



The Cross

Why Jesus had to Die

Everlasting Provisions
of Grace

John H. King

THE CROSS
WHY JESUS HAD TO DIE
Everlasting Provisions of Grace

John King

"...stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is near." - Jesus. Luke 21:28

"For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: On the night when he was betrayed, the Lord Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, broke it, and said, 'This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.'" - Paul. 1 Corinthians 11:23-24

Copyright © 2026 John King

All rights reserved. This book or any portion thereof may not be reproduced or used in any manner whatsoever without the express written permission of the publisher except for the use of brief quotations in a book review.

Printed in the United States of America

First Printing, 2021

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

ISBN: 978-1-105-46183-5 (paperback)

ISBN: 978-1-300-28508-3 (Hard Cover)

Scripture quotations marked CSB have been taken from the Christian Standard Bible®, Copyright © 2017 by Holman Bible Publishers. Used by permission. Christian Standard Bible® and CSB® are federally registered trademarks of Holman Bible Publishers.

Scripture quotations marked (NIV) are taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide. www.zondervan.com The “NIV” and “New International Version” are trademarks registered in the United States Patent and Trademark Office by Biblica, Inc.™

I have included in parenthesis references to quoted Scriptures instead of footnoting them for easy referral. Translations not specified are CSB.

Dedicated to all those who have found that the provisions of Calvary
are the sum total of all blessings.

Also, I dedicate this work to my most beloved sons and their families.
There is no greater legacy I can give them but a love for our Savior and
our God.

Acknowledgments

I am most grateful for the contributions made by my brother, Bill King and a friend, John Higgins, from Bible college days, whose collective knowledge over Scripture is invaluable to this work. From their research to proof reading to advice they have aided my efforts in writing, not only this book, but going forward supplemental works to expand and advance Christian interest in “The Cross.”

And may I acknowledge you, the reader, because you are holding this book, in paper or electronic form, with at least a preliminary curiosity in what I might have to say about a subject that, obviously, interests you. It is that interest in the Cross of Christ for which I offer you commendation, here.

As we, writers, are wont to do, I also acknowledge my dear bride of 53 plus years, who long ago must have accepted widowhood to my next subject of interest in print. Spousal support is not an option, as any writer knows. Either they supply the energy a writer needs to go the distance, researching and writing something that takes months—even years—to complete. Or they don’t. And if not, the work will not be done. This book is here and my wife, Joyce, needs most of the credit for it even if she didn’t type a single letter.

Let me lastly acknowledge my Lord for the primary resource, the Bible, from which we learn of this amazing plan He drew up to rescue us from ourselves, even if we do not yet know that we need rescuing. I only want to do what David enjoined on us in Psalm 96:3 (The New Living Translation) “Publish his glorious deeds among the nations. Tell everyone about the amazing things he does.”

CONTENTS

Preface.....	1
The Problem.....	5
Introduction.....	11
The Chapters In Overview.....	23
Theories of Atonement.....	35
The Dogma.....	63
The Simplicity of God.....	86
The Incarnate God.....	101
Perspectives On The Cross.....	114
God's Suffering Servant.....	143
Christ Our Passover.....	156
Christ Our Representative.....	163
Christ Our Righteousness.....	168
Christ Our Healer.....	178
Christ Our Redeemer.....	184
Christ Our Brother.....	188
The Power of Christ's Forgiveness.....	196
Christ Our Message.....	204
Why Christ Was Crucified.....	215

PREFACE

The problem of evil is at the heart of the biblical message, but this evil is countered by God's merciful love, which conquers human sin and purifies sinners by grace. - Fastiggi

THIS work is not intended as an historical overview of atonement¹ theory but a closer than “Sunday School” look scripturally at Calvary’s provision. Our emphasis should always be “living the message of the Cross” because it is the center of any discussion of our salvation. It bears repeating later in this work that the early church fathers never attempted to explicate or analyze Jesus’ life or death as a philosophical/metaphysical question of good and evil. During the Medieval period many theories were fashionable that have lost favor proving the difficulty in asking “Why Calvary?”

The first questions to ask is: What is the *Atonement* and why is it said to be theoretical (a theory)? The dictionary defines it as, “the reconciliation of God and humankind through Jesus Christ” but not only is there more to its many provisions or accomplishments, including reconciliation; reconciliation is *not* theoretical. Reconciliation is *not* a nominal relationship. Reconciliation is a real, rich and practical communion with God.

John Stott, an English Anglican theologian, quoted Tislington Tatlow, General Secretary² of the SCM,³ calling atonement “The price of suffering paid day by day by God himself for all human sin, and we can enter into experience the true penitence and forgiveness, which sets us free to embark upon a wholly new way of life.” This definition

¹ William Tyndale (1494 - 1536) is credited with coining this term in translating the Scripture into English. Accessed 7/19/21 Tyndale & Atonement. <https://rsc.byu.edu/king-james-bible-restoration/william-tyndale-language-one-ment>

² Tatlow (1876-1957) was also the Canon of Canterbury

³ the Student Christian Movement is the oldest student Christian organisation in Great Britain

leans toward Catholic teaching even though the Catholic faith instead speaks of the "Sacrament of Reconciliation and Penance" which we can refer to later.

John Stott, leaning toward a more Protestant understanding of the term, corrected this definition saying, "But we have respectfully to respond as the meaning of the atonement is not to be found in our penitence evoked by the sight of Calvary, but rather in what God did when in Christ on the cross he took our place and bore our sin."⁴ Stott deleted the phrase "day by day" replacing it with a simple, one time, "God did."

Atonement encompasses concepts like "substitution, satisfaction, propitiation." The simplest way to define the word "atonement" is by looking upon the Savior on the Cross dying and saying, "what He is all about hanging there, what He is doing for you and me ...that's atonement!

What is theoretical about the atonement is the scholarly attempt at explaining what remains mysterious about Jesus' death on the Cross. Why did He have to die? Paul called this "the mystery of Godliness" (1 Timothy 3:16). He declares Jesus "vindicated" in the Spirit. The plan of God to provide for us an eternal salvation, we admit, exceeds our humble knowledge of it, but still we want to explore this truth, perhaps, beyond the boundary of our language to explain it.

An in-depth study of the atonement remains theoretical even though we have given it a vital role in our understanding of our salvation. The word *atonement*, itself, is not a term used in Catholic theology, and the theologians during the Reformation period, Luther and Calvin among them, wrote from a soteriological perspective, leaving scholars to look for the atonement needle in the haystack of their theological thoughts.

C. S. Lewis writing to a friend who asked if the Atonement was actually taught by our Lord, volunteered: "... surely, since we know from the Epistles that the Apostles (who had actually known Him) did teach this doctrine in His name immediately after His death, it is clear that He did teach it: or else, that they allowed themselves a very freehand." Lewis deduced, "Surely the history of the human mind hangs together better if you suppose that all this was the first shadowy

⁴ Stott. 15

approach of something whose reality came with Christ—even if we can't at present fully understand that something."⁵

The interest driving this writing is that every grace⁶ (gift from God) that comes to us came by way of the Cross. "Therefore, he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called might receive the promise of the eternal inheritance, because a death has taken place for redemption from the transgressions committed under the first covenant." (Hebrews 9:15) This includes the indwelling Holy Spirit. Those who see sanctification as totally separate from, and not the corollary of, the Cross misrepresent Jesus' promise to His followers: "Nevertheless, I am telling you the truth. It is for your benefit that I go away, because if I don't go away the Counselor will not come to you. If I go, I will send him to you." (John 16:7)

Sadly, the terminology used in a discussion of the atonement is by its very nature philosophical and probably sounds muddled to a student of theology. What we might call a "punishment" for sin, they see as a forensic substitution, a deontological aspect of God's nature against sin, or a penal justice. What they see as a mystical/ontological feature of Christ's crucifixion is to us His bearing our sins, freeing us from its bondage, and a victory over sin through His resurrection giving us newness of life.

There is no other way to interpret Paul's teaching to Titus, speaking of the Savior as He "Who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to cleanse for himself a people for his own possession, eager to do good works." Titus (2:14)

Is it reasonable to ask why? Why did Jesus have to die on the Cross? All we can do in this work is emphasize the Biblical record. "Reasonable" is a word I used to understand the need to theorize what reasoning or logic best explains the Cross, but these can become the weeds we care not to be lost in attempting to support a theory of the atonement. This work would rather stay with scriptural explanations not only to keep it biblical but because, as a retired pastor, my heart is more with the text than a philosophical thought that might or might not support it.

⁵ Lewis. 33. To Arthur Greeves, January 10, 1932

⁶ God's gifts are relational, the giving of Himself.

Some might view this work as a guide or educational tool to learning more about Jesus' death and the reason(s) for it. If you are of this persuasion, go slowly; study the individual verses, perhaps, from other sources; or maybe a work listed in the bibliography might be worth a read. Perhaps, in a study group or book club there is something here worth discussing or questioning further—maybe with the clergy present.

This work is primarily about a protestant term: atonement. But this work is intended to be scriptural which is to say that our Catholic friends should be able to plug in as a study of the Sacrament of Penance or Reconciliation. After all, our only interest here is Jesus' death and resurrection. Why did He have to die? And what benefit is it to us that He has risen again?

I like to caution the reader: beware theological distancing. I refer to the ability to interpret the Bible academically but avoid any emotional contact or personal application of its inspiring message. Theological distancing is the art of extracting the theology from the text—here: a theory of Atonement—without owning its truth as a life-changing force, without discovering how the Cross applies to faith. Theological distancing is an intellectual exercise which might allow us to pass a written seminary exam but fail at faithfully living for Christ.

Perhaps, the better way to begin is a quote from John Stott's work, *The Cross of Christ*: "When we have glimpsed the blinding glory of the holiness of God and have been so convicted of our sin by the Holy Spirit that we tremble before God and acknowledge what we are, namely "hell deserving sinners," then and only then does the necessity of the Cross appear so obvious that we are astonished we never saw it before."⁷

We may not know, we cannot tell,
What pains he had to bear;
But we believe it was for us
He hung and suffered there.⁸

⁷ Stott. 111

⁸ Ibid. 80

THE PROBLEM

but in your hearts regard[sanctify] Christ[God] the Lord as holy, ready at any time to give a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you. - 1 Peter 3:15

BELIEVERS have been encouraged to engage the non-believer in conversation when the opportunity presents itself. It is our testimony that speaks louder than any theology. We are asked to “give a defense to anyone who asks ... for a reason for the hope (we have in Christ).” (1 Peter 3:15) This isn’t as easy as it might have been a few generations ago, because we live now in a postmodern age, a time of hopelessness in institutions that promise better days. Postmodernism¹ is a world-weary intellectualism that no longer views life in terms of absolutes or universal principles.²

Current thinking, postmodern thought, with its criticism of universal law disowns any theory of atonement or any talk of sin against God. Justice based on a divine righteousness is disallowed. Strict adherence to law or any universal morality, in other words, has more to do with imposing guilt on its citizenry to control them than justice. Our message is: Jesus was hanged! Crucifixion has always been seen as barbaric, the height of a cruel, and perhaps, sadistic, punishment. The Christian message is that innocence was sent there in the name of our depravity, but how this works remains mysterious. No wonder, it must

¹ The exploitation films, grind house movies, of the 1970’s, the precode era, was the clear indication that times had changed. We were entering the postmodern age. The previous decade overturned the social values long held as constants paving the way for a new way of viewing life.

² Griffin & Tyrrell refer to this as a fallacious view of art and life: “But some postmodernists do much more than exploit the gullible. They go so far as to say that all thought is equally relevant (that there are no boundaries, no rules, no hierarchies, no objective reality and all facts are just ‘social constructs’); furthermore, all species are of equal value, and a human being is no more important than an ant. This ‘deconstructionism’, as it is termed, is a pseudo-scientific quest for negation.” (Kindle Locations 378-381).

be accepted by faith, which in modern terms means, “just accept it and don’t ask questions!” (They are so wrong about so much here but there we have it.)

God’s act of crucifying an innocent son is the very definition of such a violence in the name of jurisprudence. A penal substitution is offensive to late modern thinkers. Therefore, as Adonis Vidu, professor of theology at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, in his work, *Atonement, Law, and Justice*, points out “...modern theories of atonement renounce violence.”³ This is reflected in a description of Christianity as a “bloody religion.”

“Our hope,” as the song goes, “is built on nothing less than Jesus’ blood and righteousness.” Giving a reasonable explanation, however, to postmodern thinkers is a task best left to the Wisdom of God. It, therefore, is incumbent upon us to study what the Bible has to say and stay true to that message not just in our reasoning but, more importantly, in our living.

There are honest inquirers trying to think through what seems to be so central to our worldview. An entire generation has been educated in the current cultural climate that since WW2 and the Holocaust has questioned allegiance to all law codes. They are re-evaluating what society expects of them in terms of their own quest for happiness.

A legal person, to their way of thinking, is therefore, a repressed person whose personal happiness or well-being is in bondage to a guilt-generating social norm or moral system that makes them liable for offenses of which they, personally, as a free and liberated person, would otherwise never have been guilty. Where there is no law, there is no offense. Even Paul understood this principle: “without the law sin was dead.” (Romans 7:8)

By postmodern thinking: divine law (the Law of God that sentenced Christ to death on our behalf) must assume a complete and neutral ontology of “the human.” (Everyone’s happiness is dependent on the same codified life-style.) Original sin defines a depraved human nature. “The scripture hath concluded **all** under sin.” Paul theologized, (Galatians 3:22). This is the language of Christian theology which runs counter to postmodern thought. Jesus died bearing our sins, He bore the complete inventory of human failure against God’s will. Jesus’

³ Vidu.178

death and resurrection consequently provided a freedom from such a bondage to these sins (a reconciliation) and to please God we must live in this sinlessness.

The church promotes a liberty in terms of righteousness not personal happiness, in terms of a forgiveness from sin, which postmodernists see as a confrontation to their chosen life-styles which are not subject to religious law. Postmodernists feel church teachings are repressive, trying to discredit who they are or who they want to become ...to be happy.

Part of the problem is a postmodern disbelief in the possibility of a personal God, who in the first place defined sin. "This shift to a spirituality without a personal God makes the concept of sin, as responsibility before a personal God, unpalatable." Adonis Vidu explains, "The attending notion of guilt is also meaningless for a society that no longer anchors standards of moral conduct in a personal, transcendent, God but in variously constructed and justified immanent human standards."⁴

In their understanding: they are not sinners; they are victims of a religious order that imposes on them inhumane standards of conduct that they cannot fulfill, and that, therefore, impose on them a psychologically crippling guilt. "The logic of sin-punishment," they would argue, "is nothing but a human construct, intended perhaps to control the escalation of crime or (cynically) to form docile subjects."⁵ Listen to some of their arguments:

Andrew Sung Park (1952 -)

The problem, says Andrew Park, a Methodist theologian, is that theories of the atonement in emphasizing the sinner failed to consider those who are victims of sin. He calls them "improper theologies" that "marginalize" a major aspect of postmodern thinking. Treating everyone as a sinner, promotes the impression that a victim's suffering is their fault. "Why should any living person complain, any man, because of the punishment for his sins?"(Lamentations 3:39) Mr. Park maintains this is not what the Savior taught. A victim's suffering is not the consequence of their sins. "Neither this man nor his parents

⁴ Ibid. 184

⁵ Ibid.

sinned,” Jesus answered. “This came about so that God’s works might be displayed in him.” (John 9:3) Sin, for Park, is an offense against one’s fellow (humanity), not against God. His theology devolves into an insightful piece of psychology, nonetheless, failing to address what to do about sin against God.

Feminist Rosemary Radford Ruether

Feminism maintains that “the Fall” and original sin⁶ “turns women into scapegoats.”⁷ The very idea that we cannot “save” ourselves stifles our freedom. Post-modernists are libertarians. Postmodernists are self-reliant individuals. “What is the salvific point of the cross?” one might ask. We are helpless in a victimized condition, if we maintain that someone else must show mercy to rescue us. Jesus on the Cross as my substitution becomes an offensive idea. “The strategy assumes there is no power available to me (the savior),” Prof. Vidu interprets them, “other than the power to elicit guilt from another and put him in my debt.”

Rita Nakashima Brock, an American feminist scholar and Protestant theologian, fulminated, “It’s telling people you don’t have a right to protest when terrible things happen to you. It short-circuits the legitimate expression of tragedy and grief that is fundamental to our psychological health. We ought to be outraged that the Roman empire crucified Jesus, not grateful, not happy that he died for us, but outraged at this travesty of justice.”⁸

A Shrinking Morality - Sinfulness

And if sin is out of the question, what about morality as a universal principle? Let me borrow from my own work, “Challenged: Living Our Faith in a Post Modern Age.”⁹

⁶ Adam as our represented made all of us equally liable for eating the forbidden fruit.

⁷ Vidu. 189

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Challenged: Living Our Faith in a Post Modern Age. (Self-published. 2016). 124

Guilt is the unhappy child of the union between a code of morality¹⁰ and an individual's conscience. And so much of this self-blame is painfully unwarranted. It leads some to believe the code should be scrapped. Jonathan Lear in the Forward to Bernard Williams' work, *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy*, tells us: "Philosophers, Bernard Williams argues, should stop propping up what he calls 'the morality system'—a punitive structure of obligation, blame and guilt—supported by the construction of ever more complex moral theories, theories of obligation, of just punishment and so on. Instead we should focus on the question: What would it be legitimately to live with confidence in our ethical lives?"¹¹

Today much of what was sinful a hundred years ago is becoming more and more common practice—even for believers. The list is shrinking. Perhaps Bernard Williams was on to something when he referred to "responsibility, guilt, blame, and such like (as)... an illusion"¹²

Postmodernism contends that the ten commandments have been part of our humanity long before Moses. They do not object to morality, per se, but to the imposition of a religious code that painfully and unnecessarily denies a sense of well-being in the name of a self-sacrifice that is always on the edge of, what Bernard Williams called "the remorse of self-reproach or guilt."¹³

¹⁰ An interesting theory of the origin of the moral consciousness is presented by Nicholas Wade in "The Faith Instinct" in which he argues for the evolution of moral principle and that the philosopher's contention that a sense of right and wrong comes from reasoning is incorrect. As biologist Ed Wilson "wrote acidly... Sometimes a concept is baffling not because it is profound but because it is wrong. (Immanuel Kant's idea that base morality is outside nature in a world of pure reason). does not accord. with the evidence of how the brain works." p. 19ff.

"...intuitive morality," says Wade (p. 123), "is wired into the brain's genetic circuitry." Psychologist Jonathan Haidt sees the moral 'intuition' as partly genetic and partly cultural.

The main point in all of this is to realize that a definition of the moral conscience is being proposed that does not necessarily require any sign or signature of the divine. But nothing said or imagined here precludes the possibility that God instilled a moral consciousness at creation (Romans 1:21ff.), and He then allows cultural influences to play a providential role.

¹¹ Bernard Williams. *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy* (Taylor and Francis: Routledge Classics) 2011. Kindle Edition. 227.

¹² *Ibid.* 228.

¹³ *Ibid.* 212.

“In this respect, the morality system itself, with its emphasis on the “purely moral” and personal sentiments of guilt and self-reproach, actually conceals the dimension in which ethical life lies outside the individual.”¹⁴

This is a fancy way of saying that all those do’s and don’ts and the guilt encased in our failures to comply as religious persons were non-essentials to our happiness or well-being! He adds elsewhere: “if an agent never felt such sentiments, he would not belong to the morality system or be a full moral agent in its terms.”¹⁵ “If we didn’t have to pretend allegiance to religious thought,” they maintain, “we would be in ignorance legitimately happy.”

Somehow guilt becomes a function of morality because no one lives up to the code—as it is understood. So when Daniel Dennett, one of the Four Horsemen of the new atheism, writes about “Breaking The Spell” of religion, he needs only convince us that “the presumed relation between spirituality and moral goodness is an illusion.”¹⁶

It is time the church reminds itself that the only recourse we have in a postmodern age of preaching the Cross and have listening ears attentive to the message is through our lives: “They conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony;...” (Revelation 12:11)

We are not winning an argument or debate. Our interest is still souls!

¹⁴ *ibid.*

¹⁵ *ibid.* 197.

¹⁶ Daniel Dennett. *Breaking the Spell* (New York: Viking Penguin. 2006), 307.

INTRODUCTION

Then beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted for them the things concerning himself in all the Scriptures. - Luke 24:27

“THE imagery surrounding the Bible's teaching on Atonement,” informs the Dictionary of Biblical Imagery, “threatens to overwhelm us by its very abundance and multiplicity.”¹ This is indisputable but what can preachers do to simplify the message?

There have been countless books written on the many theories of atonement; so, do we need another one? To be blunt, “We don't.” This work originated as just a delightful visit into the pages of Scripture as a diversion from 1,000 worries for the retired mind of this minister. But now I am wondering if it could be adapted to interest the occasional reader who doesn't attend the House of God and does not vouch-safe any devotion to God but finds themselves unexplainably, quietly, drawn to the message of the Cross. These pages are intended as an honest but scholastic enquiry into what the Scripture might say about Jesus' death without pushing a particular creed to the exclusion of others. Let the reader decide for themselves but, hopefully, with the Spirit by their side whispering into their heart what He may.

The Tree Simile

There is a design to this book's layout. Describing the atonement is, to me, somewhat like describing a fruit bearing tree. The roots, trunk, branches, leaves and fruit are all part of it. Each part is critically important to the life of the tree. Each part serves a purpose not served by the other parts. So it is with a study of the Atonement.

¹ Leland Ryken, ed. et al. Dictionary of Biblical Imagery Intervarsity Press, Downers Grove, IL 11th Printing, 1982 Thomas Nelson, Inc.

The trunk of this tree is five motifs,² five bible-based ideas, used to explain Calvary that were easily understood in the Biblical world because these ideas were culturally based and readily explained in the language of the day.

We may need a little more explanation; that's the branches, the theories, which are a system of ideas intended to explain the Cross. Branches grow in all directions and the Church has similarly proposed a myriad of ideas to cloak the Savior's death in reasonableness. The finer branches are here called dogmas, theories that have been codified into creed and denominational distinctives.

The leaves are what gives a tree its beauty, that show it is alive. Dead trees may have trunks and branches but not leaves, and likewise, creeds must have the Biblical message of the Cross else they are dead religion. The leaves here are those truths that inspire life. Here are the underlying truths that make the difference between lifeless religious form and a Gospel message of good news. The simplicity of God, Jesus incarnation, Isaiah's suffering servant, the Passover, and a few other perspectives on Scripture are the most sacred truth that cause us, who study it, to affirm with the centurion at the time of Jesus' crucifixion, "Truly, He is the Son of God!"

The fruit of Calvary's tree are what Jesus provided us on the Cross and through His resurrection. Fruit we eat. These are spiritual fruit we apply to our lives, that become expressions of our faith. Fruit are the ultimate reason for the tree, and Christ in Us is the ultimate reason for the Cross (Colossians 1:27).

And how about the roots? The tree is dead without them but they remain unobserved below the surface of what occupies our attention. When we think of trees, we don't think of roots, but that's a mistake if we care about the tree. The roots of the truth behind Calvary's plan, and the miracle of everything that happened from the Cross, nourished by a flowing divine love, are unobservable still. They are hidden truth (Deuteronomy 29:29) that speaks to a divine reasonableness, a sublime grace, that His holiness, His love, and His justice worked out in total accord (1 Timothy 3:16). Here is the "Why," why did the Savior have to shed His blood in such a punishing way to save us? Someday He will

² Motif: distinctive feature or dominant idea in an artistic or literary composition

explain all, but for now, it is a matter of faith. “You believe in God?” Jesus asked. “Then believe in me....” (John 14:1)

A Matter of Faith

What happened on Calvary is a matter for faith but it is not without reason—a divinely ordained reason—as to how and why it had to be. To the extent this remains mysterious, it is not beyond our human inquisitiveness to ask with former missionary Ken Daniels³, “Why does Yahweh need sacrifices anyway?” Daniels questioned, “I can't see why you couldn't just forgive truly penitent people for their sins without requiring a blood sacrifice, just as humans forgive each other?”⁴

Glen, an Episcopalian, and later Catholic, priest, recalled while in seminary: “We were studying atonement theory, and I thought, ‘Was there not a better way to save humanity than to resort to human sacrifice?’ But we were not encouraged to ask those kinds of questions. This particular professor mocked those who did.”⁵

Christ Our Sacrifice

John Stott in his work, “The Cross of Christ” devotes considerable space to what he titled “The Self-Substitution of God.” He pointed out convincingly that the Bible, Old Testament first and foremost, is replete with examples of a substitutionary sacrifice that expressed two truths: we belong to God by right but we have been alienated from Him through sin.⁶ Sacrifices were a universal phenomenon in the ancient world, grant it. They may have had a “common origin in God’s revelation”⁷ but, notwithstanding, the Hebrew and pagan meanings are not identical. Sacrifices to God in the Old Testament were *not* gifts to curry the divine favor, i.e. a spiritual bribe of sorts. Jesus’ death exposed our need for God’s grace. Nor did they, from God’s perspective, provide forgiveness, but a recognition of our need for reconcilia-

³ Kenneth W Daniels. *Why I Believed: Reflections of a Former Missionary* (Austin TX: Kenneth W. Daniels, 2010.), 31.

⁴ *ibid.* 37.

⁵ Daniel Dennett; Linda LaScola. *Caught in The Pulpit: Leaving Belief Behind* (Durham, NC: Pitchstone Publishing, 2013), 49.

⁶ Stott. 135

⁷ *Ibid.*

tion. Sacrifice meant death and death was caused by the shedding of blood. "For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have appointed it to you to make atonement on the altar for your lives, since it is the lifeblood that makes atonement." (Leviticus 17:11)

A Debt of Sin Paid?

On The parable of the two debtors in Luke 7:41-42 Richard Trench says, "In the words themselves there is no difficulty,... God, it needs not to say, is the creditor, men are the debtors (Matthew 18:24), and sins the debts. (Matthew 6:12)"⁸

The general interpretation of Calvary has Jesus' death in payment for a debt of sin humanity owed God in lieu of our being punished. Somehow this metaphor serves to offer many believers a rationale that supports faith. But whether or not this is sufficiently explicative remains to be examined later.

Dr. Sharon Baker, Assistant Professor of Theology and Religion at Messiah College in Grantham, Pennsylvania, in a revolutionary work titled "Executing God: Rethinking Everything You've Been Taught about Salvation and the Cross," explains the story of atonement from a perspective of love, mercy and compassion instead of in payment of a debt of sin or appeasing an enraged God. Dr. Baker confessed that her "whole belief system came crashing down around" her. She "wandered around in the rubble, kicking at the broken pieces of (her) absolute certainty"⁹ when she revisited all she had been taught to believe about the atoning work of our Savior on Calvary. For Dr. Baker "one foundation survived...that Jesus Christ is Lord and Savior. And upon that foundation", she wrote encouragingly, "I began to rebuild."¹⁰

There are five motifs called upon to represent some aspect of a multifaceted provision of the Cross. This work intends to build on these as foundational to any acceptable Christian theory of the Atonement. But lest we lose our way, a path has been laid here to lead us to an understanding of the provisions of a transforming divine grace that, in and of itself, must give reason for Jesus' death and resurrection.

⁸ Trench. Notes on the Parables of Our Lord. 234

⁹ Baker. 2

¹⁰ Ibid.

They are listed here only with Scriptural references, to provide some foundation to a discussion of Atonement theory. These five are in every regard biblical in scope. We can say without reservation or controversy that these, therefore, form the basis for any dialogue about the Cross. (Here we must let the Word speak for itself with minimal comment. These are in the NIV translation.)

Five Motifs

1. **Jesus bore our sins and forgave us.**

- I Peter 2:24 He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.
- Hebrews 9:28 so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.

2. **Jesus paid our ransom freeing us from a bondage to sinning**

- Matthew 20:28 just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.
- Mark 10:45 For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many
- I Timothy 2:6 who gave himself as a ransom for all people. This has now been witnessed to at the proper time.
- Revelation 5:9 And they sang a new song, saying: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased for God persons from every tribe and language and people and nation.

3. Jesus took our place: (Our substitute, a vicarious atonement)

- [An appeasement or satisfaction (atonement, propitiation) of God's anger or wrath.]¹¹
- Isaiah 53:4-6 Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.
- Romans 5:18 Consequently, just as one trespass resulted in condemnation for all people, so also one righteous act resulted in justification and life for all people.
- 2 Corinthians 5:14 For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died..
- Romans 3:25-26 God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood—to be received by faith. He did this to demonstrate his righteousness, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished— 26 he did it to demonstrate his righteousness at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.
- Hebrews 2:17 For this reason he had to be made like them, fully human in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in

¹¹ An argument can be made here that Jesus' crucifixion did not appease an angry God as was common in pagan sacrifices. One New Testament Scripture references God's wrath distinguished from His anger. Romans 2:8 ...wrath and anger to those who are self-seeking and disobey the truth while obeying unrighteousness. The RSV correctly translates "fury." It has been defined as "setting fire to straw" in a rush of rage but God exhibits this only at the end of time. The concept of a propitiated wrath on Calvary suggesting that Jesus' death had to appease a divine rage is theologically questionable.

service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people..

- I John 2:1-2 My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.

4. Jesus legally satisfied the law of God's Holiness.

- Romans 5:18-19; 8:1 Consequently, just as one trespass resulted in condemnation for all people, so also one righteous act resulted in justification and life for all people. 19 For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.. Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus

5. Jesus reconciled us to God

- Romans 5:7-11 Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! For if, while we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! Not only is this so, but we also boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.
- 2 Corinthians 5:19 that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.
- Colossians 1:20 and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in

heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

The Christian Doctrine

It is appropriate to define the Christian tenets of faith that both Protestants and Catholics share and which came out of the message of Calvary, i.e., that Jesus was sacrificed in our stead on a Roman Cross to atone for sin and reconcile to God those who appropriate His death by faith. These are replete with religious terms that hopefully will be explained in the following pages. There are five tenets of faith:

1. Jesus was born of a virgin¹² —Mary—and therefore,
2. Jesus is God¹³ —God’s Son¹⁴ —and therefore,
3. Jesus is a member of the Trinity—the¹⁵ Father, Son and Holy Spirit—and¹⁶ therefore
4. When He died on Calvary, God died for our sins—vicarious substitution—and therefore,
5. The Bible IS God’s Word—since¹⁷ its theme and message is all about the Cross and our Lord’s resurrection from the dead.

Catholics and Protestants divided over three additional teachings that become evident as we study the Cross and its provisions through Christ.

¹² Our Catholic brethren say Mary was never intimate with Joseph, her husband. The reference to a ‘virgin’ in Isaiah 7:14 is really the word “young maiden.”

¹³ Granville Sharp’s rule governing the ‘copulative kai’ often translatable as ‘even’ supports the Christian theological position that Jesus is Himself God. (Titus 2:13: προσδεχόμενοι τὴν μακαρίαν ἐλπίδα καὶ ἐπιφάνειαν τῆς δόξης τοῦ μεγάλου θεοῦ καὶ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ.). This is one of many Scriptures that are employed Christian theology to established the need for Jesus to be God in His death to provide forgiveness (a propitiation) for all mankind.

¹⁴ We believe Jesus to be two natures in one person. As a tenet of faith at the Council of Chalcedon the word “person” in this context is better expressed in Latin! Two natures but one persona.

¹⁵ Although the word ‘trinity’ is not found in scripture, in Ephesians 4:4-6 Paul spoke of “one Spirit..one Lord.. one God and Father of all.” Also see I Corinthians 12:4-6 “same Spirit..same Lord..same God.” It is difficult not to see a trinity here.

¹⁶ May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. 2 Corinthians 13:14

¹⁷ every word of scripture is inspired (or as I see it: every word needs to be taken into account in our interpretation) .

1. Protestants claim that justification (a divine declaration of a believer's righteousness and "no condemnation," Romans 8:1, from punishment) is by faith only, (*sola fide*) that the Savior's death atoned for all sin past, present and future not just original sin.¹⁸ Catholics see Jesus' death as a satisfaction only for original sin. It is important, here, to note that in Protestantism the "original sin" of Adam plunged humankind into a total depravity.
2. Protestants believe that all believers are priests unto God according to 1 Peter 2:9 "you are ... a royal priesthood." The Catholic Church recognizes a "Ministerial Priesthood" as well as ordained deacons, who administer the sacraments, such as baptism and the Eucharist."¹⁹
3. Catholics believe in indulgences—remission of the temporal punishment (possibly extended after death in purgatory) still due for sins after absolution. Protestants, because Christ's death was an infinite punishment for sin, both original and temporal, do not conclude a biblical reason for indulgences.

A Tale of Two Trees

How righteous are we, as Christians, as followers of Christ? This is a tale of two trees. "In the same way, every good tree produces good fruit, but a bad tree produces bad fruit. A good tree can't produce bad fruit; neither can a bad tree produce good fruit. Every tree that doesn't

¹⁸ John Stott (96) wrote, "there is a strong biblical emphasis on the influence of our inheritance, what we are 'in Adam.' The doctrine of original sin means that the very nature we have inherited is tainted and twisted with self centeredness." Mark 7:21-23; John 8:34

¹⁹ From Church teaching (Lumen Gentium: Dogmatic Constitution of the Church, paragraph 32: https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html. 31. The term laity is here understood to mean all the faithful except those in holy orders and those in the state of religious life specially approved by the Church. These faithful are by baptism made one body with Christ and are constituted among the People of God; they are in their own way made sharers in the priestly, prophetic, and kingly functions of Christ; and they carry out for their own part the mission of the whole Christian people in the Church and in the world." (Clarification: Holy Orders is one of the seven formal sacraments of the Church; it is the Sacrament that ordains, Deacons, Priests and Bishops.)

produce good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. So you'll recognize them by their fruit." (Matthew 7:17-20)

There are two classes of trees in this illustration Jesus offered us to hopefully recognize the difference between a follower of Christ and one who does not. Let's describe the non-follower first.

"A bad tree produces bad fruit." I believe it was the Bishop of Constantinople, Chrysostom, in a sermon on the Epistle to Timothy, who defined the term "bad" for us: "Anyone who has fulfilled no personal usefulness, we say is bad."²⁰ "Bad" means worthless, of no use. On a fruit tree it speaks of a fruit that appears inviting but it will not serve the purpose for fruit, i.e. nourishment.

In our little tale here, the tree with 'bad' fruit is the old us, "the old self that is corrupted by deceitful desires" (Ephesians 4:22). When talking about fruit, the word "corrupted" means rotting.²¹ That's bad. The old tree, we used to be before our salvation, is now rotting away. The passions that fed it were not good for this tree. We thought we could keep it alive, keep it blossoming and bearing emotionally nourishing fruit by a sensual appetite for things that would make us happy. But, alas, it was not possible to live well on 'bad' fruit.

But rotting is not the same as rotten. We may not see the process already happening deep within its roots and branches. Let me share a true story which I have also spoke of in my booklet "A Heavenly Citizenship."

A college professor shared a story from his past that may encourage us as we endeavor to follow Christ. Hobart was a young lad who observed his dad "ring" a tree in the back yard. Ringing a tree, went the explanation, is cutting into the bark deep enough into the cambium layer to prevent the sap in the tree from flowing back down into the root system when Autumn comes. Hobart saw his dad ring the tree and he expected the leaves to wither and drop off but the Summer went into Fall and the leaves were still there. Hobart thought to correct his dad, an excited boy about to prove himself right and dad wrong, "The tree is still alive, dad."

"The tree is dead, son." His dad spoke with unwavering confidence in what was happening to that tree.

²⁰ Παν, ο μη την ιδιαν χρειαν πληροι, σαπρον λεγομεν cp Thayer. 568-9

²¹ The word is present tense or continuing to be corrupted.

Winter turned to Spring and small new leaves broke out on every branch of that tree, giving Hobart renewed confidence that the tree was not dead. He alerted his dad, who again reiterated in fatherly tones the lesson of the rung tree.

“Hob, the tree is dead.”

Dad didn’t need to look. The leaves turned brown and fell off. The tree was indeed ...dead.

Hobart Grazier was my professor who shared that story of his life to explain that even if we sin from time to time, the old nature, like the old tree, has been disconnected from any source of strength that would feed its ways. As we follow Christ and serve Him in relationship expect old habits, old ways, old thoughts, old feelings to drop off, that are not representative of the holiness of God and His kingdom that is now very much a part of who we are becoming in Him (Romans 8:29).

There is another tree with good fruit, the new you, “the new self, the one created according to God’s likeness in righteousness and purity of the truth.” (Ephesians 4:24) The point of interest here is that this new life is a direct provision of Jesus’ death and resurrection. But the expression of that new life, bears strongly on what we do with our new found faith. From the local church in the town where we once lived I recall a comment on its Sunday bulletin written around a Christian holiday to church goers who only showed up at these special occasions: “If you don’t want to exercise your faith (by regularly attendance), don’t ask us to help you pretend that you do!” Luther explained, “The tree must be first, and then the fruit. For the apples make not the tree, but the tree makes the apples. So faith first makes the person, who afterwards brings forth works.”²²

The Fulcrum of The Cross

The question of grace on God’s side and believer responsibility (faith with or without works) on the believer’s side is a doctrinal seesaw. The weight of grace for John Calvin put the fulcrum (what Jesus did in His death) so close to where the Christian sits on this seesaw that no weight of responsibility on the believer’s part (free will) decides the balance (the will of God). For Calvin, there was no preve-

²² Luther, Commentary of the Epistles to Galatians, p. 247, on Galatians 3:10. cp. Stott. 186

nient grace, no proclivity (tendency) to choose God. As Jesus reminded His disciples, “You did not choose me, but I chose you” (John 15:16). Wesley (Methodism) envisioned the balancing point more central, so that, it took also the Christian’s faithful obedience in response to God’s grace to bring balance, to effectively realize all Jesus provided there. “Therefore, my dear friends, just as you have always obeyed, so now, ... work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.” (Philippians 2:12)

Sadly, church doctrine must define faith (set the fulcrum) in order to establish the tenets of faith often in distinction from other Christian groups. The seesaw that depicts a Christian’s relationship to grace—and therefore, to God—is theologically set, even if it doesn’t adequately represent all scripture, or the real experience of the child of God astride that seesaw.

Does it matter which approach to faith we take? It matters only that our faith owns our doctrine. Jesus’ death and resurrection is truth that we appropriate by that faith. “Everything that is not from faith is sin.” (Romans 14:23) Little children somehow know that when daddy is on the other side of that seesaw, it joyously works. They just need to climb on and most playground seesaws have moveable fulcrums. Is there a lesson here?

Stripping away all the theological phylacteries, the big words and deep philosophical analysis (in fulcrum terms: the mathematical calculations that best determine a fulcrum’s location for balance), we can agree that a child-like faith or trust in Jesus is all He expects of us. A prayer of repentance and for mercy is our part that He might mediate on our behalf before the Father. His mediation is the fulcrum point (1 Timothy 2:5). In theological terms, the point where our free will and God’s determinism (predestination) balance to bring about His will in our lives. The Cross is pure grace but how we appropriate its provision—yes, by Faith alone, nonetheless—is a question of obedience.

THE CHAPTERS IN OVERVIEW

*...the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to his saints. -
Colossians 1:26*

HERE is a breakdown in brief of the chapters in this book. The chapters, hopefully, represent some order to a study of the Cross that is more natural for a student of the Word to follow. Beginning with an historical outline of theological thought to explain the Cross, we discuss the dogma, proceeding from the theology to the actual provisions of grace. The final two chapters return to our message to a lost world.

Theories of Atonement

Atonement theory has a history. It might surprise the uninformed, the student of the Word who has not been to Seminary, that much of what we are academically engaged with may have had no interest to a Paul or Peter. The theory we might adopt might have evolved out of centuries of theological rehashing in defense of one view as opposed to others—some considered heretical.

For example: a retributive justice, which says, punishment for sin was a requirement of God's offended sense of justice or His holiness, is a concept that developed out of the Reformation period in Church history. The meaning of some terms used in the Greek New Testament, that relate to Jesus' death, have been debated endlessly through the centuries. The word *righteousness*, for one, can mean justification. And whether it means to make righteous or to declare righteous depends on much scholarly investigation. It is important, therefore, to review the historical development of any inquest into Jesus' death.

The Dogma

Is Christian unity lost in a labyrinth of conflicting theologies? Is the message of atoning grace the needle in a haystack of conflicting doctrines: Calvinist, Wesleyan, Reformed, Thomistic, Pentecostal teachings, etc.? Is the atonement provided through the death of Christ, as Dorothy Sayers observed in her day, "... hopelessly irrelevant to life..."? "The question 'What think ye of Christ?'," Ms. Sayers, an English crime writer and poet but dedicated to her faith, bemoaned, "lands the average man at once in the very knottiest kind of dogmatic riddle."¹

But notwithstanding any review of church history that might suggest otherwise, we maintain with Ms. Sayers, "If the 'average man' is going to be interested in Christ at all, it is the dogma (the message of atoning grace) that will provide the interest."²

Here we must study some terms we might be less familiar with but which are often used to explain Jesus' death and resurrection. Almost as an oxymoron or a misnomer, for example, we must talk about the *simplicity* of God. (Even though, nothing here seems simple!) We must devote an entire chapter to this inspiring truth. There is also Luther's "wondrous exchange," the present use of indulgences within Catholicism distinguished from what Luther disputed and nailed to a castle church door³ in Wittenberg. What was the Tulip doctrine? And what did Jesus mean when on the Cross He cried, "It is finished!"

The Simplicity of God

Dr. Adonis Vidu taught that "The Christian tradition has always thought of God as also possessing ... the kind of attributes that distinguish (Him) from any created thing."⁴ The suggestion I want to make is that these attributes, particularly **simplicity** (emphasis added), qualify (His actions and our relationship with Him) in a distinct way."⁵ This

¹ Sayers. *Creed Or Chaos*. 49-50

² *Ibid.* 51

³ This is now disputed, but Luther did publish his 95 thesis.

⁴ God's actions are uniquely tied to his nature. First, God's actions, God's attributes, are identical to his being rather than components of it. Secondly, divine actions are different from any other actions. cp. Vidu 243

⁵ Vidu. 240

has been called the aseity⁶ of God. Dr. Vidu is, therefore, correct in saying that “The doctrine of the atonement is inextricably entangled with the doctrine of God.”⁷ When Jesus, Who was and is God, went to Calvary, we can say without question that God went there. So, a brief look at a description of God, will benefit our understanding of the Cross.

The Incarnate God

One point of theology we find in common across all Christian faiths is that our Lord Christ Jesus was/is God incarnate. “Anyone who believes in him is not condemned, but anyone who does not believe is already condemned, because he has not believed in the name of the one and only Son of God.” (John 3:18) Jesus was, as Luther said, “truly God and truly man.” Latin scholastics referred to Him as the God-man.

The Chalcedonian Creed⁸ called Him: “the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, the same perfect in Godhead and also perfect in manhood; truly God and truly man, of a reasonable (rational). soul and body; consubstantial (coessential)⁹ with the Father according to the Godhead, and consubstantial with us according to the Manhood; in all things like unto us, without sin;...”

To paraphrase Dorothy Sayers, “One thing is certain: if (Jesus) really was both God and man (and He was!), then when the man Jesus died, God died too, and when the (Son of) God, Jesus, rose from the dead, (you and I) rose too...”¹⁰

This alone is the start and finish of our “like precious faith” (1 Peter 1:1 ASV).

⁶ Aseity is the property by which a being exists in and of itself, from itself, or exists as so-and-such of and from itself. The word is often used to refer to the Christian belief that God contains within himself the cause of himself, is the first cause, or rather is simply uncaused, though many Jewish and Muslim theologians have also believed God to be independent in this way.

⁷ Vidu. 240.

⁸ https://simple.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chalcedonian_Creed

⁹ Homoousion is a Christian theological term, most notably used in the Nicene Creed for describing Jesus as "same in being" or "same in essence" with God the Father.

¹⁰ Sayers. Creed Or Chaos. 11

Perspectives On the Cross

There is an Indian parable of the blind men and the elephant¹¹ in which each man feels a different part of the elephant: its trunk, foot, ear, side, and comes up with different perspectives on what an elephant must look like. Life is often a question of perspective, how we interpret the circumstances we experience or live through. We might look back and by reviewing, or even employing introspection, reconsider how our circumstances and choices in those circumstances might have impacted our lives. The question here for believers is how does our salvation, how does the Cross, impact us? In what practical ways, might we testify of its provision? What did Jesus do for us, provide for us, on Calvary is the real question regardless of how little we might understand the atonement or why He had to die to provide it.

There is a sense in which this chapter represents a new perspective in studying the Atonement. It is introduced here so that talking about Jesus' suffering and His ministry to us from the Cross becomes less theoretical and more provisional in meaning. We become less concerned with why He died, why is His death a necessary element of His grace, and more interested in how did my life change when I appropriated that provision by faith. **God's Suffering Servant**

Isaiah 53 is an incredible prophecy—by his own admission in verse 1. This chapter cannot be discarded as uninspired or not revelatory without at the same time showing a total disregard for the honest and reasonable explanation a simple reading of the text offers. It is prophetic insight into a divine plan to offer Jesus for the sins of mankind. It is a prophecy that could not be explained until we were able to look back in history and see for ourselves that it happened as Isaiah described.¹² One must not show a disinterest in Isaiah 53 because the chapter fails to support a corroboration with evolutionary or new-orthodox theory. To conclude, therefore, that Isaiah's "Suffering Servant" cannot be Jesus, or that chapter 53 does not specifically reference his vicarious and sacrificial death, is to shut the mind's eye to an obvious truth that like a blinding sun outshines the logic of other interpretations.

¹¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blind_men_and_an_elephant

¹² Luke 9:44-45 "Listen carefully to what I am about to tell you: The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men." But they did not understand what this meant. It was hidden from them, so that they did not grasp it, and they were afraid to ask him about it.

In Isaiah's reference to the guilt/sin offering in 53:10 it is the "soul" of the Suffering Servant that has become the offering. In 45 other references to this type of offering, this verse stands alone where the offering is a *person*. Our thoughts immediately go to Paul explaining,¹³ "For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed." (1 Corinthians 5:7)

Christ Our Passover

Jesus in eating His final passover meal with His disciples instituted the last supper as a memorial to His death until He returns. Paul explained "as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death *until* he comes." (1 Corinthians 11:26) The word "until" is a *terminus ad quem*.¹⁴ Does this suggest that some significance of this final meal with His disciples will cease to hold importance when He returns? The marriage supper of the Lamb will not celebrate the Savior's accomplishments on Calvary? Is this possible to imagine?

Especially in view of the Savior's own promise to us in Luke 22:16 "For I tell you, I will not eat it again until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God" The real significance of this celebratory meal will finally be unveiled when we enjoy it with Him in His kingdom. J. P. Lange, German Calvinist theologian, comments, "He declares here (Luke 22:16) only that ...He will no longer celebrate the Passover...that is, 'not until all be fulfilled...'"¹⁵

Does this imply that Jesus intends to celebrate the Passover meal with us in The Kingdom of Heaven? Such an interpretation appears "purely arbitrary."¹⁶ Would Jesus celebrate once and only once such a solemn observance or, might He designate such a meal as a re-instituting of the Passover?

Dr. Lange sees the Passover feast as a "feast of deliverance"¹⁷ which is finally completed, fulfilled, in the coming Kingdom of God. This is a

¹³ John 1:36 When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, "Look, **the Lamb of God!**"

I Peter 1:19 but with the precious blood of **Christ, a lamb** without blemish or defect.

¹⁴ the point at which something ends or finishes.

¹⁵ J. P. Lange, "Commentary on the Holy Scriptures: The Gospel According to Luke," vol 8, p. 336.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

joyous occasion of the saint's eternal deliverance from all sorrows, all temptations, and all evil, typified in Scripture by a "feast"¹⁸ Herein is not just the celebration of the Savior's death but the clearest indication of His subsequent resurrection from the dead. For, how else would He renew a meal with them—and us—otherwise than glorified with us in His kingdom of Grace!

The truth seems clearer when He partook of the cup of wine: He proclaimed, "For I tell you, from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes." (Luke 22:18) ..until the kingdom of God comes....! And thus Jesus invites us to join Him, "so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom" (Luke 22:30)

Christ Our Representative

As Professor Girdlestone, an Anglican cleric, so aptly said it: "The people of Israel were frequently reminded that their hope lay in the death of a representative."¹⁹

"..if one died for all, then were all dead..."(2 Corinthians 5:14) "We were "punished by proxy."²⁰ Dr. Craig, Professor of Philosophy at Houston Baptist University and Research Professor of Philosophy at Talbot School of Theology, compares this arrangement to a shareholder's meeting in which someone else votes in our stead.²¹ The vote is counted as coming from us. It is easy to see how Paul thought along the same lines in Romans 6. "For if we have been united with him in the likeness of his death, we will certainly also be (joined with Him) in the likeness of his resurrection." (Romans 6:5) "...when He was punished, we were punished..."²²

It is in this way that by faith Abraham was declared righteous. "Now it was **credited to him**"²³ was not written for Abraham alone, but also for us. It will be credited to us who believe in him who raised

¹⁸ Revelation 19:9 Then he said to me, "Write: Blessed are those invited to the marriage feast of the Lamb!" He also said to me, "These words of God are true."

¹⁹ Girdlestone. 129.

see also Leviticus 17:11.

²⁰ Craig. 205

²¹ Ibid. 204

²² Ibid. 270

²³ Psalm 32:2 How joyful is a person whom the LORD does not charge with iniquity

Jesus our Lord from the dead. He was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.” (Romans 4:23-25)

The Righteousness of God

Paul proclaims the exciting news, “apart from the law, the righteousness of God has been revealed, attested by the Law...” (Romans 3:21) In other words: the declaration of our acquittal before the judgment seat of God is a judicial action! The law has been satisfied and there is no other indictment possible!

All we need do is trust this provision which came through Christ. But what is the righteousness of God? The words righteousness, to declare righteous, and justification have a biblically significant meaning not found in secular writings. The word for righteous judgment is found only in the Bible.

