

THE DOCTRINE OF THE WORK OF CHRIST

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CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM OF FORGIVENESS

I. THE NECESSITY OF THE CROSS

1) The Cynic.

It is the measure of our shallowness, both in regard to sin and God that many people ask, “Why should our forgiveness depend on Christ’s death?” “Why does God not just simply forgive us out of his love and mercy; why go to the extent of having his Son crucified?” As the French cynic put it, “le bon Dieu me pardonnera; c’est son métier,” which translated means “The good God will forgive me; that’s his job.” (cf. J.R.W. Stott *The Cross of Christ*. InterVarsity Press, 1986, p.87. footnote 1)

After all, we argue, if we sin against each other, we are required to forgive each other. Why can God not be equally generous in his attitude towards us? We do not require the death of someone before we forgive them.

(i) The Analogy. The analogy of “forgiving us our sin, as we forgive those who sin against us”, was simply a principle Jesus laid down, namely the impossibility of the unforgiving being forgiving. The two passages involved are Matt.6:12-15; 18:21-25. The fact that Jesus laid down such a principle does not necessarily suggest that any Christian will be guilty of it. 1.John.2:9-11, makes it clear that a “brother” who hates or shows a consistent, unloving, unforgiving attitude to another “real brother” is still walking in Darkness.

Although the “principle” was laid down in a ‘de facto’ manner of speaking, nevertheless, so great is the quantum leap from darkness into light that a ‘de jure’ situation can never arise.

(ii) Cur Deus Homo? In his book, written at the end of the 11th Century, Anselm makes the pointed statement that if anybody imagines that God can simply forgive “us”, on the grounds that we forgive others, then that person has not yet considered the seriousness of sin.

This emphasises the hypothetical nature of the principle Jesus laid down in the two passages quoted above. I call it “hypothetical” because the entire sacrificial system as well as Christ’s own teaching and the teaching of the NT Epistles founds God’s forgiveness of our sins upon the vicarious and substitutionary sacrifice of Christ in our place on the Cross. We are basically forgiven because of Christ’s atonement.

If God’s forgiving us rested merely on us forgiving one another then the basis of forgiveness throughout the Bible has shifted from a God’s holiness-to-man’s-sinfulness relationship (ie. a God-Man relationship) to a Man-Man relationship.

This reduces the Incarnation, Suffering, Atonement and Resurrection to an exercise in futility, a complete blurring of the purpose of Christ’s coming.

It also means that we must exclude from the doctrine of forgiveness the holiness and majesty of God, and the fact of sin.

2) Is it Possible?

An infinitely more crucial question to ask is not why God finds it difficult to forgive, but rather, how he finds it at all possible to forgive.

If we understood something of the majestic holiness of God and his ‘doxa’ or glory, and of our own sinfulness, our righteousness being as filthy as rags to Him, we would ask how forgiveness

is even conceivable. Forgiveness cannot be taken for granted. The problem of forgiveness is the result of an inevitable conflict and collision between God as He is and us as we are.

The problem is:

(i) Our sin, unholiness and guilt. We have broken God's Law(s), and He cannot simply overlook this. When a baby gets jam over its face whilst eating bread, the problem is functional. Our sinfulness, is constitutional and practical, and thus constitutes rebellion against God, both in nature and practice.

(ii) God's holy reaction to sin. As John Stott (to whom I am indebted for some of my material, though disagreeing on one or two points) says: "How, then, could God express his holy love? - his love in forgiving sinners without compromising his holiness,..." (Stott, *ibid.*, p.88) In Isaiah's words, how could he be simultaneously 'a righteous God and a Saviour' (45:21)?

God's predicament (if we dare use such language) is that of reconciling "For God so loved the world... ." (Jn.3:16) with "...your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you,..." (Is.59:2)

The final question centres on the possibility of ending this predicament, we move on to a consideration of this.

3) Is God under any necessity to save sinners?

(i) Love as a Necessary Attribute. God's Attributes are not, to use human language, attributes or characteristics that One can have or not have, keep or dispense with, use or not use. By very definition, God's Being is a structured, yet intertwined set of attributes which are constantly, and always dynamically in action. "For with you is the fountain of life;..." (Ps.36:9) All life in the Universe, from the almost untraceable neutrino's to the vast, superheated, exploding Supernova's, to the sap steadily coursing through the stem of a flower, flows from the One Omnipotent Life of God.

"Life" by definition is activity, energy, movement, creativity-in-constant-action. God IS Life, this is not a choice he has to make, it is part of His Being.