It might seem odd that righteousness is not a fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22ff) but neither are words like: holiness, godliness, humility, merciful and many other terms Paul uses to describe our newness of life in Christ. What exactly is righteousness? Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for it! (Matthew 5:6)

It takes faith since our logic is incomplete. “The righteousness of God is through faith in Jesus Christ...” (Romans 3:22) It is by faith not logic that we know the Cross to be God’s way to salvation. As our faith increases and is able to accept deeper aspects of divine Truth, the Cross becomes more and more the center of all meaning for us: “For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith” (Romans 1:17)

Christ Our Redeemer

Redeem, redemption, is a term that comes from the word meaning “to set free.” The truth could not be clearer. It is correctly understood as our “ransom” after the analogy of the Old Testament sacrifice, and some believers like to reference Hosea 3:1-2 where the prophet purchased his wife, Gomer, back off the slave auction block and took her as his wife—not to be her master but her *husband*—a distinction any student of the Pauline teaching (for that matter, any wife) knows on the subject (Ephesians 5:25). The image is of the marketplace. It is not uncommon for God in the Bible to use examples from life to explain deeper truths. Scholarship has discovered that even the meaning of

many words in the Bible goes beyond their classical or secular use.²⁴ Professor R. C. Trench remarked, "...words often contain a witness for great moral truths—God having impressed such a seal of truth upon language, that men are continually uttering deeper things than they know..."²⁵

The basic idea in redeeming something is buying it back (the biblical idea of a "ransom") which in the case of a slave means setting them free. John Stott points out that redeem, redemption, ransom is "a technical term in the ancient world for the purchase or manumission of a slave."²⁶ Jesus' death broke the chains of sin that bound us to a way of life that estranged us from God.

Freed us from what? Lawlessness.²⁷ This word supports Prof Craig's contention that our Savior's death was a penal substitution.²⁸ Martin Luther allegorically wrote, "The Law growls, 'All right. If Your Son is taking the sin of the world, I see no sins anywhere else but in Him. He shall die on the Cross.' And the Law kills Christ. But we go free."²⁹

"I am using a human analogy," Paul employed the slavery motif to explain that now instead of enslaved to sin, we should be our Lord's life-long indentured servant. (Exodus 21:5-6) "... just as you offered the parts of yourselves as slaves to impurity, and to greater and greater

²⁴ This work is not the place to go deep into the meanings of words in their cultural settings or to trace the historical development of terms or explain the use of later words in earlier books of the Bible—all of which have great value to scholarship. If interested, a good place to begin might be John Stott's *The Cross of Christ*, chapter 7, "The Salvation of Sinners."

²⁵ Richard Trench. *On the Study of the Words Lectures*. 56

²⁶ Stott. 173

²⁷ "It is characteristic, of course, that (lawlessness). should become one of the chief terms for sin." Kittell, vol IV. 1085

²⁸ "Paul's exposition of the way in which Christ's death achieves reconciliation with God is suffused with forensic terminology rooted in Jewish notions of law and justice." Craig. 51

Craig further notes, "Theologians have long debated the question of whether God could have simply pardoned our sin without Christ's atoning death or, more broadly, the satisfaction of divine justice. Most Protestant theologians... (hold). that divine justice had to be satisfied if salvation from sin were to be possible. ... God's pardon of us is therefore required by justice. Nonetheless, God's provision of Christ as our penal substitute is an active expression of God's mercy and grace, giving us what we didn't deserve." 247ff

²⁹ Martin Luther, *Epistle to the Galatians*. 63-64

lawlessness, so now offer them as slaves to righteousness, which results in sanctification.” (Romans 6:19)

But not just a servant to God, but a “pure” servant of God or cleansed from sinful thoughts and motives; we serve no other lord. There is implied here no other motive or personal interest other than pleasing our Lord.

We are ransomed, that is to say, “purchased with his own blood” (Acts 20:28); we are His own possession (Titus 2:14). We are in a love relationship: “My beloved is mine, and I am his.” (Song of Solomon 2:16)

Christ Our Brother

A Christians is a part of a family of believers who share in common a love for Jesus. This sense of community is not a minor thing. Christians should, merely by getting together, become a vital support for each other in serving and following Jesus with renewed vigor and enthusiasm. We need each other in a very real sense. The Bible uses different terms of relationship. One of them is that we are God’s children which makes Jesus our “brother” (John 1:12). In the language of Scripture, we have been adopted, which means, God’s love for us is no accident of circumstances but a genuine choice on His part (2 Thessalonians 2:13). He wants us! When Paul thought of our redemption, he thought of our adoption into God’s family (Romans 8:15, 23). He could not separate these. Salvation is not an ‘I’ but a ‘we.’ Christianity is a community who share in a common relationship with our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, God’s Son.

About 2 percent of the U.S. population, we are told, are adopted. That’s probably the number of hands that would be raised (if people are honest and open about it) if you asked of the average church congregation by show of hands to reveal who had been adopted. *And they would be wrong!* Ask them, how many loved the Lord? That’s the true number! And this is an exciting revelation!

The Power of Christ's Forgiveness

Dr. Sharon Baker argued, "Mercy and grace transcends the law of retribution in favor of forgiveness."³⁰ Was Calvary an act of vengeance, retributive justice, wrath, or was it an act of redemptive, restorative justice, love? Or both? Did God not outright and unconditionally forgive us? "In him we have redemption, (through His blood) the forgiveness of sins." (Colossians 1:14) "In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace." (Ephesians 1:7)

There are many different perspectives on what exactly happened on the Cross, but we can say that as in the ancient Indian parable of the blind men and the elephant, "We know the elephant has a trunk and a tail." Both define the animal. And similarly, forgiveness and the requirements of God's holiness, God's wrath, the means to free (redeem) us from a bondage to sin, and a path to reconciliation and fellowship with God, are not contradictory requirements in Jesus' death.

What perplexes non-believers is why must forgiveness require sacrifice? Why should God forgiving me of my offense against Him require the death of another—first the sacrificial animal then finally His Son? But that is the message in the Levitical code.

Christ Our Message

Notwithstanding our imperfect reasoning, John Howard Yoder, an American theologian and ethicist best known for his defense of Christian pacifism, exclaims "...it is the cross ... which gives the hope..." He sums up this ... in a word, "Jesus, the slain lamb, the one who took up the cross and not the crown."³¹

All scripture to be correctly interpreted must be understood in terms of The Cross. A sound hermeneutic, for example, of all things apocalyptic has to be a revelation in effect of Jesus Christ the crucified and risen Lord. This explains why Jesus' apocalyptic teaching itself referenced His work on the Cross when he concluded, "...lift up your heads, because your redemption is near." (Luke 21:28) Our "redemption" was provided on Calvary!

³⁰ Baker. 135

³¹ Graham Ward, ed. *Postmodern Theology*. (University of Manchester: Blackwell Publishing Ltd. 2008), p. 146.

Commenting on the apocalyptic character of Ezekiel, Daniel, Mark, and John on the island of Patmos, Dr. Yoder observes that these texts are not either about pie in the sky or the Russians in Mesopotamia. “They are about how the crucified Jesus is a more adequate key to understanding what God is about in the real world of empires and armies and markets than is the ruler in Rome, with all his supporting military, commercial, and sacerdotal networks.”³² “Postmodernists,” Dr. Yoder draws our attention to today’s academics, “cannot help but think such a claim to be the grandest of grand narratives, but I cannot imagine Christians saying anything less. Not only saying it, but also thinking it true.”³³

The missionary council meeting in Jerusalem in 1928 went further, “Our message is Jesus Christ. He is the revelation of what God is and of what man through Him may become. In Him we come face to face with the Ultimate Reality of the universe; He makes known to us God as our Father, perfect and infinite in love and in righteousness; for in Him we find God incarnate, the final, yet ever-unfolding, revelation of the God in whom we live and move and have our being. ...Jesus Christ...through His death and resurrection...has disclosed to us the Father, the Supreme Reality, as almighty Love, reconciling the world to Himself by the Cross...”³⁴

Why Was Jesus Crucified

It is basic to Christian thought to herald the Savior’s death as a substitute for ours. He died in our stead. Had He not died, there would have been no eternal life for you and I. This much we can accept as an irrefutable and basic truth. Jesus’ death was a requisite for our salvation—a necessary part of the divine plan to provide for that salvation. Mark records, “Then he began to teach them that it **was necessary** for the Son of Man to suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests, and scribes, be killed, and rise after three days.” (Mark 8:31)

³² John Howard Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus: Vicit Agnus Noster*, 2nd edn. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994), p. 246.

³³ Graham Ward, ed. *Postmodern Theology*. (University of Manchester: Blackwell Publishing Ltd. 2008), 152.

³⁴ Francis M. DuBose. 339

The necessity of Jesus' crucifixion was tied to prophecy, as we know, "He was pierced because of our rebellion," (Isaiah 53:5) but atonement theory proffers a judicial necessity in postulating His death as a penal substitution, i.e. The penalty³⁵ for our sins in our place. Luther called it a wondrous exchange: "He made the one who did not know sin to be sin(offering) for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." (2 Corinthians 5:21)

But the question "did Jesus have to die for our sins" remained an open one throughout church history. Saint Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury (1033/4–1109), a Benedictine monk, abbot, philosopher and theologian of the Catholic Church, in particular has argued that if God is to save, He has to choose between satisfaction or punishment. God's honor must be satisfied. Adam's crime was sin and the penalty is death.

According to the theologians, then, Jesus' death becomes a study of the attributes and the nature of God, between His love and his holiness, between His mercy and justice.

Even John Calvin argued for what scholars call, God's "inner necessity."³⁶ Calvin argued that Jesus could not die just any death (by disease or in a street assassination, for example). It had to be the Cross because He had to be sentenced and executed by a criminal court. His death was a "penal substitution" to satisfy the justice inherent in divine law.

Nor can He die in secret, in a quiet and peaceful death in old age in His own bed. When God gave His Son, He offered Him to a depraved and hateful creation. His death became a public event burned into our memories forever. The fact that dozens of prophecies foretold it only discloses the Divine heart while He, hanging there, proclaimed to fallen man what must inevitably come to pass because He couldn't "un-love" them. (John 3:16)

³⁵ John Stott (106-107) references C. H. Dodd who struggled intellectually with the idea that God could be wrathful and require punishment for sin. Dodd concluded that when Jesus bore "wrath" on the Cross He endured the "consequence" of mankind's sin not their punishment. Stott calls this a deductive reasoning that misrepresents Truth. Stott wrote "The Cross of Christ" to demonstrate—through induction, starting with a study of wrath—the biblical concept of wrath and propitiation. Stott correctly maintains that *οργή* (wrath) stands for His (God's) ... personal hostility to evil."

³⁶ Vidu. 95

THEORIES OF ATONEMENT

And most certainly, the mystery of godliness is great: He was manifested in the flesh, vindicated in the Spirit, seen by angels, preached among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory. - 1 Timothy 3:16

WHY the cross? Why an atonement? Jesus' death for sinful man was made intelligent and legitimized to the Judean mindset whose entire religious ritual of sacrifices pointed to this moment. Occidental thinking, however, employed a line of reasoning that veered away from the sacrificial system to logical thinking where what sounded reasonable to one Christian group was not so reasonable to another. So, our theories, as to why an atonement, splintered Christendom into a plethora of theologies.

The writer to the Hebrews spoke more loudly than he knew because it was not just to his generation. The Old Covenant, the sacrificial system, of animals and other offerings, is now obsolete and although it is still cherished as a lesson in types and although the ritual still speaks to believers, it was to "soon disappear." (Hebrews 8:13)

On reading Prof. Vidu's work "Atonement, Law, and Justice" it seemed we might benefit in this work from a chapter on "Law." But law here is a study of justice (of the Halacha, the Torah or¹ Moses's writings). We are more interested here in "righteousness." But it was legal language employed by theologians during a medieval return to Greek ideas that brought us to a discussion of man's liability for Adam's sin and a reason for Jesus to take our punishment on the Cross.

¹ 613 laws in the Torah. 365 negative 248 positive

François Turretini

François Turretini (17 October 1623 – 28 September 1687; also known as Francis Turretin) was a Genevan-Italian Reformed scholastic theologian who looked at divine justice from the underside of the tapestry: five reasons for maintaining why we can say that Jesus' substitutionary or sacrificial death in our stead was *not* unjust.²

1. Because Jesus was incarnate, sin was punished in the same nature in which it was guilty. "Now since the children have flesh and blood in common, Jesus also shared in these, so that through his death he might destroy the one holding the power of death — that is, the devil." (Hebrews 2:14)
2. Jesus voluntarily took the burden on himself. "I have come to do your will." (Hebrews 10:9)
3. Jesus had power over his own life, so that he may rightfully determine respecting it. "No one takes it from me, but I lay it down on my own. I have the right to lay it down, and I have the right to take it up again. I have received this command from my Father." (John 10:18)
4. If Jesus could be held by death, then he could free no one from its dominion, but He rose from the dead (1 Corinthians 15:17). "Jesus Christ ... was appointed to be the powerful Son of God according to the Spirit of holiness by the resurrection of the dead." (Romans 1:3-4)
5. Jesus did not die for His own sins because He was sinless. Being polluted by no sin, he might not have to offer sacrifice for himself, but for us only. "For this is the kind of high priest we need: holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens." (Hebrews 7:26)

Turretin looks back from the resurrection and the newness of life we share as believers and concludes that what happened at Calvary is thereby (by the power of the resurrection) to be thought of as just because, simply put, God's plan worked! No injury is done to anyone by His substitutionary sacrifice. In Turretin's words:³

² Turretin. 13

³ Ibid.

- ◆ Not to Christ, for he voluntarily took the punishment upon himself, and had the right to decide concerning his own life and death, and also power to raise himself from the dead.
- ◆ Not to God the judge, for he willed and commanded it.
- ◆ Not to his natural justice, for the Surety (substitution) satisfied this by suffering the punishment which demanded it.
- ◆ Not to the empire of the universe, by depriving an innocent person of life, for Christ, freed from death, lives forevermore.
- ◆ Not by the life of the surviving sinner injuring the kingdom of God, for he is converted and made holy by Christ.
- ◆ Not to the divine law, for its honor has been maintained by the perfect fulfillment of all its demands, through the righteousness of the Mediator; and by our legal and mystical union, he becomes one with us, and we with him.

Hence he may justly take upon himself our sin and sorrows, and impart to us his righteousness and blessings. So there is no abrogation of the law, no derogation from its claims, because what we owed is transferred to the account of Christ, to be paid by him.

A Medieval Transition

Was Jesus' death a punishment to appease God's wrath, a satisfaction befitting His nature, a sacrifice to ransom mankind from sin, or an example of the extreme love of God for His creation? Where to begin? Original sin.

What is original sin? Augustine (354-420 AD) coined the phrase which later Anselm interpreted to refer to Adam's failure to obey God. Adam was originally sinless but he was responsible to stay that way. When Adam sinned he bequeathed to all humanity now a depraved nature. Humankind's proclivity is now in rebellion against God.⁴ Jesus' death frees us, redeems us, from the bondage to sin: "free from sin ... enslaved to God." (Romans 6:22) Talking about original sin is an effort to understand Paul when he exclaimed "just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, in this way death spread to all people, because all sinned." (Romans 5:12) This has raised questions

⁴ The Reformation introduced the doctrine of total depravity. Man, they understood was incapable of freely submitting to God.

about free will and whether Jesus' death on the Cross and resurrection were solely to return us, as believers, to the original state Adam was created in. Our sinning from this point on, as Christians, is ours to own. We can no longer blame Adam.

But for Peter Abelard (1079-1142), medieval French scholastic philosopher and theologian, it wasn't a question of whether Adam was to fault for the sin in our lives as much as: Should we be faulted for what Adam did in the Garden? Peter Abelard maintained that since the moral worth of an action depends on one's intention in doing it, we could not be blamed for Adam's misstep. He concluded that we endure not the guilt of Adam's sin but only the punishment for it.⁵

Abelard didn't buy into the idea of a "fallen" nature, a proclivity to sinning thanks to Adam. Here is a discussion less likely to be haggled over in Jewish circles since we are deploying our sense of logic instead of using the sacrificial system to explain things.

"In one swift move,...Abelard removed Anselm's (1033/4–1109) traditional understanding of original sin⁶ as creating an infinite debt of humanity before God."⁷ Abelard did not see original sin as a state of fallen humanity. To him intention (*mens rea*) is required if a crime (sin) against God was committed. You and I, Abelard maintained, would be punished for Adam's sin, grant it. But his sin was imputed to us.

Abelard was a nominalist⁸ (a popular idea in his day). All of humanity, in his view, could not be accused of having eaten that fruit. The essence of Anselm's concept of original sin was a lack of moral rectitude inherited by fallen mankind. Abelard's idea held Adam (and Eve) alone guilty in the Garden—though his sin was imputed to all of us.

The point here is not whether or not he was on to something (Protestant doctrine, for one, does not hold to Abelard's teaching) but as an observance of the historical development of Christ's death as a punishment for sin. From a legal perspective, law and justice became attributes of God. Gratuitous forgiveness was a later consideration. Would it

⁵ Vidu 65

⁶ Original sin is humanity's original state of sinfulness resulting from the Fall of Man.

⁷ Vidu. 65

⁸ a concept made famous by William of Ockham, an English Franciscan friar (c. 1287 – 1347), which didn't categorize or group all mankind under one heading. This is the doctrine that ... general ideas are mere names without any corresponding reality, and that only particular objects exist; properties, numbers, and sets are thought of as merely features of the way of considering the things that exist.

be too upsetting to point out here that the saying of Jesus from the Cross, "Father forgive them for they know not what they do" was not original but added in later copies of the text.⁹

To Abelard, sin was not yet a moral debt but simply a disorientation of desire which needed to be mended,¹⁰ by atonement. Adam's free-will together with his desire for the forbidden fruit needed correcting. This is still a restorative idea. Discipline, yes, but punishment, no.

Thomas Aquinas later (1225 - 1274) carried the torch of a retributive or penal justice but not as a necessity, only as fitting.¹¹ "Consequently the death of Christ is not a punishment, such as would be necessitated by human trespass." Prof Vidu interprets Aquinas to conclude, "God could have saved us in any other way consonant with His love."¹² The common opinion among the orthodox... is that "God neither has willed, nor could have willed to forgive sins, without a satisfaction made to his justice." (Institutes of Elenctic Theology 10.14)¹³ We have observed the slow historical movement of church theology to the present day and how it would bifurcated at the Reformation.

Why is Atonement Theory Necessary?

I asked my brother, who teaches religion in a Catholic high school what would be the best publication to read about the Catholic view of atonement. He professed there is no such term in Catholic theology. He directed me to research the "Sacrament of Reconciliation/Penance," the Catholic idea instead of atonement. The logic of an atonement is a protestant idea. Atonement is a theory. Atonement represents a line of reasoning intended to explain why Jesus had to die on a cross. Penance for Catholics is a practical approach from temporal sin (sins actually committed by the penitent) to sanctification through contrition, absolution, and repentance. So, whether we are talking ideologically about atonement as a theory or, in a more practical way, penance as a sacrament, we are wanting to formulate a dogma about the Cross of Christ that explains the plan of Salvation and the path to eternal life.

⁹ cp. Metzger. 108. Early copies contained this saying which led critics to include it but with the proviso it probably wasn't original.

¹⁰ Vidu. 87

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Craig 132

But we can contend that the plan of God in His Son's death remains in part yet to be revealed. The primary line of inquiry into why Jesus had to die says to satisfy the "law" of holiness and, thus, justifiably reconciling us to Himself. Jesus took our punishment of death on the Cross. But is this the whole story? We learn that Augustine in particular characterized Christ's atoning death as "a hidden and exceeding mysterious decree of divine and profound justice"¹⁴ Adonis Vidu cautions, "The particular manner in which God realizes His purposes for creation is something we cannot infer from our study of nature, ... morality, justice, or any other contingent order."¹⁵ Prof William Craig agrees that "...determining how and why sacrifice fixes this problem (expiates sin) is elusive.¹⁶ ... Add to this that "The Church Fathers devoted little time to reflection upon what later theologians were to call the work of Christ (e.g. his achieving atonement)"¹⁷ and we might wonder why is it important to try and get inside a loving God's thoughts. Even Paul agrees: "How unsearchable his judgments." (Romans 11:33b)¹⁸ Adonis Vidu, reviewing atonement theories of the Reformation period admits, "A logical link between (the passion of Christ) and the attendant divine forgiveness escapes us."¹⁹

Atonement: a Faith Inspiring Message

Dr. Craig summarizes, "In fact, many of the church fathers freely embraced this possibility (of a retributive justice), as did Aquinas and Grotius (a dutch jurist of the 17th century and the Enlightenment) after them. ...these thinkers also held that God had good reasons for achieving atonement through Christ's passion. (It became) ... a powerful display of both God's love of people and His hatred of sin, which has proved powerfully attractive throughout history in drawing people to faith in Christ, especially as they themselves face innocent suffering."²⁰

¹⁴ Augustine's On The Trinity 4.12.15 Craig, page 105

¹⁵ Vidu. 85-86

¹⁶ Craig 22 footnote 18

¹⁷ Ibid. 92

¹⁸ We will discuss this verse when talking about Isaiah's prophecy.

¹⁹ Vidu. 102

²⁰ Craig, 181

What We Do Know

Paul shared seven details that we might reasonably believe are needed to explain what really happened on the cross. Jesus was prepared to die for the sins of the world—even if, we cannot yet say why He had to die:

- ◆ Sin brings death. “The wages of sin is (always) death.” (Romans 5:23)²¹
- ◆ Jesus was God incarnate. “existing in the form of God ... he had come as a man ... to the point of death—even to death on a cross.” (Philippians 2:6-8)
- ◆ Jesus volunteered freely to go to Calvary. “This is why the Father loves me, because I lay down my life so that I may take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down on my own. I have the right to lay it down, and I have the right to take it up again. I have received this command from my Father.” (John 10:17-18)
- ◆ Jesus was sinless. “...tempted in every way as we are, yet without sin.” (Hebrews 4:15)
- ◆ The Provisions of Calvary are available only through repentance. “Therefore, having overlooked the times of ignorance, God now commands all people everywhere to repent.” (Acts 17:30)
- ◆ Jesus' death was substitutionary “God proves his own love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” (Romans 5:8)²²
- ◆ Without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness. “According to the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.” (Hebrews 9:22)

The common opinion among the orthodox is expounded by Francis Turretin, of Reformation renown, “God neither has willed, nor could

²¹ James 1:14-15 But each person is tempted when he is drawn away and enticed by his own evil desire. ¹⁵Then after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin, and when sin is fully grown, it gives birth to death.

²² Verse 6-7 makes clear this is a substitutionary death. “For while we were still helpless, at the right time, Christ died for the ungodly. For rarely will someone die for a just person — though for a good person perhaps someone might even dare to die.”

have willed to forgive sins, without a satisfaction made to his justice.” (Institutes of Elenctic Theology 110.14)²³

Augustine referred to Christ as both Victor and Victim in his Confessions²⁴ which made Christ’s punishment both retributive and restorative, both propitiatory and expiatory. Simplifying this wonderful truth, Christians with unwavering faith herald the message: “saved by the blood.”

So we can say that Christ bore our punishment undeservedly and, consequently in a legal sense, our sins are remitted. Christ earned the right to forgive us. This is a penal substitution. Sounds right but, now, there has arisen an academically savvy generation ‘x’ along with many millennialists who ask, “How?” The connection between the death of a sinless God and our punishment for sinning against that same God is a link their logic can’t seem to draw!²⁵

I have come to believe that Atonement theory is designed to give Christ’s death a reasonableness that human logic might embrace and that is why the Savior’s crucifixion has been explained in terms of a punishment, a ransom paid to Satan, an outstanding debt, or a way of appeasing God’s enraged sense of holiness. (Warning: the logic might have gone beyond the Scripture here.)

In a judicial sense, Calvary came to represent a legal arrangement. The Cross became a punitive justice. Making Jesus’ death a legal matter seemed to satisfy any further enquiry into the reasons behind the heavenly plan.

What Jesus provided for us has never been in question: forgiveness, freedom from the bondage to sin, reconciliation with God, etc. These are our message to this generation! But why through His death on a Roman cross? Does the scripture even say?

Oh, yes, “Without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness of sins.” (Hebrews 9:22) But is not this only a reference to the OT motif? Does it satisfy reasonableness in human terms? Should we even try? Why should forgiveness require payment? Why a sacrifice?

²³ Craig. 132

²⁴ Augustine’s Confessions 10. Craig page 106

²⁵ Friedrich Scheiermacher, the father of modern theology, abandoned orthodox faith, telling his dad, a Reformed chaplain, “I cannot believe that his death was a vicarious atonement.” (from B.A. Gerirish, “A Prince of the Church: Scheiermacher and the Beginning of the Modern Theology” (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 25).

Sacrifices from time immemorial have been an ubiquitous practice which made it, until modern times, the perfect explanation why Jesus had to die to save us from our sins. It still inspired our faith because, even if we did not realize how meaningful sacrifices once were in Old Israel in ritualizing true repentance and healing the spirit from an emotionally crippling guilt, we found them reasonable as an explanation for Calvary. Nonetheless, our understanding of Christ's Atonement remained theoretical. We know what Jesus provided at Calvary but we fumble at understanding why He had to die to provide it.

"One of the most interesting features of the ...theory espoused by Augustine," Dr. Craig informs, "shared by many Fathers, ...Christ's incarnation and death were not necessary for man's redemption."²⁶ Gregory of Nyssa questioned, "... why does he not affect his purpose by the mere exercise of His will, instead of working out our salvation in such a roundabout way, by being born and nurtured as a man, and even, while he was saving man, tasting death; when it was possible for Him to have saved man without subjecting Himself to such conditions?" (Catechetical Oration 17)²⁷ The short answer, obviously, is that it wasn't possible for that cup to pass from Him. (Mark 14:36)

Perhaps, we should concede with the early church fathers that Satan owned us and God's holiness would not steal us back but required a ransom, a payment, to get us back. After all, we are the "pearl of great price." (Matthew 13:46) The scripture submits that without Christ we are slaves to sin and at the whim of Satan's beck and call. "the trap of the devil, ... taken them captive to do his will." (2 Timothy 2:26; 1 John 5:19) Does this imply that Jesus' death was a "deal" worked out between God and Satan to get us back? Dr. Craig informs, "Basil (329/30-379) connects the necessity of Christ's deity not to the need to satisfied divine justice for sin but to the need of an unrefusable ransom offered the devil to purchase the release of his human captives."²⁸

Maybe we must accept only by faith and without adequate reason the death of our Lord because we are privileged to know what we know by revelation and not by logic. The Lord has not given us a complete explanation, yet. We must await more information in Glory since God's thoughts are not ours.

²⁶ Craig. 107

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ in his homily on Psalm 48:3 cp Craig page 95

“The challenge we have,” confesses Dr. Craig, whose contribution to my own thoughts is immeasurable, “is to ..defend an account of the atonement...in a ... coherent and plausible way.”²⁹

The Governmental Theory of Atonement

Hugo Grotius, a dutch jurist of the 17th century and the Enlightenment, believed simply that God as a Supreme Being has the right to do whatever He wants, and He wanted to send His Son to die for our sins. “There is, therefore, no injustice in this,” argues Grotius, “that God, who has the highest power with regard to all things not in themselves unjust and who is himself not subject to any law, wanted to use the sufferings and death of Christ in order to set a serious example against the immense guilt of us all, with who Christ was very closely connected by his nature, reign and suretyship.” (Defense 4.23)³⁰

Change the Story

Sharon Baker in “Executing God” suggests changing the metaphor. A major point she makes is that metaphors are culturally understood and this might mean changing the way we represent or describe some truth, into a form or story that better explains that truth. Here we are talking about the atonement and the Bible uses an Hebraic metaphor, a sacrifice, to relate the story of God’s love for us.

My thoughts went to Don Richardson’s Peace Child.³¹ His autobiography is the story of sharing the message of the cross—but not through sacrifice—with the Sawi people of the Netherlands New Guinea. To reconcile with a neighboring tribe a treaty of peace was expressed in the offer of an infant son that was by ceremony and agreement adopted into the warring clan. They called him their “peace child,” which brought all conflict between the tribes to an end. Don Richardson spoke to them about Jesus, God’s peace child, and we know God used the story to bring salvation to the Sawi people.

We can agree with Dr. Baker that “an educated faith is a stronger faith.”³² She makes a point of emphasizing that these well established

²⁹ Craig, 144

³⁰ Ibid, 142

³¹ Don Richardson, Peace Child. (Bethany House Publishers; Reprint edition), 2005

³² Sharon Baker. page 57

theories of atonement are not to be discarded or thrown away. She is simply asking us to “consider the strengths and weaknesses and determine if there might be alternative ways that contribute to being the peacemakers that God calls us to be.”³³ It is these flaws in the theories that drives her to “keep looking for an interpretation of the cross that portrays God as more restorative, reconciling, and just.”³⁴

But we might want to examine the various theories of atonement.³⁵

Jesus Ransomed Us From Satan (Cristus-Victor Theory)

Adonis Vidu ascribes Greek cultic influence to the development of an early Christian theology of a ransom paid to Satan for the souls of mankind. He began with the story of Orestes by Aeschylus, the Ancient Greek playwright, in which Orestes was tried for the crime of matricide. The Greek Furies³⁶ sought, even at the cost of peace, a justice according to law easily confused with vengeance. Justice, however, in Greek thought, thanks to the influence of epic poets as Homer and Hesiod and later Plato’s Society, was thought not maintainable by the enforcement of law but by a social order which pursued a course of peace through forgiveness.³⁷ Vengeance disguised as a retributive justice, an eye for an eye, like with the “Hatfields and McCoys (1863–1891 in W. Virginia-Kentucky), becomes a never ending feud. “The point of the courts,” Prof Vidu maintains, “is not to uphold the law for the sake of law but to mediate and arbitrate between competing interests.”³⁸ In the language of today’s jurisprudence: A

³³ *ibid.*

³⁴ *ibid.* p. 62

³⁵ Various theories are listed here even if not supported in current Christian thought.

³⁶ Greek Mythology a spirit of punishment, often represented as one of three goddesses who executed the curses pronounced upon criminals, tortured the guilty with stings of conscience, and inflicted famines and pestilences. The Furies were identified at an early date with the Eumenides.

³⁷ During the time of the epic poets (9-8th century BCE) Greek poets, such as Homer, were willing to relax the law in the interest of peace.

³⁸ Vidu. 10 “Plato and Aristotle ascribe importance to law, neither regards the law as a universal fit for every person and situation. Instead, both advocate the importance of discerning the particulars of each situation in the name of equity. ... Thus, although law is connected to justice, and justice is understood fundamentally as order, neither Plato nor Aristotle approaches a legalism that demands retribution in the name of a universal

legal plea deal is far better than vigilante justice. In Greek mythology, says Prof. Vidu, "the gods are regarded as being more than willing to relax the law, precisely in the interest of justice (as peace and order)."

"It is not at all surprising," he concludes, "that the dominant patristic conception of the atonement, the so-called ransom theory, would be at home in such a culture. ... In this case the fathers were simply echoing, as one should expect, a common understanding of justice, which pushed retribution into the background while foregrounding peace and forgiveness."³⁹

When Roman law joined Hellenic thought, the ancient world they governed did not follow any principle like Islamic Sharia law or Jewish Halacha (Torah) law which would be propitiatory or seek justice by someone always being punished for breaking law. Such was thought too violent and not promoting a peaceful as well as just solution. To ransom mankind, in keeping with such Hellenistic reasoning, God had to pull off an ingenious deception. Wresting His creation by force from the grip of a devil who stole it in the Garden incident was not thought theologically in keeping with His divine character: "With violence being excluded as an option," Dr. Vidu tells us, "some bargain had to be struck with the devil."⁴⁰

Continuing this line of reasoning: "The divine deception motif received its most explicit defense from Gregory of Nyssa. (c. 335 – c. 395) Briefly summarized, the theory holds that Satan is tricked by God into accepting the body of Christ in return for the souls of human beings, which he held under his control. Satan accepts the ransom and kills Christ, oblivious to the fact that he had no right to kill a sinless person. Having thus committed the ultimate sin, and having overextended his authority, he is rightfully deprived of it."⁴¹

This theory survived with little serious criticism until its disassembly by Anselm in the eleventh century. Until then variations on this common theme were proposed. Augustine (354 – 430) reasoned that Satan's power was delegated by God. (As in Job's case?)⁴² Augustine

principle. The law is nothing but a means, a historically conditioned means, for the achievement of virtue."

³⁹ Ibid. 14

⁴⁰ Ibid. 17

⁴¹ Ibid. 18

⁴² Job 1:12 "Very well," the LORD told Satan, "everything he owns is in your power. However, do not lay a hand on Job himself." So Satan left the LORD's presence.

advanced this reasoning, "If ...the commission of sins and through the just anger of God subjected man to the devil, doubtless the remission of sins through the merciful reconciliation of God rescues man from the devil." (Augustine: On The Trinity 13.12.16)⁴³ Then there was also the view of the devil as a usurper. On the whole, however, the devil was regarded as having some rightful dominion over us. Athanasius (c. 298 - 373) subscribed to this position, and so did Irenaeus (Bishop of Lyons, d. 202). Origen (c. 184 – c. 253) took the metaphor of ransom literally. He reasoned that "a transaction with Satan took place, in which Satan, unaware of Christ's divinity, asked for the blood of Christ and therefore was deceived into committing the ultimate suicidal act."⁴⁴ Origen thought that Christ's human soul was a ransom payment made to Satan in order to gain our release. "But to whom did he give his soul a ransom for many?" he asked. "Certainly not to God." He thought, "What is it perhaps, then, to the evil one? For he had the power over us until the soul of Jesus was given to him as our ransom." (Origen: Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew XVI.8)⁴⁵

For Gregory of Nyssa God would not be just to disregard Satan's right over man.⁴⁶ Adam freely gave himself to the tempter and sold himself into sin. "Satan's right over man must be respected." (Catechetical Oration 22)

But Gregory Nazianus would sharply denounce the notion that Christ's death was a ransom paid either to Satan or to God.⁴⁷ Gregory believed that Jesus was not a ransom but a victim of Satan's unjust attack. Christ offered Himself as a sacrifice to God "so as to snatch us from him who had us in his power..." (Against Apollinaris 69-72)⁴⁸

Jesus Paid our Debt (Divine Command Theory)

During the Middle Ages we might speak of a doctrinal evolution in which the idea of a punishment for sin or penal justice began to see the dawn of a new theological day. In this analogy, we might say that the

⁴³ Craig. 105

⁴⁴ Vidu. 18

⁴⁵ Craig. 99

⁴⁶ In Matthew 4:9 Satan argues, "I will give you all these things if you will fall down and worship me. (pay me homage)." and Jesus never debated Satan's point. cp. Craig page 109. footnote 16.

⁴⁷ Craig. 102 footnote 8

⁴⁸ Ibid.

Reformation was high noon. Anselm of Canterbury (1033/4–1109) reasoned “Sin, as a failure to render to God what is his own, incurs a debt. This debt has to be repaid to God, without there being any possibility of gratuitous forgiveness of this debt. Since this particular debt cannot be paid, there are two options left for the sinner/criminal: *aut poena* or *aut satisfactio*⁴⁹ (‘either punishment or satisfaction’)⁵⁰ God was thought to view a recompense for His offended holiness to be some form of compensation either through punishing the offender or requiring payment—we might see as a fine. These ideas are based on human relations in a legal dispute or the commitment of a crime. But is this what God was doing?

Anselm wrote, “Our situation is compounded by the fact that in order to compensate God we need to give back more than we owed originally and by the gravity of our offense, having dishonored God, so that the debt we have incurred is of infinite proportion. So no one but God could pay a debt of such magnitude, but no one but man is obliged to pay it. It follows that our salvation requires God become man.” (*Cur Deus homo* 2.6)⁵¹

The New Testament Word for Debt

Paul wrote of Jesus, “He erased the certificate of debt,...” (Colossians 2:14) but the language according to the YLT (Young’s Literal Translation) says: “having blotted out the handwriting in the ordinances that is against us”⁵² Six out of 16 popular translations interpreted this to mean “debt” or “indebtedness.” The NLT (New Living Translation) reads it “the record of the charges.” But the word for “indebtedness” is not found here.

The actual word in the New Testament for “indebtedness”⁵³ is used only three times, none of which refer to the cross.⁵⁴ The word for

⁴⁹ Tertullian (c. 155 – c. AD 220), “the father of Latin Christianity, according to Stott (117) was the first to use the legal terms merit and satisfaction of the Christian’s relation to God. “They interpreted ... Galatians 3:13 (Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us) in the light of ‘the satisfactio of the Roman public law, which means the endurance of the law’s sentence.”

⁵⁰ Vidu. 52

⁵¹ Craig 118

⁵² *chirografum decretis quod erat contrarium nobis*

⁵³ ὀφειλή

⁵⁴ Matthew 18:32; Romans 13:7; 1 Corinthians 7:3

“debt” fares no better.⁵⁵ The action word (verb) used 36 times means “to owe, bound by duty or necessity to do something.”⁵⁶ But even here there is no reference to the cross. No verse here makes clear that Jesus paid a debt of sin, although, it would have been the place to clarify for all time the divine reason behind our Lord’s sacrifice.⁵⁷

What was this *certificate of debt* Paul spoke of?

- ◆ Was this the Mosaic ceremonial ordinances that condemned us without providing an adequate redemption?
- ◆ Was it the punishment owed us for breaking the Mosaic moral code, including the ten commandments?
- ◆ Was it a debt of sin we owed God because of our rebellion against Him?

“Blotted out the handwriting” F. F. Bruce, famous for his textual work on the manuscripts of the New Testament, translated this “a signed confession of indebtedness.”⁵⁸ He noted two words in this phrase “erased” and “certificate.” The word “erased,” among its uses, could mean, in today’s parlance, “canceled, to erase the accounts payable owed.”⁵⁹ The word “certificate” means “a hand-written” note which may mean “a certificate of debt,”⁶⁰ an I.O.U. or a “signed confession of indebtedness.”⁶¹ “God frees us from our bankruptcy,” John Stott interprets, “only by paying our debts on Christ’s cross.”⁶²

We are not wishing to raise controversy here. This is a modern interpretation. An older understanding of this phrase had to do with a missing word, which was not removed (the evidence supports the

⁵⁵ ὀφείλημα is found twice: Matthew 6:12; Romans 4:4

⁵⁶ Thayer. 469

⁵⁷ The three verses that reference Jesus' sacrifice speak of our duty not His.

Therefore, he **had to be** like his brothers and sisters in every way, so that he could become a merciful and faithful high priest in matters pertaining to God, to make atonement (propitiation?). for the sins of the people. (Hebrews 2:17)

Because of this, he **must** make an offering for his own sins as well as for the people. (Hebrews 5:3)

This is how we have come to know love: He laid down his life for us. We **should** also lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. (1 John 3:16)

⁵⁸ E. K. Simpson and F. F. Bruce, Commentary on the Epistles to the Ephesians and the Colossians, New London Commentary (London, Marshalls, 1957), p. 238

⁵⁹ cp. Stott. 229

⁶⁰ Moulton . 687

⁶¹ Stott. 229

⁶² Ibid.

conclusion that the word was never there), the word “*in*.” The three words of interest here are “handwritten the dogmas”⁶³ which might read “handwritten *in* the dogmas.”

All this might have been simpler to understand if the “*in*” had been written in, “He expunged what was hand-written *in* dogmas (requirements of the Mosaic law) against us...” ...but the word “*in*” is missing. One might argue that the word “*in*” is not necessary for the meaning. True, enough.

But early Greek commentators (and must we be reminded that this is written in Greek—their language) supplied the meaning “*by*” (after a grammatical rule) understanding this to say, “the law, which was against us, was erased, removed, *by* the Gospel.”⁶⁴ (They understood “dogmas” to refer to the Gospel, Acts 16:4; but this seems forced.)

Consider Paul’s explanation to the Ephesians concerning dogmas or regulations which had to speak of the Mosaic law, “He made of no effect the law consisting of commands and expressed in **regulations**, so that he might create in himself one new man from the two, resulting in peace.” (Ephesians 2:15) Luther might have appreciated this translation since it abrogated the Old Testament Law instead of elevating it to a place of honored fulfillment in Christ (Matthew 5:17).

But we might argue with Paul “The Law is Good” (Romans 7:16). It was the *sin* that needed to be removed (expiated). The idea of a debt of sin is obvious in Jesus’ teaching (Matthew 6:12 compared with Luke 11:4). The concept of debt, scholarship reasons, is based on God’s own nature. Dr. Craig argued, “The character or nature of God himself necessitate that he punish sin.”⁶⁵

The CSB rather loosely interprets all this, “He erased the certificate of debt, **with its obligations**, that was against us and opposed to us.” He wiped clean the debt of sin we owed, being obligated to obey the law which we didn’t because we couldn’t ... and God knew this all along.

The New English Translation (NET) reads, “He has destroyed what was against us, a certificate of indebtedness **expressed in decrees** opposed to us.” The New King James Version (NKJV) says “having

⁶³ χειρόγραφον τοῖς δόγμασιν

⁶⁴ cp. Lightfoot, *The Epistles to the Colossians and Philemon*. 188

⁶⁵ Craig, 116

wiped out the handwriting of **requirements** that was against us.” (To be continued under “Perspectives on The Cross.”)

Jesus Appeased God’s Wrath (Substitutionary-Satisfaction Theory)

Why must God be appeased? As Gregory of Nyssa once noted in his *enchiridion* (10.33) “Wrath is a term borrowed from the language of human feeling.”⁶⁶ And should we ascribe our feelings to God? Was God’s wrath more an anger against sin than a rage against the sinner? Was God’s anger the cry of a restorative justice or was Jesus’ death retributive? Thomas Aquinas believed “God’s severity ...is ..shown, for He would not remit sin without penalty.” (*Summa theologiae* 3.47.3 cf. 3.48.4).

We sometimes use the term “satisfactory” based on an English translation of Isaiah 53:11 but may mean by it either a vicarious⁶⁷ punishment or a reparation or satisfaction for sin. During the early medieval period, “satisfaction was still considered the real efficient cause for the forgiveness of sins.”⁶⁸ Contrition, confession, satisfaction, and absolution by the priest delivers one from eternal punishment as well as the guilt.⁶⁹ But the person still remains bound to make satisfaction for the temporal punishment that remains after the sin has been forgiven.⁷⁰ After the Council of Florence met in 1439 satisfaction for temporal sins was decided in the judgment of the priest confessor and

⁶⁶ cp Craig. 107

⁶⁷ A theological distinction has been drawn between a vicarious and a substitutionary satisfaction. The term “vicarious” could mean only that Jesus died to provide salvation for us but not necessarily—and this is a critical point—in our stead. If He died in our place we might call it a substitutionary atonement. He took our punishment. But we tend to get lax in conversation using either to mean substitutionary.

⁶⁸ Msgr. Bernhard Poachmann, *Penance and Anointing of the Sick*. (New York: Herder & Herder, 1964) 141 It was during the Middle Ages that Penance came to be recognized as one of the Seven Sacraments. By the 12th Century (Peter Lombard 1100 - 1160) became listed as one of the seven. cp Fastiggi. 49f

⁶⁹ guilt refers theologically to liability not conviction, although, I tend not to separate out the objective and subjective meanings of this word.

⁷⁰ Fastiggi. 53. This is a general statement that in actual practice allows for certain exceptions. One main example is when a proselyte or convert to Catholicism is either baptized or goes to confession. The punishment for their temporal sins committed to that point like original sin are considered expiated through the Savior’s passion and death.

was mainly achieved by prayer, fasting and almsgiving.⁷¹ The main change is forgiveness pronounced as absolution by the priest rather than by acts of penance by the penitent.

The Protestant Reformers challenged this view, called “The Catholic Sacrament of Reconciliation” (and Penance). The Council of Trent in November, 1551 in response reaffirmed in the 6th canon that “sacramental confession was instituted by divine law as necessary for salvation.”⁷² In the 9th canon they also confirmed “the sacramental absolution by a priest is a true juridical act.” In the 14th and 15th canons the Council stated that “atoning for sin through Christ Jesus is from God” and “priests through the power of the keys⁷³ can impose penances.”⁷⁴ The Council established the teachings of Saint Thomas Aquinas in the matter of the Sacrament as dogma, including indulgences as beneficial “for the remission of the punishment which remains after contrition, absolution, and confession.”⁷⁵ The Council of Trent⁷⁶ remains authoritative Catholic doctrine on the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Jesus Took Our Punishment (Penal Substitution Theory)

Henry Wace, Dean of Canterbury from 1903 to 1924 argued, “A law which can be broken without an adequate penalty, is no law at all; and it is inconceivable that God’s moral law can be violated without entailing consequences of the most terrible kind. ... And can it reasonably be supposed that the most flagrant and willful violation of the highest of all laws—those of truth and righteousness—should entail no such results?”⁷⁷

⁷¹ Ibid. 55

⁷² Ibid. 60

⁷³ Matthew 16:19 “I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will have been loosed in heaven.”

⁷⁴ Fastiggi. 60

⁷⁵ Ibid. 61

⁷⁶ accessed 8/6/21 Council Of Trent http://www.documentacatholicaomnia.eu/03d/1545-1545,_Concilium_Tridentinum,_Canons_And_Decrees,_EN.pdf

⁷⁷ Henry Wace, *The Sacrifice of Christ: Its Vital Reality and Efficacy* (London: church Book Room Press, 1945), p. 16.)cp Stott. 116.

Punishment

There are two words in the Greek for *punishment* in the New Testament.⁷⁸ One, means to defend the honor of the punisher who receives satisfaction in afflicting an offender and is akin to vengeance. It is retribution or revenge or a feeling of satisfaction in inflicting pain. The other word means correction. Clement of Alexandria referred the first to retribution for evil inflicted. The second to discipline.⁷⁹

Another distinction was noted by Aristotle: Outraged Justice. “There is a difference between retribution and punishment.” He asserted, “To explain: on the one hand punishment regards the sufferer (the person being punished). But retribution fulfills the one doing it (the punisher).⁸⁰ In the same way, from pagan inscriptions, we learn that the word punishment is used in sacral jurisprudence.⁸¹ Violation of cultic law brings retribution and only confession of the offender’s guilt can bring back the deity’s gracious favor. This idea is pagan and not descriptive of our Lord’s relation with Ancient Israel.⁸²

Both terms eventually take on a sense of a severe punishment or torment, but in the New Testament neither term refers to Christ’s passion. If Jesus were “punished” (using this word), we might accept His death more readily as punitive in explaining the Savior’s sacrifice, but there is no New Testament scripture that says this. Scriptural silence does not mean that this isn’t true, however; for, Isaiah’s 53rd

⁷⁸ It would be quite erroneous, however, to transfer that distinction in its entirety to the New Testament use of τιμωρια (retribution). and κολασις (punishment).. The κολασις αιωνος (everlasting punishment). of Matthew 25:46 is not merely corrective and therefore temporary discipline but rather the αθανατος (no death). τιμωρια (retribution - i.e. eternal vengeance)., (this is). the αιδιοι τιμωριαι (everlasting vengeance)., with which the Lord elsewhere threatens finally impenitent men (Josephus, B. J. li. 8. 11).) **Richard Trench**. Synonyms of the New Testament on κολασις, τιμωρια page 24

⁷⁹ Strom. iv. 24; and again vii. 16 And this is Aristotle’s distinction (Rhet. i. 10): cp Trench page 24f. Trench is correct in saying that the use of the word for discipline in Matthew 25:46 is not a temporary correction (as the word is generally used) which might suggest the meanings of the two terms overlaps. But is it possible the word for discipline might be used to show the absence of a vindictiveness? Josephus is right in seeing any eternal punishment as a defense of the punisher’s honor or a desire to inflict pain after the general use of the terms. (cp Antiquities 18.1.3)

⁸⁰ See Aristotle Rhetoric I.10 διαφερει δε τιμωρια και κολασις. Μεν γαρ κολασις του πασχοντος ενεκα εστιν. Η δε τιμωρια του ποιουντος, ινα αποπληρωθη.

⁸¹ cp. Kittell, vol III. page 814

⁸² For more detail about eternal punishment please see my booklet, “The Day After Time: God Put the “More” in Forever” page 40 ff.

chapter is replete with the message of a vicarious affliction that can be viewed as nothing less than a punishment.

Even so, Isaiah prophesied “the chastisement of our peace was upon him...” (Isaiah 53:5) where chastisement is more corrective and not tortuous punishment.⁸³ The Hebrew means chastisement, discipline, admonishment, correction, instruction. It can be painful. Yes. But the Hebrew term is primarily associated with the proverbs of Solomon where he addresses parental instruction and the need of children to be taught divine wisdom.

Clement of Alexandria explained it this way: For there are partial corrections, which are called chastisements, which many of us who have been in transgression incur, by falling away from the Lord's people. But as children are chastised by their teacher, or their father, so are we by Providence. But God does not punish, for punishment is retaliation for evil. He chastises, however, for good to those who are chastised, collectively and individually.⁸⁴

There is nothing here to suggest appeasing God. The word punishment went from chastisement⁸⁵ to retribution⁸⁶ because it lost its use as a corrective force and became more a final solution; so, the New Testament only uses it in the context of final judgment.⁸⁷ It might be said that Jesus' crucifixion was a final judgment (“it is finished”) on our sins and the “old man” (Romans 6:6) but it would have been somewhat clearer had the word been used in that context.

One could argue that a discussion of a propitiatory⁸⁸ sacrifice is the domain of the theologian. Our faith was never dependent on our knowing exactly what this meant only that it was Jesus who was that sacrifice for my sins. God's connection with the law says R. W. Dale is “not a relation of subjection but identity.”⁸⁹ God's law is His holiness, or said better: His holiness is law. It is never something He might break for He cannot deny Himself (2 Timothy 2:13). It is not a question of

⁸³ The NIV incorrectly translates the word as punishment.

⁸⁴ c. 182 AD *Stromata* (Misc.) see <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/clement-stromata-book7.html>

⁸⁵ μερικαι παιδεια

⁸⁶ It has been compared to: Τιμωρια == κακου ανταποδοσις (to reward evil)

⁸⁷ Matthew 25:46 And they will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.

⁸⁸ Satisfy His outraged holiness because of Adam's sin.

⁸⁹ R. W. Dale, *The Atonement*. (London: Congregational Union of England and Wales, 1894), p. 372. Stott. 118

God breaking His own law but finding the just means to bring humankind back into relations with Him. Basil of Caesarea, Roman Bishop in Cappadocia (330 A. D. - 379 A.D.), argued, "For God is just, and the one who is just could not justify the unjust; for that reason he wanted them to be the mediation of a propitiator so that those who were not able to be justified through their own works might be justified through faith in him."⁹⁰ "Nevertheless," John Stott cautioned, "we need to be alert to the dangers of law language into the inadequacy of likening God's moral law either to the civil laws of the country or to the physical laws of the universe."⁹¹

Jesus Displayed Unwavering Love (Moral Influence Theory)

The parable of the prodigal son has led some to maintain that God forgives without punishment. Peter Abelard (c. 1079 – 1142), a medieval scholastic and philosopher, taught, "Such a demonstration of love has the power to evoke in us a similar love."⁹² The ground upon which God forgives sins was, according to Abelard, not a matter of penal justice or a propitiation for sin but our love aroused in us when we, to use John Stott's words, "contemplate the death of Christ."⁹³

Augustine's theory on Christ's death boiled down to a demonstration of how greatly God loved us. "God's love is proved in that Christ should, without any evil desert of his own, bear our evils"⁹⁴ Jesus' own words may have suggested this to some theologians, "No one has greater love than this: to lay down his life for his friends." (John 15:13)

An early theory of the atonement promoted a gratuitous forgiveness. Forgiveness was always an aspect of God's grace undeserved. "Lex talionis," or an eye for an eye,⁹⁵ the idea of a punishment or punitive justice, was not used by the Early Church Fathers to explain the Cross. Dr. Vidu informs, "The thought that God could *not*

⁹⁰ Basil's Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans 3.8.1. cp Craig. 96

⁹¹ Stott. 117

⁹² Abelard Romans 168, questia on Rom. 3:26. co. Vidu. 68

⁹³ Stott. 216

⁹⁴ Augustine: On the Trinity 13.10.13' cp. Stott. 104

⁹⁵ Exodus. 21: 23-24; Leviticus. 24: 20; Deuteronomy. 19: 21

gratuitously forgive becomes a major assumption of atonement theories only *after* Anselm (emphasis added)... in the eleventh century."⁹⁶

The earlier definition of justice (rehabilitation administered in the interest of peace—for which we recognize Greek thought) was more associated with an orderly universe or living in harmony with God's creation rather than keeping laws. Punishment as a legal measure is frowned on. There is even a word in our Bible for "sin" which means to be out of harmony with the rest of creation. It is found 62 times in the Old Testament but not in the New Testament.⁹⁷ "(Justice) means basically the order of the universe, and in this (in Greek myth and religion) the gods maintain a cosmic order."⁹⁸ Goodness⁹⁹ is predicated on the basis of a fitting social performance. In simplest terms, talk of forgiveness for the sake of peace had more social value than punishing law-breakers.

In today's world, a recurring refrain of God's love becomes a call to sympathetic support and less a matter of discipline or punishment (especially since the sciences have finally embraced social and psychological explanations for sin, in terms of human frailty, genetic deficiencies, and illness, weakening any theological definition of sin).

Dr. Sharon Baker. concluded "We've yet to undertake a complete theory of atonement that incorporates all (scripture) into a unified whole. ... (But she appreciates a bit of mystery). The rigid dogma of absolute certainty ...eliminates the need for faith."¹⁰⁰ She speaks of a substitutionary atonement but not a penal one—not as a payment of debt or punishment for sin. "Vicarious suffering is ..suffering **with** rather than suffering **instead of**,"¹⁰¹ she explains. Dr. Baker sees Jesus' humanity and His suffering as God coming down to our level while our being made into the image of Christ is our being raised to His —

⁹⁶ Adonis Vidu Atonement, Law, and Justice: The Cross in Historical and Cultural Contexts

⁹⁷ Translated in the Septuagint Psalm 34:22 (LXX 33:23) "to go wrong" "The LORD redeems the life of his servants, and all who take refuge in him will not be punished. ... οὐ μὴ πλημμελήσωσιν πάντες οἱ ἐλπίζοντες ἐπ' αὐτόν - "those who hope in Him shall not go wrong"

⁹⁸ Vidu. 4

⁹⁹ The Biblical term goodness which is a Fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22) ἀγαθωσύνη is "found only in Biblical and ecclesiastical writings" (cp <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strongsg=G19&t=CSB>). Greek social order shows the history of Justice had its beginnings in order and harmonious living, not law.

¹⁰⁰ Sharon Baker.148.

¹⁰¹ *ibid.* p. 153.

at-one-ment. "The true sacrifice of Jesus lies not in the literal shedding of blood but the inward condition of his heart of love revealed by the outward giving of his life (and only) symbolized by his blood."¹⁰²

William Craig sees value in this theory but not by itself, only if it is included with penal substitution.¹⁰³ When Jesus' death blotted out our sins, it removed the sense of guilt and shame¹⁰⁴ which Dr. Craig sees as an incentive to accepting Christ. Secondly, Christ's punishment becomes a demonstration of divine justice that triggers in some—or should, especially those who are victims, themselves, of injustices—a sense of identity. God's seriousness, thirdly, in dealing with sin vicariously becomes a display of mercy that awakens in others a love for Him. God's self-substitution displays the depth of His desire to reconcile, which becomes a conviction or draw in others to want also to be reconciled. "The moral influence of Christ's sacrificial death upon mankind," Dr. Craig maintains, "has truly been inestimable."¹⁰⁵

"This means," according to Adonis Vidu, "that the goings-on at the Cross need not be seen as a ... satisfaction of God's retributive justice."¹⁰⁶ But Prof. Vidu, notwithstanding, believes that some form of 'punishment' remains "a necessary condition of the full manifestation of divine love."¹⁰⁷ He adds, "This interpretation tends to focus all attention on a contrast between ancient pagan retribution... and Christian ... forgiveness, with the implication that Christianity rejects an account of retributive justice in favor of ... forgiveness, and peace."¹⁰⁸ And this, simply, isn't so. Jesus died *in our stead*.

Postmodern Moral Theories

Postmodern thought proposes a moral theory based on a repulsion to violence.¹⁰⁹ God does not need to punish Jesus in this theory. Retribution is a human invention based on an understanding of justice

¹⁰² *ibid.* p. 160.

¹⁰³ Craig, 261

¹⁰⁴ "Shame" is not technically a salvific term. E. Randolph Richards in "Misreading Scripture With Individualist Eyes" includes an excellent chapter on the cultural meaning of shame.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.* 262

¹⁰⁶ Vidu, 2

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.* 3

¹⁰⁹ *cp.* "The Problem" chapter above.

which is—by postmodern thinking—a tool of those in power more than “fairness” in protecting society.

S. Mark Heim, Samuel Abbot Professor of Christian Theology at Yale Divinity School, postulates Christ’s sacrificial death as problematic for postmodernists.¹¹⁰ He picks up on Rene Girard’s explanation of using a socially acceptable scapegoat to bring an end to—what is called—reciprocated violence,¹¹¹ a Hatfield and McCoy scenario. Also known as a mimetic solution to violence, Christ became God’s scapegoat, through Calvary, wherein God mimicked the evil He wished to end, to satisfy a social need for ultimate justice and to reestablish social order under His suzerainty.

Liminality

The thought is this: God’s kingdom is not ordered by “law” but a justice based on His own liminality,¹¹² His own incarnation becoming the God-man. In His kingdom, humanity is redefined in terms of Christ’s image. A primary characteristic of this image is: acceptance of “the Other.” Lee called this, “an intimate communion between two or more human beings who completely respect and accept each other in all their otherness.”¹¹³

To explain: Jesus lived during His sojourn here as an outsider, an illegal, “He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him.” (John 1:11) Liminality says that Jesus, the God-man, both God and man, dwelled in the place between the Father’s absolute holiness (*actus purus*) and our humanity. Jesus was able to accept “the other,” outsiders: publicans, sinners, and women, even those of ill-repute. His kingdom accepts all (who accept Him). “Then the master told the servant, ‘Go out into the highways and hedges and make them come in, so that my house may be filled.’” (Luke 14:23)

As God incarnate, Jesus is also called a hybrid, i.e. both God and man. It is His hybridity that postmodernism imagines God used to mimic evil. It is in keeping with this line of reasoning, God is called a trickster. He tricked us into thinking He was offering His Son, when it

¹¹⁰ Vidu. 209

¹¹¹ the philosophical equivalent of “retribution” and/or vengeance.

¹¹² Sang Hyun Lee, *From a Liminal Place: An Asian American Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2010) 63-89

¹¹³ *Ibid.* 70. cp Vidu 227

was really Himself in human disguise. Lee claims, "As the Father's love moves him to give himself (while also remaining himself) to the Son, the Father moves into a liminal place by letting go of his divinity and his divine status (while also retaining them)."¹¹⁴

Christ, a Scapegoat

Scapegoating is historically a workable solution. Jesus' death was paramount to, for example, blaming Christian's for the burning of Rome, or Jews for the undermining the German interwar economy during WW2—thus providing a scapegoat as a sacrifice for the good of the society.¹¹⁵ "Religion (in kind) is a cultural method used to reassure the people of the efficacy of scapegoating." Heim imagines, "He (God) disguises the murder (of a Savior) so that [it] will appear as a salvific, Messianic event."¹¹⁶ Heim concluded, "Jesus didn't volunteer to get into God's justice machine. God volunteered to get into ours. God used our own sin to save us."¹¹⁷

If this doesn't sound reasonable, it's probably a good sign that you are not a postmodernist. The simple universal truth about a scapegoat is that society will accept their sacrifice for the good of the society. So, when the Union during the U.S. Civil War, lost at the second battle of Manassas or Bull Run, morale was tanked. President Lincoln needed a scapegoat, someone who could be shamed and punished for the defeat. General Pope was that man even though history might exonerate him now. He was banished far from the Eastern Theater into the Dakota's. The point of a scapegoat is offering a reasonable explanation that people will accept.

What is this magnetic pull? James Allison conjectures, "This surprising non-reciprocation (forgiveness) is what pulls the other person experiencing it out of the reciprocating mode of being (no interest in getting even) and enables that person to begin to receive and then transmit love as something simply given."¹¹⁸

¹¹⁴ Ibid. 59. cp. Vidu. 226

¹¹⁵ bringing an end to the lex taliones (an eye for an eye). principle in Torah law. Exodus 21:24.

¹¹⁶ Vidu. 206

¹¹⁷ S. Mark Heim. "Saved from Sacrifice: A Theology of the Cross." (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), xi. cp. Vidu. 209.

¹¹⁸ James Alison. "The Joy of Being Wrong, Original Sin through Easter Eyes" (New York: Crossroad, 1998) 76 cp. Vidu. 210.

Since violence is a non-starter in a postmodern world, justice is better served through scapegoating (Some add: some form of rehabilitation) and not retribution. Christ in this context became a victim of Roman and Jewish jurisprudence. He wears the martyr's crown of an overcoming, forgiving, love that those who follow Him proudly herald as true justice.¹¹⁹

(Heim's theory, "God used our own sin to save us." Has a biblical ring to it. It is Luther's "wondrous exchange." It is worth picking up on later in this work.)

¹¹⁹ Postmodern theories of the atonement include feminist views as well as postcolonial views which Adonis Vidu breaks down in his work on the Atonement.

The Work Of Christ							
Theory	Christ's Work	View	Purpose	Reason	Aspect	Christ is Made Unto Us (1 Co. 1:30)	The Spirit's Work John 16:9
Substitution/Satisfaction	Savior	Objective	Penal: Satisfies Himself	guilty	Satisfaction	Justification	Sin
Cristys-Victor	Victor	Classic	Overcomes the devil	in bondage	Triumphant	Redemption	Judgment
Moral Influence	Teacher	Subjective	inspires us New Life	apathetic	Regenerative	Sanctification	Righteousness

All three of the major explanations of the death of Christ contain biblical truth and can to some extent be harmonized, especially if we observe that the chief difference between them is that in each God's work in Christ is directed toward a different person. - John Stott. p. 226

It is from him that you are in Christ Jesus, who became wisdom from God for us — our righteousness (justification), sanctification, and redemption. - I Corinthians 1:30

THE DOGMA

Perhaps the greatest sin in the world today is that men have begun to lose the sense of sin. - Fastiggi

THE dictionary defines a dogma as “a principle or set of principles laid down by an authority as incontrovertibly true.” “Incontrovertibly true”? That word means, “not able to be denied or disputed.” And the dictionary uses as an example: *The Trinity*. God did say to Moses, “those things which are revealed belong unto us...” (Deuteronomy 29:29) So, even when we are discussing things that are deemed theoretical, they must be grounded in known reality. They must be grounded in an understanding of Who God is.

Perhaps, the seminaries will continue to put out theories as to why Jesus had to die on a cross—theories designed to satisfy some current theological, or even, philosophical, interest but none of this matters unless it is built on a firm foundation of Biblical truth.

Sharon Baker argued, “We can’t construct a ... definitive theory of atonement that we have..reified into dogma (make more concrete or real) that we defend at all cost.”¹ Perhaps, so. But the underlining truth about the God of love we serve is truth we must build our theory on—if build we must. As a forensic anthropologist reconstructing a face from a skeleton, scholars of the Bible are forever trying to recognize all the details of God’s wondrous and eternal plan to rescue us from ourselves and prepare us for His heaven. And I dare say, even if the finished idea doesn’t look exactly like the picture in God’s heart, I have to believe, it is pretty close! Let’s look at the dogma, what the theologians of the faith are labeling *undeniable*.

¹ Baker. 46

Divine Justice

It's not possible to read verses like Romans 8:1 that uses the phrase "no condemnation"² for those in Christ and not think that Jesus' death had something to do with "law." Or Romans 3:25 where Paul concludes that God did what He did "so as to be just." (NIV) Such words describe the justice of God.

God defines justice by His character, His attributes, His ways. "...all his ways are just." (Deuteronomy 32:4) The legal language sown throughout the Scripture might also be tied to the Hebrew idea of Divine love.³ Scholarship adds, "In human relationships ...obligation may yield (to) favor. God's (mercy) ... rests on the covenant by which He has freely bound Himself to the people."⁴ In other words: He obligated Himself in a love relationship with His creation to go to the Cross on our behalf. But "on our behalf" makes no sense unless it was also "in our stead." The language that describes Calvary is in many places judicial because it was covenantal.

God's love is well known to David and he appeals to it in the matter of his own rebellion and unfaithfulness. Somewhere in the very nature of God, there is a loving response to a plea for forgiveness and mercy. "In keeping with your faithful love, remember me because of your goodness, LORD. ... for the sake of your name, forgive my iniquity..." (Psalm 25:7, 11)

The Paschal Mystery, the provision of a divine grace, might be explained as a divine justice that is reasonable to the heart of God. As Paul explained, "...from many trespasses came the gift, resulting in acquittal" (Romans 5:16)

A Penal Substitution

"Augustine's explanation of the necessity of the Death of Christ in relation to the requirements of divine justice," Adonis Vidu maintains, "is not sufficiently clear."⁵

It is because Jesus took on Himself our punishment and that punishment was required, somehow, by "divine justice" that we seek to

² a damnatory sentence. Thayer. 332

³ mercy, kindness, goodness, this word has many meanings. $\tau\upsilon\pi\eta$ - BDB. 338

⁴ Kittell. vol II. 479

⁵ Ibid. 38

explain His death in legalese. It is because we understand ourselves indebted to Jesus for His self-sacrifice on our behalf, we begin to, perhaps, overanalyze God's heart in the matter.

Was Jesus' crucifixion *penal*? This is to ask, was it by some law somewhere codified in God's Word, or made in covenant agreement, or as a requirement of His holiness, as an unavoidable decree that Jesus must die if God wanted us reconciled to Himself?

Recall that some theorized that a ransom might have been paid to *Satan* for our freedom suggesting somehow Satan punished the Savior in our stead. We lean away from this explanation, because it makes no sense. There is no scripture to support it. Satan is ascribed a clearly subordinate role. His dominion is completely under the control of God, and he has authority only insofar as God allows it. (Job 1:12) God's reason for retribution must be His alone and never any arrangement with the devil (Matthew 4:9-10).

But beyond this, there is another reason we maintain that Jesus' death was a *penal* substitution. We first agree with John? "Christ's death ... represents a fitting sacrifice, which propitiates God."⁶ (1 John 4:10) Richard Trench interprets this to say that Christ's offering of Himself "enabled (God) to show Himself propitious (favorable) to us once more."⁷

Prof. Vidu confesses that (at least to him) "Augustine's doctrine of original sin leaves us in no doubt about the *necessity* for the canceling of sin as debt and guilt." But the problem rests in the *relationship* between humankind and God. "This is clearly a penal substitutionary element," Prof. Vidu argues, "since *no other family of theories takes God to be the object of the work of Christ on the cross.*" (Emphasis added) What Dr. Vidu is saying here: Calvary had to provide a satisfaction for God (for His holiness or His justice). God wanted to reconcile with us while we were His enemies (Romans 5:10) and for a reason or reasons that may not sound reasonable to some, Jesus had to die.

Let's pause here in order to allow the next thought to sink in. Of all the theories out there as to why the Savior had to go to a cross, the idea that He went to pay a penalty for sin is *the only one* that makes *Calvary about God* and not just us. (We should read this many times.) The Cross

⁶ Vidu. 32-33

⁷ Trench. Synonyms of the New Testament. 294

is about the heart of God, about the Holiness of God, about Him ... not us! All the theories out there as to why the Cross, somehow explain everything in terms of our hearts, our nature, our sin. Be that as it may be (and it is true), Calvary is about Christ! Calvary is all about God.

Satisfaction

But can we call Jesus' death a "satisfaction" for sin and still call it a matter of divine justice? Satisfaction does not have to speak of punishment or retribution for sin. (A parent can satisfy correction of a disobedient child without a spanking.) But death is death and the only way death corrects anything is if it is followed by a resurrection from the dead. Think about it.

Death is in and of itself a capital punishment—no matter how we try to explain it. "Christ's death is penal in the sense that all death is penal," Dr. Vidu informs us, "not in the sense that the Son is therefore punished by the Father." "There are no traces of that idea (The Father punishing Jesus) in Augustine.⁸ The question here is not one of retribution but satisfaction. In what sense was God "pleased" or "satisfied" with Jesus' suffering—His passion?

According to Isaiah (Isaiah 53:11) Was the Father's satisfaction in Jesus' "travail"?⁹ Or could the Father have been pleased once more with His Son in that the plan was finally accomplished even though suffering was part of it? Augustine, according to Adonis Vidu, argued that "Jesus demonstrates perfect obedience and, to use Irenaean language, recapitulates what humanity was originally meant to be. In this he satisfies God. ...It is precisely His attitude to His death that satisfies and propitiates God."¹⁰

The idea of a justice being satisfied keeps surfacing in our study. How might Jesus' death satisfy *justice*? We might agree, for once, with the Greek philosopher: "retribution for retribution's sake, in the name of the application of a universal law, is *not* justice."¹¹ Jesus' death was not the final act. His death was not retribution—a divine vengeance

⁸ Vidu. 40

⁹ a King James Version translation

¹⁰ Ibid. De Trinitate. 14.12.15

¹¹ Ibid. 11 In Greek the word unjust == harmful. (αδικεω "harm" Luke 10:19) Pain is not a sine qua non of justice, although it tends to be true of punishment.

that proclaims, "There! Dead and gone! Now we can all go mourn the loss if we must."

Sunday was coming!! There was a restorative element to His passion. Through His resurrection, there would be a real beginning for God and for us! Jesus' death meant life to us. "we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, then how much more, having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life." (Romans 5:10)

To summarize: Earlier explanations were about our restoration through Christ's passion (suffering) to *satisfy* God. But after the Reformation, Protestants believed that a *retributive* justice was satisfied. Thus the metaphor: He paid the debt we owed but could not pay.

Divine Simplicity

Our knowledge of God is on a pre-heaven level —theologically speaking. So, we must speak of His divine simplicity. The doctrine of simplicity, is a way of saying that

1. God is unlike any other being; "The Lord is great and is highly praised; his greatness is unsearchable." (Psalm 145:3) and that
2. God is perfect, that is, God's actions do not share in the limitations of human actions. God's intentions, what He purposes to do, He does.¹² There is no "space" between what He intends to do and what He accomplishes. It is only in "time" we see these two ideas as distinct. (God's predestination and His omniscience continues to raise theological discussions among the scholars.) But His Word declares: "so my word that comes from my mouth will not return to me empty, but it will accomplish what I please and will prosper in what I send it to do." (Isaiah 55:11)

Irenaeus calls God an "uncompounded Being, without diverse members, and altogether like, and equal to himself, since he is wholly understanding, ... spirit, ...thought, ...intelligence, ...reason, and wholly

¹² "The doctrine of divine simplicity is not intended as an apophatic sublation of all talk of divine nature." ... That is to say, we are not trying to minimize a conflict of interest between mercy and justice, or forgiveness and punishment, by arguing that justice is not justice, punishment is not really punishment. As Adonis Vidu points out, "It is precisely such capriciousness, on the one hand, or impotence, on the other, that the concept of simplicity expressly denies." -Vidu. 29, 31

hearing, ...seeing and light and the whole source of all that is good.”¹³ In simplest language: “It is an utter impossibility for him to cease to be either loving or just.”¹⁴

Looking at God through a single lens (of divine love) , interpreting all His actions in terms of His love for us, not only inspires our understanding of God’s Word but it explains everything about our relationship with Him as believers. “For I know the plans I have for you — this is the LORD’s declaration — plans for your well-being, not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope.” (Jeremiah 29:11) It is our limited reasoning, limited by how we experience life and what we have learned about our own humanity that we, in error, compare our thoughts with God’s and ask questions about Calvary that may not be answerable—for now.

When we talk about justice, we picture a courtroom and a jurist but not necessarily what the Bible means by righteousness. “Christ Jesus ... became ... our righteousness” (1 Corinthians 1:30) When we talk about “the Law,” Mosaic or criminal or whatever, there is much we do not know about God’s judgment seat. What is the “law of Christ”? “Carry one another’s burdens; in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ..” (Galatians 6:2) Or the “Law of the Spirit” “because the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and death.” (Romans 8:2)

Can a loving God not forgive? (Or is His love conditional?) How does mercy and a penal justice come together in one divine heart? Is the sinner criminally responsible whether he is ignorant of his sinfulness or not.¹⁵ Jesus extended forgiveness to His accusers from the Cross clarifying, “they do not know what they are doing.” (Luke 23:34)

Such questions are the substance of atonement theory, especially, if we say, as we have, that sin is an injustice against the law of God—or if you prefer, against the holiness of God. But this much we do know: “... the Scripture imprisoned everything under sin’s power so that the promise might be given on the basis of faith in Jesus Christ to those who believe..” (Galatians 3:22) God’s love was not going to let this

¹³ Haer 2.13.3. cp Vidu 246

¹⁴ Vidu. 256

¹⁵ The Catechism of the Catholic Church declares, “ (Para 1857) ”Mortal sin is sin ... which is ... committed with full knowledge and deliberate consent.” - https://www.vatican.va/archive/ENGO015/_P69.HTM

matter go. He created us for His glory and that desire of His, His intention in this matter, remains unchanged and unchanging. Our Lord affirmed resolutely: “everyone who bears my name and is created for my glory. I have formed ... indeed, I have made them.” (Isaiah 43:7)

Peter didn't labor over such questions, but, then again, he was an eye-witness, “For you were called to this, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. ...Therefore, since Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same understanding—because the one who suffers in the flesh is finished with sin.” (1 Peter 2:21, 4:1) But we, too, are witnesses to the power of His death and resurrection; we have a new “life in the Son.” (1 John 5:11)

In general, a theory of atonement attempts to show how God could be merciful and at the same time exact a penalty for sin, how His justice could be both retributive and restorative. The doctrine of a divine simplicity for God attempts to show that when God is exercising one attribute of His nature, He is exercising all attributes of His nature. His justice is always merciful. When He displays His anger, He is fierce, but it is a feature of His jealous love for His people. “The LORD is jealous... the LORD takes vengeance and is fierce in wrath....” (Nahum 1:2) “Then the LORD became jealous for his land and spared (had compassion on) his people.” (Joel 2:18)

Simplicity teaches that He does all things as an expression of His love. “The doctrine of simplicity, then,” Prof. Vidu explains, “must be defined such that mercy and justice are two different names for God's only moral attribute: his love. Mercy and justice are therefore synonymous.”¹⁶ “He loves righteousness and justice; the earth is full of the LORD's unfailing love.” (Ps. 33: 5)¹⁷ Perceiving God in this way, simplifies explanations.

So what exactly is the atoning work of Christ all about? Does it satisfy justice in terms of the holiness of God or does it provide for our restoration to fellowship with a holy God? Or both? We can affirm: both because they are one and the same divine act by the one and only God whom we sinned against. This is an expression of God's actus

¹⁶ Vidu. 29

¹⁷ cp. also: Psalm 89:14 Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne; faithful love and truth go before you.

purus,¹⁸ (absolute perfection). We might say, “each perfection refers to the whole of God’s being-in-communicative-act, though each describes only one aspect of it.”¹⁹

All this can be said in one sentence: “The history of atonement theories is really a debate about the nature of God,”²⁰ that is the nature of Divine love. This single idea will consume our interest in the next chapter. With this in mind let’s turn our attention to some different denominational approaches to building on this truth.

The Sacrament of Penance

Catholic doctrine says that Jesus’ crucifixion removed original sin but not the sins we commit in our lives called “temporal sin.” The Sacrament of Penance in the Catholic faith is contrition for temporal sins committed by the penitent, absolution by a priest, and confession (repentance). Pope Paul VI issued an apostolic constitution that clarified “by divine law all the faithful are required to do penance”²¹

But there is still a satisfaction or punishment needed to effectively purify the soul of the penitent. Because sin necessitates punishment, in Catholic theology, even though it is forgiven, the sin must be purged. Dr. Robert Fastiggi, Bishop Kevin M. Britt Chair of Dogmatic Theology and Christology at Sacred Heart Major Seminary, author of “The Sacrament of Reconciliation” wrote, “Thomas Aquinas taught, ‘absolution delivers a person from eternal punishment as well as guilt.’ But the person still remains bound to make satisfaction for the temporal punishment that remains after the sin has been forgiven.”²²

Penance alone, therefore, does not address the temporal effects of sin. Pope Paul VI proclaimed, “It is a divinely revealed truth that sins bring punishment inflicted by God’s ... justice. These must be expiated either on this earth, through the sorrows, miseries and calamities of

¹⁸ Vidu 30. “The concept does not entail that all attributes are subordinated to divine love (1 John 4: 8), but that they are all the same. God’s love is the same as his justice, writes Crisp. “For perfect-being theologians like Augustine, Anselm and Aquinas, the simplicity of the divine nature means that God, as *actus purus*, is just and benevolent at one and the same time.”

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.* 236

²¹ *Paeniternini*, 3.1.1 (February 17, 1966. cp Fastiggi. 76

²² Fastiggi. 53

this life and above all through death, or else in the life beyond through fire and torments or 'purifying' punishments."²³

Thomas Aquinas maintained the benefit of indulgences, in this regard, for the remission of punishment which must be purged after contrition, absolution, and confession of those sins.²⁴ The Christian life, therefore, should be understood as a summons to engage in "spiritual battle"²⁵ against the threefold concupiscence: of sensualism, greed, and pride (1 John 2:16).

In the Church's doctrine of purgatory, Pope Paul VI explained further, "In purgatory, in fact, the souls of those who died in the charity of God and truly repentant, but before satisfying with worthy fruits of penance for sins committed and for omissions, are cleansed after death with purgatorial punishments."²⁶ This is called "post-mortem purification."²⁷ Reconciliation includes, then, both forgiveness for sins and purification from the effects of sin. This puts the penitent on the mystical path of purgation, illumination, and union with God.²⁸

William H. King, 'an ordained Permanent Deacon' for the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City (and my brother), currently teaching at Bishop McGuinness Catholic High School in Oklahoma City, OK. offered this clarification: "In Roman Catholic parlance, the idea of penance and repentance are not the same: repentance does not constitute a reparation (penance) for the harm caused by temporal sin. Yes, repentance is the conversion the penitent experiences when seeking forgiveness. The Prodigal Son 'coming to his senses' e.g., a conversion moment...he went to his father to 'confess'"

Indulgences

"Indulgences .. are linked to the Catholic theology of salvation,"²⁹ wrote Robert Fastiggi. "The Catechism of the Catholic Church," he explains, "defines an indulgence as a remission before God of the

²³ B1 Paul Indulgentiarum doctrina, January 1, 1967 VI ID, 2 Fastiggi. 79

²⁴ Fastiggi. 61

²⁵ Ibid. 75

²⁶ Ibid. 79

²⁷ Ibid. 81

²⁸ Ibid. 80

²⁹ Ibid.127

temporal punishment due to sins whose guilt has already been forgiven....”³⁰

My brother has corrected my protestant misunderstanding about penance and purgatory and how these deal with temporal sin. He explained, “..although the sin is forgiven and forgotten, whatever damage the sin brought about in terms of our relationship with God or with the faith community, still must be repaired, ergo, “penance.” The typical penance involves one-on-one with God through prayer, or prayerfully reading the scriptures (Lectio Divina).

When a faithful member of the community dies before having a chance to “reconcile” with God and his Church, then what? A period of “purgation” or purification begins to ready oneself for life eternal in the presence of God. The Catholic Church has long understood that good and faithful people die before having a chance to “make things right with the Lord,” and should not be condemned to eternal damnation, a situation only God can decide. “...all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”³¹

Indulgences cleanse the soul from a recidivism to sin which further temptations, otherwise, often leads. Indulgences becomes a Catholic understanding of the process of sanctification. “Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.” (Matthew 5:48)

“Nothing unclean will ever enter (The New Jerusalem).” (Revelation 21:27) Because we leave this life with the work of purification incomplete, the Catholic doctrine of purgatory and post-mortem purification along with prayers from the living brings the people of God opportunity to be clean. (Holy and clean are the same New Testament word.)

Sin has consequences, as King David learned, who wrote 7 penitential Psalms.³² 2 Samuel 12:13-14 tells the story of David’s adultery and the death of his son born to Bathsheba, conceived that fateful night of sin. The doctrine of Indulgence addresses the results of temporal sin (sins we commit in this life, not “original” sin). Indulgence not only prepares the believer, the penitent, for Heaven but also supports living holy in this life. A scripture reference often sited is 2 Maccabees

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Romans 3:23 New Revised Standard Version Catholic Edition

³² Psalm 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, and 143

12:42-46 which tells the story of a sacrifice made to atone for the sins of Jewish soldiers who died “wearing amulets of the gods of Jamnia.”³³

We are told that indulgences³⁴ built Saint Peter's Basilica, but be that as it may, in 1597, Pope Pius V abolished all indulgences that required fees or payments.³⁵ Some examples of plenary indulgences, that is total cleansing from sin, Dr. Fastiggi tells us are: papal blessings issued 3 times a year on solemn feast days issued by a diocesan bishop; receiving Holy Communion for the first time; piously reciting the *Tantum ergo*³⁶ after Mass on Maundy Thursday; adoration of the Cross on Good Friday or personally making the way (stations) of the Cross; listening to sacred preaching at a mission; devoted prayer in the Rosary in church ..among others.³⁷ Dr. Fastiggi summarizes, “ultimately, indulgences and the Sacrament of Penance should be seen in light of God's mercy and His desire to free us from the ravages of sin. Indulgences, like penances, serve as medicines for the healing of the soul.”³⁸

Protestantism

It is not my place here to argue one way or the other about a given Faith but to provide some historical background that should help us understand the quest for a reasonable explanation of Calvary and subsequently offer us a path to God. To highlight the difference in Protestant thinking, let's begin with Anselm of Canterbury, during the Middle Ages, in contrast to Martin Luther. We may recognize four points of departure from Anselm which become for Luther and Calvin points of departure from Catholic thought.

In brief: A belief in a *justification by faith alone* by these Reformers made Anselm's theory of a divine satisfaction for sin untenable.

1. The Reformers called Jesus' crucifixion a *punishment* for sin: Anselm taught that God's offended honor needed satisfaction while the reformers maintained it was His *retributive* justice

³³ Fastiggi. 128

³⁴ Indulgence includes a grant by the Pope of remission of the temporal punishment in purgatory still due for sins after absolution. The unrestricted sale of indulgences by pardoners was a widespread abuse during the later Middle Ages.

³⁵ Ibid. 132

³⁶ *Tantum Ergo* is the last two stanzas from the Eucharistic Hymn (*Pange Lingua*) composed by St. Thomas Aquinas

³⁷ Fastiggi. 135-136

³⁸ Ibid. 137

that required a *punishment* for sin. How should we interpret God's satisfaction in Isaiah 53:11?: "He ... shall be satisfied." (Isaiah 53:11) Dr Craig added, "The Reformers also typically held that human salvation requires the satisfaction of divine justice, but this was achieved through **substitutionary punishment**, not (satisfaction)."³⁹

2. The Reformers saw Jesus' crucifixion as a *necessary offering* for our sins: Anselm saw Christ's death as a sacrifice not, as the reformers believed, as a punishment or penal death.⁴⁰ To Anselm the emphasis was on His life *freely given* (not required) for our salvation.
3. The Reformers saw Jesus' death in *fulfillment of covenantal law*: For Anselm, Christ was the perfect sacrifice because He, being sinless, offered Himself *voluntarily* to God. To the reformers Christ's death satisfied a *legal* requirement that "it was expedient that one man should die for the people." (John 18:14)
4. The Reformers, in calling His death a punishment, understood it covered *all* sin, both original and temporal: For Anselm, Christ's death satisfied God's honor in connection with *only original sin* since only the liability for Adam's disobedience was imputed to us and not his guilt. Our sins must be purged through indulgences.

An Introduction to Justification

This work is not intended as an in depth study on the differences between Protestant and Catholic doctrine. Anyone already acquainted with either may see the distinction in the use of the term *justification*, which we must once again visit. The differences in meaning between these two branches of the Christian Faith can be reduced to what each means by being *justified by faith*. The Reformers taught "faith alone." Paul asserted, "...we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law." (Romans 3:28) But Catholicism might be more inclined to quote James who taught good works as an outward sign of

³⁹ Craig, 117

⁴⁰ Aquinas's understanding of the Savior's work on the cross was retributive but he "refuses to make punishment necessity obtaining on God and to cast it as the sole means of salvation or as the only description of what goes on at the cross." Aquinas Summa Theologie 1.2, Q 87, art. 6. cf. Vidu, page 74.

a true conversion by faith: “a man is justified, and not by faith only.” (James 2:24)

The preparation for sanctifying grace, or the process of justification came out of a counter-reformation prompted by Lutheran teaching that justification came by faith only. This conflict may be reduced to two points.⁴¹

1. Protestantism reduces the process of justification to merely a fiduciary faith; and maintains that this faith, exclusive even of good works, is all-sufficient for justification, laying great stress upon the scriptural statement *sola fides justificat*. (Justified by faith alone)
2. Protestantism makes of the forgiveness of sin merely a concealment of it, so to speak; and of the sanctification a forensic (legal by covenantal law) declaration of justification, or an external imputation of the justice of Christ. (Declared righteous not made righteous.)

The Council of Trent met between 1545 A.D. and 1563 A.D. to address these issues, original sin and justification among others, raised by Luther. The Council maintained in contention with the Protestants⁴² that justification takes place at baptism and includes both forgiveness and the cleansing from all *original* sin—and the cleansing of sins committed *before* baptism for those who come to Catholic Faith and are baptized as adults. Believers, according to Catholic teaching, are not declared but *made* righteous.⁴³ Catholics believe that our free will is still a major factor in salvation. This is why justification is also known in Catholic teaching as *sanctifying grace*. The New Advent Encyclopedia informs, “[In] the process of justification we must distinguish two periods: first, the preparatory acts or dispositions (faith, fear, hope, etc.); then the last, decisive moment of the transformation of the sinner from the state of sin to that of justification or sanctifying grace, which may be called the active justification.”⁴⁴ If I understand this right: Catholic teaching sees justification as the first step in sanctification (made righteous) whereas Protestants are more inclined to see justifica-

⁴¹ Accessed 8/6/21 New Advent Encyclopedia on Sanctifying Grace. <https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/o6701a.htm>

⁴² Stott. 181

⁴³ simul justus et peccator. “at one and the same a righteous person and a sinner”

⁴⁴ accessed 8/6/21. The New Advent. <https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/o6701a.htm>

tion (as a declaration only) and sanctification as a separate divine process. Let me say this again.

As a Protestant, myself, I have relied upon my Catholic brother to explain Catholic teaching since the theological language used in both branches of Christianity have been tuned to their particular theologies. Respectfully, I have endeavored to understand the “Sacraments” as they must struggle to understand what “Atonement” means. And this goes with a number of points of their separate creeds. In Catholicism, justification is a process that transforms the believer by purging out the sin. The moment of baptism is just the beginning but it is a lifelong process which might be continued through a purgatorial cleansing. This ongoing process of justification is sanctifying grace—or simply, by God’s grace. We will take this subject up again in this work.

Most Protestants teach justification and sanctification as two separate acts of God. Justification, to Evangelicals, for example, is a *declaration* of a righteousness God provides through a sanctification which is a life long process.⁴⁵

It seems appropriate here to quote John Stott, who admits a simplification of this clear difference in teaching on justification between Roman Catholics and a large part of Protestantism. We must not bury this timely note in pages of theological discourse but try to emphasize it here. Stott wrote, “Risking the danger of oversimplification, one may say that Evangelicals and Roman Catholics together teach that God by his grace is the only Savior of sinners, that self-salvation is impossible, and that the death of Jesus Christ as a propitiatory sacrifice is the ultimate ground of justification. But precisely what justification is, how it relates to other aspects of salvation and how it takes place—these are areas of continuing ... debate.”⁴⁶

Ulrich Zwingli

The Protestant Reformer Ulrich Zwingli (1484 - 1531) was outspokenly opposed to the Catholic Sacrament of Penance. In his Sixty-Seven Articles, he protested, “Christ has borne all our pains and labors. ...whoever assigns to works of penance what belongs to Christ ... slanders God. ... Anyone who pretends to remit ... any sin would ...

⁴⁵ Nazarenes maintain that sanctification is a single act of God subsequent to salvation.

⁴⁶ Stott. 184

be a vicar ... of the Devil."⁴⁷ John Calvin (1509 - 1564) labeled the Sacrament of Penance/Reconciliation as "fictitious."⁴⁸

There would be no doctrinal compromise on this point. Christian dogma bifurcated. But it was already happening centuries earlier. "The Council of Constance ... December 5, 1414 - April 22, 1418 ... posthumously censored 45 propositions of the English theologian John Wycliffe (1324 - 1384), who had translated the Bible into English without proper authorization and had anticipated later Protestant themes such as predestination and sola scriptura (the sole authority of Scripture)."⁴⁹

The Wondrous Exchange

For Luther, atonement began with Jesus' birth, Jesus becoming man while at the same time being God. The road began in Bethlehem and led to Golgotha. Jesus' suffering, learning obedience, and being tempted—His humanity—was a necessary part of the struggle. "The key difference from penal substitution (for Luther) is that Christ underwent all of these things (temptations and suffering) not as something demanded by God as a requirement for our absolution (forgiveness) but as what is entailed (in, by) his assuming our condition (the incarnation) and wrestling with it."⁵⁰

For Luther, reformed theories of atonement failed to grasp the extent and significance of Jesus' identification with our sins. Luther saw Jesus' entire life as a "wondrous exchange:" He became sin that we might be made the righteousness of God. Commenting on Galatians 3:13 Luther wrote that Christ became "Peter, the liar; Paul, the persecutor, David, the adulterer; Adam, the disobedient; the thief on the cross..." He became sin. For Luther, this truth is to be taken literally. "He made the one who did not know sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." (2 Corinthians 5:21) Luther "saw that the Cross of Christ was at once the scene of Satan's definitive defeat and the objective basis of justification by faith alone."⁵¹ For

⁴⁷ Ulrich Zwingli. *Sixty-Seven Articles*, in Samuel Macauley Jackson, ed., *selected Works of Huldreich Zwingli* (Philadelphia: Longmans Green & Company, 1901), 116. Article LV

⁴⁸ John Calvin. *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. book IV, chapter 19 #17. cp Fastiggi. 59

⁴⁹ Fastiggi. 54 footnote #129

⁵⁰ *Ibid.* 112

⁵¹ Vidu 116 Timothy George, "The Atonement in Martin Luther's Theology," 275.

Luther, it was precisely this identification, captured by the concept of a great exchange, that silenced his fears. For Luther, the victory of Christ consisted precisely in this, that sin and death are defeated. Luther, writing to a monk in distress over his sins, admonished, "Learn to know Christ and him crucified. Learn to sing to him and say 'Lord Jesus, you are my righteousness, I am your sin. You took on you what was mine; yet set on me what was yours. You became what you were not, that I might become what I was not.'"⁵²

"He (Jesus) must experience what we experience, our anxiety, our fear of God," Luther maintained, understanding that, "everything that belongs to the human condition. This indeed is the punishment Jesus underwent."⁵³ The key difference from penal substitution, for Luther, was that Christ underwent all of these things not as something demanded by God or required but as a voluntary—using his word—exchange, our sins for His righteousness. Some see Luther's theology as "God against God" since He is expunging His own law on the Cross, taking our punishment for breaking His law.

On the Catholic Sacrament of Penance (contrition, confession, and satisfaction) Luther denied they had any foundation in Sacred Scripture or the Ancient Church.⁵⁴ Luther reduced the sacrament to God's "word of promise" and "our faith"⁵⁵

The Law's Fulfillment

"The 16 century Reformers ... emphasized that Jesus Christ's personal submission to the law was indispensable to our rescue from its condemnation. They ... taught that his submission took two forms, his perfect obedience in his life and his bearing of its penalty in his death. They called the first active obedience and the second passive obedience."⁵⁶ But there were disagreements.

Luther and Calvin, however, were not in total harmony over the reason for our Lord's crucifixion. To Calvin, Christ taking upon Himself the punishment for our sins was the cause of our redemption. The

⁵² Martin Luther, *Letters of Spiritual Counsel*, in *Library of Christian Classics*, vol. 18. ed. Theodore G. Tappan (London: SCM, 1955), p. 110

⁵³ Vidu 112

⁵⁴ Fastiggi. 57

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Stott. 117

Savior's suffering, as such, was not, however, for Luther, the fundamental point of atonement but rather His victorious resurrection over the sin imputed to Him on our behalf. For Luther, Jesus defeated death, and in the process, the devil, sin, and the Torah law. Calvin did not see the Torah law as an enemy of salvation to be defeated, but inspired truth about our need for a Savior that was fulfilled on Calvary.

"The general atmosphere of Calvin's writings is also strikingly different: the key terms in Anselm (and later scholastic theologians) were those belonging to Roman civil law and to medieval feudal law—debt, liability, compensation, satisfaction, honor, price, payment, merit; ...but in Calvin we find constant reference to punishment, death, the curse, wrath, substitution, surety, imputation—in other words to criminal law reinterpreted in the light of Biblical teaching on the law, sin, and death."⁵⁷

For Calvin, "without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins." (Hebrews 9:22) This meant the Savior's death was necessary for Salvation. As a theological point of atonement "retributive justice" finally was in full bloom under him. Retribution, to Calvin, is the essence of the Old Testament law. Christ's death satisfied the penalty for sins by fulfilling the law. "Obedient to the point of death—even to death on a cross"(Philippians 2:8).

Retributive Justice

It would be disingenuous not to allow some room for a brief discussion of law and its impact on atonement theory. To state the problem succinctly: We were enemies with God (or to God?). His wrath was pending on all nature, "Everything ... whether things on earth or things in heaven." (Colossians 1:20) All creation(?) was out of harmony with God.⁵⁸ Notwithstanding God's apparent rage, it was He who sent His Son to die for us! (John 3:16) It seems, then, His wrath was appeased and we were reconcilable. "For if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, then

⁵⁷ Vidu. 120 cp F. W. Dillistone *Christian Understanding of Atonement*. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1968), 195

⁵⁸ Lightfoot. *Colossians*. 160. "How far this restoration of universal nature may be subjective, as involved in the changed perceptions of man thus brought into harmony with God, and how far it may have an objective and independent existence, it [is] vain to speculate."

how much more, having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life." (Romans 5:10) As simple and reasonable as this might sound, it is fraught with theological issues.

This might help to appreciate the Latin and Lutheran theories that questioned a retributive justice in favor of a more restorative one. Latin theologians saw Calvary as God's provision against original sin but salvation, in their understanding, currently also depends on obedience. "Therefore, my dear friends, just as you have always obeyed, so now, not only in my presence but even more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." (Philippians 2:10)

In Luther's case, the law was also nailed to our Lord's Cross.⁵⁹ "For Christ is the end⁶⁰ of the law, that everyone who believes may be justified." (Romans 10:4) and although salvation is by faith alone, "Not of works" (Ephesians 2:9) God's love was His primary motivation on the cross.

Calvin's explanation, why God went from wrath to love? To Calvin "retributive justice" is a message that moves the sinner to repentance. "...will not these considerations move him the more deeply, the more striking they represent the greatness of the calamity from which he was delivered?"⁶¹ Calvin postulated a difference between a "gratuitous love" and a "final love." God still loved unfaithful Israel "I led them with human cords, with ropes of love." (Hosea 11:4) but this is distinguished from a full expression of that love once Israel returns to Him. "In that day —this is the LORD's declaration —you will call me, "My husband," and no longer call me, "My Master." (Hosea 2:16) Perhaps, theologically we have misinterpreted God's roar for rage? "I will not vent the full fury of my anger...When he roars, his children will come trembling..." (Hosea 11:10-11) But then again, perhaps God's change of heart is merely our perception, what Adonis Vidu calls our "experience of redemption."⁶²

Perhaps, Anselm's teaching on the simplicity of God applies here in which His justice and love, wrath and mercy, speak to the same divine heart at the same moment. He is both at all times. The question is how

⁵⁹ cp. the KJV translation of Colossians 2:14. "Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross;"

⁶⁰ The Law's "end" could mean fulfilled, having come to its end.

⁶¹ Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. 2.16.2

⁶² Vidu. 123

is God's wrath and love related to each other in God's being. Bruce McCormack blew the whistle: "Calvin's difficulty ... was due ... to the scant attention he gave to the classical problem of the attributes of God."⁶³

Adonis Vidu quotes François Wendel: "The sacrifice offered... by ... Christ modifies, at least considered from the human point of view, the attitude of God himself towards men. (We perceive the Father's wrath being appeased as Jesus hanged there.) In reality, that attitude is unchanged and immutable... The initiative remains moreover with God, and it is his love for men which has removed the barrier constituted by sin, and the divine wrath that was the consequence of it, by accepted(ing) the satisfaction ... offered by Jesus Christ."⁶⁴

Controversies

Christ's penal substitution to Luther was a "passive obedience"⁶⁵ (He submitted unto death). To Luther, Christ endured the curse of the law to bring it to an end. Calvin, on the contrary, interpreted the Savior's life and calling in terms of fulfilling the law—an active obedience (Galatians 4:4).

Liability

Reformation theories of atonement address our *liability* in Adam's sin—what Adonis Vidu called "this deep anxiety"⁶⁶ something Latin theories did not relieve. Subsequently, because Jesus' death was a penal substitution which dealt with that liability (the curse is removed and the penalty paid), the reformers could agree with John, "perfect love drives out fear, because fear involves punishment." (1 John 4:18) The anxiety and fear that comes with a sense of liability, guilt, has been "put to death" along with the sin by Christ on the cross. We, who have accepted God's provision of salvation no longer live in fear of judgment. Because of a belief in justification by faith *alone* there is a hope filled confidence in God's ability to keep the believer safe "... pre-

⁶³ Ibid. 124 cp Bruce McCormack, "For Us and Our Salvation: Incarnation and Atonement in the Reformed Tradition," *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 43 (1998). 303

⁶⁴ Ibid. 123

⁶⁵ Vidu 124. cp. Paul S. Fiddes, *Past Event and Present Salvation: The Christian Idea of the Atonement*. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1989) 100

⁶⁶ Ibid. 126

served in Jesus Christ, and called.” (Jude 1; 2 Thessalonians 3:3; Philipians 1:6). The Catholic understanding of hope depends on a sense of duty, pious devotion, to God. “The virtue of hope demands fulfillment sometimes, because one has to discharge certain Christian duties, such as prayer, penance, and the like.”⁶⁷ “Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer.” (Romans 12:12) A verse often referred to by evangelicals but which serves all believers: “Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience” (Hebrews 10:22)

The Cost of Freedom

Perhaps one of the peskiest controversial issues raised thanks to a discussion of retributive justice is: How can something be called a “free” gift of grace if it “cost” Christ His life? If we say He purchased a salvation to give to us for free we must assume God was not in His Son (the God-man, God incarnate) on the Cross. If I gave my son in exchange for anything of value to give away, it still was not free. The Father offers His Son in payment for our salvation; then, He turns around and offers us that same salvation, it was not free. It cost Him His Son.

But if God was *in* His Son, then, we can say, God was crucified! He “gave himself for our sins.” (Galatians 1:4; Titus 2:14) In our understanding of law, if someone offers themselves to die in order to allow another to go free, in every sense, it becomes the ultimate price paid—the ultimate free gift. This is sticky logic based on human relations which are never sufficient to explain the heart of God. “No one has greater love than this: to lay down his life for his friends.” (John 15:13) It’s really that simple, Mr. Philosopher.

The T. U. L. I. P. Doctrine - Eternal Security

The tulip is an acrostic that, perhaps, was ingeniously created to explain a penal substitution. We must credit some future student of John Calvin with this piece of ingenuity, also known as “eternal security.” Let me invite you to read “What is Reformed Theology?: Under-

⁶⁷ <https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07465b.htm>

standing the Basics,” by R. C. Sproul, where he addresses this matter of what the five points of Calvinism mean.⁶⁸

Total Depravity. “All have sinned.” (Romans 5:12). This is a belief that mankind is unable by free will to seek a relationship with God. If this is true, we have not chosen God but He chose us (John 15:16). We were called—from our perspective—unconditionally. There is or can be nothing we can do to gain God’s favor or persuade Him to pick us.

Unconditional Election. “Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children” (Ephesians 1:5) Predestined means here to decide beforehand. This suggests Christ’s death on the Cross was limited to those who would be saved.

A Limited Atonement. “those he predestined, he also called; and those he called, he also justified.” (Romans 8:30) If an unbeliever’s freewill is not an aspect of their salvation, and Jesus did die for them having chosen them for salvation, it can be said that grace cannot be resisted—He saves whom He will.

An Irresistible Grace. “And God is able to make every grace overflow to you, so that in every way, always having everything you need, you may excel in every good work.” (2 Corinthians 9:8) They can never lose what God planned to give them even before they were born (Galatians 1:15). This is known as

The Perseverance of the Saints. “My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all. No one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand.” (John 10:29) They cannot backslide⁶⁹ out of the grace of God.