The attribute of love is defined similarly, but caution is needed. God's Love is, I use the phrase reverently, an "In house Love". That is to say that primarily it is a love which circulates on equal terms and strength between Father, Son and Holy Ghost. This love existed before there was any other object of any kind outside of the Trinity. Like the other attributes of life, holiness, and omniscience, "In house Love" is a necessary love. One cannot conceive of the Trinity without that binding essence of love.

Prof. Murray says: "Truly God is love. Love is not something adventitious, it is not something that God may choose to be or choose not to be. He is love, and that necessarily, inherently, and eternally." (J. Murray. *Redemption Accomplished and Applied*. Eerdmans, 1955, p.14) It must be regarded as a settled fact that the CAUSE or SOURCE of the atonement is God's love.

This still does not solve the problem of the NECESSITY of that love towards US, who are beings OUTSIDE the Trinity!

(ii) The Necessity of Absolute Consequence. We have looked at the cause of atonement. We still have to settle the necessity.

One principle we must settle from the very outset is God's Self-Sufficiency. The word "necessity" implies "obligation", and within the circle of the Trinity they are obligated only to Themselves.

It follows logically that God is under no "necessary obligation" to anyone or any object outside of himself. Where then, do the words "necessity", "consequence" and "absolute", in the chapter heading, come into the picture?

By linking Eph.1:1,4 (note the words "holy and blameless"), 11;2:8,10 (note the word "workmanship"); and 5:25-32 ("Christ loved the Church and gave himself up for her to make her holy etc...") we are pointed in the direction of an answer. God determined to save sinners by

uniting them to Christ so that He could bring into being a Bride (there generate Church) to be united to his Son in “sacred matrimony”. This was a free and sovereign plan of God.

We can lay out the plan as follows. Once having determined on such a plan God placed himself, under the necessity” of carrying the plan through because the “necessity” arose from the integrity and perfection of his own being and nature.

The word “absolute” indicates that in all God’s dealings He always stakes an “absolute” stand, never a “relative” one, from which he can withdraw or alter to suit himself. It is “absolute” in the sense that it is “Final”. God has placed himself under his own Oath, as it were.

The word “consequent” indicates the manner in which this “absolute” plan is to be carried out. Having determined on a course of action God also determined on the Way of Atonement as the “consequent” plan of action to bring the Bride into existence.

We continue with the Problem of Forgiveness, and move on to our second main heading.

II. THE GRAVITY OF SIN.

1) The Dropped Word.

The word “sin” has virtually dropped out of the vocabulary of people today. This is largely due to secular humanism, wittingly or unwittingly embraced. Not only are people embarrassed by the word sin, but it has become meaningless.

The word has become meaningless because morality and ethics have become almost, if not completely, relative. The word sin is viewed as a specialist word, used by theologians in much the same way as the word ‘supernova’ is used by the astronomist alone. Sin, unlike the word ‘supernova,’ which is vocation specific, is a word that embraces all humanity in whatever field of life or work. Why? Because man’s sinfulness is part of his nature not part of his vocation. Some words are specialist words, associated with a person’s profession, other words belong to mankind as a whole, sin belongs to the latter category.

There are least five main words for sin in the Greek NT. They are, firstly, the commonest one hamartia, which depicts sin as missing a target. In biblical usage it refers to the Law(s) of God which are the target or Divine Standard . This is God’s perfect standard and by our sinfulness we show that we cannot ‘hit’ that target or reach its perfect demands.

God’s law must not be separated from himself as if it were on a lower level. These laws are but a reflection of God’s own nature and are accordingly as perfect as he is. The second word is adikia which refers to unrighteousness or iniquity. In God’s sight an action is either right (by his standards and therefore a ‘righteous’ act), or it is wrong (by his standards and is therefore ‘unrighteous’)

Once again the ‘righteousness’ is but a reflection of God’s Righteous. Nature and anything less or lower than that Divine Righteousness is deemed ‘unrighteous’.

The next word is ‘poneria’ which is evil or sinfulness of a particularly vicious or degenerate kind. The whole concept of pornography and debasement has developed from this word. It refers to an inherent, inward corruption of character; an inner perversion. The fourth word is ‘parabasis’ which involves stepping over or ‘transgressing’ a set down boundary or line. Once again God’s Law(s) are involved, because they are God’s Boundaries, set down as an unbreakable line, or boundary that should not be crossed.

When David committed adultery with Bathsheba he was ‘transgressing’ or stepping over (in reality actually ‘breaking’) God’s set boundaries.

Finally, ‘anomia’ refers to lawlessness or the disregard or violation of a law, again God’s law. It is remarkable how many of these words have to do with a deliberate and rebellious act to ‘break God’s Law(s)

Since the laws are a reflection of God's character, the breaking of them does not involve the breaking of something separate or apart from God. God and his Law(s) are so inseparable that the action which involves breaking a Law of God is at one and same time an action of rebelling against the Person of God himself.

This is what differentiates human laws from God's Laws. In breaking a law drawn up by a legislative assembly one is, in a sense, doing something impersonal (though it may, indeed, involve a person) This is never the case with God and his Law(s): If one breaks a Law of God one automatically comes into rebellious conflict with the Divine Lawgiver. In touching His Law one touches God.

2) The Moral Breach.

The assumption throughout Scripture that these Law(s) are in fact God's moral laws, since they express his righteous and moral character. They do not apply to him, since he is the perfect Moral Being. They apply to us however, since having been made in his image we are moral beings.

These moral laws are (i) outward and objective, in the sense of, for example, the Ten Commandments and the various Moral Principles laid down by our Lord (Matt.5:44 "Love you enemies...")

And (ii) inward and written on our hearts and consciences, bearing witness to God and to ourselves as to whether we are upright and moral in our lives or not.

There is a vital correspondence between these legal requirements and our response to them. To break even one law (James 2:10) signifies that we have become a "lawbreaker" (James 2:9) and "lawless"(1.Jn.3:4) We have breached the Law(s) of God and Christ.

James, in the passage quoted above, goes so far as to say that if we break one law, it is as good as if we have broken them all. Three different illustrations may help here. The first is that of a dam wall. The slightest breach of the dam wall will cause water to flow through the cracks and with the increase in water pressure the breach will simply become wider. The second example is that of our Lord. Surveying His life from birth to death we can say without hesitation that the slightest moral or ethical breach of any of His Father's Laws would immediately have rendered Jesus unfit as the stainless sacrificial Lamb to atone for our sins. The perfection of Jesus life is an indication of what God means by "sinless". Nothing less is acceptable.

Thirdly, to indicate just how seriously God views even one sin, we need go no further than Eve's one, single disobedience in Eden. History shows us the catastrophic results of even that single sin. I'm not sure that we understand why James says that breaking one sin is like breaking all, or that we fully understand the punishment that fell upon Adam and Eve for their single sin (in today's world it would be termed a 'mistake' and modern man would certainly object to such a severe punishment)

THE FOLLOWING PARAGRAPH APPEARS TO BE A COMPLETE REPETITION? It does not appear to add anything to comprehension -David Fitz-Patrick 28.3.91-----

-----Let me try and explain once more. Although this is not perfect theological language I would like to suggest that God and his Law are One. This does not mean that God is governed by a Law that is over him,-that would put that Law higher than God! What I mean is that the Laws of God are in perfect harmony and synchronization with the BEING and the NATURE of God because they flow from and express totally and perfectly that Being and Nature. Thus when you and I break such a Law we are not merely breaking a Law that is separate and independent from God. To put it graphically God does not see the Law(s) that he has made as some object outside of himself and seated in the heaven of heavens objectively observes us breaking them.-----

-----The laws are so much a part of God's being that when we break such a Law we(i) deeply offend God's Nature and Person, not just his morality but his deepest Being and (ii) in effect declare ourselves autonomous, placing our desire over and against his, an act of hostility and rebellion.

By doing this we not only breach God's Moral Law(s) but declare ourselves independent from Him, an act of moral treason against the Creator who, upholds, feeds, guides, loves and keeps us alive by granting life.

3) The Autonomous Man. God is the only truly autonomous Being or Person in the Universe. There are no laws that govern or control Him. He is of necessity the final reference point for all His rational creatures. This means that they are under and have to live by his authority. They have to be informed of who they are, what their purpose is, what their relation to the Creation and the Creator are. This is so because in their fallen state they would not of themselves know these things.

God's General and Special revelations are therefore adaptations to the weakness and fallenness of sinners. God makes these revelations in such away that men and women can understand them. He speaks to them in their own language. He uses "anthropomorphisms" too. That means he, for example, speaks of himself in human language: that he has "eyes", "ears", "a strong arm", that he is like "a rock", "a castle", "a shield" and so on. In other words he makes himself explicable to us.