When Jesus died, did He forgive everyone or only the elect? Was His death in some way provisionally limited, that only those whom He would call would experience the eternal life which His death and resurrection brought. When Peter proclaimed that God was “...not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9) was He affirming that Christ did, indeed, die to save

⁶⁸ My personal belief includes a couple points from this acrostic and excludes others. I believe in a total depravity or a corruption by sin of free will and necessarily God must choose or draw us (convict us) if we are to come (John 6:44). But the atonement is not limited. Christ died for all. Some resist God’s grace (conviction) and the saints who persevere find that their relationship with the Lord is strengthened. I am not sure someone cannot lose their salvation (Matthew 13:20-21).

⁶⁹ There are two words for “backslide” but the one that signifies to return back to the beginning - to slide all the way back - is never used of turning away from the Lord.

everyone, ultimately and universally, or did Jesus' crucifixion leave the question unanswered as to other considerations, like repentance and faith. Is the atonement limited?

This controversy is affectionately called the Calvin-Wesleyan controversy. Robert Shank's work, "Life in the Son," takes the Wesleyan side. To me it is not worth the time to study while offering nothing of value to this work. This paradigm leaves a number of Scriptural verses vague or left out of the discussion, which as an exegetical (interpretive) tool offers a half-truth—at best. Like selling cars, praising your own make or brand but downplaying that of the competition, the Calvin-Wesleyan controversy has been misused to discredit honest faith when it should have been God's opportunity to instruct. Myer Pearlman in his signature work, "Knowing the Doctrines of the Bible" called Calvin's and Wesley's ideas the two rails the train runs on. Something worth knowing.

"It Is Finished"

When Jesus cried, "It is finished!" What was finished? What did He mean by these words just before He expired on the cross?

- ◆ Paid in full: "(Financial) receipts are often introduced by this phrase," according to Moulton & Milligan's *Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament*. In general the word means: to fulfill obligations, to pay."
 - Charles Swindoll explained: "It was a Greek expression most everyone present would have understood. It was an accounting term. Archaeologists have found papyrus tax receipts with "Tetelesthai" written across them, meaning "paid in full." With Jesus' last breath on the cross, He declared the debt of sin cancelled, completely satisfied. Nothing else required. Not good deeds. Not generous donations. Not penance or confession or baptism or...or...or...nothing. The penalty for sin is death, and we were all born hopelessly in debt. He paid our debt in full by giving His life so that we might live forever."⁷⁰

⁷⁰ https://www.goodreads.com/author/show/5139.Charles_R_Swindoll

- ◆ The simplest meaning of "finished" in the form He spoke it on the Cross is "All is fulfilled, All is accomplished!"
 - This, to me, fits better in the context since Jesus was not talking about an unpaid bill but the fulfillment of all prophecy. "Everything God commissioned Jesus to do has been 'completed,' the saving work whose earthly completion according to J(oh)n is at the cross."⁷¹ Reverend Stott affirms, "It has been and will forever remain finished,"⁷² This might explain what Jesus meant in Luke 12:50 since He spoke these words in reference to the Cross: "But I have a baptism to undergo, and how it consumes me until **it is finished!**"

Let me suggest why I lean toward the second meaning but not to exclude the first. The first meaning suggests a propitiatory substitution. (Jesus bore our sins. Colossians 2:14; I Peter 2:24) This view became established theology during the Reformation. The early church fathers did not formalize in doctrinal creed any retributive theory of the atonement, suggesting that the word "tetelesthai" simply refers to the fulfillment of prophecy. It is really a question of what the Savior meant and we must not presume to know beyond doubt. With an open mind consider the following possibility: The phrase "It is finished" is one word in the original Greek in a nuanced form⁷³ which may carry the three following meanings:

- Jesus finished the Work FINALLY. "The fulness of the time was come." (Galatians 4:4)
- Jesus finished the work COMPLETELY "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself."(Luke 24:26-27)
- Jesus finished the work once FOR ALL TIME. "the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all."(Hebrews 10:10)

⁷¹ Kittell vol VIII 59

⁷² Stott. 84

⁷³ A perfect passive indicative

THE SIMPLICITY OF GOD

God does one thing and that is to be himself. - Adonis Vidu

St. Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury, proposed that God is characterized by simplicity. There is no attribute or expression of His being that is not demonstrated in every act. We can say that God's counsel is one and the same as His good pleasure (Philippians 2:13). He does not have nor would He ever need a "plan B." A theology that proposes that God has anything less than His perfect will for us (Jeremiah 29:11) is an invention of our despondency over our failures—nothing more.

We see God's simplicity in the Unity of the Trinity. (John 14:7, 26; 17:21) The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are One in every sense and yet they are three. (1 Corinthians 12:4-6)

On the Cross, mercy and justice were united in Him. In terms of the atonement His retributive justice is also a restorative justice. God's wisdom is both a gentle voice (James 3:17) and loud (Proverbs 1:20). When He gave Egypt for Israel's ransom, it was love (Isaiah 43:3-4). In this way His attributes distinguish Him from all other beings.

In a word, God is "Holy." It was a Holy God that was crucified for us, a point that should be burned indelibly into our consciousness and into our theological explanations as to why He had to die. Instead of thinking that God is sometimes kind and sometimes cruel, we need to step back far enough to see how God is always and only an agent of divine love. From the moment He hovered over His creation tending to details of the most delicate design (Genesis 1:2) to the final seconds of time when He will present His masterpiece of a New Heaven and New Earth to us (Revelation 21:1). His wisdom has always been unchanged and unchanging: "pure, then peace-loving, gentle, compliant, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without pretense." (James 3:17) "God is love" (1 John 4:8) does not so much reveal the essence of God,

but rather, the nature of His love. We have a new word for this, for God's actions—we call it ...grace.

The Holy Love of God

God forgiving sinners while punishing sin is fully consistent with His holiness. Holiness is the regulating attribute of God. It has been argued with varying focus on God's honor,¹ God's law,² or a moral order,³ which is a key part of God's character, that Christ's crucifixion was unavoidable to satisfy His holiness. Dr. Stott explains, "Not only that He must overthrow .. the devil.... (Not only) must (He) satisfy His law, His honor, or the moral order... He must satisfy Himself."⁴

P. T. Forsyth popularized the expression "the holy love of God"⁵ bringing together what might appear as conflicting aspects of His divine character. His holiness required satisfaction for sin; His Love argued for forgiveness. Emil Brunner called it a "dualism"⁶ of mercy and wrath. "Sin has caused a 'break in the world order,'" he argued, "a disorder so deep-seated that reparation or restitution is necessary, that is, 'atonement.'"⁷ But as Stott correctly maintains, "'God is not at odds with Himself."⁸ ... In the words of G. C. Berkouwer, 'In the Cross... God's justice and love are *simultaneously* revealed'"⁹ Thomas J. Crawford correctly theologized, "It is altogether an error ... to suppose that God acts at one time according to one of His attributes, and at another time according to another. He acts in conformity with all of them at all times."¹⁰

¹ Anselm. *Cur Deus Homo*. 2.7 "no one can do it except one who is truly God, and no one ought to do it except one who is truly man" cp. 1.11

² Calvin. *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 2.16.10; cf 2.12.3

³ cp. Hugo Grotius (d. 1645) a Dutch statesman. cp. *A Defense of the Catholic Faith Concerning the Satisfaction of Christ Against Faustus Socinus* trans. Frank H. Foster. (Andover: W. H. Draper, 1889), p. 57. Socinus was a Unitarian theologian.

⁴ Stott. 129

⁵ cp Stott. 132

⁶ Emil Brunner. *The Mediator*. (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press. 1927), 519n

⁷ *Ibid.* 485. cp. Stott. 124

⁸ Stott. 131

⁹ G. C. Berkouwer. *The work of Christ*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Press, 1965) p. 277

¹⁰ cp Stott. 133f. Thomas J. Crawford, *The Doctrine of Holy Scripture Respecting the Atonement*. (Edinburgh: Blackwood, 1871), pp. 453-54

Summarize

Let's summarize: by the simplicity of God we mean: "...two kinds of consequences follow for his actions:

1. "First, all of his attributes are in the background of all of his actions; He is at the same time or in the same action both just and merciful."¹¹ "He is gracious, compassionate, and righteous." (Psalm 112:4)
2. "Second, all of his actions will exhibit a unity and consistency worthy of **perfect** agency."¹² "God is not a man, that he might lie, or a son of man, that he might change his mind. Does he speak and not act, or promise and not fulfill?" (Numbers 23:19)

Grace is an expression of the generosity of His holiness and love irrespective of the achievements or trophies of any individual. Grace is the perfect and consistent demonstration of His infinite and eternal goodness toward us who by faith accept it.

- "Only goodness and faithful love will pursue me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever." (Psalm 23:6)
- "For you are saved by grace through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God's gift" (Ephesians 2:8)
- "Now I truly understand that God doesn't show favoritism" (Acts 10:34)
- "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever." (Hebrews 13:8)
- "I, the LORD, have not changed..." (Malachi 3:6)

The Westminster Confession

In the Westminster Confession of Faith, God is described as the "one only living and true God, who is **infinite** in being and **perfection** ...

¹¹ Vidu. 248

¹² Ibid.

without ... parts... immutable ... eternal, incomprehensible, almighty ... most holy...**most absolute...**¹³ (emphasis added).

Because He is immutable (unchanging), eternal, and infinite, without parts, and perfect in all His attributes and actions, we can describe God using four aspects of His being:

1. **God is immutable**; He will not change. He cannot be other than Who He is. God cannot compromise, be compromised or deny the full expression of His holiness. He cannot be disingenuous or contradict Himself. He cannot be anything other than what He always is. Whoever God is, He cannot improve on His perfection, decide to reevaluate or redefine His attributes or to set His principles aside, by which He governs His actions and His dealings with mankind.
 - When He declared, “I will not vent the full fury of my anger; I will not turn back to destroy Ephraim. For I am God and not man, the Holy One among you; I will not come in rage” (Hosea 11:9) His decision was not based on the circumstance, nor was it based on an isolated or sudden warm feeling that prompted a change of mind and heart. He did what He did because of Who He is: “I am God...The Holy One.”
 - 15 times in 35 verses in Leviticus 19 we read the phrase “I am the Lord” after each instruction in a longer list of instructions. For God these were somehow typologically connected to the future Cross of Christ. God wasn’t pulling rank, instilling fear into the wilderness dwellers by requiring them to do something that gave Him a sense of power and authority over them. No! He was giving His holiness a metaphorical context that would much later translate into the plan of Salvation through His Son. To allow a compromise of His instructions to suffice would be to show Himself to Israel—to all of us—other than Who He is—something not possible for Him.

¹³ Accessed 4/21 <https://bpc.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/D-ConfessionOfFaith.pdf>
CHAPTER II Of God, and of the Holy Trinity

- A familiar story is Moses striking a rock that he should have spoken to in providing drinking water for Israel. It troubled God to be so misrepresented. "But the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, "Because you did not trust me to demonstrate my holiness in the sight of the Israelites, you will not bring this assembly into the land I have given them." (Numbers 20:12)
 - The one thing His holiness, his person, his heart, his principles could not endure was idolatry. "Do not turn to idols or make cast images of gods for yourselves; I am the LORD your God." (Leviticus 19:4)
 - We should agree with Dr. Vidu, again, "It is not that the crucifixion produced a change in God, from which point God was enabled to engage in another particular action. Rather, crucifixion, resurrection, glorification, as well as God's adoption of us ..., all are elements of a single, ... action, whose success depends in no measure on anything needing to happen on the human side that would somehow escape his control."¹⁴
2. **God is infinite;** He cannot be or do or give less than Who He is - the size of His compassion. Divine self-expression must be always nothing less than infinite, infinitely wholehearted, infinitely real, infinitely impassioned. The Augsburg Confession (1530) calls God an immeasurable power. Westminster Confession of Faith calls Him "most absolute." God does not because He cannot "pull His punches." His love is infinitely intense. God's wrath cannot be measured. His grace cannot be exhausted. He brings the riches of heaven with Him
- When Joash, the king of Israel, was instructed by Elisha to symbolize victory over Syria by shooting arrows in the ground, the prophet was deeply disturbed that the king only used three arrows. "The man of God was angry with him and said, "You should have struck the ground five or six times. Then you would have struck down Aram (Syria) until you had

¹⁴ Vidu. 260

The Simplicity of God

put an end to them, but now you will strike down Aram only three times." (2 Kings 13:19)

- Paul made our point for us: "Now to him who is able to do above and beyond all that we ask or think according to the power that works in us ..." (Ephesians 3:20)
 - And in speaking of the grace of God, every believer should know that Jesus' resurrection made possible ours: "so that in the coming ages he might display the immeasurable riches of his grace through his kindness to us in Christ Jesus." (Ephesians 2:7)
 - "He did not even spare his own Son but offered him up for us all. How will he not also with him grant us everything?" (Romans 8:32)
 - Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments and untraceable his ways! (Romans 11:33)
3. **God is eternal**; He cannot be more than Who He is. He cannot grow or learn or develop or become better. Time is a measure of growth, decay, change, process—none of which impacts God or His actions. God lives and moves in eternity.
- All God's thoughts, actions, His purposes are eternal , not subject to time, have only and always eternity in view and eternal value.
 - "This is according to his eternal purpose accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Ephesians 3:11)
 - "I am sure of this, that he who started a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus." (Philippians 1:6)
 - Since God is eternal perfection, and His plans eternally perfect, He fulfills His promises; what God starts, He always finishes, Nothing God purposes becomes an incomplete task.
 - "So my word that comes from my mouth will not return to me empty, but it will accomplish

what I please and will prosper
in what I send it to do.” (Isaiah 55:11)

- God’s Word always has the end result in view, the final consequence; a completed plan which is a single event, “single, all encompassing, utterly uncontradictable action”¹⁵

4. **God is without parts;**

- The Augsburg Confession (1530) calls God an indivisible power. (1530) All of his attributes are in the background of all of his actions;¹⁶ His role as Creator, Judge, and Savior is indivisible as is His being, the Trinity, in 3 persons. The Simplicity of God was proposed in support of the Doctrine of the Trinity. The Trinity maintained unequivocally that Christ is equally God with the Father and the Holy Spirit. Adonis Vidu pointed out how the doctrine of the trinity based on the simplicity of God made clear “the ontological distinction between God and humanity”¹⁷ (God’s aseity).¹⁸
 - It is the Creator who has saved us; “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.” (2 Corinthians 5:17)
 - It was our Savior who created the universe and made us new creatures in Him; “All things were created through him (the Word), and apart from him not one thing was created that has been created.” (John 1:3)
 - It is the Judge of all the universe who exercises perfect justice in Christ on the Cross declaring us righteous by faith. “There is reserved for me the crown of righteousness, which the

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid. 252ff.

¹⁷ Ibid. 242

¹⁸ The word is often used to refer to the Christian belief that God contains within himself the cause of himself, is the first cause, or rather is simply uncaused. Notions of aseity as the highest principle go back at least to Plato and have been in wide circulation since Augustine, though the use of the word 'aseity' began only in the Middle Ages.

The Simplicity of God

Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me on that day," (2 Timothy 4:8)

- What God did God does. The record of God's actions toward His creation are a display of His unchanging holiness. The underlining will and council of God are foundational to every act. He is no respecter of persons. God's activity is perfection, that is, coherent, united and consistent.
 - "The Lord GOD has sworn by his holiness:" (Amos 4:2)
 - "The nations will know that I am the LORD — this is the declaration of the Lord GOD — when I demonstrate my holiness through you in their sight." (Ezekiel 36:23)
- The doctrine of simplicity says that God never displays certain attributes more than others. God simply *is* his attributes.
 - The Westminster Catechism¹⁹ adds, "...working all things according to the counsel of his own immutable and most righteous will, for his own glory; most loving, gracious, merciful, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin; the rewarder of them that diligently seek him; and withal most just and terrible in his judgments; hating all sin, and who will by no means clear the guilty."
 - "By these he has given us very great and precious promises, so that through them you may share in the divine nature, escaping the corruption that is in the world...." (2 Peter 1:4)

God is Eternal

When we by faith accept God's wondrous provision through Christ's death and resurrection, we might ask: "Has something ...

¹⁹ Accessed 4/21 <https://bpc.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/D-ConfessionOfFaith.pdf>

changed as a result of the atonement? (No! Not with God.). A change of treatment does not mean that God is now any less holy or any less just and more loving. Rather, an objective circumstance is now in place (we are now in Christ), which makes us experience God as more loving than just, even though strictly speaking nothing has changed in God."²⁰

The simple reality is that "...human action and divine action differ in terms of their relation to time. There is no distance between intention and outcome with God,"²¹ unlike mankind that often purposes ideas that never become reality. If man's ideas become reality, it is only in time, over a period of time. God, who is omniscient and omnipotent has no reason to purpose the impossible or something that might not have happened. When He intervenes His thoughts are always consequential. Simplicity, then, yields the following rule: every aspect of a divine plan, every phase, every act and moment is eternally present when He begins. "(Christ's) temptation, teaching, obedience, miracles, crucifixion, descent into hell, resurrection, glorification, ascension, (and His parousia) His return, cannot be read as stand-alone (acts) They are all part of a single pattern which stretches from creation to eschatological glorification."²²

Not only is God all loving and all just to each one; not only does God show Himself loving and just in every circumstance throughout the history of mankind, but, everything God does is eternally significant. "Almost certainly God is not in time." C.S. Lewis philosophized, in "Mere Christianity," "His life does not consist of moments one following another... Ten- thirty - - and every other moment from the beginning of the world- - is always present for Him. If you like to put it this way, He has all eternity in which to listen to the split second of (a) prayer."

If you could expand your imagination just a bit and allow me to illustrate this dynamic and eternal principle that every aspect of the call of God and the leading of His Spirit in the life of a believer—as it was with Jesus—is with God a single event. Put your life on the time line of history marking when you were born and where your life is now—in time. Now step back, back further, back further —into eterni-

²⁰ Vidu. 263

²¹ Ibid. 243

²² Ibid.

ty—until that line of your life is only a dot in your view, until it becomes in its completeness that single event God’s will has purposed for you.

From God’s perspective, time has no relevance except in explaining some simple aspects of His heart to us. What He does is always with His eternity in mind. So should we! “So we do not focus on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.” (2 Corinthians 4:18) What complicates it for us is that He is not done with us yet. But the burden of this work is to answer the question: Why did Jesus have to die on the Cross? And God might have multiple aspects of His genius that might not be detailed enough for kindergarteners, as we. Notwithstanding all this, we are privileged to explicate this truth, hungering to learn, imagining what reasons God might have had, and, burning with a desire to know Him, meditating on the Word.

God Is Holy

Perhaps, the most striking divine attribute—the dictionary defines “striking” as “attracting attention by reason of being unusual, extreme, or prominent,” is God’s *holiness*. The word in the Hebrew language of the Old Testament means “apartness.”²³ It is opposite a word meaning “commonness.” Scholarship concluded, “Holiness comes to have the meaning of divine, and thus becomes an adjective for God.”²⁴ Holiness is the divine person; it is how God acts and thinks and works. Holy is what God is and humankind is not since the “fall” of Adam and Eve.

R. C. Sproul admits that he had to—using his term—‘grapple’ with this: “As I studied the Old Testament, I was also bothered by the stories about God’s ... killing Uzzah instantly for touching the ark of the covenant, and by other narratives that seemed to reveal a brutal side to the character of God. How could I ever come to love such a God? The one concept, the central idea I kept meeting in Scripture, was the idea that God is holy. The word was foreign to me. I wasn’t sure what it meant. Today I am still absorbed with the question of the holiness of God. I am convinced that it is one of the most important

²³ BDB. 871

²⁴ Kittell vol I. p. 90

ideas that a Christian can ever grapple with. It is basic to our whole understanding of God and of Christianity.”²⁵

Any definition of the holiness of God has to be just words strung together to sound intelligent; if He is undefinable by any use of language, and He is: “No one can fathom his greatness!” (Psalm 145:3), His holiness, as an aspect of His being, is mysteriously glorious, and we are presumptuous in a mental haze of theological ignorance to think otherwise. The Westminster Confession of Faith correctly described Him as the “one only God, ... incomprehensible ... most holy.”

Abominable

Learning what God detests is a lesson in His holiness, since things He rejects outright and cannot have these anywhere in His kingdom or in His presence. The dictionary describes such things as abhorrent to God like carrion (Isaiah 14:19), or filth (Psalm 14:1, 3 where the word comes from a root meaning sour milk).²⁶ The dictionary uses the word “tainted” of a corrupt person (Job 15:16). Another word has been translated “detestable” coming from a word that originally meant “to throw away.”²⁷ Such things are said to be loathed or something that occasions horror (Deuteronomy 12:31) and is consequently cursed (Deuteronomy 7:26).

Even in the New Testament there is the language of utter disgust, talking about sin. In Revelation 3:16 God said to the church at Laodicea He would “vomit” them out of his mouth. When my son was an EMT I asked him what body fluid most bothered him: blood, urine, etc. He, without hesitation, said, “vomit.” God created this stuff as an object lesson of sin and it is important we understand that.

What God Hates

And what does a Holy God find abhorrent, disgusting, and filthy? In addition to rebellion (1 Samuel 15:23) and idolatry (Leviticus 26:30) which in our cultural setting is “greed” (Colossians 3:5) Solomon can

²⁵ R. C. Sproul, R. C.. *The Holiness of God* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers. 2nd Edition. 1998), (Kindle Locations 210-213).

²⁶ The Hebrew word for filth is onomatopoeic. חֲלָץ gagging followed by a liquid sound and then a guttural as if spitting out.

²⁷ BDB. 1054

find seven (Proverbs 6:16-19). "The Lord hates six things; in fact, seven are detestable to him:

1. arrogant eyes,
2. a lying tongue,
3. hands that shed innocent blood,
4. a heart that plots wicked schemes,
5. feet eager to run to evil,
6. a lying witness who gives false testimony, and
7. one who stirs up trouble among brothers."

These are "sin." If we want a true picture of heaven just picture a place where these cannot enter. And now we know what words like "pure, clean, godly, saints, and sanctified" mean. These are characteristic of God's holiness in us.

The best example of God's holiness is in the biblical record of His Son, Jesus. "Lord," said Philip, "show us the Father, and that's enough for us." Jesus said to him, "Philip ... The one who has seen me has seen the Father. ... I am in the Father and the Father is in me ... The Father who lives in me does his works. (John 14:8-10) Jesus' moments of joy, His silent tears and bouts of anger, as well as His response to those who opposed Him are revelations of holiness. The best theological study is Jesus' years of ministry including His death and resurrection. "The Son is the radiance (reflection) of God's glory and the exact expression (representation) of his nature," (Hebrews 1:3)

Be Ye Holy

God, Himself, commanded us, "...be holy because I am holy" (Leviticus 11:44); but Calvary turned this command into a promise (Romans 8:28-30; 1 John 3:2). We capable of appreciating God's holiness, at least on a elementary level, because "we know in part" (1 Corinthians 13:9) We are at least in the earliest grade of a divine schooling, learning to trust Him (Psalm 25:4), learning to identify His will for our lives as "good, pleasing, and perfect." (Hebrews 12:2) It is not surprising that God's servants find abortions as tearfully and angrily evil (Isaiah 49:1 & 15; Matthew 19:14; Luke 17:2). We cringe in disgust on hearing falsehoods and lies. All those movies that are

uninhibited evil that have unabashedly abandoned any sign of moral decency for the sake of ratings are no longer watchable, even if we fail to explain why. But like God we need to find a way to deal with the offense without hating the offender and never compromise our awareness of God's holiness in our lives.

Dealing with Sin

We might gain some insight into why Jesus' crucifixion for sin in our stead was God's plan from the beginning (Genesis 3:15). God cannot allow sin into His heaven because He is holy. But He wants us! While suspended on the Cross, Jesus seem to sense the Father's difficulty with what was happening (Mark 15:34). "God ... condemned sin in the flesh by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh as a sin offering." Paul explained (Romans 8:3).

But how to separate the sinner from his or her sin was the delicate operation grace needed to perform. Salvation had to be more than a word of forgiveness. It had to make provision for sinners to be transformed into saints; for believers to be able to follow Christ; to make us holy as He is. "Christ in us, all our hope..." (Colossians 1:27) God cannot allow us into His heaven—as greatly as He longs to—unless we, too, are holy. That is simply Who He is and how it must be!

We have analyzed our Savior's mission; we have studied His words and watched Him respond to His humanity but in a perfectly sinless way. We admired His compassion as something beyond our ability to love so completely and became breathless to hear His wisdom. We puzzled over His parables; they were more than parables to us.

But more than all this, we have theologized every possible cultural, spiritual, and natural reason that might supply us with a sound and consistent logic as to why a Cross. Even though Scripture is dedicated wholly to this divine task we felt it important to have a reasonableness to support faith.

But we have wept and rejoiced because of Him; we have hungered to know more of Him—all the while seeming to sense that our faith was all we ever really needed and then let Him do the rest in us (Philippians 1:6). "You believe in God," Jesus encouraged us, "trust me, too." (John 14:1)

* * *

God's Love

We may say God's love is immutable, eternal, infinite, and without parts. No divine attribute describes His "simplicity" as clearly. We might reference Paul's description in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 to illustrate.

- ◆ God's love is an immutable love: Unchanging, non-hypocritical, undisguised, pure, "genuine" (RSV 2 Corinthians 6:6). It is a love not compromised or corrupted by envy or self-importance.
 - 4 His Love does not envy, is not boastful, is not arrogant,
- ◆ God's love is eternally loving. Can we translate the word "not" by "never" since the verb is present tense?
 - 5 God is never rude (unbecoming love or in a way that makes love ashamed of its actions.), is never self-seeking, is never irritable....
- ◆ God's love is infinitely loving. "Above all, keep fervent (extended, stretched out) in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins." (NASB 1 Peter 4:8)
 - 5b-6 God does not keep a record of wrongs. (God is forgiving) Love finds no joy in unrighteousness but rejoices in the truth.
- ◆ God's love is without parts. The operative word is "all" Everything He does is an act of love, and as such, is an act of forgiveness, faithfulness, promise, and being patient with us.
 - 7 It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

It is this love Jesus was emphasizing in John 3:16 in His conversation with Nicodemus. "See what great love the Father has given us that we should be called God's children..."(1 John 3:1); How could He not go to Calvary!

"Paul and John saw love in the cross," John Stott adding this stipulation, "because they understood it respectively as a death for sinners (Romans 5:8) and as a propitiation for sins (1 John 4:10)." He clarified, "...the cross can be seen as a proof of God's love *only* (emphasis added) when it is at the same time seen as a proof of his (God's)

The Simplicity of God

justice”²⁸ (This, a reference to the simplicity of God). This Dr. Stott said to rebut the Moral Influence Theory of Atonement.

²⁸ Stott, 216

THE INCARNATE GOD

Truly this man was the Son of God! - Mark 15:39

ATHANASIUS of Alexandria (296 – May 373) wrote, “For in speaking of the appearance of the Savior amongst us, we must needs speak also of the origin of men, that you may know that the reason of His coming down was because of us, and that our transgression called forth the loving-kindness of the Word, that the Lord should both make haste to help us and appear among men. For of His becoming Incarnate we were the object, and for our salvation He dealt so lovingly as to appear and be born even in a human body.”¹ Athanasius called this a reasonable consistency² for God is reasonable—even when it comes to our sin. He saw Calvary as a plan “...reasonable with respect to God, i.e. what is involved in His attributes and in His relation to us.”³

An argument from simplicity might proceed thus: Because He is eternal, and as Prof. Vidu maintained, “all of His actions will exhibit a unity and consistency worthy of **perfect** agency⁴” God would never leave Adam and Eve in a Fallen condition, since it was not the completion of His eternal plan for them. Calvary was His answer to returning us to the Garden. From a Divine perspective, simplicity maintains that what God does is always a single event that cannot fail. God said of His Word, “it will accomplish what I please.” (Isaiah 55:11). There can be nothing God envisions or purposes that is not, in His eyes and thoughts, at the same moment completed. So Adam and Eve’s fall triggered a plan—planned before the earth was called into existence (Revelation 13:8; 17:8)—as an act of extreme and necessary mercy, to

¹ Athanasius. 10

² Athanasius. 62 Si peccatum sic dimittitur impunitum, similiter erit apud Deum peccanti et non peccanti (If sin is left unchecked, it will be the same with God the guilty and not guilty).

³ Ibid. 7 cf. Rom. iii. 26, cf. Anselm, ib. I. 12.

⁴ Ibid.

send Jesus to the Cross. For this His incarnation was a reasonable act of Divine justice.

Adam And Eve

Then God said, "Let us make man in our **image**, according to our **likeness...**"⁵ (Genesis 1:26) Athanasius argued, "God made man for incorruption, and as an image of His own eternity."⁶

Likeness means similitude or resemblance, which, indeed, speaks to the external appearance of one person compared to another. Seth did look like Adam, his dad. Seth was "in (Adam's) own likeness, after his image." (Genesis 5:3) If this, however, means that a father-son relationship could be established in their genomes (and indeed it could) the Biblical terms "image" and "likeness" must be expanded⁷ to explain Adam in God's image because "God is a Spirit." (John 4:24) To paraphrase the rest of the Savior's words: We relate to Him, to God, on a spiritual—not a physical—level.

The word "image" is spoken of paintings⁸ and sculptures.⁹ Adam was made in God's image, as if God while forming him from the dust of the earth was viewing Himself in some way to stay true to the details of His own image. (Genesis 1:27) ¹⁰Adam was not God but he was godly.

According to Athanasius: Man is "...the impress of His (God's) own Image, a share in the reasonable being of the very Word Himself, so that, reflecting Him and themselves becoming reasonable and expressing the Mind of God."¹¹ Man was made for fellowship with God, so on some level of closeness and intimacy Adam might know Him. God equipped him with a "reasonableness," the ability to have such fellow-

⁵ The Christian understanding of the plural "us" references the trinity. נְעִשָׂה אִדָּם בְּצַלְמֵנוּ כְּדִמוּתֵנוּ

⁶ Athanasius. 12

⁷ cp. Isaiah 13:4 "Listen, a commotion on the mountains, like that of a mighty people ." where "likeness" is simply "like referencing anone aspect of comparison—in this case the level of noise. It is within the meaning of this word to make a comparison between God and Adam on another, non-physical-level,

⁸ Ezekiel 23:14 "male figures carved on the wall, images of the Chaldeans"

⁹ 1 Samuel 6:5 "images of your tumors and of your mice "

¹⁰ For this reason alone, abortion is a dangerous practice for which some will give answer! "Whoever sheds human blood, by humans his blood will be shed, for God made humans in his image." (Genesis 9:6).

¹¹ <https://ccel.org/ccel/athanasius/incarnation/incarnation.ii.html>

ship.¹² "...why did God make them (humankind) at all," reasons Athanasius, "(if) He did not wish to be known by them?"¹³

Adam and Eve were capable of apprehending a "knowledge of good and evil." (Genesis 2:9) In direct terms, we, who are made spiritually "like" God, are conscious of righteousness, the concept of judgment, and sin (John 16:8). Some animals may experience attrition, like Fido, the dog, when his master catches him tearing apart a sofa cushion. But Fido doesn't feel contrition nor can Fido repent. There is something about us that has a built in consciousness of right and wrong even if we deny it. Adam was made in God's image in order to make him (and Eve and humankind) capable—before the Fall—of perceiving, understanding, and appreciating God's holiness. His moral goodness. We have an innate consciousness of God's holiness.¹⁴ John Stott simplifies, "men and women, unlike the animals, are morally responsible beings."¹⁵ It is this simple condition of the heart that thru repentance, and the renewing of our minds (Romans 12:2) we are brought back to the purity and sinlessness of Adam and Eve before the Fall and made capable of understanding and appreciating God. His Holiness is the ultimate "likeness" God is working toward in us (Romans 8:28-29).

"...how could they (humankind) be rational without knowing the Word (and Reason) of the Father, in Whom they received their very being?" argued Athanasius. "For there would be nothing to distinguish them even from brute creatures if they had knowledge of nothing but earthly things."¹⁶

Athanasius concluded, "He (God) gives them a share in His own Image, our Lord Jesus Christ, and makes them after His own Image and after His likeness: so that by such grace perceiving the Image, that is, the Word of the Father, they may be able through Him to get an

¹² John Stott sees this as human responsibility which justifies a discussion of punishment for sin. C.S. Lewis in his essay, "The Humanitarian Theory of Punishment" bemoans the tendency of replacing retribution by humanitarianism, a penal system that turns into a social reform. Punishment, however severe, is deserved if the offender is to be treated as a responsible (conscious of sin) human person made in God's image. cp. Stott. 103-104

¹³ Athanasius. 24

¹⁴ The greek terms for beauty (καλος) and moral goodness (αγαθος) overlapped in meaning during the Koine period. Being made in God's image, like God, gives us also an appreciation for beauty in nature, in art, and in music.

¹⁵ Stott. 102

¹⁶ Ibid.

idea of the Father, and knowing their Maker, live the happy and truly blessed life."¹⁷

But Adam and Eve wanted to know what evil was even though there was no such property in their makeup spiritually or intellectually. They had to go on the say-so of a snake in the grass that pushed the narrative that somehow knowing evil was an important piece of knowledge. He lied! "And, in a word," said Athanasius, "everything was full of irreligion and lawlessness, and God alone, and His Word, was unknown."¹⁸

We needed to be rescued from an evil which was now systemic in a depraved nature. Even our basic physiological needs became addictions; feelings overwhelmed sense. We were only one generation from our first homicide. We needed to be rescued from ultimate death. So, Jesus went to the Cross. And for this to happen, He came as the incarnate Son of God.

Jesus Identifies with Fallen Humanity

Dr. William Craig affirms, "In virtue of Christ's incarnation (and, I should say here, his baptism, whereby Jesus identified himself with fallen humanity), Christ is appointed by God to serve as our proxy before Him. The Logos, the second person of the Trinity, has voluntarily consented to be appointed, by means of his incarnation and baptism, to serve as our proxy before God so that by his death he might satisfy the demands of divine justice on our behalf."¹⁹

"The Word (the Logos) was God,"²⁰ John proclaimed (John 1:1).²¹ Did Jesus see Himself as deity? According to Matthew, Jesus confirmed, "I am the Son of God." (Matthew 27:43) John recalls that His Jewish "opponents" (John 10:31) attempted to stone Him because, as they told the Savior, "for blasphemy, because you — being a man — make yourself God." (John 10:31) Jesus replied, "You say, 'You are blaspheming' ... because I said: I am the Son of God?" (John 10:36)

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid. 25

¹⁹ Craig, 206

²⁰ Jehovah Witnesses incorrectly translated "a god." The grammar as well as the context does not require or warrant the indefinite article. cp. A.T. Robertson, 767 (I) (also see discussion of The "God-Word" Godet, The Commentary of the Gospel of John Vol I. 248).

²¹ The Greek reads "God was the Word."

So when Paul affirmed, “We preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to the Jews and foolishness to the Greeks” (1 Corinthians 1:23) Paul was saying far more than just a reference to the hanging of a good man. Jesus was, according to Paul’s teaching, the Jewish King and He was first and foremost deity. Both ideas stirred much scorn and mocking.²²

A Unique Gospel

Greek thought²³ saw the Word, the Logos, as a universal source of knowledge in all nature, not as the physical presence of God in the person of Jesus Christ. “Classical antiquity was dominated by the difficulty of merging a philosophical-impersonal idea of God with an existential-personal idea of God.”²⁴ The thought was similar to Solomon’s wisdom. “Wisdom calls out in the street; she makes her voice heard in the public squares.” (Proverbs 1:20) All of this goes to prove that the Gospel message is unique. Christianity is unique. The plan of salvation and its execution were both the result of divine agency. “He saw that there was no man—he was amazed that there was no one interceding; so his own arm brought salvation, and his own righteousness supported him.” (Isaiah 59:16)

Dr. Gregory Boyd, a professor at Bethel College, St. Paul, Minnesota, wrote:

“There is no other belief which does this... Only the Gospel dares to proclaim that God enters smack-dab into the middle of the hell we created. Only the Gospel dares to proclaim that God was born a baby in a bloody, crap-filled stable, that He lived a life befriending the prostitutes and lepers no one else would befriend, and that He suffered firsthand, the hellish depth of all that is nightmarish in human existence.”²⁵

Professor Stephen Prothero, professor of religion at Boston University tells us that even our concept of ‘a faith’ is unique to Christianity:

²² Luke 23:37, 39 “If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself! ...Then one of the criminals hanging there began to yell insults at him: “Aren’t you the Messiah? Save yourself and us!”

²³ <https://inters.org/jesus-christ-logos>

²⁴ cp. NTERS – Interdisciplinary Encyclopedia of Religion and Science, edited by G. Tanzella-Nitti, I. Colagé and A. Strumia, www.inters.org

²⁵ Boyd. 151

“It is often a mistake to refer to a religion as a “faith,” or to its adherents as “believers.” As odd as this might sound, faith and belief don’t matter much in most religions. Often ritual is far more important, as in Confucianism. Or story, as in Yoruba religion. Many Jews do not believe in God, and the world’s Hindus get along quite well without any creed. ...to be a Christian has typically been to care about both faith and belief. ... As the term Christianity implies, this faith revolves around the person of Jesus, whom Christians have traditionally regarded as Son of God, Savior, and Christ ...the coming king who will remake the world.”²⁶

The God-Man

Christ, according to Paul, is “the **image** of the invisible God.” (Colossians 1:15) How are we to explain this most informative Biblical idea: Jesus was in the image, as well as, the form of God and at the same time during His sojourn here, the likeness and fashion of a man. It is little wonder controversy surrounded this “mystery of Godliness.” (1 Timothy 3:16) Jesus was, indeed, the manifestation of God in the flesh (incarnate).

The message of Calvary is encapsulated in Paul’s exhortation to all who would follow our Lord. “ Christ Jesus... existing in **the form of God**, did not consider equality with God as something to be exploited. Instead he **emptied** himself by assuming **the form of a servant**, taking on **the likeness of humanity**. And when he had come **as a man** (in the fashion of a man), he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death—even to death on a cross.” (Philippians 2:5-8)

First and foremost, there is much to learn about the words used. Verses 7 and 8 have three words worth studying: form, likeness and fashion.²⁷

“Form” must be differentiated from “fashion.”²⁸ Searching through a number of dictionaries for the best definitions for these two terms, we find form “always signifies (that) which truly and fully expresses the being which underlies it.”²⁹ Form according to Bishop Lightfoot “

²⁶ Prothero. 69-70

²⁷ These words are all in verse 7 in the original Greek. Translated often number verses differently.

²⁸ cp Lightfoot. Saint Paul’s Epistles to the Philippians. 127ff.

²⁹ Moulton & Milligan. 417

has a more important function in making the thing what it is.”³⁰ Or as my own Bible School Greek teacher taught, “Being in the form of God says Jesus is God.” Jesus being in the “form” of God meant that in every sense, metaphysically, quintessentially, and by nature³¹ Jesus is totally God.

In addition, while form is unchangeable, fashion is changeable. The dictionary calls fashion an “external bearing” (behavior or appearance) as distinguished from form which is “essential and permanent.”³² Paul taught that Jesus was “fashioned as a man” (KJV) He was in a physical body in order to experience death. His earthly body (as distinguished from His glorified body) was necessary to experience temptation, suffering and, ultimately, crucifixion for our Salvation.

This basic distinction bears true even with the composite uses of the terms:³³ fashion and form. The fashion of this world is passing away according to Paul (1 Corinthians 7:31; Romans 12:2). It seems appropriate that the word “world” in the Greek originally meant adornment, decoration, or ornament. The Greek term “kosmos” gave us both cosmology and cosmetic showing how this world, its cultural, social, and governmental embellishments are but the latest fashions that are not eternal.

We, on the other hand, are being conformed to the image of His Son (Romans 8:29; 2 Corinthians 3:18; Galatians 4:19). Our minds are being transformed (Romans 12:2). Our new birth is who we essentially are. The new birth is not a behavioral change but an eternal transformation, a new creation, now capable of developing deep and abiding fellowship with God.

It remains to define the word “likeness” which means according to the dictionary “not mere resemblance but conformity.” Jesus was not just fashioned as man with two arms, two legs, etc., but He was sin-

³⁰ Lightfoot. Saint Paul’s Epistles to the Philippians. 129

³¹ Ibid. 128. Parmenides, born c. 515 BC, considered the founder of metaphysics or ontology, according to Lightfoot used the term “form” to explain the essence or unchanging nature of the universe.

³² Moulton & Milligan. 619

³³ In English the verbal form for fashion, the noun, is the verb fashion (cp transfigure, Phil 3:21) whereas form has 2 terms to employ, transform and conform. Unfortunately the translations, in an effort to explain, may unintentionally not hold to this clear distinction.

lessly, yet totally human. He partook of our humanity with all its challenges and temptations.

There has been much discussion surrounding these terms, since they describe the God-Man before and during His sojourn here. Jesus was totally God and totally man. It's because logic fails reasonableness that much controversy has arisen. I wrote on this subject in my book, *Challenged*,³⁴

- Arius believed that Jesus had to be created as the Son of God. He couldn't just 'be' God.
- Nestorius thought Jesus couldn't be God because He was obviously human. Nestorius never recognized Mary as the 'Mother of God.' That was illogical to him.
- Apollinaris believed the Jesus was God's mind in a human body. Jesus had one nature not two.
- Eutyches maintained that Christ had a human nature but it was unlike the rest of humanity.
- Serapion who probably was the one who introduced docetism believed that Jesus' body was an illusion. (Docetism comes from the Greek word, *dokein* meaning 'to seem to be')
- Sabellius couldn't buy into the idea of a trinity. He believed that God was not three persons in one but three characteristics in one.
- Marion didn't believe that Moses' God was Jesus' God. The God of the Old Testament was, according to him, vengeful; Jesus was love. Marion was a docetist.
- The Patripassians³⁵ and Theopaschism³⁶ (God suffered). claimed that Christ's divine nature suffered as well as His human nature during the Passion.³⁷

* * *

³⁴ cp my book *Challenged*. 277

³⁵ Monarchianism is a set of beliefs that emphasize God as being one person, in direct contrast to Trinitarianism which defines God as three persons coexisting consubstantially as one in being.

³⁶ a 6th-century heretical doctrine maintaining that Christ had only one nature, the divine, and that this nature suffered at the Crucifixion

³⁷ This becomes a question of passibility or capable of feeling suffering.

Passibility

The dictionary defines *passible* as incapable of feeling pain. [Physical pain?] It adds, “only the humanity of Jesus is regarded as passible.” This word comes from the Latin *impassibilis* meaning “incapable of suffering.” The early Greek fathers maintained that the incarnate Son suffered on the Cross ... but not God, Himself. Ignatius of Antioch (108/140 AD) thought God “who cannot suffer, accepted suffering (in Christ).”³⁸ Irenaeus affirmed that through the incarnation the invisible was made visible.. The impassible, passible.”³⁹ Believing that God could not repent because He could not lie or change His mind, feelings of love, pity, sorrow, jealousy, or wrath were only anthropomorphisms not descriptive or real emotions.⁴⁰ God was said to be changeless and nothing could disturb Him.

God is not passive, He cannot be tempted (James 1:13) or mocked (Galatians 6:7) or deceived (Jeremiah 11:20; John 2:24). He is never unwillingly coerced into any action. He is free from what William Temple called “gusts of feelings.”⁴¹ But to say that God is incapable of suffering misrepresents the Old Testament representation of His dealings with Israel. To say God’s feelings are not human—we can accept—but not that they are not *real*. Martin Luther’s phrase “God striving with God” is a realistic description of His pain, especially while His Son hung in silent agony on the Cross. We need to confess that our language is weak in explaining Heaven’s truths, but we have a glimpse (Exodus 33:21-23)—and that is sufficient for faith (1 Corinthians 13:12).

Philippians 2:7-8

I like to see this scripture as God doing three things that cannot be done, since they fault human logic showing how unnatural it would have been for human reasoning to draw up such a plan.

³⁸ Stott. 321 cp. Ignatius Ad Polycarp 3, in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol I, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981).

³⁹ *Ibid.* cp. Irenaeus *Adversus Haereses*

⁴⁰ John Stott (321. fnt., 39) writes, “a useful survey of patristic quotations and references is given by J. K. Mozley in his *Impossibility of God: a Survey of Christian Thought* (Cambridge: The University Press, 1926).

⁴¹ William Temple, *Christus Veritas* (London: Macmillan, 1924), p. 269. cp Stott. 322

- ◆ Being in the form of God, Jesus took upon Himself the form of a servant. Though being God He lowered Himself to serve the Father's plan for our Salvation. God, in the person of Jesus, becomes a servant not as a superficial act of service but to give His life. God is above all but not while incarnate which defies our logical understand of the order of things. The word "emptied" must mean that to be man, He relinquished His omnipotence and, other than on the Mount of Transfiguration, gave up the glories of heaven to suffer the scorn of sinful man.
- ◆ He was made in the likeness of sinful man, of humanity (yet sinless). He grew up (Luke 2:40). He learned obedience through suffering (Hebrews 5:8). He was tempted (Hebrews 4:15). Jesus' incarnate life was filled with all the drama associated with being a member of humanity. But our understanding of God—to this point—was of a being above human suffering, weakness, and temptation.
- ◆ He died. God is eternal! God cannot die. So thought the logical mind. Athanasius argued from reason, "For if He took a body to Himself at all, and—in reasonable consistency, as our argument shewed—appropriated it as His own, what was the Lord to do with it? or what should be the end of the body when the Word had once descended upon it? For it could not but die, inasmuch as it was mortal, and to be offered unto death on behalf of all: for which purpose it was that the Savior fashioned it for Himself."⁴²

A Reason to Believe

Is Jesus both God and man? Is He our God-man who died on the Cross? Or was He only human? Or perhaps, most shocking of all: Could He have been just—just *God*—dying while scorners mockingly laughed, "He saved others; let him save himself." (Luke 23:35)

Had they really believed Him divine, wouldn't they have stood there in tears, perhaps, frightened? What does this mean that God took form, appeared human, and is now dying? God cannot die—not because it is not logical—but because we have always believed in Him.

⁴² Athanasius. 62-63

God promised us the Messiah! 150 Psalms, all those prophecies, 2,000 years of prayers for deliverance, and here He finally is ...dying!

Oh the horror of such a Passover eve while the sky turned dark and the earth shook almost off its axis; how much more does this take on the ghostly atmosphere of a nightmare? Though they, who were there that afternoon, were never more wide awake.

And then it was over, and God was dead!?

This prompts the simplest question: Do we need a reason to believe what really happened here? Jesus was human! But Jesus could not have been a mere human in some minds since there was too much drama for such an explanation. But, we knew his parents, the town he grew up in, and many followed him, watching him do incredible things that couldn't be denied—miraculous things that—at the very least—God was at his side. Ask His disciples!

But why imagine Him both God *and* man? How would such a thing be? What kind of person does that make Him? The belief goes that He has two natures—not two personalities. Do we need a reason to believe?

And what if we don't believe! What if reason refuses to support the idea that God was in some way on that Cross dying because of me! Because of *me!* *Me!* That's another matter. When did I even imagine such a thing, let alone being accused of it! *Me!* I would want God dead! Are you crazy?

So what if someone doesn't believe that something important happened that day—that somehow, on some level, it involved God ...does that matter? Beliefs are meaningless if they are not believed. Are you starting a religion? Is this a vision of a church no one should attend because your God is dead!

Oh yes, Paul! Paul thinks that the Torah spoke of this moment. And he thinks that if you don't believe, it is your loss. He pushed this idea! He discarded his pharisaic education to herald this single message of Jesus' death on that Cross (1 Corinthians 1:17).

Well, whatever happened on the Cross *did* happen and, according to Paul, it meant something to God; so, we best figure it out. "What then? If some were unfaithful, will their unfaithfulness nullify God's faithfulness?" He argued, "Absolutely not!" (Romans 3:3-4a)

So I don't need a reason to believe other than believing that what happened that day on Golgotha's Hill was God's doings and He wants us to accept Jesus' death as a sacrifice for sin. We know what that means. Now you are saying something that those who stood there can understand. There is one problem, though. The Torah called for animal sacrifices and never a human sacrifice. If this Jesus was God's Son, though, as He claimed to be (Luke 22:70), even if our logic fails us, we should not walk away disinterested. Even the devil knew (Luke 4:41). We should pause awhile like the centurion who, overseeing the event, stood there for hours pondering what it all might mean. He called Jesus "God's Son"! (Matthew 27:54). I think that makes Jesus, *God*. Peter, also, was excited to learn of Jesus' true identity (Matthew 16:16).

So, He *was* diety? He was ...*God*! The Bible says so ..and not just Paul!

So, He was both human and divine?

Uh-huh!

We don't need a reason to believe this other than to trust the Bible record, but this actually makes sense to true believers. John Stott said it this way, "The incarnation is indispensable to the atonement. In particular, it is essential to affirm that the love, the holiness and the will of the Father are identical with the love, holiness, and the will of the Son. God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself."⁴³

Dr. William Craig explained, "It is Christ's deity that makes his sacrifice uniquely efficacious for the expiation of the sins of mankind."⁴⁴

Perhaps, a search for reasons is an overreach since God's thoughts are never ours (Isaiah 55:8). Richard Wurmbbrand is credited with remarking, "There were two kinds of Christians: those who sincerely believe in God and those who, just as sincerely, believe that they believe."⁴⁵ When our faith needs the support of a home-made science, we are less likely to "own" that faith, to accept God's Word simply because it is God's Word.

When Jesus died, God died since no one else could do by the Cross what God only could do in dealing with the sin that separated Him

⁴³ Stott. 159

⁴⁴ Craig. 95

⁴⁵ https://www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/44578.Richard_Wurmbbrand

from His creation. "I searched for a man among them," the Lord argued, "who would repair the wall and stand in the gap before me on behalf of the land so that I might not destroy it, but I found no one." (Ezekiel 22:30) No one to do what God must do! And Job once painfully noted, "I need someone to mediate between God and me, as a person mediates between friends." (Job 16:21) No man could do this, but Jesus can. "For there is one God and one mediator between God and humanity, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 2:5)

Another point to consider: When Jesus rose again, man rose. Jesus is proof of the reality of our coming resurrection. "But as it is, Christ has been raised from the dead, the (first) of those who have fallen asleep. (The general resurrection of all the saints)." (1 Corinthians 15:20)

Better to just trust Jesus, since He is the one who hung there for us. God, in His Son, hung there to "bear our sins" (Isaiah 53:12) and reconcile us to Himself (Ephesians 2:16). As Jesus comforted His followers on the eve of His death, "I have told you now before it happens so that when it does happen you may believe" (John 14 :29).