By contrast, fallen man wishes to be autonomous. He is his own final reference point. This is his basic sinfulness." For sin is that by which men seek to interpret facts apart from the revelation of God." (C.Van Til. *A Christian Theory of Knowledge*. Presbyterian & Reformed, 1969,p.33)

The picture of fallen men and women in Scripture is, ironically that of people who "know God" (Rom.1:18,19,20,21,25), but have 'suppressed' the truth (v.18)

What makes it serious is that as "knowing" God, man still prefers his autonomy. In the light of the creature's complete and total dependence upon the Creator this is outright rebellion.

Suppression of the "knowledge" of God means that man is led away from the "light of the knowledge of God", into deeper darkness where he becomes "vain" and his "foolish heart is darkened", -he is thus led from light into darkness, and from knowledge into non-knowledge or untruth. What to him is light is "blindness" (Eph.4:18)

" Here then is the heart of the matter: through the fall of Adam, man has set aside the law of his Creator and therewith has become a law unto himself. He will be subject to none but himself. He seeks to be autonomous...he now tries to be the source of his own light. He makes himself the final reference point.....". (Van Til,ibid.,p.42)A "lie" is to say something is true when it is not. The terrible tragedy is that the sinner will accept what is non-truth, untruth, and illusion, as if it WERE the truth, as if it IS reality.

The "lie" results in the sinner having a faulty view of God, of himself, of sin, of morality, of goodness, of righteousness, of man's real condition and consequently of the solution to the "problems" of mankind.

An illustration will make this clear. Take the illustration of a first year medical student and a highly qualified heart specialist with years of training both being faced with the same patient. Who will make the more skilled diagnosis? The application, on the one hand to the autonomous sinner in search of truth, and on the other to him who places himself under God to search after God's Truth as revealed in Scripture and Christ, is obvious.

4) The Problem Compounded: The Law. The problem of Forgiveness, you may recall, was basically the predicament caused by, on the one hand God's love for sinners, and on the other sinfulness, which causes an necessary separation between man and God, the SUMMATION OF ALL MORAL GOODNESS, could not just ignore their sinfulness. The problem, intimately bound in with the whole situation, is the existence of God's Law which has inherently a certain strength or power in it (1 Cor.15:56 "...the power of sin is the law.")

There are a few things to be said here: (i) The problem is compounded because, although it has power, the Law does not have the power to save sinners from their sin. (Rom.8:3) "...the law was powerless..."In fact it was never intended to save, was the fallacious supposition of the Jew, as it is also the case with so many today.....The Law was not given for that reason (ie. to save from sin),because man in sin could not possible keep it." (D.M. Lloyd-Jones. *Romans: An Exposition of Chapters 3:20 -4:25.Atonement and Justification*. Banner of Truth,1970,p.20)

The problem does not lie in the Law. It could save if it was kept perfectly! Sin has stripped us of the power to keep it, and so the Law is equally powerless.

(ii) The power of the Law lies in its ability to legislate and condemn. In other words the whole power of the Law lies in its ability to define sin, to reveal its real nature, to reveal that we consistently break it, that we breach its morality, that we try to be independent and autonomous from it.

Thus the power of the Law lies (a) in exposing our breaking of it, and (b) in its penal sanction. In other words it brings down upon us God's curse as well as punishment. (Gal.3:10)

(iii) The greatest power of the Law however is not just to exposes in, not just to penally condemn sin, but to bring death (Rom7:13) It is meant to take a man's life from him.

(iv) The Law has one profound redeeming feature: " So the Law was put in charge to lead us to Christ." (Gal.3:24) One of the functions of the Holy Spirit so to open our spiritual eyes that looking first at our sin and then at the Law we see the guilt, penal sanction and death brought upon us.

But then, by the same Spirit we are "lead" to Christ who himself took our guilt, our penal sanction and death upon himself. "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." (Gal.3:13) "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." (2.Cor.5:21) _____

Before looking for solutions, or rather, The Solution, we must take a closer look at the attributes of God. These attributes are hard to accept because he has turned us into sentimental, maudlin creatures. Without these attributes we do not have a Just and Moral Universe or Society, and certainly not a Just Redemption. We can rejoice in God's Holiness and Wrath.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Discuss " The Cynic", " The Analogy" and " Cur Deus Homo?"
 2. Why is God under a "Necessity" to save sinners?
 3. What is the "Dropped" word and what does it have to do with the "Moral Breach"?
 4. Write an essay on the Autonomous Man and The Law in such a way that you show how they are intertwined.
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**OUR LORD'S UNDERSTANDING
OF THE LAW OF GOD**