Paul stood up one day, interrupting the speaker—even if it may have been himself—and enraptured exclaimed "Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom ... of God!" (Romans 11:33a) "He was overcome by a sense of God's wisdom," explains John Stott, "To devise such a costly plan of salvation that both meets our needs and *also satisfies His own character.*"⁴⁶ I emphasize John Stott's words here to remind my reader that this all along has been the question of a justice which God could live with, that would justify our redemption.

Why did my Jesus have to die?

Was I the reason? Was it I?

That hung Him there! Oh! Wondrous grace

That bore the shame of my disgrace.

⁴⁶ Stott. 219-220

PERSPECTIVES ON THE CROSS

And he said, Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God: but to others in parables; that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand. - Luke 8:10

JESUS' death is not allegorical, since, His death is not a story told to explain truth. It IS the truth that needs to be explained. Jesus' death was an historical fact that Dorothy Sayers referred to as "the only thing that ever really happened,¹ ...miraculous and unfathomable."²

Calvary was not a metaphor for love. There were witnesses. Jesus dealt effectively, completely, resolutely—and add, historically—with the sin issue that separated us from a Holy God.³ Sin comes in two parts: sinfulness or original sin and the actual acts of sin we as individuals commit as examples of that sinfulness.⁴

We know we are forgiven.⁵ We know, thanks to Jesus' death and resurrection, we have newness of life,⁶ a new birth,⁷ a new beginning in our relationship with God⁸ (and one another). We know that had Jesus not bled and died on Calvary, none of these would have been

¹ Sayers. *The Man Born to be King*. 290. cp. Revelation 5:3-5 as John Stott interpreted (320), "This must surely be why the scroll (the book of history and destiny) is now in the hands of the slain Lamb, and why only he is worthy ... to reveal its contents...."

² Sayers. *Creed or Chaos*. 8ff.

³ Colossians 1:22 But now he has reconciled you by his physical body through his death, to present you holy, faultless, and blameless before him

⁴ ἁμαρτία, the condition, Romans 5:12 and ἀμαρτημα, the deed, Romans 3:25

⁵ Ephesians 1:7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace

⁶ Romans 6:5 For if we have been united with him in the likeness of his death, we will certainly also be in the likeness of his resurrection.

⁷ John 3:3 Jesus replied, "Truly I tell you, unless someone is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

⁸ 1 John 1:2-3 that life was revealed, and we have seen it and we testify and declare to you the eternal life that was with the Father and was revealed to us what we have seen and heard we also declare to you, so that you may also have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.

true.⁹ We know if there had not been a Calvary, we would have died in sin¹⁰ and been “lost” for eternity.¹¹

Calvary is not a parable. It is not a story to teach a moral truth. Jesus death was an historical reality that made possible God’s gift of eternal life. Calvary was not symbolic. Calvary was the execution of a Divine plan,¹² a plan God carefully and thoughtfully drew up in eternity¹³ and executed through His obedient Son.¹⁴ Trying to understand the reasoning behind the Divine plan in story form is not what faith is about. Faith is accepting or recognizing that, through His death, Jesus offered us eternal life in Him.¹⁵

The task of inspiration through the writing of the apostles and prophets was to share with us the event that God, in the person of His Son, was going to die on a Roman cross and this single event would have eternal significance. It would become the moment by which all history would hereafter be interpreted and judged.

A Biblical Perspective

I prefer describing Calvary, not in terms of motifs, but, in terms of perspectives. We are the blind men walking about and feeling the elephant, trying to describe what it is we are touching. Calvary provided many things which we can appropriate in this life. Listed here, in no particular order, are some of the provisions of Calvary which offer different perspectives as we walk around this truth and, using this metaphor, feel our way to comprehend “what was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have

⁹ Romans 5:9 How much more then, since we have now been declared righteous by his blood, will we be saved through him from wrath.

¹⁰ 1 Corinthians 15:17 And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins.

¹¹ John 3:16 For God loved the world in this way: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.

¹² Isaiah 53:1 Who has believed what we have heard? (believed our report). And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?

¹³ Matthew 25:34 Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.

¹⁴ Hebrews 5:8-9 Although he was the Son, he learned obedience from what he suffered. After he was perfected, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him,

¹⁵ John 14:1 Don’t let your heart be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me.

Acts 16:31 Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved

observed and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life." (I John 1:1)

"Here," reminds Professor Trench, "as in other similar cases, what the Scripture does is to approach the central truth from different quarters; to exhibit it not on one side but on many, that so these may severally supply the deficiencies of one another, and that moment of the truth which one does not express, another may."¹⁶

Jesus bore our sins.

I Peter 2:24 He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree

Jesus' dying on the Cross was not substitutionary in that He bore or experienced only the pain of our sin; He bore the *punishment* for our sin. His death was a retributive punishment not a vicarious penitence. It wasn't a question of so much pain and suffering as it had to do with satisfying, penally, the punishment God's holiness required to mercifully forgive us without disregarding the sin that nailed Him there. John Calvin in his *Institutes* taught, "This is our acquittal: the guilt that held us liable for punishment has been transferred to the head of the Son of God (Isaiah 53:12). We must above all, remember this substitution, lest we tremble and remain anxious throughout life,"¹⁷ that is, in the fear of God's judgment.¹⁸ Summarizing: "to 'bear sin' means neither to sympathize with sinners, nor to identify with their pain, nor to express their penitence, nor to be persecuted on account of human sinfulness (as others have argued), nor even to suffer the consequences of sin in personal or social terms, but specifically to endure its penal consequence, to undergo its penalty."¹⁹ To bear one's iniquity means in the Mosaic law to be held responsible.²⁰

Isaiah prophesied,²¹ "he (God's Suffering Servant, i.e. Jesus) will carry their iniquities..." (Isaiah 53:11) Peter referenced this text (Isaiah

¹⁶ Richard Trench, *Synonyms of the New Testament*, page 290

¹⁷ Calvin's *Institutes*. 2.16.5

¹⁸ Stott. 141. ftnt. #13

¹⁹ *Ibid.* 143

²⁰ cp Leviticus 5 where a list of offenses is enumerated. Pivotal is verse 6 "He must bring his penalty for guilt for the sin he has committed to the LORD: a female lamb or goat from the flock as a sin offering. In this way the priest will make atonement on his behalf for his sin."

²¹ Eight of 12 verses (1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 11) are referenced in the New Testament referring to Jesus. IF we add Jesus' references to Isaiah 53, every verse except verse 2 is referenced.

53:11 & 12). The word “carry” in Isaiah is a word in the original which described a “heavy load,”²² In Isaiah 53:4 God’s suffering servant carries a burden of pain²³ and sin that He took off our backs and put on His own, i.e. vicariously! Isaiah went on to prophecy, “...he bore the sin of many...”²⁴ where it means He was “accepting of suffering of the guilt of others”²⁵ to which Peter added—clarifying who God’s suffering servant was and when Isaiah’s prophecy was finally fulfilled, “in His body on the cross.” Peter then pulls back the curtain revealing God’s plan. “So that,.... we might live for righteousness.” (1 Peter 2:24) In Paul’s words, “ ...in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too may walk in newness of life.” (Romans 6:4)

There is only one kind of life in Christ, eternal life. Removing sin from our lives as believers has no temporal significance although it starts in this life.²⁶ Jesus called it a “well of water springing up into everlasting life.” (John 4:11 & 14) It is a life in the Son which makes our salvation²⁷ more than a condition or a hope but a new way of life, that we begin to experience the moment we accept Him and appropriate the provisions of Calvary. It could not reasonably be anything less. Jesus made that point emphatic in our favorite childhood verse, John 3:16. We know this already as believers but here our focus is solely on this truth—He took our sins and sinfulness²⁸ and took them as far from us as the rising sun is from the setting sun (the east is from the west).²⁹ There is much more to discover about our Lord’s suffering on Calvary

²² BDB, 687

²³ Isaiah 53:4 “...he carried our pains...” Most English translations use the word “sorrows” which might not be an adequate description.

²⁴ Isaiah 53:12 הוֹאֵה חַטָּאת רַבִּים וְנָשָׂא

²⁵ Gerhard Kittell. Theological Dictionary of the New Testament (Grand Rapids , MI: Wm. B Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1974), vol IX. pg. 60.

cp. Numbers 14:33 “Your children will be shepherds in the wilderness for forty years and bear the penalty for your acts of unfaithfulness until all your corpses lie scattered in the wilderness.”

²⁶ Romans 6:4 Therefore we were buried with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too may walk in newness of life.

²⁷ 1 John 3:14 We know that we have passed from death to life because we love our brothers and sisters

²⁸ Both ideas are in the words used for sin.

²⁹ Psalm 103:12. This distance is infinite and no matter how fast or slow the earth turns, the east and west are never closer.

but this one provision alone is the offer of eternal life in its scope and importance.

But what exactly does Peter mean by saying, that He “carried away” our sins? We use a theologically inspired term: expiation.³⁰ Not only the sin and sinfulness but the guilt (the liability) is gone and replaced with a peace that confirms the totality of God’s forgiveness. He didn’t forgive in words³¹ but in action thru His death.

For this reason, John could make an amazing proclamation, “We know that everyone who has been born of God does not sin, but the one who is born of God keeps him, (himself) and the evil one does not touch him.” (1 John 5:18) The Kingdom of God is both within, “the reign of God is within you.” (Luke 17:21 YLT) and still to come “ tell you that many will come from east and west to share the banquet. with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 8:11)

Non-believers question the logic behind a purposeful God requiring the crucifixion of His Son. We are not prepared yet to address this query. But our faith recognizes God’s authority over sin in our lives thanks to what Jesus did on the Cross. It is more than forgiveness. And “sin” needs to be further defined. But there was a dynamic at work in those hours of darkness on Golgotha’s hill: The Temple veil was torn away and what had been a once a year appointment in the Holy of Holies for the Jewish High Priest became a doorway to prayer for all who would enter into communion with God! There can be no communion between God and sinfulness.³² Explanations aside as to how this all works in God’s heart and in our lives, we, nonetheless, now know as believers that it is all very real.

Jesus Became Our Ransom

Mark 10:45 For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.

³⁰ the act of extinguishing the guilt incurred by something

³¹ Luke 23:34 records Jesus pronouncing forgiveness from the cross but this portion of the verse might be added later. It was rated a C by the textual critics in the NA27 edition of the Greek text.

³² Psalm 66:18 NIV If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened.

A ransom indicates an “exchange.”³³ The underlining significance in atonement (our interest in writing) is a sacrifice; and the idea in a sacrifice is “a life for a life.”³⁴ There are actually three words (not just the word ransom) that are—affectionately using our Indian proverb—the tail, trunk, and leg of our theological elephant. They collectively describe God’s purpose on the Cross: ransom, redemption, and atonement. We might see them as synonyms, but they are parts of a whole, inseparable aspects of one divine reason for Calvary.

The word *redemption* is often tied to the idea of a ransom. Some translations tend to use the terms interchangeably³⁵ but there is a difference. To redeem is to set free.³⁶ The price of that freedom is often a ransom paid.³⁷ But the ideas often merge when the heart is in prayer.

Take, for example, David’s prayer: “Remember your congregation, which you purchased long ago and redeemed ... for your own possession.” (Psalm 74:2) A few translations weaken, in my view, the word *purchased* to mean *chose* (NLT) or *acquired* (NET) or *gotten* (RSV, ASV) which does not justify the word used in either the Septuagint³⁸ or the Hebrew.³⁹ Purchased means *ownership*. The word here is a synonym of “to redeem for God’s own.” The idea of a *purchase* goes with the word *ransom* but David referred to Israel being *redeemed*. Jesus did not simply free us from sin, it took the sacrifice of His Son to purchase that freedom (Hebrews 9:15).

And atonement? Theologizing has complicated, otherwise, a very basic concept. An atonement is a *covering* which hides something from someone—in this case Israel’s sins from God’s eyes (Exodus 32:30). It

³³ Joseph H. Thayer. Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, page 49. The general meaning in the Hebrew may also include money or payment in exchange for life. cp. Exodus 21:30.

³⁴ Though Isaiah 43:3 does not explain the Greek word, it does, on this point, explain the Hebrew equivalent. “I give Egypt for your ransom, Cush (the upper Nile). and Seba in your stead.”

³⁵ compare Isaiah 35:10 & 51:11 which use the same word. קָדַם which means ransomed in QAL and redeemed in Hophal. cp. Hosea 13:14

³⁶ The Greek word, λύτρον, comes from the word to loose. The Hebrew comes from a word “to sever” and often in Scripture means “to rescue.”

³⁷ A ransom could be paid in sanctuary shekels (Exodus 30:12-13) “to make an atonement for your souls” (Exodus 30:15 KJV); so, it is not always a sacrifice. But Exodus 13:13 does call it a “life for a life.”

³⁸ cf. Liddell & Scott. 521

³⁹ BDB. 889

was typified in the mercy seat of the Ark covering, hiding, the tablets of the Law (the Torah) from site.

When Moses prophesied that God "...will provide atonement for ... His land and His people" (Deuteronomy 32:43), some interpret this to mean He would "*cleanse* the land for His people." Others: He would be "*merciful* unto his land, and to his people." God's mercy is clearly a "covering" hiding sin from His eyes until Christ would come to expiate it (Acts 17:30).

David, confiding in the Savior, prayed, "...As for our transgressions, You will provide *atonement* for them." (Psalm 65:3) The New Living Bible (NLB) makes this much clearer, "Though we are overwhelmed by our sins, you forgive them all." So, atonement is forgiveness? It certainly suggests it under the Old Covenant but declares it outright under the New (Colossians 1:14). The King James Bible reads "thou shalt *purge* them away." The translators, then, saw atonement as more than a covering, overlooking sin, but an expiation or purging away of not only the sin but the guilt, liability and shame that came with it (Isaiah 6:7). Atonement was so complete as "to make *reconciliation*" (Ezekiel 45:15) according to a couple translations.

Mark 10:45 spoken by the Savior of Himself describes His pending death on Calvary as vicarious.⁴⁰ The Hebrew word is correctly interpreted "His life for ours." The Son of man came to serve and to give His life for others (those who by faith accept Him) as a ransom.⁴¹ "The offering is always for a human life."⁴²

The Greek translators of the Hebrew Old Testament used Jesus' word, *ransom*, to translate all three Hebrew words already outlined: atonement (a covering for sin), a redemption (kinsman-redeemer) and a ransom (purchased). If we maintain that Jesus' use of the word ransom is the equivalent of the Hebrew (and we do): a ransom was paid in the person of the Savior on Calvary *for* our lives. He "purchased (us) with his own blood." (Acts 20:28) Jesus' use of "ransom" is equivalent to "atonement," He "... put away sin by the sacrifice of

⁴⁰ from the Latin word for "substitute." Jesus gave His life on the Cross in our place.

⁴¹ "This makes it all the clearer. that the Hebrew equivalent is to be sought in כָּפַר" (ransom) Kittell, vol IV, page 330.

⁴² Kittell vol IV. page 329. cp Exodus 21:30 If instead a ransom is demanded of him, he can pay a redemption price for his life in the full amount demanded from him.

himself.” (Hebrews 9:26) As our redeemer, He “by his own blood ... obtained eternal redemption for us.” (Hebrews 9:12)

Jesus Was Made Our Redemption

1 Corinthians 1:30 “Christ Jesus, who became ... from God for us — our ... redemption.”

There is a difference between being ransomed and being redeemed. A ransom is a life for a life. Redemption carries no payment! “‘To set free for a ransom’ does not occur in the NT (New Testament).”⁴³ Atonement or ransom is not redemption!⁴⁴ Atonement addresses sin. A blood sacrifice was required for forgiveness. Salvation had to be purchased, a life for a life. “...the blood is the life...” (Deuteronomy 12:23) Ransoming is a sacral act, a formal part of Torah law that required one life in exchange for another.⁴⁵

Redemption, in distinction, is solely the act of freeing one from bondage, slavery, or sin. Paul’s emphasis on redemption in his epistles and not a ransom⁴⁶ has shifted the discussion, as regards atonement, from “who did He pay to free us” to “what did He do to free us.” We are, Paul affirmed, “...justified **freely** by his **grace** through the **redemption** that is in Christ Jesus” (Romans 3:24)

Israel’s freedom from Egyptian bondage was an act of redemption. God did not pay a ransom.⁴⁷ He acts in His own power.⁴⁸ “God...owns both Israel and the nations.”⁴⁹ He owns all and owes no one. God’s act of freeing His people from slavery to sin on Calvary was an innate

⁴³ Ibid. 351.

⁴⁴ Ibid. 332

⁴⁵ cp Isaiah 43:3 I have given Egypt as a ransom for you

⁴⁶ The thought that redemption has a price is not supported by the use of the word, “redemption.” The word “ransom” in 1 Timothy 2:6 according to one definition is “what is given in exchange for another as the price of his redemption, ransom.” (Thayers, page 50). From all that has been said already, this definition is weak. “This is a rare word and its attestation is late.” (Kittell, vol IV page 349). The phrase “price of redemption” in the Greek translation of Psalm 49:8 meaning specifically “redemption from the penalty of sin.” is of an uncertain translator.. (Thayers, page 384).

⁴⁷ In Isaiah 43:3 He gave Egypt to ransom Israel but the word “ransom” here means “in exchange for” without a reference to payment.

⁴⁸ Deuteronomy 9:26 Lord GOD, do not annihilate your people, your inheritance, whom you redeemed through your greatness and brought out of Egypt with a strong hand.

⁴⁹ Kittell. vol IV. 333.

loving response to their need.⁵⁰ “The legal idea of buying back from an alien power is missing.”⁵¹ The emphasis in redemption is freedom. God did not buy us back from Satan or any other power. God did not negotiate our release from sin’s prison. The price for our redemption was a personal matter within God. The Psalmist warned, “They trust in their wealth and boast of their abundant riches. Yet these cannot redeem a person or pay his ransom to God—since the price of redeeming him (his soul)⁵² is too costly...” (Psalm 49:6-8) There was a ransom price, indeed, the Savior’s shed blood, but this was somehow an arrangement between God’s love and His justice alone.

The writer to the Hebrews wrote, “He (Jesus) entered the most holy place once for all time, not by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood, having obtained eternal **redemption.**” (Hebrews 9:12) Redemption is—as only it can be—a free gift of God’s grace. For believers, thanks to Calvary, redemption is “an existing reality.”⁵³ Paul clarified, “In him we have redemption, (through His blood) the forgiveness of sins (according to the riches of his grace).” (Colossians 1:14 & Ephesians 1:7) All aspects of our freedom in Christ have come by way of Jesus’ death and resurrection.⁵⁴ Redemption is not only forgiveness (freedom from guilt, the liability for sin) but the sin itself that enslaved us.⁵⁵ As a divine provision, the prison door of sin is off its hinge. We can walk free in newness of life.

There is an eschatological component to our freedom in Christ. Redemption also awaits the people of God.⁵⁶

⁵⁰ Exodus 3:7-8 Then the LORD said, “I have observed the misery of my people in Egypt, and have heard them crying out because of their oppressors. I know about their sufferings, and I have come down to rescue them from the power of the Egyptians and to bring them from that land to a good and spacious land....

⁵¹ Kittell. vol IV. 334.

⁵² Mark 8:37 KJV Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

⁵³ Kittell. vol IV. 353.

⁵⁴ 1 Corinthians 1:30 “Christ Jesus, who became ... from God for us — our ...redemption”

⁵⁵ Hebrews 1:3 The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact expression of his nature, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After making purification for sins,(by Himself). he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high

⁵⁶ Romans 8:23 Not only that, but we ourselves who have the Spirit as the firstfruits — we also groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for adoption, the redemption of our bodies.

Ephesians 1:14 The Holy Spirit is the down payment of our inheritance, until the redemption of the possession, to the praise of his glory.

But the question is still brought forward: Why did it take the Savior's death to provide our freedom from sin and guilt. There is no payment to be made, no law to be followed, no promise of commitment to be honored. The very word "redemption" forgoes all these (at least on our part)! This is grace. The writer to the Hebrews called Jesus, "...the radiance of God's glory and the exact expression of his nature, **sustaining all things by his powerful word.**" (Hebrews 1:3) But He would not take His place "at the right hand of the Majesty on High" to intercede for us and exercise that power until "after **making purification for sins**, (by Himself....on Calvary)."

Should not God's provision have been possible without a crucifixion? No. Now thanks to His death for sin, the writer to the Hebrews adds "Therefore, he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called might receive the promise of the eternal inheritance, because **a death has taken place for redemption** from the transgressions committed under the first covenant." (Hebrews 9:15)

A Vicarious Atonement - Jesus Took Our Place

I Timothy 2:6 who gave himself as a ransom for all, a testimony at the proper time.

The word Paul used for a ransom in writing to Timothy was not the same word spoken by the Savior in Mark 10:45 but its meaning is the same. It is the single place it is found in the Greek in either testament. We noted already that the word ransom found in Mark is not Pauline, but this word supports our Lord's statement regarding His crucifixion with some differences. In Mark, Jesus' life was given as a ransom instead of many. Paul said Jesus gave Himself as a ransom **for the benefit** of all. The use of "all" for "many" is "typical of the Past."⁵⁷ "For the benefit" theologically means "in our stead"⁵⁸ We could say that for Paul, Christ died for all⁵⁹, but the Savior clarified that not all would appropriate His work on Calvary and follow Him.⁶⁰

So also in Paul's teaching to Titus, "He (Jesus) gave himself **for us** to redeem us from all lawlessness and to cleanse for himself a people for

⁵⁷ Kittell. vol IV. 349.

⁵⁸ Thayer 689 "Since what is done for one's advantage frequently cannot be done without acting in his stead (it comes to mean). in the place of, instead of. ...hence the two prepositions are interchanged."

⁵⁹ 2 Peter 3:9 not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

⁶⁰ Matthew 22:14 For many are invited, but few are chosen

his own possession, eager to do good works.” (Titus 2:4) Had He not died as He did on a Roman cross, there would have been no deliverance from the bondage of sin. And here is the real matter that faith must embrace.

As Paul taught, “(Jesus) **gave himself for our sins** to rescue us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father.” (Galatians 1:4) Jesus' death was by divine design a crucifixion, not as an expression only or primarily of His love for the lost, but as a requirement to provide freedom from the bondage of sin, to deliver us from sin and rescued us spiritually from this evil age.

Some question the reasoning behind such a theology since it does not leave any theoretical wiggle room. If He died as an expression of love or simply because the Father allowed it to happen as a consequence of Judean hatred at the time, we might find the historical account more reasonable. But to argue that the divine plan required for our Savior a Roman cross and three hours of darkness in agonizing loneliness bears no resemblance to human experience and leaves us abandoned of reason.

So we argue Torah law and forensic possibilities or we surrender to the logic of debt we get from our own financial transactions. We even learned that Jesus' cry, “It is finished” possibly means “paid in full.”⁶¹ We know a little something about law or finance but God dying for our sins adds a whole new paradigm for which we have no parable or metaphor to explain.

We appeal to Old Testament types, the OT sacrificial system which foreshadows the Truth but these sacrifices are now dead ceremony—and that by God's design: “(He) having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.” (Colossians 2:14 NKJV) Beside, how many Christians really know and understand Torah law and the sacrificial system enough to apply its typology to this most sacred of historical events!

No! Reason is not a friend here. Faith is!

⁶¹ https://www.goodreads.com/author/show/5139.Charles_R_Swindoll

Jesus Is The Mercy Seat

Romans 3:25 God presented him as an atoning sacrifice (an expiation, or a place of atonement) in his blood, received through faith, to demonstrate his righteousness, because in his restraint God passed over the sins previously committed.

Paul gives redemptive meaning to the word for “the place of atonement,” “the mercy seat” or “the covering” to the Ark of the Covenant in the Holy of Holies, as he does elsewhere with other symbols in Torah law and ceremony.⁶² The mercy seat suggests other than appeasing God’s wrath.

- ◆ “Jesus is (the mercy seat).”⁶³ The idea of Christ becoming solely a propitiation for sin is not sufficient explanation in the light of this simple truth. Said another way, “(The Mercy seat) certainly denotes that which expiates sins.”⁶⁴
- ◆ The object of (our) faith is Jesus crucified and risen. Propitiation assumes God’s wrath the object of a sacrificial appeasement but the Mercy seat was, in simplest terms, a covering or forgiveness of sin. Its object is you and me.
- ◆ “God ...gave His only begotten Son...” “It is only in the revealing action of God which gives birth to Faith.”⁶⁵ Paul affirmed, “If you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.” (Romans 10:9) Paul attests to a real conversion to Christ only if and when the revelation (not an academic exercise) of Who the Savior is has been accepted by faith (“believe in your heart.”) For, as Jesus explained, “flesh and blood (does not) reveal this ... but my Father in heaven.” (Matthew 16:17) “The point is that God has given him to men as the basis of their faith.”⁶⁶
- ◆ “In this light the theological route of Paul’s view of redemption is clear. For Paul it is not something which makes God

⁶² 1 Corinthians 6:19 Don't you know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God? You are not your own,

⁶³ Kittell, vol III. 321 hilasterion

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Kittell, vol III. 321

gracious. This explanation for human sin presupposes the grace of God.”⁶⁷

God in Christ Forgave Us

Hebrews 8:12 For I will forgive their wrongdoing, and I will never again remember their sins.

Another word coming from the same family of words as ransom, redemption, and the mercy seat, is one word for forgiveness. This word, also translated merciful, in the Greek Old Testament “is used only as a predicate of God.”⁶⁸ Forgiveness is an act of divine mercy to the offender who seeks reconciliation. In terms of God’s provision of salvation, He initiates this act of reconciliation by first forgiving us and then extending to us the authority to be forgiving toward others. There is, in other words, a divine mercy, a divine love, that only He can give which rescues us from the pain of shattered relationships and the guilt it engenders..

Jeremiah prophesied that forgiveness opens the way for an intimacy (if you prefer: confidentiality, closeness, friendship, love relation) with God that brings us to an heretofore unrealized level of relationship with Him. “No longer will one teach his neighbor or his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they will all know me, from the least to the greatest of them’ — this is the LORD’s declaration. For I will forgive⁶⁹ their iniquity and never again remember their sin.” (Jeremiah 31:34)

Forgiveness as a biblical concept born of the work Jesus accomplished on Calvary deserves its own bema. It is an overarching truth that the Savior’s Cross represented. Even though it is questionable whether or not Jesus actually spoke the word from the Cross,⁷⁰ all theological roads lead here. In reality the work in our Lord’s suffering reveals the extent of God’s forgiveness.

⁶⁷ Ibid. 320

⁶⁸ Ibid 300

⁶⁹ in the LXX ηλθον is ἴλεως ἔσομαι I will forgive

⁷⁰ Luke 22:34 might have been added and not original.

When He created the universe, He spoke it into existence, but on Calvary He needed more than words.⁷¹ Mankind⁷² needed a change of heart.⁷³ Sin is systemic in our nature. Sin is “original” in a theological sense. In grammar, it is the sinfulness that is displayed in the deed. Sin is a spiritual cancer metastasized in the very marrow of the soul⁷⁴ requiring of God more than words to affect a forgiveness that leads to repentance and reconciliation.

Forgiveness was not just an act of grace but an act of the riches of His grace,⁷⁵ which is to suggest that forgiveness is a multifaceted provision. God must through forgiveness bring us into brand new relationships with Himself and each other. Forgiveness is the nourishment that feeds a healthy redemption. God’s forgiveness is eternal—as eternal as He. It doesn’t simply let go of some sins or the sin of the moment. It reaches to the end of time wherever we are struggling with evil and declares us forgiven!

Jesus' Death Was Propitiatory and Expiatory

Hebrews 2:17 “Therefore, he had to be like his brothers and sisters in every way, so that he could become a merciful and faithful high priest in matters pertaining to God, to make atonement(propitiation) for the sins of the people.”

Was God’s atonement⁷⁶ propitiatory or expiatory? Professor William Lane Craig wrote, “Among their various functions the animal sacrifices filled the twin fundamental purposes of expiation of sin and propitiation of God. “To expiate” means to remove, annul, cancel; “to propitiate” means to appease, to placate, to satisfy. The object of expiation is sin; the object of propitiation is God.”⁷⁷ “In propitiation the

⁷¹ 2 Corinthians 3:3 You show that you are Christ’s letter, delivered by us, not written with ink but with the Spirit of the living God — not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.

⁷² the Greek word *ἄνθρωπος*, not *ἄρσεν*,

⁷³ Ezekiel 11:19 I will give them integrity of (one). heart and put a new spirit within them; I will remove their heart of stone ... and give them a heart of flesh.

⁷⁴ Hebrews 4:12 For the word of God is living and effective and sharper than any double-edged sword, penetrating as far as the separation of soul and spirit, joints and marrow. It is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

⁷⁵ Ephesians 1:7 In him we have ... through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace.

⁷⁶ *ἱλάσκομαι* which is used in the New Testament occurs only 11 times in the old Testament always ... with Yahweh as subject. In general, it means to forgive.

⁷⁷ Craig. 19. He maintains that “At least some of the sacrifices described in the OT were clearly propitiatory. A premier example is the sacrifice of the Passover lamb (Exodus 12: 1-27). This sacrifice was not originally instituted for the purpose of expiating sin.”

action is directed toward God The underlining purpose," reads the International Dictionary of New Testament Theology, "is to change God's attitude from one of wrath to one of good will and favour. In the case of expiation, ...the action is directed towards that which has caused the breakdown in the relationship."⁷⁸

Propitiation raised the question of punishment. Is the sacrifice in the Old Testament intended as a punishment vicariously administered to a lamb or other animal in place of the sinner? "The law," this same dictionary continues, "nowhere indicates that in sacrifice...an act of punitive punishment is executed; it in no way asks us to look on the altar as a place of punishment."⁷⁹ "...sacrifice in the Bible is concerned with expiation rather than propitiation."⁸⁰

The idea behind appeasement is that a sacrifice is required else God will be enraged to the point of mercilessly eradicating even our memory. Dr. Craig added, "It was a dangerous business to have a holy God dwelling in the midst of a sinful and impure people."⁸¹ But, although, God appeared driven almost to this mindset with His people in the wilderness, He always left, no matter how narrow, a path to the merciful side of His nature. The Lord, grieving over an unrequited love for His people blurted out, "I will smite them with the pestilence, and disinherit them." (Numbers 14:12) but, as we know, Moses interceded in a prayer that had to be inspired by the very God Who, seemingly, sought Israel's demise. "But Moses replied to the LORD, "The Egyptians will hear...If you kill this people ... the nations that have heard of your fame will declare, ...the LORD wasn't able to bring this people into the land he swore to give them." (Numbers 14:13-16)

As Dr. Craig observed, "The sacrificial system functioned to facilitate the juxtaposition of the holy and the unholy."⁸² But to ascribe to God the same pagan idea of a god who required sacrifices to assuage His wrath, misrepresents the Scriptural representation of our God. Yes, He grieved over His people's unfaithfulness; He was prone because of them to what appeared as "fits of jealousy" but He always knew that He loved them and He didn't repent choosing them. "I will not vent the full fury of my anger; I will not turn back to destroy Ephraim. For I

⁷⁸ Colin Brown. vol III. 151

⁷⁹ G. F. Oehler. *Theology of the Old Testament*. 1874, 431.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² *Ibid.*

am God and not man, the Holy One among you; I will not come in rage.” (Hosea 11:9)

Yet it is a good question: Did Jesus' death appease an angry God or did it address the sin in our lives by removing it? Jesus was the Passover Lamb. But unlike the passover lamb during the Exodus from Egypt, which may have saved God's people from the death angel (propitiatory?), Jesus' death was, according to Paul, expiatory! “Clean out the old leaven so that you may be a new unleavened batch, as indeed you are. For Christ our Passover lamb has been sacrificed for us.” (1 Corinthians 5:7) “...who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29)

But does not Christ's death deliver us from the judgment of God? “...by his blood, will we be saved ... from wrath.” (Romans 5:9) “It is clear that the authors of the Hebrew Old Testament and the Greek (LXX) translators are far removed from the crude pagan idea of propitiating a capricious and malevolent deity.”⁸³ The New Testament concept of Divine wrath⁸⁴—rage—doesn't show up in the New Testament theology or narrative until the vials are poured out in the closing chapters of the Revelation. The words “vengeance” and “revenge” have a “bonam partem,” a good, meaning since they are expressions of an end time mercy that must separate out the sheep from the goats in judgment. God's wrath, in other words, is a necessary part of His act of mercy to ultimately rescue the saints from tribulation and answer their prayers to bring an end to evil.

God's grief and anger were often mitigated in the Old Testament record by His desire to save⁸⁵ and not destroy. “How can I give you up, Ephraim? How can I surrender you, Israel? ...I have had a change of heart; my compassion is stirred!” (Hosea 11:8)

A. W. Tozer reminds us, “When Jesus died on the cross the mercy of God did not become any greater. It could not become any greater, for it was already infinite. We get the odd notion that God is showing mercy because Jesus died. No--Jesus died because God is showing mercy. It

⁸³ Colin Brown. vol III. 157

⁸⁴ θυμος “rage” opposed to οργη “anger.” Rage is compared to setting fire to straw.

⁸⁵ James 5:7 Therefore, brothers and sisters, be patient until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth and is patient with it until it receives the early and the late rains.

2 Peter 3:9 “The Lord does not delay his promise, as some understand delay, but is patient with you, not wanting any to perish but all to come to repentance.”

was the mercy of God that gave us Calvary, not Calvary that gave us mercy. If God had not been merciful there would have been no incarnation, no babe in the manger, no man on a cross and no open tomb.”⁸⁶

But there are incidents of God’s anger in Scripture about to boil over. As Solomon cautioned, “A king’s fury is a messenger of death, but a wise person **appeases** it.” (Proverbs 16:14)

“Phinehas son of Eleazar, son of Aaron the priest, has turned back my wrath from the Israelites because he was zealous among them with my zeal, (jealousy) so that I did not destroy the Israelites in my zeal. Therefore declare: I grant him my covenant of peace. It will be a covenant of perpetual priesthood for him and his future descendants, because he was zealous for his God and made **atonement** for the Israelites.” (Numbers 25:11-13)

“Then Moses told Aaron, ‘Take your firepan, place fire from the altar in it, and add incense. Go quickly to the community and make atonement for them, because wrath has come from the Lord; the plague has begun.’ So Aaron took his firepan as Moses had ordered, ran into the middle of the assembly, and saw that the plague had begun among the people. After he added incense, he made atonement for the people.” (Numbers 16:46-47)

The words “appeases” and “atonement” in Proverbs 16:14 and Numbers 25:13 are in the Greek translation a Greek word found 105 times in the Septuagint but which is not used in the New Testament. Dr. Leon Morris referenced in an article on Reconciliation pointed out the atonement “acquired a technical meaning which completely overshadowed other meanings. Hence, in most places it means ‘to accomplish reconciliation between God and man’, without indicating how that reconciliation is obtained.”⁸⁷

The transition in atonement from appeased to forgiven underscores that even in ritual form, God is a personal God seeking to reconcile and develop a relationship with His people rather than a god easily provoked to rage needing to be constantly appeased. The language of the Psalmist supports this:

- ◆ “Lord, for the sake of your name, forgive my iniquity, for it is immense.” (Psalm 25:11)

⁸⁶ A. W. Tozer *The Attributes of God: A Journey Into the Father's Heart*

⁸⁷ Colin Brown. vol III. 155

- ◆ "...let your compassion come to us quickly." (Psalm 79:8)
- ◆ "Yet he was compassionate; he atoned for their iniquity and did not destroy them. He often turned his anger aside and did not unleash (stir up) all his wrath." (Psalm 78:38)

Dr. Craig concludes, "The sacrifices served the fundamental purposes of expunging sin and appeasing God's wrath. By securing divine forgiveness for sins, they serve to reconcile God and sinners. Any biblically adequate theory of the Atonement must, then, make good sense of Christ's death as an expiatory and propitiatory sacrifice to God the Father."⁸⁸

Notwithstanding any theological doubt, Christendom still endears herself to the old hymn,⁸⁹ "Rock of Ages, Cleft for me...Be of sin the double cure, Save from wrath and make me pure."

Jesus Purchased a Peoples for Himself

Revelation 5:9 .And they sang a new song: You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slaughtered, and you purchased people for God by your blood from every tribe and language and people and nation.

The term "purchased" is not a reference to a payment which would suggest an actual purchase ...but from whom? The word is used instead to indicate private ownership. The word 'possession' comes from a word meaning 'to preserve or get for one's self.'⁹⁰ In Haggai's prophecy, this word is translated "provide."⁹¹ Jesus' death provided for us "the right (we are authorized) to be children of God."⁹² Jesus obtained this privilege for us, this provision, on Calvary.

"Be on guard for yourselves," How protective God has become in Paul's warning to God's shepherds, "and for all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has appointed you as overseers, to shepherd the church of God, which he purchased with his own blood." (Acts 20:28) Malachi, introduced this truth prophesying, "'They will be mine,' says the

⁸⁸ Craig. 35

⁸⁹ Text: Augustus M. Toplady, 1740–1778

Music: Thomas Hastings, 1784–1872

⁹⁰ Thayer 504.

⁹¹ Haggai 2:9 "I will provide peace in this place"

⁹² John 1:12

LORD ..., 'my own possession I will have compassion on them as a man has compassion on his son....'" (Malachi 3:17) Peter called believers, "a people for his possession, so that you may proclaim the praises of the one who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light." (1 Peter 2:9) "...you were bought at a price." (1 Corinthians 6:20) God "...made them, (us) as it were, His private property."⁹³

In 1 Corinthians 7:23 ("You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of people.") Paul alludes to the story of Hosea and Gomer whom Hosea purchased off a slave market to become his wife. (Hosea 3) This rocky love story became a metaphor for God's unwavering love for Israel and Israel's need to be redeemed. (The definition of jealousy—God's jealousy—is the pain of an unrequited love from someone—Israel—who belongs to God and should be faithful.) But the message for those who remain faithful is, in the words of the Song of Songs (2:16) "My love is mine and I am his..."

Jesus Canceled the Old Covenant

Colossians 2:14 He erased the certificate of debt, with its obligations, that was against us and opposed to us, and has taken it away by nailing it to the cross.

Bishop Lightfoot, an English theologian and Bishop of Durham UK, on Colossians 2:14 commented, "In the case before us the Jewish people might be said to have signed the contract when they bound themselves by a curse to observe all the enactments of the law."⁹⁴ As noted already under "Theories of Atonement" a "certificate of debt" is a free interpretation based on the original use of the word for something "handwritten." True debt certificates (our I.O.U's) were legal documents issued in Paul's day but is that what Paul means here? We concluded above that the indebtedness we experienced was due to violating God's Law. But, again, He knew we wouldn't keep it. "What should we say then? Is the law sin? Absolutely not! On the contrary, I would not have known sin if it were not for the law." (Romans 7:7)

Even the dictionary recognizes that this references the "Mosaic Law....which shows men to be chargeable with offenses...."⁹⁵ The obligations or dogmas Paul was thinking of where the 600 plus ceremonial Torah injunctions which symbolized in biblical type the Sav-

⁹³ Thayer. 8

⁹⁴ J. B. Lightfoot, Saint Paul's Epistle to the Colossians page 187

⁹⁵ Thayer. 668

ior's death on Golgotha's Hill but now were no longer, in terms of worship, of any ritualistic importance. True worship would instead be in spirit and truth, Jesus foretold. (John 4:23)

The Torah Law had been explicit, to which the people had given oath. "Moses came and told the people all the commands of the LORD and all the ordinances. Then all the people responded with a single voice, 'We will do everything that the LORD has commanded.' ... 'Anyone who does not put the words of this law into practice is cursed.' And all the people will say, 'Amen!'"⁹⁶

Israel's oath was in the form of a verbal commitment to the Law. The use of this word, handwritten, "...in the NT (New Testament) it has the sense of 'promissory note'"⁹⁷ in which the Deuteronomic law becomes the record of "...the Mosaic Law and its demands..."⁹⁸

On the cross, an old ceremonial law code was called on one final time while a new covenant of an eternal Davidic kingdom was being drawn up. "The point ...of indebtedness," scholarship observed, "is rather to underline ... God has forgiven sins."⁹⁹ Paul goes further. The Father sent His Son to fulfil the ceremonial law. We didn't follow them, anyway.¹⁰⁰ He knew that Calvary had to provide for a change in us! And God made that provision available through faith. His peace became His gift to us. "He made (in His flesh) of no effect the law consisting of commands and expressed in regulations, so that he might create in himself one new man from the two, resulting in peace." (Ephesians 2:15)

Jesus Represented Our Crucified Self

Romans 6:6-7 For we know that our old self(man) was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin (body of sin) might be rendered powerless so that we may no longer be enslaved to sin, since a person who has died is freed (acquitted) from sin.

⁹⁶ Exodus 24:3 ; Deuteronomy 27:26 "The dogma, therefore, ... referring primarily to the mosaic ordinances, will include all forms of positive decrees in which moral or social principles are embodied, or religious duties defined; and the 'bond' is the moral assent of the conscience, which (as it were) signs and seals the obligation." J. B. Lightfoot, Saint Paul's Epistle to the Colossians page 187

⁹⁷ Kittell, vol IX. 435

⁹⁸ Kittell, vol II. 231

⁹⁹ Ibid, vol IX. 436

¹⁰⁰ Romans 7:19 I practice the evil that I do not want to do.

This might be one of the debated scriptures being one of the most central to Christian theological thought. Depending on one's denominational directives or church doctrine, one's understanding of a "crucified self" is, at best, *prima facie*. Frédéric (Francis) Godet, a Swiss Protestant theologian and a scholar appreciated for his brutal honesty, when he interprets this text, points out that Paul's use of words like "know" (verse 6): "For we *know* that our old self was crucified " and "consider" (verse 11: "*consider* yourselves dead to sin") "introduce the notion of subjectivity."¹⁰¹

So, is the old self, the old man, really dead, crucified? And not just dead, but buried in baptism (verse 4: buried with him by baptism) as a clear outcome of our faith in Christ as Savior? "...in order that,... we too may (like our resurrected Lord) walk in newness of life. (Romans 6:4) If this is all true, why do we still sin?

There are volumes here which must be left to the pastors to expound. But what is clear is that something is real about the change in one's heart and life upon accepting Christ by faith. Jesus called it "a new birth."¹⁰² This is more than a changed opinion regarding the Christian dogma. The dogma that encapsulates essential Christian truth is the crucifixion of the God-man, the Savior, God incarnate who died on Calvary for our sins. This truth, this dogma, this doctrine, can only be genuinely believed by revelation from God, the Father.¹⁰³ Academic enquiry by a mind not renewed¹⁰⁴ or by a heart not impassioned by faith¹⁰⁵ may say idol words for a church membership, they may believe they believe, but they fail to appropriate what Calvary offers. The bottom line, as Paul informed, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, and see, the new has (all new things have) come!" (2 Corinthians 5:17)

It remains for us to discuss what Paul meant by "rendering the body of sin powerless." That is a matter for redemption. But now, let's agree with Matthew Henry: "Death makes a mighty change: such a change

¹⁰¹ F. Godet. Epistle to Romans. 244

¹⁰² John 3:3 Jesus replied, "Truly I tell you, unless someone is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

¹⁰³ Matthew 16:17 for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.

¹⁰⁴ Romans 12:2 transformed by the renewing of your mind

¹⁰⁵ Romans 10:9 believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead,

doth sanctification make in the soul, it cuts off all correspondence with sin.¹⁰⁶ This is the “Tale of Two Trees” in the Introduction to this work.

Jesus Won a Spiritual War

Colossians 2:15 He disarmed the rulers and authorities and disgraced them publicly; he triumphed over them in him (it).

The “dominion of darkness”¹⁰⁷ is real. We have rightly donned the armor and prepared for spiritual warfare.¹⁰⁸ We are mentally alert in battle realizing who the enemy is,¹⁰⁹ what he is capable of,¹¹⁰ and what we are equipped to do.¹¹¹ But our battle cry would sound no earth shattering yelp, if Jesus had not been victorious in His own encounter with the powers of darkness. Jesus took upon Himself a human likeness that knew the assault of temptation.¹¹² Satan was there in the wilderness¹¹³ when He began His ministry; Satan was there toward the end when he moved Simon¹¹⁴ to confront the Father’s plan that involved the Cross. “The final act in the conflict,” Bishop Lightfoot informs, “began with the agony of Gethsemane; it ended with the cross of Calvary.”¹¹⁵

¹⁰⁶ Ibid. 246. ftnt. T. W. C.

¹⁰⁷ Luke 22:53 “Every day while I was with you in the temple, you never laid a hand on me. But this is your hour — and the dominion of darkness.”

¹⁰⁸ Ephesians 6:11-13 “Put on the full armor of God so that you can stand against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this darkness, against evil, spiritual forces in the heavens. For this reason take up the full armor of God, so that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and having prepared everything, to take your stand.”

¹⁰⁹ John 8:44 “He was a murderer from the beginning and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he tells a lie, he speaks from his own nature, because he is a liar and the father of lies.”

¹¹⁰ 2 Corinthians 2:11 “so that we may not be taken advantage of by Satan. For we are not ignorant of his schemes.”

¹¹¹ 2 Corinthians 10:4 “since the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but are powerful through God for the demolition of strongholds. We demolish arguments.”

¹¹² Hebrews 4:15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted in every way as we are, yet without sin.

¹¹³ Luke 4:13 After the devil had finished every temptation, he departed from him for a time.

¹¹⁴ Matthew 16:23 Jesus turned and told Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me because you’re not thinking about God’s concerns (the things of God). but human concerns.”

¹¹⁵ Lightfoot, Colossians. 190

Jesus knew the battle would rage on that Hill for at least three torturous hours after which, He saw Satan “cast out as a supreme ruler of the world of men.”¹¹⁶ Crowds of curious—and perhaps, temporary—followers didn’t know what to make of the moment. The week before His death, Jesus broke His silence, a silence of thirty-three years, and shouted, “Raise a cross; crucify me! I will open the way for all to follow me and to know God!”¹¹⁷ Was Nicodemus there? Most likely. And did he remember what Jesus said to him in private, “Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up.” (John 3:14)

Colossians 2:15 ...HE WON!!!!

So, this is one of the victories Calvary gives us. The next time temptation attempts to entrap our thoughts in the moment as if there was no tomorrow when we would have to face the guilt of defeat or a worse consequence—what did the Captain of the Lord’s army tell Joshua—“Haven’t I commanded you: be strong and courageous? Do not be afraid or discouraged, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.” (Joshua 1:9) Calvary is victory over sin! Whether we talk about the defeat of a spiritual darkness or sins being carried away or being crucified to self or simply forgiven, the battle cry is the same—there is victory in the Cross.

Jesus Instituted A New Covenant

Hebrews 9:15-18 Therefore, he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called might receive the promise of the eternal inheritance, because a death has taken place for redemption from the transgressions committed under the first covenant. Where a will exists, the death of the one who made it must be established. For a will is valid only when people die, since it is never in effect while the one who made it is living. That is why even the first covenant was inaugurated with blood.

Calvary provided for us an “eternal inheritance” as Jesus promised, “I bestow on you a kingdom, just as my Father bestowed one on me.” (Luke 22:29) For those who need this truth illustrated, think of it as Jesus’ last will and testament which the children—you and I—inherit

¹¹⁶ John 12:31 “...Now the ruler of this world cast out....”

¹¹⁷ John 12: 32-34 “As for me, if I am lifted up from the earth I will draw all people to myself.” He said this to indicate what kind of death he was about to die. Then the crowd replied to him, “We have heard from the law that the Messiah will remain forever. So how can you say, ‘The Son of Man must be lifted up?’ Who is this Son of Man?”

upon His death. As scholarship explains, "The question is not now of a setting forth of the ultimate ground of the death of Christ, a ground already assigned at ver. 15—but of an illustration of its practical necessity, in order for the delivering over of the blessings of salvation, as an inheritance."¹¹⁸

Somehow, this illustration lends reasonableness to Jesus' death on Calvary but it is not, in and of itself, explanatory. What must be seen here is that Jesus' death and resurrection initiated a brand new covenant which meant goats and bulls (verse 13) no longer moved the merciful heart of God to overlook sin, proleptically, in the spirit of a divine forgiveness.¹¹⁹

We "share"¹²⁰ in the saints' inheritance in the light." (Colossians 1:12) The Psalmist cried out, "LORD, you are my allotted portion." (Psalm 16:5) Here, perhaps, is the place for a doctrinal hiccup: If heaven is inherited upon the death of the Savior, how could it be called "a reward" (Matthew 16:24) or "in payment" (Matthew 20:13) ?

Rewards?

Jesus and the Apostles did speak of heavenly rewards, which, I for one, admit was unexpected. I came to chalk such language up to a Jewish metonym for all the good things heaven offers.

What is that inheritance in the light of the distribution of rewards? On the parable of "The Great Banquet," Jesus concluded, "you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous." (Luke 14:14) Scholarship interprets, "Only where one does something, not out of an everyday craving for advantage, but out of disinterested love, does the Savior promise the richest reward."¹²¹ Is this not a good Jewish understanding? The writer to the Hebrews recognized that God's Word can "judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart." (Hebrews

¹¹⁸ J. P. Lange, Epistle to the Hebrews. 161ff

¹¹⁹ Acts 17:30-31 Therefore, having overlooked the times of ignorance, God now commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has set a day when he is going to judge the world in righteousness by the man he has appointed. He has provided proof of this to everyone by raising him from the dead.

¹²⁰ The Greek reads "the parcel of the lot"^mNot won, but allotted" (Lightfoot, Colossians. 141).

¹²¹ J. P. Lange. The Gospel According to Luke. vol VIII. 224

4:12) In this way God can, according to Isaiah, "... repay according to their deeds." (Isaiah 59:18) Even in the Beatitudes which describes the purity of a servant's heart in following Jesus, walking in holiness, and lovingly serving the Father's interests, Matthew recalls Jesus saying, "Be glad and rejoice, because your reward is great in heaven." (Matthew 5:12)

Then, this being Biblical, how are we to interpret Jesus when He underscores the role of a true servant who expects nothing in return for their faithfulness! "...when you have done all that you were commanded, you should say, 'We are worthless servants; we've only done our duty.'" (Luke 17:10)

The message of God's grace is unmerited favor. God's Riches At Christ's Expense is the acronym created to teach this. But, at the same time, "The thought of retribution cannot be taken out of the message of the New Testament without destroying it (the entire idea of rewards and punishments)."¹²²

Even the word *payment* has been used in the New Testament of a "reward which God gives in recognition of the doing of His will."¹²³ Paul points out that the distribution of rewards or divine retribution is a matter of judgment.¹²⁴ "...fire will test the quality of each one's work." He theologized, "If anyone's work that he has built survives, he will receive a reward." (1 Corinthians 3:13-14) John confirmed, "Watch yourselves so you don't lose what we have worked for, but that you may receive a full reward." (2 John 8)

Believers are "rewarded" with a crown of righteousness, of life, of glory, and of rejoicing. (2 Timothy 4:8; James 1:12; 1 Peter 5:4; 1 Thessalonians 2:19) Nothing in the language suggests that God plans to distribute trophies of grace based on degrees of success or achievement in this life. God's grace rewards faithfulness. The greatest reward is the honor to serve Him.¹²⁵

¹²² Kittell. vol II. 168

¹²³ Ibid. vol IV. 698

¹²⁴ Romans 2:6 He will repay each one according to his works:

¹²⁵ Matthew 23:11 The greatest among you will be your servant.

Rewards, then, become another perspective on an inheritance. It is the promise of love¹²⁶ which includes forgiveness.¹²⁷ As Paul taught servants to view their relationship with their masters,

“Whatever you do, do it from the heart, as something done for the Lord and not for people, knowing that you will receive the reward of an inheritance from the Lord. You serve the Lord Christ. For the wrongdoer will be paid back for whatever wrong he has done, and there is no favoritism.” (Colossians 3:23-25)

“The relationship between God and man is a personal one.”¹²⁸ Those faithful to the Lord are rewarded with the glories of heaven. Those who did not serve Him but rejected Him will be *rewarded* (recompensed) in kind.¹²⁹ The summary of the matter is this: Salvation is more than a position in Christ; it is a relationship with Him as Lord. The inheritance is the reward.

God in Christ Provided Justification From Sin

Romans 4:25 He was delivered up for (because of) our trespasses and raised for our justification.

Christ’s death atoned for our sin. His resurrection is evidence that His sacrifice for our sin was accepted. “By the same law of solidarity whereby our condemnation had brought Him to the cross,” Godet explained, “our justification must transform His death into life.”¹³⁰ As some maintain: as soon as Jesus cleared or paid our debt in full¹³¹ (“It is finished”), He must be legally set free. Regardless the form our explanation fancies or what metaphor we use, we must say that Jesus’

¹²⁶ Matthew 10:42 And whoever gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is a disciple, truly I tell you, he will never lose his reward

¹²⁷ Kittell. vol II. 168

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Matthew 10:33 “But whoever denies me before others, I will also deny him before my Father in heaven.

¹³⁰ Godet, The Epistle to the Romans. 184

¹³¹ The concept of a debt being paid for on Calvary is a motif which makes His death sound more reasonable in terms of our human understanding. But this idea is questionable in terms of the biblical perspectives on Calvary. Yes, His death was vicarious and had He not gone to the Cross we would yet be in our sins and eternally lost, but the idea of “owing” is questionable as a theological truth.

death alone did not complete the plan. His resurrection was always a necessary final part of the divine plan.

Paul explained, "For the love of Christ compels us, since we have reached this conclusion: If one died for all, then all died. And he died for all so that those who live should no longer live for themselves, but for the one who died for them and was raised." (2 Corinthians 5:14-15) Said another way: Jesus, was totally God and totally man; so, when He died, God bore the weight of our sin, carrying it away and when He rose from the died, man rose, making our resurrection equally a reality. Because the plan of God required a resurrection, Paul could conclude, "And if Christ has not been raised, ... you are still in your sins." (1 Corinthians 15:17)

So here. Our trespasses slew Him, God declaring us righteous with the expiation, or carrying off of those trespasses and the guilt they brought. He was vindicated when He rose. John Stott wrote, "His resurrection was God's decisive demonstration that he had not died in vain."¹³²

An argument is made here for our bodily glorification since Jesus was not resurrected a ghost—a point He took pains to make clear to His disciples¹³³ to strengthen their faith in Him. It should be obvious that an eternal God wants an eternal fellowship with living saints He redeemed. "He (God) is not the God of the dead, but of the living." (Matthew 22:32)

What does it mean to be justified or declared righteous? Using the debt motif: "...justice was satisfied and pardon possible."¹³⁴ In Pauline legal terms: "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus." (Romans 8:1) For we who believe or trust Jesus and His work on the cross, the sentence of death had been remitted.¹³⁵ We might say that the King, whose right it is to free us from punishment, has pardoned us. A pardon restores full rights: adoption (Ephesians 1:5), an inheritance in heaven (1 Peter 1:4), citizenship in Heaven

¹³² Stott. 85

¹³³ Luke 24:39 Look at my hands and my feet, that it is I myself! Touch me and see, because a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you can see I have.

¹³⁴ Godet, The Epistle to the Romans. 184

¹³⁵ In the American legal system, we might add: with prejudice and if you maintain that salvation cannot be forfeited, double jeopardy attaches..

(Philippians 3:20), access to the Father (Romans 5:2), and ...much more.

For a Holy God, Calvary's provision must include sanctification, which scholarship calls, "the fruits of justification"¹³⁶ and which Paul details to the Romans in His letter to them (Romans 6-8). Until here, the provisions of the Cross might have seemed like a trickle of blessings—we know we are forgiven. But now the flood gates open when appropriating the message and provision of the Cross means being holy as He is holy!¹³⁷ "I will open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you a blessing until it overflows." (Malachi 3:10 NASB)

Jesus Reconciled Us to God

2 Corinthians 5:19 God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them.

If we sought for one overarching reason why Jesus had to be crucified, it would be to reconcile us to God. The fifth chapter of the second letter to the Corinthians, verses 16-21, gives us a detailed message of what Jesus' ministry was all about, culminating in His crucifixion and resurrection. I could not help but appreciate one definition of "reconciliation" found in the Greek dictionary discussing the reconciliation of a married man and woman, "let her return to harmony"¹³⁸ with her husband. Is there not a dynamic at work here in which we, the bride of Christ, have returned to harmony with God!

The word at its root meaning signifies a change and an exchange. Though the language is weak in describing the reconciliation we have with God through Christ, which reconciliation we represent as ambassadors, every believer anecdotally understands its meaning. The concept of an exchange usually indicates elements of equal value but not in the biblical language of redemption. God took out the heart of stone and replaced it with one of flesh.¹³⁹ "There is a change, not merely in the disposition of man or his legal relationship with God

¹³⁶ Godet, *The Epistle to the Romans*. 186

¹³⁷ 1 Peter 1:15 But as the one who called you is holy, you also are to be holy in all your conduct;

¹³⁸ Thayer, 333. cp. 1 Corinthians 7:11

¹³⁹ 2 Corinthians 3:3 You show that you are Christ's letter, delivered (ministered unto). by us, not written with ink but with the Spirit of the living God — not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts. (hearts of flesh).

(our position in Christ as saved), but in the total state of his life."¹⁴⁰ We have been changed! We are new creatures in Christ.

¹⁴⁰ Kittell vol I. 255

GOD'S SUFFERING SERVANT

... you make him a guilt offering - Isaiah 53:10

I invite the reader to obtain my booklet, "The Suffering Servant: Isaiah's Astonishing Prophecy" in which I outline the changes in Biblical studies from a devotional to a critical approach and the impact these changes had on the interpretation of this sacred text. Was Jesus God's "Suffering Servant"? Well, when it is all said and done, "On all hands," says C. R. North, "it is agreed that whoever was the original of the servant, none except Christ was its fulfillment."¹

Isaiah's writings shake our assurance in academic conclusions that do not take the prophet's divine source into consideration. Not just his message (as unbelievable as that became, Who has believed our message) but his use of words (and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?) begs a reevaluation of modern theological thought that fails to explain verse 12, "For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors." We might agree with R. K. Harrison in his "Introduction to the Old Testament" that "the occidental (Greek) mind (logic) is not sufficient to appreciate the semitic writing style. Much that was considered error was simply a style of writing unfamiliar to the modern mind."² What makes a study of Isaiah's prophecy of so great significance in terms of the Atonement is that this work is the primary source on the subject. We are all the Ethiopian eunuch "sitting in his chariot on his way home, reading the prophet Isaiah" (Acts 8:28) and needing God's Philip to explain to us what we are reading. We continue to enquire, "who is the prophet saying this about — himself

¹ C R North *The Interpreters Dictionary of the Bible*, IV. p. 294

² Harrison clarifies, "Because of the far-reaching differences between the oriental somatic mind and the culture of the Hellenistic world, the early Christians recognize that not all the concepts expressed in the Old Testament were in absolute harmony with the outlook of the nascent Christian era. This divergence of standpoint receives fresh emphasis when the works of the law ... sit in contradistinction to the character of divine grace, as in the theology of Paul." Harrison p 417

or someone else" (Acts 8:34)? Luke narrated his testimony (Acts 8:35). "Philip proceeded to tell him the good news about Jesus, beginning with that Scripture." (Isaiah 53:7-8)

Isaiah's "gospel" is the purest and most complete record of Atonement theory in Scripture. We must jump up into the chariot along with Philip and listen with the heart what he has to say.³

Was Jesus Accepting Our Punishment?

The question asked since the Reformation and primarily by —the so-called—protestors: Did Isaiah prophesy that Jesus' suffering would be punitive? Not far from where I live there is a maximum security prison which is called a "correctional institution." But are the men incarcerated there being rehabilitated or reformed or in anyway changed for the betterment of society, if and when they are released? Or is the word "correctional" just a polite redefining of a punitive measure that sounds more pleasing to the public's ear? Is their detainment really retributive, a punishment, or is it restorative justice?

If Jesus' passion was propitiatory, to appease God's wrath ("The Lord has punished him for the iniquity of us all," Isaiah 53:6), we might be confident in calling His suffering punitive, retributive. But to what degree we maintain His suffering as expiatory ("He bore the sin of many," Isaiah 53:12), we might say His suffering was a restorative measure, to provide us reconciliation with God.

This issue concerns Catholic theology, penance, as well. "Penance is an act of discipline and rehabilitation," teaches Prof. Vidu with a caveat, "but from the 11th century onward penance acquires a distinctively retributive overtone. Anselm (as a Catholic theologian) restricts retribution to temporal sins. (In other words) For the sins that we commit in our lives we can be punished. (But) Not so for original sin for which there was no adequate punishment short of annihilation."⁴

³ Philip didn't have John 3:16 or Acts 16:4 or Romans 3:23-25 to discuss God's salvation through Christ ...but he had Isaiah. And he had a translation not any original Hebrew. Ethiopians were fluent in Greek not Hebrew and they had the Septuagint version, the Greek translation, of Isaiah's "Gospel" translated at least 100 years before Christ. The Ethiopian eunuch, whom Philip met in the wilderness, was reading about Calvary. Should we need any more to convince us of the providential hand of God, the irrefutable evidence, that confirms and validates a Christian faith in the Word of God!?

⁴ Vidu. 56

Absolution for the penitent (the confessional) becomes a central point of Catholic theology. In Catholic theology suffering played a part: "... pardon does not remit penance.⁵ The best penances ...are... sent from God—crosses, sicknesses, pains ... which atone for sins. ...suffering for sin: first atonement to God, and second the re-making of our souls. ... Suffering⁶ subdues bodily appetites, cleanses and restores us."⁷

Central to Anselm's doctrine of atonement, therefore, is his theology of original sin. He saw sin as simply failure to render to God His due. What is due to God is our obedience. Adam's sin is the failure to honor faithfulness to God for its own sake. God gave no reason why the knowledge of good and evil was forbidden but Adam should have honored God's instruction to stay away nonetheless. We owed God our fidelity. Anselm held that "Man cannot and ought not by any means to receive from God what God designed to give him unless he returned to God everything which he took from him."⁸ Anselm believed that God's very nature makes gratuitous forgiveness impossible.⁹

All this to explain what Prof Vidu called "the mechanism by which God saves us."¹⁰ Scholarship then confirms what we, in this work, have been maintaining all along that there is a "scholastic drive ... to probe the depth of this mystery for its reasonableness."¹¹

A Personal Theory

It was through Adam's eating forbidden fruit that "the knowledge of evil" was introduced into the world, not just on an intellectual level but experientially estranging humankind from the holiness of God. Jesus' death and resurrection had to address this alienation through the Cross. We are made in God's image which separates us from the rest of creation with our ability to "reason together" (Isaiah 1:18) with God

⁵ Stott. 309

⁶ In Protestant theology, suffering is best explained, not in terms of atonement (Christ having suffered once for all, Hebrews 10:10) but in terms of a worldview that accepts suffering as God's means to draw us closer to Himself (Hebrews 5:8; 11:6; 1 Peter 2:19).

⁷ Stott. 310. cp. George D. Smith, ed. *The Teaching of the Catholic Church*, 2nd ed. (London: Burns and Oates, 1952), pp. 114-1-46

⁸ Anselm, *Cur Deus Homo* 1.23.246 also 1.24.250

⁹ Vidu. 59ff

¹⁰ *Ibid* 61

¹¹ *Ibid*.

over issues of "sin, righteousness, and judgment." (John 16:8), the three subjects that are the tripod of the atonement.

- ◆ The **sin** that concerns God is one of trust or faith. Jesus' argument is "because they believe not on me." (John 16:9) The sole requirement in understanding God is not an academic or head qualification but a matter of the heart.
- ◆ God discusses **righteousness** with us, living for Him, in His absence (John 16:10). "And he died for all so that those who live should no longer live for themselves, but for the one who died for them and was raised. From now on, then, we do not know anyone from a worldly perspective. Even if we have known Christ from a worldly perspective, yet now we no longer know him in this way. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, and see, the new has come!" (2 Corinthians 5:15-17)
- ◆ God warns us that we are involved in the conflict of the ages "against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this darkness, against evil, spiritual forces in the heavens." (Ephesians 6:12) But they are already defeated. "This world is (already) **judged**." (John 16:11) Jesus' death on the cross condemned and defeated the spiritual darkness." He disarmed the rulers and authorities and disgraced them publicly; he triumphed over them in him." (Colossians 2:15)

Why not a Fortuitous Forgiveness?

Parents used to discipline children in a way that introduced an experience painful enough to the child to bring about behavioral reform. Sometimes discipline can be less severe (a child loses TV viewing privileges for a time). This is theologically called "satisfactory" because the goal is to reform, to teach self-discipline. Sometimes, however, punishment was corporal making it punitive, in the minds of those who do not accept such severe means. Do the crime, do the time! And often in this regard, it helps the parent to generate a little anger to stay focused, while doing something that pains them, too, emotionally. It sounds reasonable, then, to think that Jesus' suffering on Calvary for our sins was necessary, that is to say: it was

punitive. Tyler McNabb of the University of Macan, called it a "penal substitution."¹²

If Jesus suffered just to obtain a divine forgiveness, whether or not averting or satisfying God's anger, it seems to escape logic why God couldn't find a less painful approach to provide our salvation. We do not beat children to forgive them!

Calvary again is not simply a statement of forgiveness. The cross dealt with the three aspects of God's Holiness just outlined: sin (all sin: original and personal), righteousness, and judgment. In childlike language we could say, Jesus died to take away our sin. This is more than forgiveness. In a penal way, this was Christ taking the punishment we deserved. We might say, in a legal sense, sin has been adjudicated. Righteousness is the divine provision of newness of life, so that we might live now for Christ. The Judgment is a message of Satan's ultimate, decisive, and final fall.¹³

This little satisfies, however, the theorists who need to research why all this took our Lord's suffering, becoming our paschal lamb? We must reread Paul's comment to the Roman church (Romans 11:33b) "How unsearchable his judgments. (His decisions)"¹⁴ God decided to corral us all, see all humankind—not just Adam—as sinners, in order that He then might be merciful to all who would seek His mercy.

If this is penal justice, at least one piece to the puzzle is still locked away in the mind of God—unsearchable—giving us only a partial picture of His reason for sacrificing His Son for our redemption.

Judicial language, granted, is everywhere in Paul's writings. "... from ... sin came the judgment, resulting in condemnation, but from many trespasses came the gift, resulting in justification. (acquittal)." (Romans 5:16)

We must take care not to reason a point of theology that isn't spelled out in Scripture. "The hidden things belong to the LORD our God, but the revealed things belong to us and our children forever," (Deuteronomy 29:29). God does tell us some things primarily through Paul's and Isaiah's writings. We are drafted into agreeing with Dr. William Craig

¹² written on the back cover of Wm Craig's work.

¹³ The word "judged" in John 16:11 is a perfect form meaning immediate, complete, and permanent. The true meaning of "capital punishment".

¹⁴ Thayer. 360 The Greek dictionary calls judgment, "the decision (whether severe or mild) which one passes on the faults of others."

who concludes, "The formulaic expression 'died **for** our sins,' so prominent in the Pauline corpus... refers to substitutionary, **punitive** suffering." Okay. And we agree with him because it's Bible that the meaning of the word '**for**' is substitutionary (a vicarious atonement) in Romans 4:25.¹⁵ It "is made clear by expressions like 'delivered up for our trespasses.'"¹⁶ That's what Isaiah said. "he bore the sin of many and interceded for the rebels" (Isaiah 53:12) This leads us immediately into a deeper discussion, of "Divine Justice."¹⁷

Divine Justice

It seems important to review Dr. William Craig's interest in the role of divine justice in the Atonement. Dr. Craig is investigating the Pauline use of "forensic terminology rooted in Jewish notions of law."¹⁸ In English: Paul needed to explain the provision of divine grace through Calvary to his fellow jews and they understood God's forgiveness only in terms of Moses's writings, Torah law.

We want to explore some of the benefits of Jesus' death and resurrection which we can appropriate like: justification by faith, forgiveness of sins, or reconciliation with God. Jesus' death opens up beautiful possibilities with our Heavenly Father through prayer. But how did we logically get from the Cross to such a communion with God? The path is atonement.

This word for Paul was a study in God's mercy. But according to Dr. Craig it was a forensic or legal process. He called it "divine justice." David Lewis in his work "Do We Believe in Penal Substitution?" confesses, "penal substitution sometimes makes sense after all, even if none can say how it makes sense."¹⁹ (Do I need to read this again!)

¹⁵ Romans 4:25 He was delivered up for (because of) our trespasses and raised for our justification.

¹⁶ Craig, 48

¹⁷ Socinus, (1539-1604), theologian whose anti-Trinitarian theology was later influential in the development of Unitarian theology, contends that the only thing intended here is that an occasion for the death of Christ was given by our offenses, or that Christ died only with the view that he might, by his example, incline us to quit the commission of sin, and render us certain of its pardon. - cp. Turretin. 21

¹⁸ Craig, 51

¹⁹ David Lewis Do We Believe in Penal Substitution? 209 cp, Craig 199. footnote 9

In an article repudiating Charles Finney's theological legacy²⁰ Dr. Michael Horton summarizes what we think we know,²¹ so far: "...on the basis of clear biblical texts, ... justification (in the Greek, "to declare righteous,"²² rather than "to make righteous") was a forensic (i.e., legal) verdict. In other words ... it was a declaration or pronouncement that had someone else's righteousness (i.e., Christ's) as its basis. Therefore, it was a perfect, once and-for-all verdict of right standing."²³

Perhaps, one of the most revealing verses in legal language is Romans 8:1 "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus." Here condemnation is a legal judgment or sentencing, a judicial pronouncement.²⁴ (And Paul's Jewish brethren can understand this.) I am reminded of Abraham's intercessory prayer, and in a legal sense pleading his case before his Lord for his nephew, Lot, "Won't the Judge of the whole earth do what is just?" (Genesis 18:25)

It should be theologically safe to conclude that if God dons the judicial robe a declaration of righteousness by Him is authoritative and final. Dr. Craig defines righteousness as "God's own moral law, which is grounded in His unchanging nature as a God of perfect holiness."²⁵ This is central to any understanding of why God does what He does, why Jesus had to die. Jesus' death and resurrection led to a pronouncement of acquittal (a legally final and total forgiveness) of the complete record of our sins. It remains only that through confession and repentance we recognize our freedom in Christ from the crimes against God that before our salvation described us. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9) The joy of a true salvation should always be, "I am pardoned of all sin!"

²⁰ We are interested in Finney, the lawyer turned theologian/evangelist for his approach to Atonement theory. cp. chapter "Theories of Atonement."

²¹ This is reformation theology. Catholic theology teaches that we are, indeed, being made righteous (purged of sin) through living the Sacrament of Penance.

²² In Jots & Tittles, I go into some grammatical detail on the greek form used here which best translates "to declare."

²³ accessed March 15, 2021, <https://www.the-highway.com/articleMay11.html>

²⁴ ἀλλὰ κατακριθῆμι μου "But if the case be decided against me" taken from Moulton & Milligan, "The Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament." page 328

²⁵ Craig. 59

Cursed of God

In Romans 3:21-26 Paul interprets Jesus' death on a Roman cross as a curse and the subsequent benefits of Jesus taking upon Himself the curse as a penal substitute but he does not speculate on a reason for its necessity. As a motif, Paul goes no further than to re-iterate that Jesus took "the curse of the law... for us..."²⁶

Paul interpreted this to say that dying such an ignoble death a man was cursed under Jewish law. "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law (which some equate with the wrath of God)²⁷ by becoming a curse for us, because it is written, Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree." (Galatians 3:13) As a judicial act of God against sin, the curse means punishment is inescapable. "In judicial procedures of ancient peoples curses play a significant role, e..g. In the execution of punishment, the enforcement of law, etc.²⁸ ...there can be no divine fellowship ... for those who stand under punishment, except by way of a penal substitute."²⁹

A. W. F. Blunt on this verse in Galatians wrote, "The language here is startling."³⁰ The water here was thought too deep to swim across; so, some commentators tried to circumvent this lake on foot. Perhaps, not the curse of God but the curse of the law? Wrong. (Deuteronomy 21:23). Perhaps, He felt cursed in sympathy with sinners. Wrong. "Cursed of God" (Deuteronomy 21:23).

Luther in his Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians heralded the good news, "Our most merciful Father, seeing us to be oppressed and overwhelmed with the curse of the law, and so to be holding under the same that we could never be delivered from it by our own power, sent his only Son into the world and laid upon him all the sins of all men, saying: Be thou Peter that denier; Paul that persecutor, blasphemer and cruel oppressor; David that adulterer; that sinner which did eat the apple in paradise; that thief which hanged upon the

²⁶ Deuteronomy 21:23, "cursed of God (כִּי־קִלְקֵלֶת אֶל־הַיָּם וְהָאֵרֶץ). is everyone who hangs on a tree."

²⁷ cp Leland Ryken. Dictionary of Biblical Imagery. page 187

²⁸ Kittell. vol I. 449

²⁹ Ibid. 451

³⁰ A. W. F. Blunt, The Epistle of Paul to the Galatians, The Clarendon Bible (Oxford: Clarendon, 1925). p. 96. cp. Stott. 335

cross; and briefly, be thou the person which has committed the sins of all men; see therefore that thou pay and satisfy for them."³¹

Christ, Our Sin (Guilt) Offering

In His forbearance, God, "passed over the sins of previous generations"³² But how is this justice, if before Christ, sinners get away with it without punishment? He exercised "restraint" (Romans 3:25)³³ knowing that He provide a justification by faith, to "declare righteous the one who has faith in Jesus" (Romans 3:26) In Christ's death, God's justice has been vindicated. "How so?" William Craig asks and answers, "Paul does not say."³⁴

"Isaiah 53 does not make clear whether (Jesus) merely endured the punishment ...or whether he was imputed their guilt."³⁵ Jesus did not just bare our sins, "he became sin." He took our sins as His own! "(God) made the one who did not know sin to be sin (sin offering) for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." (2 Corinthians 5:21)

Did we go too far in saying Jesus became the guilt offering for our sins? Yet Isaiah prophesied that God made "him a guilt offering." Paul declared Him to be not an offering to cover sin but to be the very sin that needed to be born or carried away. But are not both saying the same thing, Paul in legal terms, Isaiah in terms of the sacrifice Jesus became?

Isaiah 53: 6 reads: "We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the LORD has **laid** on him (caused him to suffer because of) the iniquity of us all." God's servant "met up with" punishment. This is the Suffering Servant becoming God's

³¹ Martin Luther. Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians (London: James Clarke, 1953), p. 272) cp. Stott. 336

³² Craig. 70

³³ Trench renders this verse to mean "There needed a signal manifestation of the righteousness of God, on account of the long praetermission or passing over of sins, in His infinite forbearance, with no adequate expression of His wrath against them, during all those long years which preceded the coming of Christ; which manifestation of God's righteousness found place, when He set forth no other and no less than His own Son to be the propitiatory sacrifice for sin." (Hebrews 9:15, 22) Trench Synonyms. 117

³⁴ Craig. 70

³⁵ Craig. 75

sacrifice for our sins? As Dr. Lange states it, "Israel ... has sinned, and the Servant of God is punished."³⁶

The Guilt Offering

The word "laid" which means "to meet up with or fall upon" in the context of the guilt offering in verse 10 best translates: "The Lord caused our guilt (our punishment) to fall on him."

J. P. Lange, with dogmatic emphasis, maintained that there can be no other meaning! "Now if the object of this ...was not to make the... punishment strike the Servant ...with the same ... necessity with which it would have struck the actual guilty ...and these guilty ones ... might be free from punishment," he affirms (if this is not the meaning)," then, I see not how the prophet would say "Jehovah laid on him the iniquity of us all."³⁷ As Lange translated the Hebrew thought: The Lord "gave up his servant that he might take on himself the **guilt and punishment** of the sinful people."³⁸

Verse 8 adds: God smiting the Servant was to death for the people's sins: "for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken." This translated from the Greek reads: "...because of the iniquities of my people he was led to death."³⁹

Verse 10 makes this undeniably clear: "... the LORD makes his life an **offering** for sin" The offering spoken of here is the **guilt** offering.⁴⁰ This is atonement theory in its purest form. Here is the keystone, or better still, the cornerstone, the underlining theme, of all Christian theology!

The accent on this amazing account is Isaiah's choice of words for an offering. He speaks in verse 10 of the guilt offering. This begs the question, why not the burnt offering or sin offering or peace offering? All these are visible in Christ but Isaiah wanted us to know that the guilt offering should be particularly noted. Christ was our guilt offering. Many scholars equate this to the sin offering because verse 10 in

³⁶ Lange, John Peter. Commentary of the Holy Scriptures Vol 6, page 576

³⁷ *ibid.*

³⁸ *ibid.* 581

³⁹ ἀπὸ τῶν ἀνομιῶν τοῦ λαοῦ μου ἤχθη εἰς θάνατον

⁴⁰ The guilt offering "confined to offenses against God and man ...that could be covered by compensation." (BDB. 79): $\text{D}\Psi\aleph$

the Septuagint says “an offering for sin.”⁴¹ And in verse 12 clearly, “he bore the **sin** of many.” Also one clear meaning of the word “to be guilty” is “to be culpable” which does not presuppose any penitence or sense of guilt. But for 3 additional reasons the “guilt” offering correctly describes what Jesus provided on Calvary.

Restitution

The guilt offering was a means by which restitution could be made for damaged and broken relationships. Leviticus 5:16 introduces the guilt offering as a restitution for injury or destruction of property, breaking Torah law, or ..sin against God.⁴² Forgiveness was conditioned on this offering. Jesus restored our relationship to God and God to us. And he gave forgiveness a divine power to erase the pain of sin as well as the sin, itself.

A Lamb

Poor people could substitute less expensive offerings for the burnt and sin offerings but not the guilt offering. It had to be a lamb.⁴³ Verse 7: “he was led like a **lamb** to the slaughter,” It was important to specify here that a lamb would be sacrificed.

No Festivals

The guilt offering was never offered as part of one of the great Festivals, unlike the burnt offering and the sin offering.⁴⁴ The guilt offering was not a celebration of Calvary. It was a personal encounter for the sinner with Calvary. If the Law could describe the moment of salvation, a moment at the mourner’s bench where the sinner experiences the Savior’s gentle healing touch upon the soul, where God, in

⁴¹ ὄωτε περι ἀμαρτίας. The NIV reads his life an offering for sin

⁴² They must make restitution for what they have failed to do in regard to the holy things, pay an additional penalty of a fifth of its value and give it all to the priest. The priest will make atonement for them with the ram as a guilt offering, and they will be forgiven.

⁴³ Lev 14:21-22 “If, however, they are poor and cannot afford these, they must take one male lamb as a guilt offering to be waved to make atonement for them, together with a tenth of an ephah of the finest flour mixed with olive oil for a grain offering, a log of oil, and two doves or two young pigeons, such as they can afford, one for a sin offering and the other for a burnt offering.

⁴⁴ See Numbers 28. The Sabbath Offerings, The Monthly Offerings, Passover, The Festival of Weeks.

the person of the Savior, pours in the oil and wine and heals the soul, restores our joy, forgives our sin, and quickens us to newness of life, it is here in the guilt offering.

God was Pleased

Verses 10 of Isaiah 53 says “The Lord was **pleased** (inclined, willing) to beat him painfully.”

“God can be seen as delighting in it.”⁴⁵ Dr. Vidu interprets Anselm of Canterbury. But we must not misrepresent the heart of God in this matter. The language here—to me—does not depict a divine rage or wrath but clearly a divine resolve. “What makes the death of Christ pleasing to God is not so much the fact that it represents the punishment due to humanity,” Augustine believed, “but that Christ's human attitude in proximity to his death is exemplary. He is a fitting and pleasing sacrifice on account of his obedience even in the face of death. This is what propitiates God.”⁴⁶ We have to remember the times the Father expressed His delight in Jesus, knowing His mission: “behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” (Matthew 17:5)

- “Pleased” The language of this prophecy suggests God was as motivated, as passionate, as He was on creation day; only here, there is a more solemn tone to His plan.
- “Pleased” It is safe to say what Isaiah is not saying, that is to say: God took *no* pleasure in Jesus' pain.
- “Pleased” Could this speak of desire or the acceptance of good counsel? If I may: Is God's heart or head driving this event? The Greek translation reads “The Lord also is pleased to purge him.”⁴⁷ If this is a disciplinary action to purify the soul, it is our souls being purged of sin vicariously. But the question is: is this God's desire (how He feels at the moment) or just the wisdom of His counsel that Isaiah is reporting? In the Greek language (and therefore the Septuagint) the nuance for the word “willed”⁴⁸ or “counseled” is sadly lost. Both meanings

⁴⁵ Vidu. 77

⁴⁶ Vidu. 40

⁴⁷ κύριος βούλεται καθαρῖσαι αὐτόν

⁴⁸ θελειν

are interchangeable with this word "pleased." "The Septuagint belongs to the age when the distinctions were being obliterated."⁴⁹ And maybe that's a good thing lest we think that somehow in His heart God repented of actions His wisdom required for our salvation. And what was Jesus thinking or feeling according to Hebrews 12:2 "**For the joy** set before him he endured the cross" The word "for" can also mean "instead of" (suggesting Jesus set aside any thought of more joyous or happier times with His Father to endure this moment) though no English translation supports this rendering. The translators all seem to support the idea that Jesus knew that this was the path to ultimate joy!

- "Pleased" But was the Father only accepting of his pain out of the necessity to provide salvation for us (the counsel of His will and wisdom)? Did He look beyond the moment deeming this pain necessary to achieve a greater joy of or pleasure in our pending reconciliation with Him? God was not just adhering to sound counsel, staying with the plan drawn up before the foundation of the earth was laid. God shows no reluctance in this prophetic utterance to go through with it. We might rightly say that His love for us drove His interest and intent.
- "Pleased" Whatever else we conclude: the Divine will played a vital role, actively participating, in His plan for His Suffering Servant. "For God so loved the world....." (John 3:16)
- An interesting note: What was Jesus asking in the garden when He used this word? "Father, if you are **willing**, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done." (Luke 22:42) Was He asking, "Can we not revisit the plan for the Salvation of souls? How necessary is this plan? If you want, your wisdom could find another way!?" There was no other way! How do we know? God was pleased with this one. "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved." (Acts 4:12)

⁴⁹ G Johannes Botterweck & Helmer Ringgren. Transl: John T. Willis Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974. Vol I. P 629f

CHRIST OUR PASSOVER

Christ our Passover lamb has been sacrificed. - 1 Corinthians 5:7

THE Jewish passover, first, no doubt, in importance among the major feasts,¹ began on the first day (Joshua 5:10) of the first month (Exodus 12:2; Ezekiel 45:21).² The significance of the event is probably best told in Isaiah 43. In verse 1 God declares "I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; you are mine." And He added (verse 3) "For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, and your Savior. I have given Egypt as a ransom for you."

It would be incorrect in saying that Paul was speaking metaphorically when he called Jesus "our Passover lamb." As John-the-Baptist already announced, Jesus was the "Lamb of God" (John 1:29, 36) He was the antitype. The animal was the type. The dictionary of Biblical Imagery calls the sheep "a particularly apt source of metaphor for spiritual realities."³

Isaiah's prophecy, likewise, understood Jesus to be God's sacrificial lamb. "He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth. Like a lamb led to the slaughter and like a sheep silent before her shearers, he did not open his mouth." (Isaiah 53:7) The prophet in particular represented Christ's docility, His submissiveness, His silence, in His absolute innocence in the face of an out-of-control abuse, a tyrannical and beyond harsh and tortuous mistreatment. It is not coincidental that Isaiah's word for a lamb is Moses's word for the Passover sacrifice (Exodus 12:3)..

Isaiah 53:6 also calls you and I sheep, but wayward sheep. Our wandering is defined here as iniquitous, a Hebrew word meaning our

¹ BDB. 820

² elsewhere we are told the second month (Numbers 9:11).. The lexicon explains "if impossible at that time, then on the 14th day of the second month. (BDB. 820).

³ Ryken. 782

bent or proclivity.⁴ The dictionary again describes this scene: "Sheep would not survive long without a shepherd. Sheep are not only dependent creatures; they are also singularly unintelligent, prone to wandering and unable to find their way back to a sheep fold even when it is in sight."⁵ There is no better description or definition of the Old Testament word translated here as "iniquity." This word, iniquity, contains one more element: guilt or justifiable punishment. Even here there is a hint of a retributive justice in the atonement. But here, it seems more likely a restorative effort to teach sheep to stay close by.

Redemption

The Passover celebrated God's deliverance of Israel from Egyptian bondage, as already noted. Provision likewise has been made through Christ's death to free us from a bondage to sin. Passover was an act of redemption a point God reminds them of over and over and over again throughout the Biblical history.⁶ The Scriptures regarding the Passover tell a story about Calvary.

- ◆ It was a military victory against the gods of Egypt: "I will pass through the land of Egypt on that night and strike every first-born male in the land of Egypt, both people and animals. I am the LORD; I will execute judgments against all the gods of Egypt." (Exodus 12:12)
 - In like manner, Jesus' death was a spiritual victory over Satan. "He disarmed the rulers and authorities and disgraced them publicly; he triumphed over them in him." (Colossians 2:15)
- ◆ It was all God. He even took credit for Pharaoh's recalcitrance. : I will harden Pharaoh's heart, ...that the Egyptians may know that I am the LORD. (Exodus 14:4)
 - Calvary is all about grace without works. "For you are saved by grace through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God's gift." (Ephesians 2:8)

⁴ cp. Girdlestone. 78. David spoke of his disobedience in Psalm 51 three times.

⁵ Ryken. 782

⁶ cp. Exodus 7:5; 13:9, 14, 16; 16:6, 32; 18:1, 8, 9, 10; 20:2; 29:46; 2 Samuel 7:6; 1 Kings 8:16; Ezekiel 20:5-10; Hosea 11:1; Amos 2:10; 3:1; Micah 7:15; Zechariah 10:10

- ◆ God claims those delivered as belonging now to Him “I bore you on eagles’ wings, and brought you unto myself.” (Exodus 19:4)
 - We are His, now. “The Holy Spirit is the down payment of our inheritance, until the redemption of the possession, to the praise of his glory.” (Ephesians 1:14)
 - “For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s.” (1 Corinthians 6:20 KJV)
- ◆ God’s three-fold reason for the Passover according to David (2 Samuel 7:23): “And who is like your people Israel? God came to one nation on earth in order
 - (1) to redeem a people for himself,
 - “He gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to cleanse for himself a people for his own possession, eager to do good works.” (Titus 2:14)
 - (2) to make a name for himself, and
 - “He exercised this power in Christ by raising him from the dead and seating him at his right hand in the heavens far above every ruler and authority, power and dominion, and every title given, not only in this age but also in the one to come.” (Ephesians 1:20-21)
 - “so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow —in heaven and on earth and under the earth.” (Philippians 2:10)
 - (3) to perform for them great and awesome acts, driving out nations and their gods before your people you redeemed for yourself from Egypt.”
 - “For the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power.” (1 Corinthians 4:20)

A Greater Deliverance

Dr. Craig asks, “Is it possible that by the first century the Passover sacrifice had come to be understood, at least in popular thinking, as

expiatory?"⁷ This is to ask does the blood signify God overlooking for the time being the sins of Israel (Acts 17:30) instead of a sacrifice designed to appease God? As we learn: the blood of a one year old lamb or goat was brushed on the doorposts and the upper post (the door header) of their homes (Exodus 12:5, 7). And when the Lord saw the blood applied there, the angel would bypass that home when the plague of death came (Exodus 12:12,13). Josephus understood that "... Passover lambs in Egypt purified⁸ the homes of the Israelites."⁹ (John 11:55)

The primary significance of the passover was not to appease God's wrath but an act of divine deliverance for His people. God was addressing the question of sin and in an act of mercy brought them out of their bondage. "Then the LORD said, "I have observed the misery of my people in Egypt, and have heard them crying out because of their oppressors. I know about their sufferings." (Exodus 3:7) In like manner Jesus' death frees us from the bondage to sin. This is true expiation. "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and death." (Romans 8:2)

There would be coming a greater miracle of His power and love! Passover shall be replaced with a far more significant and relevant act of deliverance. The Miracle of the Passover will not be as noteworthy as Calvary. By way of the Cross, the saved of the nations of the world will be gathered into His Kingdom. "Look, the days are coming" — the LORD's declaration — "when it will no longer be said, 'As the LORD lives who brought the Israelites from the land of Egypt,' but, 'As the LORD lives, who brought and led the descendants of the house of Israel from the land of the north and from all the other countries where I had banished them.' They will dwell once more in their own land." (Jeremiah 23:7-8)

"However, look, the days are coming" — the LORD's declared — "when it will no longer be said, 'As the LORD lives who brought the Israelites from the land of Egypt.'" (Jeremiah 16:14)

* * *

⁷ Craig. 33, ftnt. #45

⁸ ceremonially cleansed or set apart for God's service and use purification was the vow of the Nazarite. (Numbers 6:21).

⁹ Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews. 2,312

Calvary

Paul links Passover with Calvary:¹⁰ “For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.” (I Corinthians 5:7) Passover was less about the Egyptian first born as much as it foreshadowed in God’s mind the death of His own Son. Even a brief study of the Passover Feast should bear this out. I am always wondering what was on our Lord’s heart and mind when He directed Israel to observe this day. We know it had something to do with the Cross. I am reminded of Abraham’s trek to Mount Moriah intending to sacrifice his only son. God was walking along side Abraham that day. It was He who had asked the patriarch to take Isaac along for the outing. God knew Isaac wouldn’t be sacrificed! But He also knew that His Son would be! “Like the original Passover sacrifice,” we read in the Dictionary of Biblical Imagery, “His death atones for sin..., His blood purifies ...and His body sanctifies....”¹¹

Communion, Love Feasts, The Eucharist

So, no surprise, to learn Jesus observed the Passover feast for His “The Last Supper” as a memorial to His death (Matthew 26:17; Mark 14:12; Luke 22:7-8). For Paul (1 Corinthians 11:23-33) it is a reminder also of the resurrection and our Lord’s promised return. Some know this as Holy Communion, others as the Holy Eucharist.

Whether this is *symbolic* (Holy Communion is a type of Christ’s death) or *sacramental* (the Eucharist elements are considered part of Christ) is a theological inquiry.¹² Transubstantiation (The Catholic belief that the elements become the body and blood of Christ) and Consubstantiation (The Lutheran belief that the elements coexist with the body and blood of Christ in the Eucharist) are a genuine component of the faith of many believers. After much dialogue with my

¹⁰ The guilt offering which Isaiah references should not be confused with the Feast of Passover in which other sacrificial animals could be substituted. Exodus 12:5 “from either the sheep or the goats”

¹¹ Ryken. 630. The dictionary leaves room in this description for both transubstantiation (the conversion of the substance of the Eucharistic elements into the body and blood of Christ at consecration, only the appearances of bread and wine still remaining.) and consubstantiation (the substance of the bread and wine coexists with the body and blood of Christ in the Eucharist.). Others maintain the elements are only symbolic.

¹² cp. Accessed 6/28/21 on transubstantiation: <https://nwcatholic.org/voices/cal-christiansen/how-can-i-explain-transubstantiation>

brother, who teaches Catholic theology, I, an ordained pentecostal, came to compare the term *sacrament* to our term *instrument*.

Make Me an Instrument

As an instrument of God's grace, we ask God to use us, to let our experience include a genuine and inspired work of the Spirit in and through us. My brother—and I am not wanting to put words in his mouth—seems to agree that this describes, for him, a *sacrament*. This being so, what the Sacrament of the Eucharist brings with it is a spiritual experience that advances the Spirit's interest in our sanctification. The Eucharist becomes part of this process which, in Catholic belief, is a vital part of Salvation. For Catholics, their sanctification must include the Eucharist. Partaking of The Eucharist becomes a vital expression of a penitent heart and helps purge the life of temporal sins once absolved. Cal Christiansen, on the Northwest Catholic website, commented, "The miracle of the Eucharist is a mystery, something that human reason and intelligence can never fully grasp."¹³

Love Feasts

It is believed that the Love Feasts, Christian fellowship around a celebratory meal, were originally associated with our Lord's Supper as a proclamation of His death on the Cross "until He comes" (1 Corinthians 11:26). These were designed as a practical expression of Christian community, "a joyous declaration of faith"¹⁴ from a thankful fellowship for Calvary while looking, with great anticipation, for their Lord's soon return. If I may borrow a Catholic idea: there is nothing more sacramental than this. When Christians began to celebrate the Eucharist or participate in Communion, it was a "holy" communion, a true thanksgiving. We must take care not to marginalize the Spirit's role in the Church in the name of orthodox purity. Whether we view the communion elements as symbolic or literal, they must always be significant.

¹³ Ibid. "At the end of the day, transubstantiation is a philosophical term used by the church to describe a miracle, the mystery of the Eucharist. Like the apostles, we have faith in the Lord's words, that he meant what he said; but, also like the apostles, we will never fully understand those words"

¹⁴ Colin Brown. vol II. 547

With time, these feasts ceased, for some, to inspire a sense of spiritual awe, a sense that Jesus was indeed in their midst, as He promised (Matthew 18:20). In our day, is it possible that, the old hymns like “The Old Rugged Cross,” that used to bring tears of gratitude, are never sung ...or if they are, they merely embellish the phylacteries of a now meaningless ritual? Even during the early centuries of the Church, for some, love feasts were less love and more feast, a splintered assembly, eating apart from the poor, cliques of the more wealthy (“who feed only themselves.”¹⁵ Jude 12)—a fellowship in name only. They began to eat apart, ignoring others who came from poverty and need. Jude called it now “...dangerous blemishes at your love feasts as they eat with you without reverence.” (Jude 12) The message of the Cross was now—if I may imagine—lost in a haze of discussions over the dinner and good times without true thanksgiving. Paul described such a person as one who “eats and drinks without recognizing the body.” “(He) eats and drinks judgment on himself” because this is a sacred gathering that has degenerated into something horribly disrespectful of what the Spirit of God is doing there! (1 Corinthians 11:29). Lest we think this overstates the seriousness of the occasion, Paul explained, “This is why many are sick and ill among you, and many have fallen asleep (a euphemism for “dead”).” (1 Corinthians 11:30)

I might think myself correct in calling the elements “symbols” of Jesus' passion (and I do. Sorry to all my friends of faith who disagree), but I would be wrong to see them as only an object lesson in something that happened 2,000 years ago. Jesus' crucifixion, for a believer, should be the only thing that really matters and upon which hinges every hope, every promise, and every blessing from God.

¹⁵ The Greek: to entertain sumptuously in company with

CHRIST OUR REPRESENTATIVE

For just as through one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so also through the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous. Romans 5:19

THE Athanasian Creed¹ goes, "we believe and confess that our Lord Jesus Christ... is God and man... Perfect God and perfect man, of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting... Who although He be God and man, yet is He not two, but one Christ." As Martin Luther simplified, "wäre Gott und wäre mensch (Truly God and truly man)." This is accepted here as true, for, He thus became our representative on the Cross.

"One thing is certain;" to quote Dorothy Sayers, "if he (Jesus) was God and nothing else, His mortality means nothing to us; if he was a man and no more, his death is no more important than yours or mine. But if he really was both God and man, then when the man Jesus died, God died too, and when the God Jesus rose from the dead, man rose too, because they were one and the same person."²

Ms. Sayer's logic offers an explanation that is theologically supportable. The writer to the Hebrews said it this way: "But we do see Jesus — made lower than the angels (incarnate) for a short time so that by God's grace he might taste death for everyone — crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death." (Hebrews 2:9) As Paul further described this divine dynamic, "Christ Jesus ... existing in the form of God ...taking on the likeness of humanity ...he had come as a man ... " (Philippians 2:6-7)

Jesus' death was not merely substitutionary but also representative. The dictionary reads, "When one person takes upon himself suffering which another would have had to bear, and therefore not only endures it with him, but in his stead, this is called substitution or representation

¹ <https://www.urncna.org/urncna/Creeds/Athanasian%20Creed.pdf>

² Sayers. *Creed or Chaos* 11

—an idea which, however unintelligible to the understanding, belongs to the actual substance of the common consciousness of man...it has found its true expression in sacrifice....”³

A Proxy

Paul advanced Isaiah’s message: Jesus not only took our place; we, too, were crucified with Him. His death becomes an inclusionary⁴ substitution. Dr. Craig explains this using the illustration of a proxy vote. Whenever the shareholders meet to discuss any action to be taken over the funds I have investments in, I elect to sign my vote to a proxy. I do the same when the condo board calls for a meeting of the residents in our complex. I allow someone else to vote in my place. But it is still on the record as my vote. It is not my proxy’s vote, but mine because they represent me. I am included. In this way, consider the possible explanation that Adam in the garden was our proxy. “...in Adam all die...” (1 Corinthians 15:22) Adam was to blame and so was I ...and you! We were in Adam at the time and sinned with him. “...because⁵ all sinned...” (Romans 5:12) And what is the benefit to including us in Adam’s sin?

This is great news because now God can show mercy to all who seek Him. “For God has bound everyone over to disobedience so that he may have mercy on them all.” (Romans 11:32) Godet interprets this to mean moral solidarity or community of life.⁶ If we say, “all humanity was represented in Adam” we have a clearer understanding. All died in Adam or as Godet interprets, “in whom they (all) were embraced.”⁷

One Died ...All Died

We can say the same of Jesus’ death and resurrection. “If one died for all, then all died.” Paul reasoned—why? “... he died for all so that

³ Keil & Delitzsch. vol VII. p 316

⁴ exclusionary is understood as “one party taking the place of another in such a way that the guilty party is excluded from the obligation or fate.” cp Craig page 81 footnote 2.

⁵ ἐφ’ ᾧ πάντες ἥμαρτον. ἐφ’ ᾧ in its primitive meaning translates “near.” With time it signifies “at the date of.” In a moral sense “on the ground of” and logically: “as may be seen by.” Professor Godet admits that the simplest interpretation might be “as a consequence” of Adam’s sin, all have sinned and all die, but he confesses that this meaning is “without precedent.” (Godet, Romans. 207ff).

⁶ Godet in his Epistle to the First Corinthians, 352

⁷ ibid. 353

those who live should no longer live for themselves, but for the one who died for them and was raised. (2 Corinthians 5:14b-15)

John Stott clarified further, "A substitute is one who acts in place of another in such a way as to render the other's action unnecessary. A representative is one who acts on behalf of another in such a way as to involve the other *in* his action (emphasis added). Christ did for us what we could never do for ourselves as a substitute: he bore our sins in judgment. But as a representative he did what we by being united to him have also done: we have died and risen with him."⁸

Jesus' victory over sin became ours! What was true of the first Adam, is true of the second Adam, Jesus. This is deductive reasoning, but it makes sense. The benefits originating with and arising from Jesus' death that believers now experience can best be explained: *Christ was our representative*. So, when Jesus died to sin and gloriously rose again, He provide for us a new life in Him. The gift of an eternal life with the Father was not something His death brought Him ...but us. That's representation! Paul puts it all together for us: "Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, in this way death spread to all people, because all sinned." (Romans 5:12)

Paul taught, "(Adam) is a type⁹ of (Christ)" (Romans 5:14). "Each of them draws after him all mankind." Godet pointed out, "so that ... what the one was to humanity we may infer ... the other is to it."¹⁰ As Adam introduced sin, Christ brought salvation from sin. "For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive." (1 Corinthians 15:22)

When Adam sinned, he "laid human life open to the power of sin."¹¹ By sin, we agree with those scholars who maintain that it is neither a particular sin (I was not actually, physically, present to bite into forbidden fruit) nor sinfulness as a proclivity or tendency to sin but as a "principle of revolt."¹² "The scripture, Paul concluded, "imprisoned ... everyone under sin so that the promise could be given - because of the faithfulness of Jesus Christ - to those who believe. (Galatians 3:22 New English Translation) Adam, in a sense, perhaps, known only in the

⁸ Stott. 269

⁹ "a person ... prefiguring a future person." Thayer. 632

¹⁰ Godet, Romans. 213

¹¹ Ibid. 204

¹² Ibid.

heart of the Creator, represented or in some way, spoke for, all humanity, in that moment.

When Adam sinned, a tsunami of sinfulness swept all humanity in its wake. When Adam revolted in the matter of the tree that was said to introduce us to something called “evil,” which Adam was suppose to avoid but didn’t, God decided—or in His omniscience already known—that He needed another way, the way of faith in His Crucified Son (John 14:6).