I. INTRODUCTION: CONTEMPORARY TEACHING ON THE LAW OF GOD IS WEAK

1) Introductory Remarks. “ It is often said that standards of conduct and integrity among evangelical Christians today are not as high as they were in days gone by. Few... would feel able to dispute the justice of this accusation.” (The Word of the Lord. The Campbell Morgan Bible Chapters. Introduced by R.T. Kendall. Marshall Pickering, 1988, p.110 from an article by Dr. J.I. Packer “Our Lord’s Understanding of the Law of God.”) Without wishing to single out recently fallen American Televangelists, it appears that there is an alarming and inappropriate “familiarity” exhibited with the things of God, and with God himself. We have witnessed a decline in natural “godliness” and the growth of acursed “professionalism” among contemporary Christian leaders and laity. This is particularly disturbing. To what extent have “professional and business methods”, and even more so the ‘spirit’ and ‘attitude’ of these methods subconsciously influenced Christians? In today’s high-tech world it would, of course, be foolish to ignore these new methods of management in churches, organizations and evangelism. The danger lies not in the “state of the art technology” we utilize, but in our leaning too heavily on it for success, rather than on the Holy Spirit. It is interesting, from an historical perspective, to note that almost every new generation of Christians has to grapple with similar problems. Perhaps the challenge is greater today because of the vast array of “ technique-solving” machines and programs available. These are helpful psychologically, but are of dubious spiritual value. 2) The Root of the Problem. At the heart of this superficiality and lack of godliness is the fact that we care and know little about the Laws of God. The Love of God has been preached so often and for so long (it is not wrong to preach about God’s love per se) without the balance of the Law, that the Law has become peripheral. Prevalent anti-authoritarian attitudes mediate against preaching the Law of God. We neglect to study and apply the Law as our forefathers did. Book titles, records and music tapes in Christian bookshops provide evidence of the great vacuum that exists concerning the Law of God.

Today “house churches” abound. Naturally, we rejoice in this, but to whom are the members and the churches themselves responsible? Do they have an internal structure based upon the Scriptures? It is interesting to read of “Methodist Societies” which sprung up within the Anglican Church of Wales during the Revival under Daniel Rowland and Howell Harris in the 1740’s. They were provided new converts with a place to receive instruction and guidance, a place to witness, to pray and to enjoy mutual fellowship. The “Societies” were not haphazard, self-running affairs. They were structured, disciplined, well-ordered, reproachable and accountable to the ordained leadership. We seem to care more about correct doctrine, which is of course right in its place, than we do about right living; about the truth than the behaviour which backs it up. We are anxious about the doctrines of the epistles, but skate over their ethical implications. (Packer, cf. Kendall, *ibid.*, p.111) I disagree with Dr. Packer reluctantly, but I am not convinced that there is any greater evidence for an anxiousness about the doctrines of the Epistles than there is for their ethical and moral demands, i.e. the demands of God’s Law. If our argument is that God’s Law made provision for a Perfect Lamb to take our place, our sin and our penalty, and that Christ is that Perfect Lamb, then we must surely discover what our Lord’s attitude to the Law(s) of God were. II. CHRIST’S ETHICAL TEACHING AS A WHOLE.

1) Moral Instructor. A view held for almost a century is that the real Jesus of Nazareth was nothing more than a teacher of practical wisdom, morality, ethical views and standards. He was a moralist and no more, a teacher of ethics and ethical behavior and not the Mediator who shed His blood for sinners.

This view originates from a theory that there is a fundamental difference between the historical Jesus we meet in Matthew, Mark and Luke, and the theological Jesus we meet in the Gospel of John. Paul was blamed for turning the Rabbi of Galilee into a Divine Saviour. This approach contrasted “the Jesus of History” with “the Christ of Paul”. The next obvious step was to separate the ethical and practical teaching of Jesus from the unauthentic theology that the writers of the NT, Paul and the other apostles, had built around Christ and embedded him into.

This approach emphasizes the necessity of loving your neighbour and a belief in God’s universal Fatherhood of man. Unconsciously these were the first steps taken towards “Liberation Theology”. The Sermon on the Mount became the Golden rule to live by. There is no Law capable of being broken and so there are no sinners in need of salvation. A Moral Gospel supplants the Salvation Gospel. 2) Christ’s ethical teaching must not be separated from His Person and work. If the ethical teaching is seen in isolation, Christ’s uniqueness is undermined, His teaching could just as well have been propagated by Confucius or Buddha. If Christ is not seen as the one and only Saviour, Christianity loses its credibility. The theory that Christ’s ethical teaching can be understood and proclaimed in isolation from the rest of his Person and Work lingers on.