Inclusion, not Exclusion

“... the gift is not like the trespass.” Paul continues (Romans 5:15). We earned punishment but Christ paid it in our stead and gave us the gift of what He provided on the Cross. Adam brought death; Jesus brought eternal life. “For if (and it is true) by the one man’s trespass (Adam’s sin) the many (all humanity) died (spiritually and naturally), how much more have the grace of God and the gift which comes through the grace of the one man Jesus Christ overflowed to the many (who believe).” (Romans 5:15) By summary: we sinned in Adam, we were crucified with Christ. “Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.” (Romans 6:6)

This might sound purely philosophical. How did we get theologically from the Cross to Communion with God? Isaiah’s “Suffering Servant,” Dr. Craig argues, “may not be described in inclusionary terms, but that does not imply that it is exclusionary. It would be very natural to take the Servant of the Lord to be a representative of the many before God... and so to *include* them representatively in his suffering. Indeed, this is precisely the move that Paul made.”¹³ This much, therefore, can be said, “Christ did not simply die in our place;” Dr. Craig explained, “rather, what our representative did, *we* did. Christ’s death was representatively *our* death.”¹⁴ (Emphasis added)

And what is the ultimate truth here? “...Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him, ...So, you too consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.” (Romans 6:8, 11) Again, Dorothy Sayer reasoned: when Jesus (the man) rose, we

¹³ Craig, 83

¹⁴ Ibid, 80

rose. Resurrection from the dead is a reality now awaiting all (John 5:29).

The overarching message of the Cross for us is: when we reach the Kingdom shore, we ought not look for the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. It is not there, but the tree of life will be (Revelation 22:2, 14).

CHRIST OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS

It is from him that you are in Christ Jesus, who became wisdom from God for us — our righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, - 1 Corinthians 1:30

WHAT is *righteousness*? Paul's use of the word *righteousness* is not even mentioned in his letter to the Colossians. His doctrine of being *declared* righteous, a theological concept common among some protestant faiths, which we should shortly explain briefly, was surprisingly not common among the other New Testament writers.

Perhaps, none of this is important to most Christians who simply accept a meaning offered them in their church's teachings, but the meaning should engage us here since Paul proclaimed that Jesus "became ... from God ... our righteousness" (1 Corinthians 1:30).

The universal meaning of righteousness is the quality of rightness which Joseph Thayer (we have been quietly referencing his Greek Lexicon) calls "a state of approval to God¹ (Hebrews 5:13)." In ethics it represents: integrity, virtue, purity, or correctness in action, feeling, and thought. The Pastorals speak of works of righteousness in such ethical terms.² This makes the basic meaning of the word: the quality or trait of a virtuous life in which what we do or think or feel is said to meet with God's approval. But Paul's entire point is that this is specifically who we are *not*. "He (The Lord) saved us —not by *works of righteousness* that we had done, but according to his mercy." (Titus 3:5)

So, the simplest explanation as to what Paul meant in saying Jesus became our righteousness is that He took our sin and gave us His righteousness, Martin Luther's "wondrous exchange." But how do we get here?

¹ Thayer. 149

² Craig. 365

A Causative Form

The action word (verb) is written in a causative form meaning to *make* right or righteous. If this be true, Jesus' death and resurrection turned us from sinners into righteous persons, but the things we still do wrong have argued against this simplistic interpretation (Romans 7:15).³ "This meaning," Joseph Thayer commented, "is extremely rare, if not altogether doubtful."⁴ When David confessed, "Surely in vain have I *kept my heart pure*" (Psalm 73:13) did he really mean to say "I purified my own heart"! I think not!

He actually said, "I have shown my heart upright." But that suggests the idea that this form means to *show* or *exhibit* righteous—rather than to *make* righteous. Ezekiel said, "your sisters *appear* righteous" (Ezekiel 16:51) while comparing Israel's unfaithfulness to Judah's. Does Paul mean to say "Jesus appears ... from God ... to become our righteousness." He only seemed to save us! This isn't correct, either.

Scholars, then, suggested the causative form might mean to *evince* or *prove* righteous. Jesus used this idea once: "Wisdom," He said, "*is proved right* by all her children." (Luke 7:35) Paul used the word righteous once in this way also. He proclaimed Jesus "*justified* in the Spirit" (I Timothy 3:16). Jesus was *proven just* in dying for the souls of mankind. We have been all around this truth until now because this is the "mystery of Godliness." We knew all along with an unreserved conviction that this had to be true: Jesus had to die on the Cross for our salvation and in so doing, He was proven right as our penal substitute.

"In the writings of Paul," however, Joseph Thayer points out that, *righteousness* for Paul has a "peculiar meaning."⁵ The idea "to prove righteous" doesn't fit I Corinthians 1:30. Do we mean to interpret "Jesus became the *proof!* of our righteousness"?

Scholars had one more meaning to look at: *to declare* righteous. This idea is not without grammatical example.⁶ For Paul, the hope of salvation was not dependent on keeping the Mosaic law, which proved

³ I refer you to the "Tale of Two Trees" in the Introduction

⁴ Thayer. 150

⁵ Ibid. 149

⁶ the verb, to be worthy, also means to declare or judge worthy. 2 Thessalonians 1:11 best reads (ASV) "count you worthy of your calling,"

impossible, nor living in harmony with nature,⁷ or according to some social order (A Greek cultural idea). Paul revisited the Old Testament concept of God “imputing” righteousness, declaring us justified by a faith in Christ’s expiatory death on the cross. “The righteousness of God is through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe.” (Romans 3:22) This idea is not Paul’s alone but it reaches back into the writings of Moses, “Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness.” (Genesis 15:6) and the Psalms, “It was credited to him as righteousness throughout all generations to come.” (Psalm 106:31) This is a point of seminal import: “Paul thus makes the most frequent use of this whole word-group.... Of all the New Testament writers ... he establishes the closest connection with the Old Testament.”⁸

Righteousness, you remember, is an attribute of God. “Your righteousness reaches the heights, God, you who have done great things; God, who is like you?” (Psalm 71:19) His righteousness, redeems and saves. In the truest sense of a redemption, God declared us free from sin, and through Christ’s resurrection provision was made as an empowering grace to walk in newness of life. We could say, we now belong to Him, “as those who are alive from the dead, offer yourselves to God ... having been set free from sin, you became enslaved to righteousness. just as you offered ... yourselves as slaves to impurity, and ... lawlessness, so now offer them as slaves to righteousness... you have been set free from sin and have become enslaved to God” (Romans 6:13, 18-19, 22) Said more succinctly: “Righteousness ... is not a matter of ... conforming to a given set of ... legal standards, but of behavior which is in keeping with the two-way relationship between God and man.”⁹

Righteousness is also Relational

“Righteousness is a term of relationships”¹⁰ Righteousness, as such, denotes a covenant relationship between the Lord, our Redeemer, and us. “Turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth. For I am God, and there is no other. “By myself I have sworn; truth has gone

⁷ The word for sinning or committing wrong-doing based on living in harmony with nature is found only in the Old Testament. cp. the chapter on Theories of Atonement, The Moral Influence Theory.

⁸ Brown. vol III. 363

⁹ Ibid. 355

¹⁰ Ibid. 357

from my mouth, a word that will not be revoked: Every knee will bow to me, every tongue will swear allegiance. "It will be said about me, 'Righteousness and strength are found only in the LORD.' " (Isaiah 45:22-24)

So, our righteousness, which is solely imputed by faith and not earned by merit, is more than a status or a declaration of forgiveness of sin. Righteousness is godly living. "...training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16-17) "to live in a ... righteous, and godly way in the present age." (Titus 2:12)¹¹.

"Who may ascend the mountain of the LORD? Who may stand in his holy place? The one who has clean hands and a pure heart, who has not appealed to what is false, and who has not sworn deceitfully. He will receive blessing from the LORD, and righteousness from the God of his salvation. Such is the generation of those who inquire of him, who seek the face of the God of Jacob." (Psalm 24:3-6a)

The righteous are those who, in humility and faithfulness, trust in the Lord, who seek to live uprightly and without pride of heart, depending on the Lord for His protection and salvation. Righteousness here is not ethical perfection, but that obedience and uprightness of the faithful who seek Him.

On Imputation

Imputation is a legal concept. It represents a new legal status. This means that by faith, as with Abraham, so with us, our trust in God's provision through Christ "is credited ... for righteousness." (Romans 4:23-25), that is, "the law's requirement would be fulfilled in us." (Romans 8:4) Lest we dilute this truth to be concerned only with "status" or "forgiveness of sins" recall we pointed out that righteousness encompasses a life of holiness. Righteousness is not merely the absence of guilt. God would not declare what He does not intend to make good. Now, let's finish Romans 8:4, this describes those "who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit."

Martin Luther wrote, "Believe in Christ and your sins will be pardoned. His righteousness will become your righteousness, and your

¹¹ The distinction between righteousness (serving God) and sanctification (God only) is one of perspective

sins will become His sins.”¹² (Our sins imputed to Him.) “Christ was, in God’s eyes, legally liable for our sins.”¹³

Not every church father believed that our sins were imputed to Christ. “Augustine’s prima facie claim that Christ assumes punishment but not guilt would seem to imply a doctrine of penal substitution without imputation.”¹⁴ John Stott calls this “the ultimate mystery of the atonement”¹⁵ (1 Timothy 3:16) In the Epistle of Mathetes to Diognetus, we read, ““O sweet exchange! O unsearchable operator! O benefits surpassing all expectations!”¹⁶

Origen, however, wrote regarding the imputation of our sins to Christ and his substitutionary punishment for our sins, “God was about to punish them, but he forbore to do it. They were about to perish, but in their stead he gave his own son.” (John Chrysostom (349-407) Homilies on I Timothy. homily 7.3)¹⁷ Thomas Crawford, clarifies this point for us: Christ “voluntarily accepted liability for our sins.... We are.. in .. a righteous standing before God.”¹⁸

Our Righteousness In Christ

In saying “Christ ... became ... from God for us — our righteousness” we teach that Paul is telling us that Jesus, through His death, endured our punishment for sin—if you are a protestant: this includes our current sins as well as original sin. This means His death, in technical terms, was a plenary substitution; He died in our stead and so God called it done, He declared us righteous. There is, now, for those who accept this provision by faith “no condemnation” (Romans 8:1), no day of Divine wrath (1 Thessalonians 5:9) awaiting them.

But is there more to “righteousness”? The Old Testament word for righteousness¹⁹ represents “the consistent and normative action of God. But,” as scholarship reminds us, “(this) hardly exhausts it (its

¹² Martin Luther, Epistle to the Galatians, 54-55

¹³ Craig, 270

¹⁴ Ibid. 105

¹⁵ Stott. 197

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid. 98

¹⁸ cp Stott. 148. Thomas J. Crawford, *The Doctrine of Holy Scripture Respecting the Atonement*. (Edinburgh: Blackwood, 1871), pp. 453-54

¹⁹ The Hebrew word דָּיָק includes what is just, justice

meaning).²⁰ If righteousness means doing right, it must mean doing right by someone. If one were alone on an island forsaken and without companionship, right and wrong should cease to have real meaning. "It should be emphasized particularly," we read in the theological dictionary, "that (righteousness) implies relationship. A man is righteous when he meets certain claims which another has on him in virtue of relationship."²¹

Righteous living here is not a social construct, living in social harmony according to norms society dictates, nor is it compliance with law, as it might have meant in Ancient Israel. As E. Randolph Richards, professor of biblical studies at Palm Beach Atlantic University, wrote, "Righteousness here has absolutely nothing to do with works of the law. It is about trust."²² He recognized righteousness as a "...horizontal dimension of grace. I am reconciled to God. But it also means we are reconciled to one another."²³ "Fellowship with Christ necessarily leads to fellowship with Christians."²⁴

Is this a provision of Calvary? Unquestionably! 2 Corinthians 13:13²⁵ references what theologians call the triadic formula:²⁶ Grace, Love and fellowship, which links inseparably the work of God in Christ with what He is all about in His church. "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all."

Justice

God presented him as an atoning sacrifice in his blood, received through faith, to demonstrate his righteousness, because in his restraint God passed over the sins previously committed. God presented him to demonstrate his righteousness at the present time, so that he would be righteous and declare righteous the one who has faith in Jesus. (Romans 3:25-26)

Our attention is also drawn to the word justice. In an honest quest to know God's righteousness in relation to Jesus' death, it seems proper

²⁰ Kittell. vol. II. 195

²¹ Ibid.

²² Richards 262

²³ Ibid. 263

²⁴ Kittell. vol. III 807

²⁵ This is verse 14 in some translations.

²⁶ Ibid.

to look into Romans 3:25-26 which has been called “the marrow of theology.”²⁷ C. E. B. Cranfield in his *Epistle to the Romans* wrote: “God, because in His mercy He willed to forgive sinful men, and, being truly merciful, willed to forgive them righteously, that is, without in any way condoning their sin, purposed to direct against His very own self in the Person of His Son the full weight of that righteous wrath which they deserved.”²⁸ John Stott adds, “When God justifies sinners, he is not declaring bad people to be good, or saying that they are not sinners after all, he is pronouncing them legally righteous, free from any liability to the broken law, because he himself in his Son has born the penalty of their law breaking.”²⁹

“God presented him as an atoning sacrifice (propitiation) in his blood, received through faith, to demonstrate his righteousness, because in his restraint God passed over the sins previously committed. God presented him to demonstrate his righteousness at the present time, so that he would be righteous and declare righteous (and justify) the one who has faith in Jesus.”

Francis Godet, my scholar of choice for this study,³⁰ translates Romans 3:25 “Who He had established beforehand as a means of propitiation through faith, by His blood for the demonstration of His justice.”

According to these verses, God, Himself, is the author of redemption. “Everything is from God, who has reconciled us to himself through Christ.” (2 Corinthians 5:18) P. T. Forsyth wrote, “The atonement did not procure grace; it flowed from grace.”³¹ John Calvin agreeably commented, “The work of atonement derives from God’s love, therefore it did not establish it.”³²

Godet then explains “propitiation through faith, by His blood.” I, like he, have a problem interpreting the word “propitiation” to mean “appeasement” as if Jesus’ death turned the heart of God from wrath to pardon. Scholars who retain the meaning “appeasement” admit that sin

²⁷ Godet. *Epistle to the Romans*. 150

²⁸ C. E. B. Cranfield. *The Epistle to the Romans*. International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1975), I;217. Cp. Stott. 134

²⁹ Stott. 187

³⁰ *Ibid.* 150-162

³¹ P. T. Forsyth. *The Cruciality of the Cross*. (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1909) p.78. cp. Stott. 172

³² Calvin’s *Institutes* 2.16.4

enrages God (a point we should make emphatic for there is a final judgment). But this meaning must be maintained in the light of one fact. God sent *Himself* to Calvary in the person of His Son leading Dr. David Wells to write, “[In] Pauline thought, man is alienated from God by sin and God is alienated from men by wrath. It is in the substitutionary death of Christ that sin is overcome and wrath averted, so that God can look on men without displeasure and man can look on God without fear. Sin is expiated and God is propitiated.”³³

We already noted that the Father sent the Son. He did this out of love not rage. The “false” idea is that God now displays a different attribute to us than before Calvary, that He went from wanting us dead to a compassion and a pardon for us in our need of His salvation. Hopefully our talk about the simplicity of God successfully rebutted this view. His love for us drew up this plan of a propitiation by Jesus’ blood, His Son’s death. And what is Paul’s reason for calling this a “propitiation”? He didn’t! He called it a “propitiation ... by His blood.” Jesus’ death was God’s mercy seat³⁴ effectively dealing with the sins of all those who accept His forgiveness by faith.

It is very important to note that we accept this “through faith.” There is no universal salvation. Also, faith requires accepting what God did for us without having all the whys and hows explained. Salvation is not a signature on a membership card nor is it church attendance, per se, nor the magic in a written prayer of repentance (unless we really mean it). Salvation is believing and confessing with the testimony of our lives (Romans 10:9) that the death of God’s Son was for our pardon and reconciliation with Him and by faith we have reached out and grasped hold of it. (Philippians 3:13)

Some scholars call the shed blood of the Messiah “an equivalent for that of sinners, the indemnity³⁵ offered to God’s justice to purchase the pardon granted by love.”³⁶ (This presupposes God was wrathful until Jesus’ death when He displayed His grace.) There is a problem here in the language which Godet recognizes. The verse does not say God

³³ David F. Wells. *The Search For Salvation*. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1978) p. 29. cp Stott. 172.

³⁴ Paul’s word was the Greek word for the mercy seat, the lid, over the ark of the covenant. (Exodus 25:17) To me, this “lid” covering the covenant now symbolizes God’s merciful pardon which He provided through His Son’s death on the cross.

³⁵ paid as compensation?

³⁶ Godet. *Epistle to the Romans*. 152

through Christ purchased our pardon. These words are from William R. Featherston's song (1864): "My Jesus I Love Thee."³⁷ The CSB translation says, "in his restraint God passed over the sins previously committed."³⁸ The word translated as a "pardon" actually means "to tolerate" or, here, to "let pass unpunished, to overlook"

Righteousness or Justice

"In the inspired Scripture," A. W. Tozer, an American Christian pastor, author, and spiritual mentor, correctly noted, "justice and righteousness are scarcely to be distinguished from each other. The same word in the original becomes in English justice or righteousness, almost, one would suspect, at the whim of the translator."³⁹ So, was the word Paul used "justice" or "righteousness"? Godet admits that each commentator has taken the term "...as expressing the special attribute which agrees best with his system (theology) in regard to the work of redemption."⁴⁰ Some scholars translate the word "justice" as God's holiness, or goodness, or fidelity, or sanctification, but none of these words are here! The CSB, our translation of choice, says, "righteousness" but, to be clear, Francis Godet says "justice."

A Demonstration of Justice

So, according to Godet, what might "the *demonstration* of His justice" signify? Prof. Godet thinks that had Paul meant by "demonstration" a "compensation," he should have written "a satisfaction of His (God's) justice."

If Paul means God's justice, is it a retributive justice? If so, Jesus' death was a punishment for sin. So when Godet translates "the demonstration of His justice" he is saying that our sin required punishment. "It is the revelation of disorder (sin) to the sinner's conscience by means of suffering."⁴¹ He became sin for us to redeem us from the law's curse. (Galatians 3:13; 2 Corinthians 5:21)

³⁷ A song I absolutely love to sing.

³⁸ Catholic theology interprets this to mean that the pardon on Calvary was for our liability in original sin only. Temporal or current sins need to be "purged" after contrition, absolution, and confession.

³⁹ Tozer. 86

⁴⁰ Godet. Epistle to the Romans. 154

⁴¹ Ibid. 154

But how was Calvary a manifestation of God's justice? Four ideas:

- ◆ Jesus' death had to be on public display. "He disarmed the rulers and authorities and disgraced them **publicly**; he triumphed over them in him." (Colossians 2:15)
- ◆ "From His cross there rose the most perfect homage rendered to the righteousness of God." Prof. Godet added. How could His death for our salvation, for the atonement of the world, not be public!? "not willing that any should perish, but that **all should come** to repentance." (2 Peter 3:9)
- ◆ The Jewish law is now replaced by a new life in Christ. This needs to be heralded as a public proclamation in the town square. "For Christ is the **end** of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes." (Romans 10:4) "The law, then, was our guardian **until** Christ, so that we could be justified by faith." (Galatians 3:24)
- ◆ "For four thousand years," Godet reminds us, "the spectacle presented by mankind to the whole moral universe was, so to speak, a continual scandal. With the exception of some great examples of judgment, divine righteousness seemed to be asleep....." Our verse confesses, "God passed over the sins " But now, Hear ye! Hear ye!! He that hath an ear , let him hear! "Therefore, having overlooked the times of ignorance, God **now commands all people everywhere** to repent." (Acts 17:30)

CHRIST OUR HEALER

He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree; so that, having died to sins, we might live for righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. - 1 Peter 2:24

Is physical healing in the Atonement?¹ “Rooted in Wesleyan theology,” claims Dr. Alminana in a brief biography of Kathryn Kuhlman’s healing ministry² (in the 1960’s and early ’70’s), “the atonement of Christ was received holistically as a cleansing agent for both body and soul.”³ This became part of a progressive sanctification, that, like the man sick of the palsy lowered through the roof in front of the Savior, deals effectively and decisively with both sin and sickness (Matthew 9:2). “The link between sin and sickness, established quite early in the Holiness Movement,” Dr. Alminana wrote, “would continue as a theological bedrock of healing teaching for generations.”⁴

I must admit, I didn’t expect to read Isaiah say, “he himself bore our sicknesses; we are healed by his wounds.” (Isaiah 53:4-5) and if we want to equate this only with spiritual healing, i.e. salvation and not physical healing, we need to explain Matthew:

“When evening came, ...He ... healed all who were sick, so that what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled: He himself took our weaknesses and carried our diseases.” (Matthew 8:16-17)

¹ This is a question I struggled with at one time. I have since come to the conclusion that all that humanity lost in Eden Jesus brought back through the cross. The ultimate physical healing is the resurrection but healing can take place before that time-it did in the New Testament. - John P. Lathrop

² Kathryn Kuhlman’s healing ministry spanned the 1960’s and early 70’s in the Pittsburgh, PA. area. She had been associated with the Assemblies of God but she was independent of all denominations in her ministry. I recall her holding services in Presbyterian circles.

³ Alminana. 76

⁴ Ibid. 78

* * *

He was referencing the verses above. But I remain a bit perplexed for a few reasons:

- ◆ Francis Turretin called this a “partial accomplishment” of Isaiah 53. “...it is well known,” Turretin reminds us, “that in the Scriptures, a prophecy is said to be accomplished not only when it is completely and ultimately fulfilled, but also when a partial accomplishment of it has begun.”⁵ Is this the sole portion of Isaiah 53 that was *not* fulfilled on the Cross?
- ◆ Peter seemed to be thinking about spiritual healing “He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree; so that, having died to sins, we might live for righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.” (1 Peter 2:24)⁶
 - C. F. Keil comments, “The stripes and weals inflicted upon Him have made us sound and well.”⁷ This appears to be what Peter meant, a spiritual healing not a physical healing. The commentator appears to ignore Matthew’s observations that Jesus’ healing the sick was the fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy.
- ◆ Calvary’s spiritual provisions are otherwise universal and immediate. The Cross represents the vehicle by which God provided forgiveness for sins and the opportunity by faith for us to be reconciled to God. “we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, then how much more, having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life” (Romans 5:10)
 - When we seek salvation, He saves us. “For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” (Romans 10:13)
 - But is this true of physical healing? Are believers in need of a physical touch from the Master but they fail to reach out and grab hold of the hem of His garment? Is physical healing available for the taking (in seeking the Lord for it) as is true of salvation? And if not, why

⁵ Turretin 20

⁶ Interestingly, Peter switches persons from “we” to “You.”

⁷ Keil & Delitzsch vol VII. P.319. Jerome “suo vulnere vulnera nostra curavit” His wounds healed our wounds.

not?

- ◆ Faith is Faith. Is it appropriate to think of faith for salvation but not for healing? Would the Lord give us faith to trust Him for the one and not the other. Could we ever say God can be trusted to save but not heal?
- ◆ Physical healing was already part of Jesus' ministry *before* His crucifixion. How can we say that Calvary was necessary to provide for it? "He...spoke to them about the kingdom of God, and healed those who needed healing." (Luke 9:11)
- ◆ Francis Turretin noted "...the diseases of the body are to be viewed in a different light from those of the mind [spiritual]. In healing the former, it was not necessary that Christ should himself become sick; it was only necessary that he should exercise his power."⁸ But for spiritual healing, God "made him to be sin for us" (2 Corinthians 5:21)."
- ◆ T. J. McCrossan, whose teaching on bodily healing and the atonement formed the basis of one branch of pentecostal teaching claimed that "All Christians should expect God to heal their bodies today, because Christ died to atone for our sicknesses as well as our sins."⁹ But Pauline teaching suggests otherwise, "though our outer person is being destroyed, our inner person is being renewed day by day." (2 Corinthians 4:16) John Stott maintains that there might be here a confusion between the "already" and the "not yet" of prophecy.¹⁰
- ◆ Margaret De Alminana observed that tying physical healing to the atonement ties it to our sins. "Ultimately, it was the victim who was to blame or implicated in some way for his or her own sickness."¹¹ (John 9:1-2) "It was this tendency to blame the victim for disappointing healing results that Kathryn Kuhlman sought relief, which sent her in earnest pursuit of a new healing theory."¹²

⁸ Turretin. 20

⁹ T. J. McCrossan, *Bodily Healing and the Atonement*, ed. Roy Hicks and Kenneth E. Hagin (Tulsa, OK: Faith Library Publications, 1982), p. 10

¹⁰ Stott. 241

¹¹ Alminana. 75

¹² *Ibid.* 76

Uncommon Divine Healing?

There might be reasons why physical healing is not more apparent in the church in so-called civilized countries.

- ◆ Perhaps, we lack a certain “faith” to trust God for healing being dependent more so on science or the medical professionals. “He was not able to do a miracle there, except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and healed them. And he was amazed at their unbelief.” (Mark 6:5-6a)
- ◆ Perhaps, we are not serious about wanting a healing. “Do you want to get well?” John 5:6
- ◆ Perhaps, the complexity of life in which the spiritual and physical inseparably intertwine, healing is never a simple matter of physical well-being. “The prayer of faith will save the sick person, and the Lord will raise him up; if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.” (James 5:15)
- ◆ Perhaps, we need to ask again, “Which is easier: to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Get up and walk?’” (Matthew 9:5) Our Lord’s interest is always the spiritual. Does He utilize physical healing for spiritual growth?

“Therefore, so that I would not exalt myself, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to torment me so that I would not exalt myself.” For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. (2 Corinthians 12:7-9)

Uncommon Wording

There is also something noteworthy about the language. Isaiah used an interesting form for the word “healed”¹³ in Isaiah 53:5.¹⁴ Perhaps a better translation might be “with His stripes healing is provided us.”

This adds to the difficulty in understanding the prophet’s words. Physical healing is provided in the Savior’s Suffering. As Matthew

¹³ The Heb is in the Niphal stem: נרפא

¹⁴ The Blue Letter Bible has it wrong.

observed, this was undeniable, but it appears in a different light than the other provisions from the Cross: peace, forgiveness, etc. The New Living Translation (NLT) reads “He was whipped **so we could be healed.**” Young’s translation (YLT) says, “by his bruise **there is healing to us.**”¹⁵

An Explanation

It is difficult to ignore Matthew’s anecdotal explanation that physical healing is mentioned in the atonement, that physical healing is not unimportant to God while His Son is dying for sin. The overwhelming burden of Isaiah’s prophecy is, indeed, of a spiritual concern. Calvary deals decisively with our sins, our sinful nature, our sinfulness, a depraved or fallen humanity and the devil’s advantage over it. Calvary is a divine coup de grâce against an enemy that would strike the Savior with a mortal blow: wounded, pierced (Isaiah 53:5). But perhaps Anselm was right. The devil was tricked! His masterful plan, working seamlessly through Judas Iscariot, came back on him. Oh the prophetic metaphor of innocence when Job cried out, “... (The Lords) hand pierced the fleeing serpent!” (Job 26:13)

But what does this have to with with disease and illness, sickness and infirmity? Everything. Because both our spiritual well-being and our physical well-being—both—have to do with faith. It is the same faith the provides the one that provides the other. It has always been that way! Jesus looked for faith when He healed someone. “According to your faith let it be to you.” Matthew 9:29)

Francis Turretin believed that “bodily infirmities and pains are a part of the punishment of sin; and on this account, in a secondary and subordinate sense, it refers to them because Christ had a right to heal them.”¹⁶ Turretin reasoned, “removing the cause, the effect was taken away.”¹⁷

Jesus coined the phrase little faith (one word in the original)¹⁸. It is found 5 times in the Gospels addressing our anxieties and fears. Faith, in simplest terms, is foundational to every blessing, every provision of

¹⁵ “The passive is used impersonally (in the 3rd sing. masc.) Absolutely...” Kautzsch. Gesenius’ Hebrew Grammar. #121 a

¹⁶ Turretin. 20

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ ὀλιγόπιστοι

God. We, therefore, "add to ... faith..." (2 Peter 1:5) And is it possible that God would provide some blessing outside of Jesus' death and Resurrection? No! "His divine power has given to us **all things** that pertain to life and godliness" (2 Peter 1:3)

A Theology of Miracles

"Power for healing," Kathryn Kuhlman learned, "is found in the manifested Presence of God."¹⁹ "Though she (Kathryn) anchored her understanding of the justification for healing in the atonement," Dr. Alminana wrote, "the actual healings..would be ...beyond this doctrinal rationale."²⁰ This type of healing ministry was exemplified in the Savior's. Sister Kuhlman would wait patiently and silently until the power of God to heal was evident.

"On one of those days while he was teaching, Pharisees and teachers of the law were sitting there who had come from every village of Galilee and Judea, and also from Jerusalem. And **the Lord's power to heal was in him.**" (Luke 5:17) Waiting on the presence of God in the person of the Holy Spirit to heal who He would represents a position of humble submission to Him which exclusively glorifies Him and denies the minister a theological basis for claiming any credit for what God is doing.

Physical healing is undeniably in the atonement because it is part of the Spirit's ministry. And the Holy Spirit's ministry is a consequence of Jesus' ascension after the Cross. (John 16:7)

And what about faith? Is faith required for healing, which seems implied in Jesus' ministry while He sojourned here? It was never faith for healing but a trust or faith in the healer, Jesus. This difference is critical to appreciating the dynamic of physical healings as a provision of the atonement. The purpose behind Jesus' death was spiritual, the salvation of the soul. But the soul and body have a necessary union. Seeing these as a dichotomy suggests that God would somehow care about the one without the other, which isn't scriptural. (Luke 5:23-24; James 5:15; 1 Corinthians 15:44).

¹⁹ Alminana. 121

²⁰ Ibid.

CHRIST OUR REDEEMER

"It is from him that you are in Christ Jesus, who became ... from God for us — our ... redemption." 1 Corinthians 1:30

THERE was in ancient Judean society what was recognized as a "strong feeling of tribal solidarity"¹ among the members of a clan or family. Neither death nor poverty were recognized as reasons to forfeit a family member's possessions. The Mosaic law (Leviticus 25:25-34) allowed for a near relative, a brother or uncle or cousin, to repurchase what might have been sold to pay off their debts and thereby rescue their property and maintain their property rights. This is a legal arrangement "to lay claim to someone or something"² that has been lost through slavery or poverty. There was even a special provision for a man to marry his brother's widow, if no son had been born to them, to provide a lineage for the deceased (Genesis 38:8). Family possessions and unity were to be rescued. "Every disruption of that unity was regarded as intolerable and as something that had to be restored or repaired."³

A most noteworthy example of this arrangement is the story of Ruth (Ruth 2:20) in which Boaz, a kinsman of Naomi, Ruth's mother-in-law, fulfilled the law in marrying Ruth (Ruth 4:4-5, 9-10). The idea behind this legal provision was to restore a family's wealth, rescue a family member from poverty or slavery, or to repurchase their possessions to maintain the inheritance and preserve the legacy of another family member. An interesting example is Jeremiah purchasing his uncle's field, knowing that in 70 years, they will be able to re-own it (Jeremiah 32:6-8)

¹ Botterweck. vol II. 351

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

The Hebrew had a special word for this not recognized⁴ in the sister or cognate languages: a *redeemer*. One could almost aver that God had another redemption in mind in giving us such a culturally outspoken and unique Old Testament covenantal idea. “I, the LORD, am your Savior and **Redeemer**” (Isaiah 60:16) Every Sunday morning, in the church I attended as a lad, we closed the AM service with Psalm 19:14 (it was KJV back then): “Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and **my redeemer.**”

This inspired term is rich in meaning. When God rescued (redeemed) Israel from Egyptian bondage, (Exodus 15:13) they became His people. In delivering them, he purchased them for His own. “I have **redeemed** you; I have called you by your name; you are mine.” (Isaiah 43:1) A broken covenant relationship has been restored. “And the **redeemed** of the LORD will return and come to Zion with singing, crowned with unending joy.” (Isa 51:11)

Our Redemption

“In the Old Testament,” John Stott informs us, “people were redeemed from a variety of social situations such as debt, captivity, slavery, exile and liability to execution. But it is a moral bondage from which Christ has ransomed us.”⁵ Redemption becomes a synonym for forgiveness of sins. (Ephesians 1:7) Also, we are redeemed from the curse of the law (Galatians 3:13). We are saved from a final Divine judgment against those who refuse to recognize and accept God’s salvation through Christ.

In the New Covenant, Jesus is not called our redeemer but our *redemption* because reference is being made to the method in which He purchased our salvation. “He (Jesus) entered the most holy place once for all time, not by the blood of goats and calves, but **by his own blood**, having obtained eternal redemption.” (Hebrews 9:12) He purchased us with Himself!

But nothing is subtracted from the meaning already recognized. He is our redeemer. We are His possession! “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his possession, so that you

⁴ The dictionary says, “seems to be almost exclusively Hebrew,” (Botterweck. vol II. 350).

⁵ Stott. 175

may proclaim the praises of the one who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light." (1 Peter 2:9) He has freed us from a spiritual bondage to sin. "that we may no longer be enslaved to sin" (Romans 6:6) We didn't free ourselves, no more than Israel of old delivered themselves from Egyptian bondage. (Romans 3:21-28)

Titus 2:14

"He gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to cleanse for himself a people for his own possession, eager to do good works." (Titus 2:14)

Let's take the space to review this key scripture. Paul wrote Titus. No scripture more clearly, simply, and emphatically explains redemption, freedom from the bondage to sin to serve the Lord. A closer examination of this verse, perhaps, shares all we really need to know about the efficacy of Jesus' death—until He shares more with us in His Kingdom (Ephesians 2:7)

- **He gave Himself.** His crucifixion was voluntary. As He said, "No one takes it from me, but I lay it down on my own. I have the right to lay it down, and I have the right to take it up again. I have received this command from my Father." (John 10:18)
- And He did this **"for us."** This is not only voluntary but vicarious. Some interpret the word "for" to mean "for our benefit" or "for our good," a meaning worthy of the word, but within the language of the New Testament it means "in our stead."⁶
- He has redeemed us. Redemption is first and foremost the purchasing of our salvation (ransoming us) by His blood (Acts 20:28) which is a vicarious substitution. Yes, indeed, for our benefit; "you were bought at a price." (1 Corinthians 6:20)
- He did this (the translation simply reads **"to."** His intent or the purpose behind His sacrifice. "In order that" shows "purpose or end."⁷ Jesus' death did not provide our freedom from sin's

⁶ "Since what is done for one's advantage frequently cannot be done without acting in his stead (just as the apostles teach that the death of Christ inures to our salvation because it has the force of an expiatory sacrifice and was suffered in our stead), we easily understand how *ὑπέρ*, like the Latin 'pro' and our 'for,' comes to signify (in our stead)." (Thayer. 639).

⁷ Thayer. 302

bondage as an unintended consequence of a unfortunate death of a good prophet. Jesus, God's Son, submitted to the Father's plan and gave Himself willingly to the lash and the cross knowing that this was the means to our freedom from sin's grasp! ...And we understand our redemption, also, in terms of: "the forgiveness of sins." (Ephesians 1:7)

- **redeem us.** set us free via a ransom in His blood. "redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation" (Revelation 5:9)
- **from all lawlessness.**⁸ He freed us from unrighteousness to live for Him. As the Father praised the Son: "You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness" (Hebrews 1:9) and
- **to cleanse.** to make us like Christ free from all sin (1 John 1:7). "Blessed are the pure in heart." (Matthew 5:8)
- **for himself a people.** "I am my beloved's" (Song of Solomon 6:3 We are His people.
- **for his own possession.** "the redemption of the purchased possession" (Ephesians 1:14)
- **eager.** A burning zeal,⁹ passionate, with a sense of urgency.¹⁰
- **to do good works.** How simple a phrase but deeds that by definition "give glory to your Father in heaven." (Matthew 5:16)

The Last Days

"There is also an eschatological thread (in the last days) in which full redemption is yet to be accomplished."¹¹ Jesus disclosed to us that our redemption is eternal in ways yet to be realized by us (Luke 21:28). The Holy Spirit confirms this message (Ephesians 1:14) and Paul also taught that there will be a day when all of creation will rejoice in a total freedom from not just sin but the suffering it causes (Romans 8:22-23).

⁸ "lawlessness is less to be construed along the lines of a general condition in view of the antithesis to "eager to do good works" (Kittell vol IV. 1085).

⁹ Thayer. 271

¹⁰ cp 2 Corinthians 7:7 "earnest desire... fervent mind" "a godly jealousy" 2 Corinthians 11:2

¹¹ Ryken. 699

CHRIST OUR BROTHER

Blessed is the ... Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who ... chose us ...to be holy and ...predestined us to be adopted as sons (and daughters) for himself. - Ephesians 1:3-5

WE are ambassadors of Reconciliation. **“Everything is from God, who has reconciled us to himself through Christ and has given us the ministry of reconciliation.”** (2 Corinthians 5:18-19) Theologians discuss the extent of the estrangement between us and God. As with relationships in general, there is presupposed enmity on both sides. “Man is the enemy of God and God is the enemy of man.”¹

This conclusion is deduced from studying human relationships but can we affirm it true through Scripture? Clearly we hated Him: “while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son,” (Romans 5:10) We hated Him but did He hate us? The explanation given is that God’s wrath could not be ignored: His uncompromising hate for sin (which is scripturally clear, Proverbs 6:16-19) is a matter of record.

Yet, Paul concluded “Everything is from God, who has reconciled us to himself through Christ.” When God chose to be reconciled, Jesus became the agent of that reconciliation.

I alone am the cause of my estrangement from God. I need to be reconciled to God. He does not need to be reconciled to me. God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not reconciling himself to the world (2 Corinthians 5:19 KJV). I needed to be repentant for the distance between us and He made it possible through Calvary. It was love not wrath that sent Him to a cross.

This, to me, doesn’t sound terribly wrathful. I have met vengeful people in life who take their hate to the grave, yet God, here, *initiated* the reconciliation. That, again, doesn’t sound like hate. Wrath, maybe;

¹ Brunner, Mediator. 516. cp. Stott. 195

hate? I think not. (John 3:16) This is why we had to include in this discussion a study on the “simplicity of God,” as we have. It was prophesied of Jesus, “I have come to do your will, O God.” (Hebrews 10:7)

We agree with those scholars who observe that the word phrase used here, “has reconciled,” to be *past time*. Jesus, again, called it, “finished” from the Cross. He failed to ask my opinion, let alone my co-operation, in His interest in bringing me back into His good graces. What’s with that!? John Stott interjects the New English Bible translation, “From first to last this has been the work of God.”² The writer to the Hebrews called Jesus “the author and finisher of our faith (Hebrews 12:2).”

Adoption

Reconciliation means family and family means *adoption*. “He predestined us to be adopted as sons (children) through Jesus Christ for himself, according to the good pleasure of his will.” (Ephesians 1:5)

About 2 percent of all parented children in the United States are adopted (1 out of 50).³ That’s probably the number of hands that would be raised (if people are honest and open about it) if you asked of the average church congregation by show of hands to reveal who had been adopted.

And they would be wrong! Ask them, how many loved the Lord? That’s the true number! And this is an exciting revelation!

The Family of God

John Stott references four, he calls them, “images” of salvation each illustrating an achievement of the Cross.

1. Christ as a sacrifice for sin paints the picture of the Temple precinct where the sacrifices were a type of Christ’s crucifixion (Hebrews 10:1).

² Stott. 194

³ Accessed 7/8/2021 Adoption statistics <https://adoptionnetwork.com/adoption-myths-facts/domestic-us-statistics/> “There are about 1.5 million adopted children in the United States, which is 2% of the population, or one out of 50 children”

2. Christ ransoming us depicts the market place as, for example, the story of Hosea buying back his wife, Gomer, from the slave auction block (Hosea 3:2).
3. Christ our justification recalls the court room because justice is a legal term and Christ in His death paid the penalty for our sin (Romans 5:9).
4. And now *reconciliation* adopts us into God's family. Tom Wright in his work, "Justification: The Biblical Basis" is surely correct emphasizing that "justification is not an individualist's charter, but God's declaration that we belong to the covenant community."⁴

John Stott reminds us that "The community of Christ is the community of the cross."⁵ He began to expand on this idea, reminding us, as believers, that Calvary transforms our way of thinking about this life, about priorities and what is important, about suffering, about our relationships: with our enemies (Matthew 5:44), and friends (3 John 1:5), our family thru adoption (Romans 8:15) and above all, God (1 Peter 2:9). Jesus redefined for those who follow Him what is reasonable (Matthew 19:21) and what brings happiness (Matthew 5:3-12). He took us out of ourselves and placed us inside a community of like-minded believers and, though life is not necessarily spatially communal, we don't live together, we are spiritually connected and impact each other's life through fellowship and ministry (1 John 1:3, 7).

There is a dynamic here in relationship that makes Heaven, Heaven. John Stott called it "a community of celebration"⁶ but even this attempt at describing the joy of heaven is weak. Because heaven is community, no one is alone, no one is marginalized, no one is uninvolved. There is no separation, no racism, no segregation or class distinctions in heaven. "After this I looked, and there was a vast multitude from every nation, tribe, people, and language, which no one could number, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were clothed in white robes with palm branches in their hands." (Revelation 7:9) And how to describe the celebratory atmosphere; I have not the language. "And they cried out in a loud voice: Salvation belongs to our God, who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb!" (Revelation 7:10)

⁴ Stott. 189 fnt. #76

⁵ Ibid. 250

⁶ Ibid.

E. Randolph Richards, in his work, “Misreading Scripture With Individualist Eyes” points out how American and European cultural thinking, which he calls *individualism*, misrepresents the message of Scripture here. The Biblical record of our salvation is a “We” not an “I” which he calls a *collective* cultural way of perceiving life.

As difficult it is to describe this difference, it is important while interpreting the Biblical idea of reconciliation. In western cultures there is a particular emphasis on individual rights and opportunity for advancement. We define happiness in personal terms: *my* happiness. When interpreting scripture we tend to see God’s relationship with “me” as a personal spiritual encounter that impacts “my” life irrespective of all others. Living a godly life is a solo endeavor as if “I” lived alone on an island and there was only the Lord and me.

But the Bible explains spiritual life in terms of the *community* of believers, the Church (Matthew 18:20). Reconciliation is not merely reconciled to God but reconciled to one another as well. When God saved us He introduced us to His family expecting us to “get along” (Ephesians 4:2, for example). Jesus sent His disciples out by “twos” in ministry. *We* means—not alone.

By the same token, sin is never a personal matter but something that impacts relationships. Did any scholar imagine what life would have been like in the Garden for Adam alone had he not followed Eve in the matter of the forbidden fruit? Of course not! And not because Adam had a choice to go it alone but because Eve was not a stranger in his world. She was his *wife*. David and Bathsheba, too, did something that produced pain that rippled down through their generations. (2 Samuel 12:10-11; Exodus 20:5)

As Richards points out in scripture, and therefore, also in the church, “understanding the people of God as family is an important Old Testament theme ... The New Testament writers took up many kinship images ... to help Christians to see that we are *family*.”⁷

When discussing Calvary, we will never stop talking about the justice God administered through Christ when He dealt decisively with sin. He declared us forgiven but more than that, He declared us reconciled. In declaring us righteous, He declared us sons and daughters, His adopted children.”Having predestinated us unto the adoption

⁷ Richards. 254

of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will." (Ephesians 1:5) In declaring us righteous, He declared us family.

Here is where the common term "fellowship" takes on deeper meaning. The dictionary calls it "the closest of all human relationships."⁸ It is not surprising at all to see this term featured at the birth of the Church through the move of the Spirit of God (Acts 2:42). Nor is it surprising to learn that God's faithfulness toward us is defined in terms of our fellowship within the family of God. "God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord." (1 Corinthians 1:9)

Sharing

God is a God, Peter expounded, of "very great and precious promises so that through them you may share in the divine nature...." (2 Peter 1:4) *Share!*? Yes, "share." It has the same root word as our word, "fellowship." Fellowship is only possible because we share "like precious faith" (2 Peter 1:1 KJV) and the same new nature being made in the image of Christ (Romans 8:29; 1 John 3:2). Reconciliation is God's answer to "emptiness, and superficiality."⁹ But more than that, reconciliation with a holy God means we must be holy. But that's why Jesus died and rose again. "If we walk in the light as he himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin." (1 John 1:7)

Salvation is a believer's introduction to God's family, which means that without other believers, to use John Stott's words, we "feel [or should feel] unfulfilled and disoriented, unable to find (ourselves)."¹⁰ As believers, we will never feel totally "at home" again until or unless we come to a full appreciation of and for the family of God.

* * *

⁸ Moulton & Milligan. 351

⁹ Stott. 190

¹⁰ Ibid.

Everything in Common

“Now the entire group of those who believed were of one heart and mind, and no one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but instead they held everything in common.” (Acts 4:32)

In western cultures, the response of the Early Church in its infancy seems, for some, too demanding: “no one claimed that any of his possessions was his own.” While a local church board member (many years ago) I knew a young couple who sold their house and gave the money to “our” church. Actually “he” did it without the approval of his wife. Long story, short: I argued on the board that we should return it ...and we did. But we might take a closer look at “his” heart that brought him to this decision. Another man (single), I knew while I was pastoring, sold his business to his brother (he then went to work for his brother) and gave the money to another church (not ours). I couldn’t change his mind on this. This second man (a young believer), who attended the church I pastored at the time, was in a meeting in which I mentioned the ministry’s financial need. (This was after his business was sold, and that’s not all he gave away!) He stood to his feet, pulled out his wallet, grabbed a wad of bills, and asked, “How much do you need?” There is a spirit here reminiscent of those very early days in Acts 4. And I think some would squelch it as immature or unwise, but don’t tell Barnabas (Acts 4:36).

Here is not the place for a sermon on widows, orphans and the poor, but this early spirit of generosity, this passionate concern about others more needy, was in Acts 6 organized, codified, and assigned to spiritual leadership to make sure no one was left out. (I should mention Ananias and Sapphira, in Acts 5, who drove full speed, headlong, into a “moving train” of something God was inspiring, that God was behind. Perhaps, we should take more than an historical notice of this.)

Generosity is a biblical word worth studying (2 Corinthians 9:13). Here, it is worth noting that this aspect of God’s love had infused the passions, the enthusiasm, the emotions and thoughts of an entire church that now as a community caught a vision that defined them culturally and spiritually. And, I must add, I would have “loved” to be a part of it!

“Allelous” - One Another

Fellowship is intimacy¹¹ or closeness— a common burden, a common heart, a common prayer as well as working and worshipping together. I like to call this the “allelous” principle after the New Testament word for *one another*.¹² It is because of Calvary that we experience in this life a taste of the richness of fellowship with one another that will be ours in its fulness in the Kingdom to come: “comforted together” (Romans 1:12); “kindly affectioned one to another” (Romans 12:10); “same mind one toward another” (Romans 12:16); “edify another” (Romans 14:19); “likeminded” (Romans 15:5); “Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God” (Romans 15:7); “admonish one another” (Romans 15:14); “the same care one for another” (1 Corinthians 12:25); “by love serve one another” (Galatians 5:13); “Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ” (Galatians 6:2)” ...and more.

“The gospel was plowing new ground.” The professor exclaimed, “Understanding ... kinship ... makes us better able to understand the responsibility of Christians to ...live in harmony with one another.”¹³ Being a Christian is not just “me and Jesus. I am ... part of God’s household. ... I become part of His *we*.”¹⁴

It is not surprising to hear E. Randolph Richards, then, call sin, that which “...alienates from God’s community.”¹⁵ And that God “... doesn’t want to save me as an individual, God saves us into ... a community.”¹⁶

Unwillingness to share our Christian experience, disinterest in assembling with other believers, disunity on any level, is not a mark of a believer who is fully appreciating and appropriating Christ’s death and resurrection.¹⁷

¹¹ Thayer. 352

¹² ἀλλήλους

¹³ Richards. 246

¹⁴ Ibid. 109

¹⁵ Ibid. 237

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Hebrews 10:25 “...not neglecting to gather together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging each other, and all the more as you see the day approaching.”

Heaven

I once wondered if our hope was just a fond thought that we would be reunited with so many loved ones and dear friends that have preceded us to glory. When I get there, I will be one of countless millions of others who will be called to an awesome worship service at the Throne. That's spelled out in the Revelation Jesus gave John.

But will I find my mom in the crowd?

There are two things wrong with this question. One, my mom is no longer my mom. I was thinking about giving my beloved wife a "Christian" hug since I can't hug her romantically. Old relationships will be replaced with new—and far more meaningful and dynamic—ones. The second thing wrong with that question is this cold term "crowd." When I am with family, regardless the size, I am never in a crowd, a nameless throng of bodies pushing and shoving me as if I were in the way. I will belong here ...in every sense.

The closest I can come to giving this thought a biblical base is Philipians 1:27, "our citizenship is in heaven." In the Epistle of Diognetus, Christians are said to be "passing time in this life but will be citizens in heaven."¹⁸ It will be different than this life, for sure! But it will be "family." I will be reintroduced to so many saints, some who might have once lived in my own neighborhood, even in my house. I think I will remember mother even if she is sweeter and younger and however God designs our glorified bodies. I'll leave it thereonly keep in heart the truth that when God saved us, He introduced us into His larger family and we have been welcomed as one of them.

We must live our faith in that truth "not neglecting to gather together ... but encouraging each other, and all the more as you see the day approaching." (Hebrews 10:25)

¹⁸ επι γης διατριβουσιν αλλ' εν ουρανω πολιτευονται cp. Thayer. 528

THE POWER OF CHRIST'S FORGIVENESS

For this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. - Matthew 26:28

ANSELM argued, "If anybody imagines that God can simply forgive us in the same way we are to forgive others, he has not yet considered the seriousness of sin."¹

Is forgiveness a major theme of Calvary? Luke records that Jesus from the Cross said, "Father, forgive them, because they do not know what they are doing." (Luke 23:34) Some early manuscripts do not have this statement and we might find it reasonable to exclude it on that basis. We would be wrong.² It represents Jesus interceding like Moses of old for Israel at the golden calf incident. (Exodus 32:11ff) But the Cross itself is an act of the Father's forgiveness. "God exalted this man to his right hand as ruler and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins." (Acts 5:31) Now, give this some thought: If someone punches you in the nose, I cannot forgive him because it was not my nose. God was offended by our sin— only He could forgive. He could forgive us through Christ's death because Christ is God. The One who was offended paid the price for our forgiveness. If Jesus did pray for God's forgiveness, it would have been an announcement of what the Father was doing at that moment.³ It was God, the Father, Who forgave us.

The question before us is whether or not forgiveness of sins is in the atonement and we have to exclaim, "absolutely, yes!" It would be impossible to interpret God dealing with our sins in any way that would not include His forgiveness (Ephesians 1:7). What is less obvi-

¹ Anselm. *Cur Deus Homo*. 1.21

² Scholars include it.