The moral and ethical teaching of Jesus never did stand on its own. Like the ethical teaching of the Epistles it is firmly rooted in the framework of active Redemption, not passive Homilies. Christ’s ethics are firmly placed within the corollaries of the Active Gospel, which presents Him as an Active, Dynamic, Saving Redeemer and not simply as a Wise Man or Sage. (i) The Work of Redemption and the Spoken Word are One. Christ’s work of Redemption on Calvary and His Spoken Word were always One work, they were not contradictory. Christ’s teaching was not unexpectedly overtaken by His death, His death was related to His teaching.

Christ’s preaching ministry began with the announcement “The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand, repent and believe the gospel.” (Mark 1:15)

The “kingdom” was that position men and women would enter, after repentance and belief in Christ as the only Redeemer, of peace, safety and real happiness. Jesus is not dealing with ethics but is concerned with what He calls “the gospel”.

How could Jesus make such a pronouncement at the beginning of his ministry? This was possible because as King-Redeemer of the Kingdom, He was already present. He was not just another Galilean Rabbi, He was the king come to His Kingdom to pronounce salvation to all those who submitted to Him as king.

What, in turn, was the kingdom based on? This Messianic Kingdom was based, if we study Is.53 carefully enough, on the Atonement made on the Cross. The primary action of Christ was not so much His words, important though they were, but the Action on the Cross upon which the ethical teaching was based.

During His three years of ministry Christ was able to give people definite assurance of salvation? The reason for this was that He was already pledged to die. The new kingdom and covenant had to be sealed by His blood. He had not come to be ministered unto, but came to minister unto.

Christ’s teaching must be seen in the light of His death. The Ethical Christ and the Atoning Christ are one.

Earlier Jesus Christ announced Himself as the Prophet to come. Thereafter He made it clear that He had also come as the King of this new Kingdom. But primarily He had come as the Priest, to lay the foundation for bearing away men’s sins. “The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” (Mark. 10:45)

Our Lord’s preaching and teaching involved an ethics that was inextricably linked to his atonement.

(ii) Christ’s ethical instruction presupposed the preaching of Kingdom. Christ’s teaching on how to live was meant for those who had already received the “gospel of the kingdom”. It could hardly be otherwise. Christ did not come to preach an Ethical Atonement, but an Atonement of Sacrifice that would be followed by a life lived according to certain ethics.

The gospels give proof of this by telling us that our Lord's discourses on ethical themes, eg. the Sermon on the Mount, the Sermon on the Plain, these sermons in Luke 12 and Matt. 18, were not directed at the listening crowds, but at His disciples (cf. Matt. 5:1; 18:1; Luke 6:20; 12:1,22)

Once this is understood the nature and purpose of our Lord's ethical teaching becomes clear. It is meant for those who are already Christian. The Law, is not meant to create Christians, but rather indicates lack of Christianity.

III. CHRIST AND THE AUTHORITY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT LAW.

1) The abiding validity of the Old Testament. Our Lord did not brush aside the O.T. Law(s), He asserted their abiding value and continuing validity. "It is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle (tiny letter) of the law to fail." (Lk. 16:17) The so-called Moral Laws, in particular, retain their binding force over those who have entered the kingdom of God. The Civil and Hygienic Laws ceased to apply when Israel ceased to be a Theocracy, but the Moral Laws and Principles found in the Ten Commandments and other parts of the O.T. remain in force for the Christian.

Christ scathingly dismissed the oral law, "the tradition of the elders", (Mk. 7:7), but insisted that the written Mosaic injunctions are "the commandment of God", "the word of God", (Mk. 7:8f and v.13), and must be obeyed. 2) The Old Testament law was not abolished. It would be a misunderstanding of Christ's mission to think that the 'new order' He came to institute involved an annulment or cancellation of the O.T. law. He explicitly states: "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil." (Mt. 5:17)

"From this statement it would appear that, just as in his life and death he was consciously fulfilling the pattern of the Messianic ministry, which he found laid down in the O.T. prophets, so in his moral teaching he was consciously reaffirming, in its new and final application, what he discerned to be the substance of the O.T. law." (Packer, cf. Kendall, *ibid.*, p. 121)

It is significant that Christ fulfilled the law as He said He would in Matt. 5:17. It is conceivable that He was (i) deliberately setting right a seed-thought which might have begun growing in the disciples and other people's minds and (ii) that He was laying down, at the beginning of His ministry, a principle to counter a problem that He knew would arise later on in His ministry.

Christ underwrote the O.T. moral laws. As we shall see the key issue around which the Atonement revolves is the law. We sin because there is a Law of God to break. It is because we break this law that we incur its liability of guilt and penalty of death. Christ dealt with these issues in His atoning work on the cross.

3) A Problem Examined. A superficial reading and exegesis of some of Christ's statements seems to indicate that in certain instances He brushed aside, on His own authority, the teaching of the O.T. law and substituted His own. There are at least five such instances.

The first instance is His apparent denial of the legitimacy of divorce for any reason except in the case of adultery, despite the existence of Mosaic regulations for divorce in Deut. 24:1f., which apparently permitted it. (see: Matt. 5:32; 19:3f; Mk. 10:2f; Lk. 16:18)

The second, third, and fourth instances are found in the sections in the Sermon on the Mount where Christ appears to criticise the Mosaic regulations about swearing (taking an oath), revenge, and love ("...you have heard that it was said...but I say to you, Swear not at all... resist not evil... love your enemies...") The fifth is found in the passage in which Christ lays down the principle that no man is defiled by the food which he eats, but rather by the evil that comes out of him (Mk. 7:19f) This is in direct opposition to the list of unclean meats in Lev. 11, laid down by Moses. In general terms, and in answer to any such accusations, we may say: (i) In each of the five cases our Lord was seeking to establish the heart of the law rather than the negative, legalistic, outwardly-conforming interpretation given it by the Pharisees.

(ii) Do not be confused by phrases which begin "You have heard that it was said ...", . This does not necessarily relate to Scripture. Jesus does not say "...you have seen that it was written..." (which would indicate that the written Mosaic law was being referred to), but rather "...you have heard..." (thus referring to rabbinical and scribal interpretations)

(iii) The fact that our Lord is dealing with the Pharisees is made clear in Mt.5:43, where Jesus says “ you have heard it said that you must love your neighbour but hate your enemy”. As the phrase “hate your enemy” is not found in the OT, it must have been a Pharisaical interpretation.(iv) Our Lord was not challenging the OT Law(s), but the misinterpretation of the law. As the Moral laws of the OT, were inextricably linked to the atonement it was never Christ’s intention to negate them. The Moral Laws constituted men and women as sinners. Writing to the Romans, Paul says “The law was added so that the trespass might increase.” (Rom.5:20) Christ’s atoning work was directed at those who had broken God’s laws and had thereby become sinners.

To suggest that Christ did not uphold the OT moral laws and principles is to suggest that he did not fulfil the purposes for which he came, namely (i) to keep the law perfectly in our stead, and (ii) to make atonement for law-breakers!

In Romans, Paul explicitly states: “...I would not have known what sin was except through the law.” (Rom.7:7)

IV. OUR LORD’S UNDERSTANDING AND INTERPRETATION OF THE LAW

It would be helpful if we looked at some passages in the Sermon on the Mount, and especially Matthew 7, to see just how Christ approached, understood, interpreted and upheld the law.

1) Mt.7:21-30. This section deals with the Sixth and Seventh of the Ten Commandments, which deal with murder and adultery. Our Lord did not in any way negate the Commandments or, deny their validity or application. The use of “But” vv.22,28 does not indicate a denial of the validity of the Commandments, in fact the reverse is true. The laws involve more than external understanding and obedience, they also involve the emotions, (angry , v.22), attitudes (you fool, v.22c), and inward, invisible desires such as lust (who looks lustfully, v.28) Christ was in fact rebuking the Pharisees’ un-balanced emphasis on the externals and their lack of concern for “motives” or “the spirit of the law.” There was a dimension to sin or law-breaking that the Pharisees had neglected, which was perhaps even more important than the externals.

2) Mt.7:31-32. This section deals with divorce. Christ points out that if a man or a woman divorces his/her partner for any reason other than adultery, and he/she then remarries a new act of adultery will take place. The marriage will be an adulterous one and the partner who first committed adultery will be guilty of breaking up that which God had joined together.

The “certificate of divorce” is explained, not condoned, in Mt.19:8. Moses, Christ says, “...permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard”, but, he quickly adds “...it was not this way from the beginning.”