³ cp. John 11:41-42 "Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me."

ous is the demand this places on believers in turn to forgive others. When Jesus taught us to pray He enjoined us to recognize His forgiveness *in ours!* "And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors." (Matthew 6:12)

"The object of forgiveness is the sin, the debt, not the sinners (debtor)." Dr. Craig seemed to be debating that oft spoken mantra, God hates the sin but loves the sinner. He clarified, "Not only are people forgiven ...but their sins are forgiven. This fact makes it evident that divine forgiveness is not (merely) a change of attitude on God's part toward sinners. The word carries ...the connotation of nullifying or canceling or remitting debts."⁴ Forgiveness wipes the slate clean.

John Stott outlines the task before God in that He does not just reconcile us to Himself, but He must deal with sin in the light of His holiness. "How could God express his holy love, " John Stott asks, "forgiving sinners without compromising his holiness ...judging sinners without frustrating his love?" Stott maintains that "It is when our perception of God and man, or of holiness and sin, are askew that our understanding of the atonement is bound to be askew also."⁵ It is when we begin to realize who God is in the person of His Son that we, too, fall at His feet crying, "Go away from me, because I'm a sinful man, Lord!" (Luke 5:8)

Being Forgiven

The thought of being forgiven is a hope that radiates like the morning sun, the reassuring warmth of an eternal tomorrow. It is a hope planted over a buried past, the flower of a divine promise of newness of life, of a reconciliation with God, of adoption and sonship. And with Jesus' resurrection there is the hope of our resurrection. Dorothy Sayers reminded us: "when He was raised again from the dead, man was resurrected."⁶ Jesus, through His death, Girdlestone reminds us, "gave substance and embodiment to the divine disposition of mercy which was foreshadowed in the Levitical Law."⁷

And for those who still think that forgiving someone is just a matter of words, consider how we are asked to forgive. Actions must follow

⁴ Craig. 72

⁵ Stott. 90

⁶ Sayers. Creed or Chaos. 8ff.

⁷ Girdlestone. 130

the words or forgiveness has no substance—to use Girdlestone's term. We need to forgive in deed if we have forgiven indeed. Forgiveness is an act of reconciliation.

Forgiveness is a powerful friend. It can melt hardened hearts, disarm a defensive stance, defuse anger, heal relationships, and for those who want it, forgiveness has provided eternal life—and herein lies our greatest hope. Here is where some emphasize the “moral” aspect of the atonement which we already reviewed.

Christians are asked to emulate God in this matter, to be ministers of reconciliation. Forgive as you have been forgiven.⁸ And, to be sure, this is happening, thanks to Jesus' night of suffering. To the believer, the abuse of friendship may indeed be given a proper burial through forgiving tears and repentant hugs—or most definitely should. We have been given new birth and a new hope through Christ that is confirmed in every act of forgiving. Our lives should bear witness to a spirit of reconciliation and healed relationships. Love—not american-style but God-style—should be the message of the Cross spoken in every action and every word of every believer.

Perhaps some hurts seem unforgettable. Perhaps, there is a distant memory that shows up in dreams unannounced and uninvited. Perhaps some offense requires, we reason, a vigilant watch to warn us lest it dares besiege us again. Perhaps, something too painful to remember clearly, nonetheless, still haunts us in unexplainable fears, moments of uncontrollable rage, orphaned desires that are not who we want to be—yet, they somehow show us who we have become! (Oh, how it hurts to be human!) And forgiveness is not just forgiving others, but forgiving one's self... me—the one who hurts in the solitude of my thoughts, in the heaviness of my spirit, in the regrets of a long ago that should have nothing to do with who I am now, but somehow seem to. The work on Calvary needed to address all this pain and hurt. “the chastisement of our peace was upon him”⁹

There is here, at least, a hint at the size of the work God had to and continues to have to perform on the human soul to bring us to His peace! The words “Forgive them” He spoke from the cross were the ultimate vindication that something real was happening the day He

⁸ Matthew 6:12 And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. NEW INT.

⁹ Isaiah 53:5

died. And thus began His ministry to us. Today He sits at the Father's right hand praying for you and me, praying that what He provided that day on Calvary will have the full benefit of His grace in us. He sent the Holy Spirit to remind us.

It is on our own road to Emmaus when He speaks to the heart that all this begins to make sense. The truth in that moment, as to why He had to die, is revealed in such clarity as to never again need to be proven:

He died ...for me!!

The Unmerciful Servant

The Lord's prayer in Matthew's recollection calls sin a debt, forgive us our debts, a penalty owed, after a Chaldean euphemism. The dictionary interprets that to be saying of our sins "... God can demand punishment as something due,"¹⁰ But on Calvary that debt was paid completely. We have been forgiven (1 John 1:9). In turn the Lord is requiring us, who have been forgiven, to forgive. To bring this truth home with undeniable clarity, Jesus told the parable of the "Unmerciful Servant" (Matthew 18:21-35)

Peter suggested that there has to be a limit to how many times we should be required to forgive someone (70 times 7?). Professor Trench understood Peter to be assuming that we have a right to some limit, but there is no such "right" in Scripture! Trench spoke of the parable of the "Unmerciful Servant," which we must hear:

"...it was evidently assumed, that a man in forgiving, gave up a right which he might still, under certain circumstances, exercise. In this parable the Lord will make clear that when God calls on a member of his kingdom to forgive, he does not call on him to renounce a rate, but that he has now no right to exercise in the matter; for having himself asked for and excepted forgiveness, He has implicitly pledged himself to show it! And it is difficult to imagine how any amount of didactic instruction could have brought home this truth with all the force and conviction of (this) parable."¹¹

¹⁰ Thayer. 469

¹¹ Trench. Notes of the Parables of Our Lord. 121-122

In the parable, Jesus tells the story of a monarch who called in a 10,000 talent loan owed him. To get an idea of how much that is consider that all the gold used in building the Tabernacle in the wilderness amounted to only 29 talents. (Exodus 38:24) When David gathered the resources to built the Temple (Solomon's Temple) it amounted to 3,000 talents. He then passed the plate and collected an additional 5,000 talents of gold for the service of God's house. (1 Chronicles 29:4-7) Such an immense debt could only be acquired by some high, well paid, official in the king's service—maybe, the administrator of the royal revenues. "Perhaps," Prof Trench imagines, "a satrap who should have remitted the revenues of his province to the royal treasury."¹² (He embezzled.) In short, it was beyond any servant's ability to repay.¹³

The servant was taken into custody, "was brought before him" (Matthew 18:24) and since he could not pay, the king gave orders to have the man's family sold into slavery, in payment, "that he, his wife, his children, and everything he had be sold to pay the debt." (Verse 25)¹⁴ In the parable, the man was thrown into prison. This practice never formed part of Jewish law, as well as, selling family members into slavery until a debt is paid in full. These were considered harsh and "superfluous."¹⁵ Subsequently, the reference to tormentors in verse 34, "handed him over to the jailers to be tortured until he could pay everything" suggests an oriental monarch not Jewish.

If we are understanding what the Savior is saying here—and we have only one way to see it—our debt owed God due to sin is beyond anyone's ability to make restitution (Romans 3:23). The punishment is everlasting destruction. "And you were dead in your trespasses and sins." (Ephesians 2:1)

¹² Ibid. 123

¹³ It was with exactly 10,000 talents that Darius sought to buy off Alexander, that he should not prosecute his conquests in Asia (Plutarch, Reg. et Imp. Apoph.). The same sum was the fine imposed by the Romans on Antiochus the Great, after his defeat by them; and when Alexander, at Susa, paid the depths of the whole Macedonian army, they amounted to only twice this sum, though every motive was at work to enhance the amount (see Droysen, Gesch. Alexanders, p. 500). The immensity of the sum may in part have moved Origen to his strange supposition, that it can only be the man of sin (2 Thess. 2) that is here indicated, or stranger still, the Devil!

¹⁴ cp, Leviticus 25:39 "If your brother among you becomes destitute and sells himself to you, you must not force him to do slave labor" Such was Roman law.

¹⁵ Trench. Notes of the Parables of Our Lord. 124

So this servant “fell down and began begging.” He knew something about the king; he could be merciful. Mercy is our God’s soft spot. We best learn that! “But from there, you will search for the LORD your God, and you will find him when you seek him with all your heart and all your soul.” (Deuteronomy 4:29)

This servant began to promise full payment of his debt, either driven by a desperate appeal or just one more deception that probably got him into this difficulty in the first place. We should think both. Such words on a sinner’s lips “testify that he has not yet attained to a full insight into his relations with God.”¹⁶ Without repentance and a cry for mercy one shows that he knows nothing about grace. A sinner knows no theology, no doubt, nor even if there is such a thing, but he knows mercy if He knows anything about God.

God reads the heart. It took some prison time, perhaps, but this servant’s cry became genuine and his monarch “had compassion, released him, and forgave him the loan.” (Verse 27) How brilliant is God! There can be no forgiveness in secret, that is, that the sinner does not know he or she is forgiven (Isaiah 1:18). He knew.

The lesson in this parable pivots on the next verse: “That servant went out and found one (went in search) “of his fellow servant who owed him a hundred denarii (a small amount easily repaid).¹⁷ He grabbed him, (It is evident, isn’t it, who is who in this parable?) started choking him, and said, ‘Pay what you owe!’” (verse 28)

When the king is informed, he is enraged and not without good reason that we, too, can understand: “Shouldn’t you also have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?” (verse 33) God’s holiness is offended (verse 34) and more so at the blatant disregard for not showing to others a kindness shown to him. What all Christians need to learn is that God shares his love often *through* us, the righteousness/justice can be done *by* us having been done *to* us. Our relationship with Him is represented by our fellowship with one another (1 John 1:7).

The informants, the fellow servants, on the other hand, are saddened, “they were deeply distressed (grieved).” (verse 31) Prof Trench reminds us, “In man, the sense of his own guilt ... the deep conscious-

¹⁶ Ibid. 125

¹⁷ A ratio of 100 pence to 10,000 talents is a ratio of 1 dollar to 1,250,000 dollars.

ness of whatever sin he sees (in another)... exists in its germ ... in his own heart."¹⁸ Our anger toward another's act of injustice tends to stir us to drag them before the judgment seat of popular opinion if we can. We imagine ourselves rejoicing in that day of reckoning when God finally gets around to avenging wrong. But hear Paul out, "Brothers and sisters, if someone is overtaken in any wrongdoing, you who are spiritual, restore such a person with a gentle spirit, watching out for yourselves so that you also won't be tempted." (Galatians 6:1)

Forgiveness!! It is impossible not to get the message here: You have been forgiven much; it is incumbent upon you to forgive others the small debt owed you. In no small way, if we might speak in the vernacular, this unmerciful servant had hell to pay. "tortured until he could pay everything ... owed" (Verse 34) which we know for us would be an eternal punishment.

Then Jesus says plainly something we probably never wanted to hear, "So also my heavenly Father will do to you unless every one of you forgives his brother or sister from your heart." "But if you don't forgive others, your Father will not forgive your offenses." (Matthew 6:15) Perhaps, we need to ask, "What is forgiveness exactly?" Is it possible for a believer to be unforgiving?

Forgiveness

William Craig argues that "We should not ... think of our sinful condition primarily on the analogy of the debt owed by a debtor to a creditor nor of God's forgiveness in terms of remission of a debt; rather, our condition like that of a condemned criminal before the court and divine forgiveness like a legal pardon, which is not at all incompatible with satisfaction of divine justice [and which satisfaction] has [become] a precondition of a full pardon.¹⁹ ... [This is] much more a legal pardon ...than ..the remission of a debt or the forgiveness of an offense."²⁰ The Psalmist declared, "As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us." (Psalm 103:12)

"Already said: Forgiveness is an act of divine mercy to the offender who seeks reconciliation. In terms of God's provision of salvation, He

¹⁸ Trench. Notes of the Parables of Our Lord. 128

¹⁹ Craig. 257

²⁰ Ibid. 214

initiates this act of reconciliation by first forgiving us and then extending to us the authority to be forgiving toward others. There is, in other words, a divine mercy, a divine love, that only He can give which rescues us from the pain of shattered relationships and the guilt it engenders."²¹

Any study of forgiveness has to address the sin that needs to be forgiven. There are many Greek words for sin—all which carried biblical meaning as aspects of the broken relationships we suffered before Calvary: missing God's glory, disobedient, lawless, failing God, ungodly, sinful ignorance, out of harmony, transgressing the Word of God, trespassing God's will. We were spiritually dead²² needing to be—not just forgiven but—resurrected." Perhaps, we should emphasize here that walking in "newness of life" (Romans 6:4) must include a forgiving spirit.

²¹ Ibid. 257

²² Ephesians 2:1 And you were dead in your trespasses and sins

CHRIST OUR MESSAGE

If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, a curse be on him! - Galatians 1:9

JOHN Stott is correct, "No theology is genuinely Christian which does not arise from and focus on the Cross."¹ Jesus' mission, which sent Him to the Cross, is not only central to all Christian truth, it is all Christian Truth. "I decided to know nothing among you," Paul vowed to the Corinthian Church, "except Jesus Christ and him crucified." (1 Corinthians 2:2) The Holy Spirit's entire ministry revolves around Jesus: His life, death, resurrection and intercessory ministry. "When the Spirit of truth comes he will guide you into all truth." Jesus comforted eleven disillusioned followers, who were unsettled by His talk of crucifixion. Then the Savior explained, "For he will not speak *on his own* (King James Version: *of Himself*), ... He will glorify me." (John 16:13-14a) The metaphor that might emphasize this truth: enrolling in a college course because you hear that the Holy Spirit is on staff as one of the instructors, but the only course He teaches is Jesus 101. We want to learn so much more: eschatology, comparative religions, church history, demonology, to name a few, but the Spirit seems disinterested in these. His curriculum is Jesus' incarnation, Jesus' death, Jesus' resurrection, and Jesus' intercession now at the right hand of the Father. (And if we inquire when Jesus or the Father will be offering these courses, they're not. Acts 1:8)

This would have been most uplifting if we might imagine now spending endless days in school and in praise of our Lord's victory over sin and the devil. But we have a world with whom to share this good news (John 17:15-16). Admit it: We are missionaries, ambassadors of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:18-19). We have a message from God for a world where many do not want to hear it. We are sifting through

¹ Stott. 211

the debris of a—spiritually speaking—crumbling cultural awareness of the love of God, looking for—if I may use the parable—those priceless (precious) pearls for whom our Lord gave everything to make His own (Matthew 13:46).

The Lifeblood of Christianity

As Pastor David Platt, Lead Pastor at McLean Bible Church in Washington, D.C., so aptly states it, “The Gospel is the lifeblood of Christianity.”² The missionary council meeting in Jerusalem in 1928 expanded, “The Gospel is the answer to the world’s greatest need. It is not our discovery or achievement; it rests on what we recognize as an act of God.”³ As believers, the Savior in our life is beyond question our trumpet call, our motive for living. “Herein lies the Christian motive;” states the 1928 Missionary Council, “it is simple. We cannot live without Christ and we cannot bear to think of men living without Him. Christ is our motive.”⁴

To Dr. Platt the challenge is “how to live out that gospel in our lives, families, and churches in an age of sexual confusion, legal abortion, rampant materialism, violent racism, escalating refugee crises, diminishing religious liberties, and a number of other significant social issues.”⁵ In his work “From Christendom to Apostolic Mission” Bishop Kagan, the Bishop of Bismarck, North Dakota, sees the necessity for the Church to once again don the mantle of the missionary since we are no longer living in a Christian culture. Archbishop Fulton Sheen in 1974 said “We are at the end of Christendom. Not of Christianity, not of the Church, but of Christendom. Christendom is ... social life as inspired by Christian principle. That is ending—we've seen it die.”⁶ Graham Ward’s “Anthology of Christian Essays on Christianity’s Survival” included an article by Stanley Hauerwas:⁷ “The Christian Difference, or Surviving Postmodernism.” The fact that Ward could

² Platt. 1

³ Francis M. DuBose. 343ff

⁴ Francis M. DuBose. 343ff

⁵ Platt. Introduction

⁶ Reverend Kagan. Preface

⁷ Stanley Martin Hauerwas is an American theologian, ethicist, and public intellectual. Hauerwas was a longtime professor at Duke University, serving as the Gilbert T. Rowe Professor of Theological Ethics at Duke Divinity School with a joint appointment at the Duke University School of Law. - Wiki

compile such a work is itself a testament to the church's awareness of what Hauerwas called "a life and death struggle with the world."⁸ ... adding: "I think it is a serious mistake not to take postmodernism⁹ seriously."¹⁰ Hauerwas saw believers as "a community-in-exile."¹¹ Sounds Pauline: "Our citizenship is in heaven, and we eagerly wait for a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ." (Philippians 3:20)

We are, in simple truth, missionaries to cultural change. And we must let that missionary side of our love realize more its potential in the hand of God. Jesus—yes—offends a world that does not know who He is, but His life is what our lives are all about. "in him we live, and move, and have our being...." (Acts 17:28) Christian apologist J. F. Baldwin recognizes the importance of heroic, Spirit-filled living, as the most powerful argument beckoning nonbelievers to the faith: "We may certainly teach people about God's grace by telling them the story of Pilgrim's Progress; ... we teach it best when we demonstrate it with our lives. Our actions matter more than any words."¹² "Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers," Pope Paul the Sixth observed, "and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses."¹³ And Bishop Kagan gave us the definition of witness: "They need to know, from their own experience, that obedience to the Gospel is perfect freedom, that holiness leads to happiness, that a world without God is a desolate wasteland, and that new life in Christ transforms darkness into light."¹⁴ The ultimate test of a disciple's commitment and dedication to the Lord is their ability to represent the Good News—as only good news can be represented—with an undying hope, an enduring peace, an unconquerable love, an unquestioning faith, and an unquenchable joy.

⁸ Ward. 145

⁹ Postmodernism is a world-weary intellectualism that no longer views life in terms of absolutes or universal principles. They go so far as to say that all thought is equally relevant (that there are no boundaries, no rules, no hierarchies, no objective reality and all facts are just 'social constructs');

¹⁰ *ibid.*

¹¹ *ibid.* p. 153.

¹² Ken Daniels.. 101

¹³ Pope St Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 41 cp. Reverend Kagan. 35

¹⁴ Reverend Kagan. 37

The Rough-edge of Christianity

Perhaps, in the spirit of filing off the rough-edge of the offense, Sharon Baker suggested that “we reinterpret our tradition (in a way) that it remains relevant for our changing world and powerful enough to transform our world with the good news of salvation through Jesus Christ.”¹⁵ Dr. Craig maintains that there is a reasonable argument to be made for the Savior’s crucifixion that will draw the non-believer into conversation about their sinfulness and their need for a Savior. “What is needed,” he offers, “is a defense of the coherence and morality of one’s theory of the atonement using the best tools of philosophical analysis and argumentation. Only then will one’s theory of the atonement commend itself to thinking men and women today.”¹⁶ Perhaps.

But Jesus, Himself, cautioned that, there is nothing we can do or say that will make more palatable a truth that confronts society on the most basic of levels—its morality or lack thereof. If there is talk of a “hell” (and Jesus did speak of it) it aggravates the offense. No wonder our Lord unabashedly admitted, “You will be hated by all nations because of my name.” (Matthew 24:9) If the Spirit gets us into trouble, He will get us out (Luke 12:11).

And where can we run and hide in God’s Word? Where are the words that only console the sinner with a universal hope of grace that suggests there are many roads to God, that somehow what we called “sin” isn’t that at all but just a faltering part of our humanity, a genetic defect, an illness? Is there nothing in the Good Book that condones or supports cultural change, that sees social evolution as simply different from what it once was? Must grandma’s traditions and beliefs still be relevant? Can we not find a biblical position that allows us the liberty to be different, to be living a new morality? Surely in a book the size of the Bible there has to be some thread of truth that supports the post-modern approach to social change?

No!

The Bible is one continuous message. It reflects on the broken relationship we have with the God Who created us and still loves us though we rejected and ignored that love. It is the message of reconcili-

¹⁵ Sharon Baker. 6

¹⁶ Craig. 9

ation, forgiveness, and redemption through the ultimate act of selfless, divine, love on a Roman Cross.

Everyone of us stands before Him guilty of walking away, of seeing no value in loving God back—something God called sin. "...all have sinned" (Romans 3:23). A relationship always takes two but how to transform the heart of a humanity that had no passion for Him, was the gargantuan task. We simply didn't want God!

Whether we want to admit it or not, the entire Bible is God's way of telling us this simple but profound truth. The Bible is all about Him, our need of redemption and how God would provide it. As Jesus explained to two disciples one day along a country road as they walked: "...beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he (Jesus) interpreted for them the things concerning himself in **all** the Scriptures."¹⁷ 'All' is the operative word. The Biblical record offers nothing else to us than our salvation thru Christ. There is no other path back into fellowship with God. "Jesus (said), "I am the way... No one comes to the Father except through me." (John 14:6) Jesus is the only way and that, too, is an abrasive and impertinent attitude toward other religions that think to hold a claim on spiritual or moral truth.

It's All About The Blood

"We were reconciled to God through the death of his Son." (Romans 5:10) Christianity is, indeed, a bloody religion, an idea, perhaps, in and of itself, offensive (I'll give you that) to logical minds, to academicians who reason from a scientific perspective, and who, therefore, see no value in the death of a Savior.

But with an unapologetic conviction, this is what our faith is all about! This is our living hope: the glorious return of the great God even our Savior, Jesus Christ (Titus 2:13) who shed His blood on a cross on our behalf, in our stead, to reconcile us to God. "We have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses.." (Ephesians 1:7) This has become our trumpet sound as believers. Paul unambiguously declared "... through him to reconcile everything to himself ... by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross." (Colossians 1:20)

¹⁷ Luke 24:27

The Savior's shed blood is the only explanation that ought to satisfy faith, that ought to satisfy any inquiry into any theory of the atonement. The writer to the Hebrews agreeably wrote, "How much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, cleanse our consciences from dead works so that we can serve the living God?" (Hebrews 9:14) This is redemption, freedom from sin's hold on us. In Peter's words, "For you know that you were redeemed from your empty way of life ..., not with perishable things like silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ,...." (1 Peter 1:18-19)

More to the point of atonement: our Lord's incarnation was necessary that by His death He would defeat Satan at his own game. Our God sent His Son to wrest death from Satan's hand and to provide eternal life for all those who would, by faith, accept (faith is accepting) His victory, so valiantly fought and won! The writer to the Hebrews said it this way: "Now since the children have flesh and blood in common, Jesus also shared in these, so that through his death he might destroy the one holding the power of death — that is, the devil." (Hebrews 2:14)

The Old Testament is replete with references to sacrifices because sacrifice means shed blood. All along, the Father had His Son's death on His mind and heart. There can be no other explanation worthy our theology. "For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have appointed it to you to make atonement on the altar for your lives, since it is the lifeblood that makes atonement." (Leviticus 17:11) "Without the shedding of blood," the writer to the Hebrews affirms, "there is no forgiveness." (Hebrews 9:22) "We have redemption through his blood." (Colossians 1:14) This is atonement, plain and simple. What is eternal life to a believer, is philosophical garble to the unbeliever until through conviction the Spirit of God reveals it. It is every believer's privilege to herald the message for the sake of those who will be listening.

The Confrontation

But this message runs counter to the cultural changes in the civilized world as Dr. Platt writes, "As followers of Christ, we are fooling ourselves if we don't face the reality that belief in and obedience to the Bible in an anti-Christian age will inevitably lead to risk in one's

family, future, relationships, reputation, career, and comfort in this world.”¹⁸

Our worldview as well as our faith defends the deity of Jesus as well as the trinity, the virgin birth, and ultimately the death of our Savior, all as central to our message, but all of which, sounds like mythological nonsense to the non-believing heart. “We preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to the Jews and foolishness to the Gentiles.” (1 Corinthians 1:23)

Make no mistake about it: The Bible is the promise of Salvation offered thru Christ’s death—a message that counters today’s evolutionary worldview of an eventual utopia, a self-made heaven for mankind. The Cross represents a miracle of grace that science cannot confirm or deny because it is outside the realm of natural inquiry. The resurrection from the dead and what it means for believers has broken out of the confines of natural history.

“(Christianity’s) critical edge,” Graham Ward cautions, “is important for the way it can sharpen theology’s own analytical tools.”¹⁹ God’s Word is the only weapon we wield (Ephesians 6:17) and that against “every proud thing that is raised up against the knowledge of God, (2 Corinthians 10:5).” Ward, sees God’s Word in terms of a theology (indeed it is a “study of God”) that enables us “not only to read the signs of the times but to radicalize the postmodern critique.”²⁰ This is his way of saying that our message continues to stand out in bold relief in an age of *wokeness*, “by providing it with an exteriority,” he continued, “a position outside the secular value-system.”²¹ In English: as Jesus prayed to the Father, “I have given them your word. The world hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.” (John 17:14)

The Cross is a message that runs counter to the social change evident within a, so-called, civilized world. God’s Word, therefore, has continuity and unity of thought. There is only one message within its pages! Discussions around topics, like a nuclear family or infanticide, that appear peripheral and less important have been dragged into dialogue because we cannot escape certain conclusions about the God

¹⁸ Platt. Introduction

¹⁹ Ward. xxiii

²⁰ Ibid. xxiii

²¹ Ibid. xxiii

we are getting to know and to love. Somehow, we have discovered, that our faith, our love for God, our salvation, is a wisdom crying in the streets (Proverbs 1:20) pleading with us not to be lured in by fancy phrases or ensnared by notions of compromise with otherwise worldly concepts that ultimately lead to denying who we are or who we want to become in Christ.

Now on the eve of Christ's return, this makes our voice as necessary as it is unwelcome. The church needs to consider the danger of compromise like playing a linguistic shell game or sleight of definition with words like "faith is just opinion" or "love is just a feeling" designed only as a palliative approach to mitigate the pain of confrontation. Sin is sin and needs to be dealt with if we care anything at all about meeting God someday without fear.

Our faith is not an aspirin, a cognitive dissonance that denies reality. Christian faith is the boldest move we can make. Instead of denying or projecting blame, admitting what we had become and our estrangement from God, we ask God to forgive us—to appropriate the forgiveness of God, if you prefer—and show how to live above our past rebellion against Him.

God's Involvement with Mankind

Let's go back to Genesis 1:1. God was not first our Savior. He was first our Creator and the new birth is His work. He is the Creator. But there's the rub! Creationism is not evolutionary theory. Evolutionary theology suggests God made man in the same fashion and for the same reason as the rest of His creation—and that simply is not true. We are uniquely made in His image.

Evolutionary theory suggests we are heading toward a utopian world where "survival of the fittest" is a natural process leaving the best of the best—instead of, as we believe, the work of a divine providence that plans an end to sin and corruption. Postmodern thought, evolutionary theory, counters what Christian eschatology and the Apocalypse is all about.

Weakening the idea of God as our Creator weakens the reason why He made us, for His glory. And if not for His glory, then Romans 3:23 ("all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God") is nonsense, since we cannot fall short of a relationship that didn't exist. In other words, no Creator God means no reality to the concept of sin. Sin and God's

judgment is now mocked by a postmodern relativism. Relativism, like existentialism, argues that knowledge, truth, and morality exist only in relation to a culture or a society. There is, for them, no absolute moral truth. And need I warn the Christian where this leads? Jesus' death for sin becomes a moot point. It has been replaced with a materialistic understanding of reality. Materialism has two definitions. Take your pick.

- ◆ a tendency to consider material possessions and physical comfort as more important than spiritual values. This is a familiar trap that Jesus addresses in the first beatitude. "Blessed are the poor in spirit. (Matthew 5:3) Believer happiness is not invested in possessions but in a dependence on God for all things.
- ◆ the doctrine that nothing exists except matter and its movements and modifications. Science is god?

A Powerful Message

The fifth chapter in The Acts of the Apostles is an historical reference to possibilities when the church learns to unite behind the Gospel. In verse 12 Luke tells us, "Many signs and wonders were being done among the people through the hands of the apostles." We read this as if this were a one-off event instead of the possibilities for which the Church was commissioned. Verse 14, no surprise, testifies, "Believers were added to the Lord in increasing numbers..." Governments of the world, take notice!

When the sick were carried on cots out into the streets hoping that Peter might pass by, believing that just the apostle's shadow was enough to heal them, the earthly authorities knew that God was getting out of hand. The theology in Jesus' day was: touch Him to be healed (Mark 6:56). But for the apostles, their shadow was sufficient. (It had to be, obviously, during sunset when a person's shadow was longer and more likely to sweep the crowd along the side of the road or Peter had to step over them!) What a parade! Touch or no touch, it is not a question of theology but of faith, and the crowds were there, swept up in the assurance that God was there and God would heal. They came—I dare say—by the hundreds, and now whoever saw themselves in office were under immense social pressure to put a stop to it.

Verse 17, Luke noted, they were “filled with jealousy.” You see (not to preach but, just saying) God gets in the way of the would-be powerful, famous and rich, and they don’t like it! “So,” verse 18, “they arrested the apostles and put them in the public jail.” That is that!

No that wasn’t that. The following morning, the political leaders, had to check it out for themselves. Peter and the apostles with him were in the public area, the Temple court, (verse 21) teaching. Teaching what? Verse 28: teaching “in this name” (Jesus’ name, i.e. The message of the Cross).

And how did they get out? I can imagine the soldiers being asked and replying, “Don’t ask, sir!” So now what should they do? An official statement with the force of law should be issued. It should work to silence them.

It didn’t. Peter and the others were re-captured and brought before the religious leaders. They’re in serious trouble now! Jesus warned them, “You will even be brought before governors and kings because of me.” (Matthew 10:18) He gave them a heads-up, “You will be hated by everyone because of my name.” (Matthew 10:22) And here we are!

“Didn’t we strictly order you (Peter and those with you) not to teach in this name? (Freedom to speak has limits. Talk about anything or anyone you want, Peter ... but not “Him,” not Jesus, not the Cross!) “Look, you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and are determined to make us guilty of this man’s blood.” They whined.²² This verse is psychologically rich. Peter’s message was not one of guilt but it was the Spirit’s opportunity to convict (John 16:8). Sad, when someone doesn’t see the difference, not knowing that “godly grief produces ... repentance that leads to salvation without regret.” (2 Corinthians 7:10) Peter didn’t fill Jerusalem with anything ... God did!

But what interests us here is the official executive order that was issued against teaching the Gospel message of the Cross and Peter’s response: He asserted, “We must obey God rather than people.” (Acts 5:29)

Make no mistake about it: “the offense of the cross” (Galatians 5:11) is real. We must not be “...ashamed of the gospel, because it (alone) is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes...” (Romans

²² A whine is a feeble and petulant complaint. How fitting here. They are up against a powerful move of God. Get out of the way or be run over! (Just saying)

1:16) If our message were the misinformed ramblings of a few unrealistic visionaries, we would be more entertaining than threatening (perhaps, an SNL parody in the U.S. we might laugh at). But this is not the case. The Gospel is empowered to change the world, to bring a sweeping spiritual revival that, subsequently, has political consequences for governments that find God somewhere between a nuisance to a genuine providential force that cannot be ignored.

Dorothy Sayers in her way, perhaps, says it best: "It (is) a grave mistake to present Christianity as something charming and popular with no offense in it. Seeing that Christ went about the world giving the most violent offense to all kinds of people, it would seem absurd to expect that the doctrine of His Person can be so presented as to offend nobody. Nobody need be too much surprised or disconcerted at finding that a determined preaching of Christian dogma may sometimes result in a few angry letters of protest or a difference of opinion on the parish council. At the risk of appearing quite insolently obvious, I shall say that if the Church is to make any impression on the modern mind She will have to preach Christ and the Cross."²³

"Jesus took our place on Calvary" is the heart of the Gospel message. "So," John Stott reminds us, "substitution is not a 'theory of atonement.'"²⁴ Ours is to expound it with conviction, not dress it in logic to make the message less offensive or less unreasonable to the natural mind. The strength of our message is in two things on our part and one on God's. For our part, the strength of our message depends on the strength of our conviction (faith) that this is real. Second, going back to the introduction to this work: they will know what God does by observing the fruit of His miraculous work in our lives. If fruit trees bear good fruit, no one is trying to understand the root system. If you think of it, a mystery surrounding a total understanding of Calvary leaves somethings for God to reveal later—and I want Him to take all eternity to share this truth. But for now, He is the One who convicts. Our evangelization is not the art of guilting someone into salvation or selling them on it. We introduce them to our Lord and He then takes it from there.

²³ Sayers, *Creed Or Chaos*. 8ff

²⁴ Stott. 199

WHY CHRIST WAS CRUCIFIED

Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said, "You're not considering that it is to your advantage that one man should die for the people..." He ...being high priest that year ... prophesied that Jesus was going to die for the nation, and not for the nation only, but also to unite the scattered children of God. - John 11:49-52

IN parables, analogies, metaphors—and yes, motifs—the story of our redemption is told. But the complete picture awaits our arrival in God's eternal presence when all that Jesus accomplished on Calvary will be finally and fully realized.

We enjoy discussing the Cross—and we ought to. ... at finding a reasonable explanation in contemporary terms not *what* happened on Golgotha's hill that Friday (we know what happened, what God provided, for between Paul and Isaiah this is explained) ...but *why*. Why His death? Why a sacrifice? Was it a legal agreement God made with Himself to satisfy His holiness? What was He willing to accept or give up to restore our relationship? What satisfies His Holiness when He is grieved by sin?

We asked specifically: Why did Jesus have to die? We must agree with John Stott:¹ The Cross was not a commercial bargain with the devil, any quid pro quo to satisfy a code of honor or a technical point of law. Jesus was not forced into submission by God as some moral authority over Him, nor punished by a harsh .. punitive Father. Nor was God, the Father, reluctant to forgive or accept the Cross as a means of our salvation.

But these explanations, to some, sadly, sound reasonable. They seek a story that explains Calvary. But the Cross is not a message in logic. It is a message in *grace*! We are so used to being rewarded, honored, recognized: we understand earning our way, accepting and returning favors, or avenging wrong. It feels so good to see someone get their

¹ Stott. 159

comupins—what goes around, comes around and some call it karma. Galatians 6:7 makes sense as a moral law: “Don’t be deceived: God is not mocked. For whatever a person sows he will also reap,” “Surely,” we say, “there must be something we can do, or at least contribute, in order to make amends.”

So when someone mentions a plenary substitution, which is what the Atonement was and is, many would-be theological academicians go intellectually numb. “Jesus dying in our stead, paying the punishment for our sins” is a message on pure grace, an unmerited gift of salvation. This concept of plenary substitution lies at the heart of our salvation.

We need to take care not to—as I spoke of in the preface—theologically distance ourselves from the real message. William Craig observed that, in error, some church doctrine has been read into Scripture ...to make the message friendlier or more representative of church life. “Theories of the atonement,” he wrote, “are usually laid out based on the way in which reconciliation is typically achieved **in human relationships**.(emphasis added) If the biblical texts are discussed at all, it is only after a theory of the atonement has been formulated, which is then read back into the biblical texts.”²

Paul, himself, warned us not to get entangled in explanations that lead nowhere good. What sounds reasonable is not always a revelation from God. What is logical to our way of thinking might not be of faith. “Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.” (Colossians 2:8)

There is much, however, we do know. In the words of Reverend Stott: “Deliberately, freely and in perfect love he has endured the judgment in our place. He has procured salvation for us, established a new covenant between God and human kind, and made available the chief covenant blessing, the forgiveness of sins.³ ...The curtain of the temple for centuries (which) had symbolized the alienation of sinners from God was torn from top to bottom in order to demonstrate that the sin barrier has been thrown down by God and the way into his presence opened.”⁴

² Craig. 8

³ Stott. 84

⁴ Ibid. 84ff

The theological truth here is that “The ...Father humbled Himself to become in and through His only Son flesh, sin, and a curse for us, in order to redeem us without compromising His own character.”⁵

Embracing the Truth

William Craig, in agreement, asserts that “A theory of the atonement will seek to explicate⁶ how Jesus’ death served to remove the obstacle of sin separating us from God.”⁷ Believers are thereby encouraged to—using Paul’s words: “...make every effort to take hold of it.” (Philippians 3:12) These are the eternal provisions God offers through His death and resurrection: the privilege to live a righteous life, to follow Him in service, to lay up treasures in heaven. And, don’t forget, being empowered to forgive as we have been forgiven.

We can with Peter now embrace the provisions of Calvary, for, “His divine power has given us everything required for life and godliness through the knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.” (2 Peter 1:3)

Paul confessed, “I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.” (Philippians 3:8) Is this not just another way of saying, I give up analyzing the Cross, but I know He died there and I know that this provides for me a new life to live in Him and how by a transformed mind I can now know the Savior who went to that cross. Paul disavowed academic excellence, philosophical wrangling not designed to understand but to explain (a subtle distinction dangerously different). He spoke “not with eloquent wisdom so that the cross of Christ will not be emptied of its effect.” (1 Corinthians 1:17)

What happened that Friday—we think it was a Friday—on Golgotha’s Hill was horrific, earthshaking (literally so) and carried the weight of an eternal burden of sin out to sea and tossed it into the deep. “He will again have compassion on us; he will vanquish our iniquities. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea.” (Micah 7:19) Now, if we accept His death for what it meant to God, we will live above that past sin. “For we know that our old self was crucified

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ explain

⁷ Craig, 6

with Him so that the body ruled by sin might be rendered powerless so that we may no longer be enslaved to sin, since a person who has died is freed from sin. Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.” (Romans 6:6-8)

“How is it that Jesus’ death dealt with our sins?” asks Dr. Craig, “How did his death on the cross overcome the estrangement and condemnation of sinners before a holy God, so as to reconcile them to Him? This is the central question concerning the New Testament doctrine of the atonement.”⁸ Dorothy Sayers called the creed “the very knottiest kind of dogmatic riddle.”⁹ What best explains how God could declare us, who were enemies, who crucified Him—declare us—righteous based solely on what He did and nothing of any moral or eternal value in us?

Grace!

The Message

Well, speaking of simple: the sum of all history is recorded in those few short hours on Calvary. Someday, we will all meet this Savior in the glorified flesh. Someday “every tongue (every person who ever lived) will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” (Philippians 2:11) All will then realize that what happened on that sacred brow was all that ever really happened and everything else—all achievements, all treasures, all discoveries, will lie in the ashes of all things forevermore forgotten.

The message of the Cross is a message that confronts everything wrong about us in the eyes of God. “What will you do with this Jesus?” is a question many feign not important. Some try by laughter or philosophical rationalizing with a roll of the eyes, as if we who preach Christ are crazy, to dull the sharp edge of the knife of conviction, though this message is the sole reason for a Bible. “For the word of God is living and effective and sharper than any double-edged sword, ... able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.” (Hebrews 4:12) Some say this life is all there is and there will be no inevitable encounter with truth but “the neck is bared” because Jesus

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Sayers. *Creed Or Chaos*. 49-50

died. "...all things are ... exposed¹⁰ to the eyes of him (God) to whom we must give an account." (Hebrews 4:13)

Whether or not meeting Him will be a traumatic event depends on what we do with what He offers us now through His death ("with whom we have to do" - KJV Hebrews 4:13). I appreciate how John Stott put it: "He is still, as C. S. Lewis called him, 'a transcendental interferer.' We resent his intrusions into our privacy, his demand for our homage, his expectation of our obedience. Why can't he mind his own business, we ask petulantly, and leave us alone? To which he instantly replies that we are his business and that he will never leave us alone."¹¹

As the writer to the Hebrews so aptly summarized: "Long ago God spoke to our ancestors by the prophets at different times and in different ways. In these last days, he has spoken to us by his Son." (Hebrews 1:1-3) And dare I state what in a civilized world should be obvious, "There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to people by which we must be saved." (Acts 4:12)

We need to appropriate His death—appropriate what the Savior was talking about when He foretold His own death. Jesus exclaimed, "Truly I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you do not have life in yourselves." (John 6:53) It is not enough to learn the theology, we need to own the message, that is to say—referencing a Pauline concept (Romans 6:11)— "consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus."

Sin

And what is sin? Simply put: God and we were not on speaking terms. When was the last time you prayed? Point taken. God is holy. That's Who He is, how He thinks and what motivates Him to act. We were born unholy. Before being reconciled to Him through Christ's work at the Cross, everything we thought, planned, reasoned, wanted, or did, was to one degree or another warped, twisted, slightly to one side, off balance, skewed and out of harmony with what God wanted done, why He wanted it done, or how He wanted it done. Our lives were not in line with Him. That's sin. It has nothing to do with jewelry

¹⁰ τραχηλίζω - to bare the neck

¹¹ Stott. 58

or wine (necessarily). "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:23)

Talking to God, listening to Him and following Him were not possible before we accepted Christ as Savior. Now we are among His sheep (one of Jesus' cherished metaphors) who know His voice. "My sheep hear my voice, I know them, and they follow me" (John 10:27)

How To Know I Am Saved

When Jesus asked Peter to identify whom Peter thought He, Jesus, was, Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." Then Jesus responded, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but my Father in heaven." (Matthew 16:15-17) Paul agreed, "This is the message of faith that we proclaim." He, no doubt, sought to herald this trumpet call in every town and hamlet between Antioch and Rome (1 Corinthians 2:2).

Faith? Christ death on Calvary and resurrection for our salvation must be believed—better, believable. But it is only believable when it is revealed by God. Paul then explained, "If you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." (Romans 10:8-9) This is not a formula, as if, verbalizing anything will make it so. It is admitting now what we know to be gloriously true. The confession is the natural response of the heart. What we believe we confidently speak of. As Jesus said elsewhere, "the mouth speaks from the overflow of the heart." (Matthew 12:34) So, King John translation, "We confess that 'Jesus is our Lord,' because we believe unequivocally God raised him from the dead. That's how we know we are saved" This is something God told us and we heard Him clearly!

Recall the centurion at the foot of the Cross who confessed Jesus as God's Son?

This sacred truth is never known,
Except it comes from God alone—
As Peter learned, you must recall—
Else no one knows. No, not at all!
So when we read the centurion
Confessed the Savior God's own Son

If I might be so bold to say
This was his soul's salvation day!

Appropriating Calvary

And then, we must appropriate that message, live the provisions Jesus provided through His death and resurrection. "Therefore we were buried with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too may walk in newness of life." (Romans 6:4)

The Atonement is a story still being written on the believer's hearts and into their lives (Romans 8:29). Until there are more answers we rest only in this promise in John 20:31: "But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name."

BIBLIOGRAPHY

ATHANASIUS of Alexandria. *On the Incarnation: Treatise on the Embodiment of the Word of God*. Kindle edition e-artnow, The original writing of this work is public domain. Athanasius of Alexandria (2012-11-27T22:58:59). On the Incarnation . Blue Letter Bible. Kindle Edition. 2021

Alexandria, Athanasius of. On the Incarnation: Treatise on the Embodiment of the Word of God (p. 1). e-artnow. Kindle Edition.

Botterweck, G. Johannes, Helmer Ringgren, et. al. Editors. *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1974 15 vols.

Brown, Colin. ed. al. *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House. 1986 4 Vols..

Baker, Sharon . *Executing God* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press) 2013

Bernard Williams. *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy* (Taylor and Francis: Routledge Classics) 2011. Kindle Edition.

Boyd, Gregory *Letters From A Skeptic* Colorado Springs, CO: Cook Communication Ministries, 2004

Brown, Driver, & Briggs. [BDB] *The Brown, Driver, Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*. [The BDB].. Peabody, MA. Hendrickson Publishers. Sixteenth Printing 2015

Brunner, Emil. *The Mediator*. Translated by Olive Wyon. 1927; reprint, Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1947.

Caragounis, Chrys C. *The Development of Greek and The New Testament: Morphology, Syntax, Phonology, and Textual Transmission*. Grand Rapids, MI.: Baker Academic, 2006

Bibliography

Craig, William Lane. *Atonement and the Death of Christ: An Exegetical, Historical, and Philosophical Exploration*. Waco, TX. Baylor University Press. 2020

Daniels, Kenneth W.. *Why I Believed: Reflections of a Former Missionary*. Austin TX:Kenneth W. Daniels, 2010. Kindle Edition.

Daniel Dennett. *Breaking the Spell*. New York:Viking Penguin. 2006

De Alminana, Margaret. *Kathryn Kuhlman, a Theology of Miracles*. Newberry, FL:Bridge-Logos, 2011

DuBose, Francis M. ed. *Classics of Christian Missions*. Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1979 .

Fastiggi, Robert L. *The Sacrament of Reconciliation: An Anthropological and Scriptural Understanding*. Chigago, IL. Hillenbrand Books, 2016

Franks, Robert S. *The Work of Christ: A Historical Study of Christian Doctrine*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1962

Godet, Frederick Louis. *Commentary of the Gospel of John*, Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House. 1970

Godet, Frederick Louis. *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House. 1971

Godet, Frederick Louis. *The First Epistle to the Romans*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House. 1970

Gesenius, William A *Hebrew And English Lexicon of the Old Testament*. Boston, MA: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1882

Girdlestone, Robert B. *Synonyms of the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids , MI: Grand Rapids Book Manufacturers, Inc. 1974

Griffin, Joe, Ivan Tyrrell. *Human Givens: The new approach to emotional health and clear thinking*. East Sussex, United Kingdom:Human Givens Publishing, Chalvington, East Sussex:Human Givens Publishing Ltd,, 2013

Harrison, R. K. *Introduction to the Old Testament*, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2004

Kagan, Reverend David D. *From Christendom to Apostolic Mission: Pastoral Strategies for an Apostolic Age*. Bismarck, ND: University of Marry Press, 2020

E. Kautzsch. *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*. London, UK:Oxford University Press, reprinted 1974

Bibliography

Keil-Delitzsch *Commentary on the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI. Eerdmans Publishing, 1980

Kittel, Gerhard. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1974.

Lange, John Peter. *Commentary of the Holy Scriptures*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing Company, 1980.

Lewis, C. S. *“Yours, Jack: Spiritual Direction from C. S. Lewis”* New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers, 2008.

Liddell, Henry George and Robert Scott. compl. *A Greek-English Lexicon*. London: Oxford University Press, 1976

Lightfoot, J. B. *Saint Paul's Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing Company, 1974

Lightfoot, J. B. *The Epistle of Saint Paul to the Galatians*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing Company, 1974.

Lightfoot, J. B. *Saint Paul's Epistles to the Philippians*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing Company, 15th printing, 1976

Luther, Martin. *Commentary on Saint Paul's Epistle to the Galatians*, trans. Theodore Graebner. Grand Rapids, MI Zondervan Publishing, 1939

Metzger, Bruce. *A Textual Commentary of the Greek New Testament*. London-New York: United Bible Societies. 3rd edition. 1975

Moulton, James Hope & George Milligan. *The Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1974

Pearlman, Myer. *Knowing the Doctrines of the Bible*. Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House; Revised edition, 2012

Platt, David. *Counter Culture: Following Christ in an Anti-Christian Age*. Carol Stream, Ill: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 2017 .

Prothero , Stephen. *God Is Not One: The Eight Rival Religions That Run the World--and Why Their Differences Matter*. New York:Harper Collins, 2010

Richards, Randolph E. & Richard James. *Misreading Scripture With Individualist Eyes: Patronage, Honor and Shame in the Biblical World*. Downers Grove, IL:InterVarsity Press. 2020

Bibliography

Robertson, A.T. *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research*. Nashville: Broadman Press, 1934

Ryken, Leland, editor. et. al *The Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*. Downers Grove IL: IVP Academic. 1998

Sayers, Dorothy. *Creed or Chaos* (Manchester,NH: Sophia Institute Press, 1974)

Sayers, Dorothy. *The Man Born to be King*. (San Francisco CA: Ignatius Press. 1990)

Sproul, R. C. *The Holiness of God* (Carol Stream,IL:Tyndale House Publishers. 2nd Edition. 1998), ([Kindle Locations 210-213](#)).

... *What is Reformed Theology?: Understanding the Basics*. MI Ada: Baker Books. 2016

Stott, John. *The Cross of Christ Centennial Edition*. Downers Grove, IL:InterVarsity Press. 2021

Thayers, Joseph. *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon*. Hendrickson Publishers, 1996

Trench, Richard C. *Synonyms of the New Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1975

Trench, Richard C. *On the Study of the Words Lectures*. New York: W.. Widdleton, publisher. Unknown

Trench, Richard C. *Notes on the Parables of Our Lord*. New York, NY: Fleming H. Revell Company. Unknown

Tozer, A. W. *The Knowledge of the Holy*. New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishing, 1961

Turretin, Francis. Transl. James R. Wilson. *The Atonement of Christ*. New York, NY: Board of Publication of the Reformed Protestant Dutch Church, originally published 1679-1685. Formatted, corrected, annotated (in blue), and modernized by William H. Gross www.onthewing.org Nov 2015 Last updated: 11/23/2015

Vidu, Adonis. *Atonement, Law, and Justice*, Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing, 2014

Wace, Henry. *The Sacrifice of Christ: Its Vital Reality and Efficacy..* London, England: Church Book Room Press, 1945

Ward, Graham. ed. *Postmodern Theology*. University of Manchester: Blackwell Publishing Ltd. 2008

Bibliography

Wells, David F. *The Search For Salvation*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press. 1978

Accessed 5/24/21 referencing a classical Greek understanding of the Logos: <https://inters.org/jesus-christ-logos>

Accessed 5/26/21 Athanasius, On The Incarnation” <https://ccel.org/ccel/athanasius/incarnation/incarnation.ii.html>

Accessed 6/3/21 A review of Misreading Scripture With Individualist Eyes. http://pneumareview.com/misreading-scripture-with-individualist-eyes-patronage-honor-and-shame-in-the-biblical-world/?fbclid=IwAR3UFjuuBJWOWeIC9Ngn1YQDO9bqrZ4_LnCaHA4Ni_6AR66UITH2DEJH61w

Accessed 6/17/21 Turretin on the Atonement of Christ. <https://archive.org/details/turretinonatone00turr>

Accessed 6/28/21 The New Advent Encyclopedia on Hope. <https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07465b.htm>

Accessed 6/28/21 Charles Swindoll’s Reformed Theology. https://www.goodreads.com/author/show/5139.Charles_R_Swindoll

Accessed 7/6/21 On Transsubstantiation <https://nwcatholic.org/voices/cal-christiansen/how-can-i-explain-transubstantiation>

Accessed 7/19/21 Tyndale & Atonement. <https://rsc.byu.edu/king-james-bible-restoration/william-tyndale-language-one-ment>

Accessed 8/6/21 Council Of Trent http://www.documentacatholicaomnia.eu/03d/1545-1545,_Concilium_Tridentinum,_Canonis_And_Decrees,_EN.pdf

Accessed 8/6/21 *New Advent Encyclopedia on Sanctifying Grace*. <https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06701a.htm>