In a situation where unfaithfulness to the marriage bond was rampant, wives were being irresponsibly abandoned. Moses instituted the certificate of divorce (i) to keep evil practices under control, and (ii) to safeguard the status of the woman by ensuring that she had legal evidence of divorce instituted by her husband. All claims of the former husband on her were revoked. Neither Moses nor our Lord condoned divorce; it was a temporary, pragmatic solution to a serious problem. The ideal was laid down by God in Gen.2:24. Our Lord condemned Rabbi’s, who, using Moses’ example and procedure permitted divorce for reasons other than adultery.

3) Mt.7:33-37. This passage deals with the taking of oaths. The Pharisees, using Lev.19:12, cf. Deut 23:21, demanded that oaths taken in God’s name should be kept.

In the light of the fact that Paul either swore an oath or at times came close to it (Rom.1:9;9:1;10:2; 2.Cor. 11:10; Gal.1:20; 1 Tim.2:7), we must assume that in certain rare instances the Christian is permitted to do likewise (if, for example he had to give evidence in a Court of Law.)

We can only conclude that when our Lord said “Do not swear...”, he was referring to the whole corpus of casuistical laws the Pharisees and Scribes had built up over the years. They held, for example, that oaths not taken in God’s name were not binding. Jesus is suggesting that Christians should be people of such integrity and honesty that their word is their bond; that their “yes” and

“no” means exactly that, plain, unadorned, honest language that is dependable and trustworthy, devoid of innuendos or cunning subtleties.

4) Mt.7:38-42. On reading this passage it becomes clear that Christ did not dispute the validity of the laws outlined in Exod.21:24; Lev.24:20; and Deut.19:21. A feature of the OT passages is the equality of the distribution of punishment e.g. An “eye for an eye”. The principle being that justice and punishment must fit the crime. This principle operates in modern day judicial systems. The OT laws of “an eye for an eye, etc...” have been the butt of accusations of harshness. However, given that every country must have some judicial system, the Israelite system, which strove for equality and fairness before the law, was head and shoulders above less impartial systems of the surrounding civilizations at the time.

The Jewish and OT laws strove to avoid (i) disproportionate punishment regarding public law, and (ii) sought to curb disproportionate private vengeance. They were therefore, remarkably advanced in legal thinking, as humane as was possible and also, almost uniquely amongst the civilizations of the time, these laws incorporated the principle of the need for all men to be equal before the law, with equality of punishment.

A comparison of the Old Testament Law’s with the draconian laws passed in the 18th and early 19th Centuries in England illustrates the point. There was a disproportion between crime and punishment. Hanging was the usual punishment. The “Waltham Black Act” of the early 1700’s, drawn up after minor agrarian uprisings in 1722-23, instituted hanging from the age of 10, regardless of sex, as punishment for burning a standing rick of corn, or a pile of straw; for poaching a rabbit or for cutting down an ornamental shrub, or for appearing on a high-road with a sooty face!

The abuse of the power of the law and the disproportion between crime and punishment in the above laws is obvious. When compared with Jewish law, they were little short of murderous, especially as they were in the hands of unbending and harsh judges. (R. Hughes. *The Fatal Shore: A History of the Transportation of convicts to Australia, 1787-1868.* Pan Books, 1988, p.29)

It may be worthwhile to reflect on the “equality” aspects of the atonement. In order to redeem us and redress the imbalance caused by the fall, our Lord Jesus Christ had to “match” God’s requirements with our liability, point by point.

Christ’s incarnation involved, subjection to temptation, perfect observance of God’s Law in “passive” and “active” obedience, becoming sin for us, taking upon himself the penalty due to sinners, death and resurrection. He was, as we shall see in Chapter IX our perfect and complete Substitute.

5) Mt.7:43-47. This was dealt with under point 3)(iii) Our Lord understood that the civil, ritualistic and hygienic laws, given for the ordering of Israel’s national life in Palestine, would cease to be effective when the Israelite State passed away, as it did when the Roman general Titus invaded the country in 70 AD.

The moral law and principles were another matter. They were “absolutes”, being the authoritative Word of the Lord under which and by which, Christians should live until the day of their glorification.

QUESTIONS

1. Discuss Christ’s Ethical Teaching as outlined in the notes, but in your own words and in such a way that you give evidence of understanding the subject. 2. Write an Essay on “Christ and the Authority of the Old Testament Law.” 3. How did Christ understand and interpret the Law. Give four examples.

COURSE

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THE BIBLE INSTITUTE OF SOUTH AFRICA

BIBLE STUDY CORRESPONDENCE COURSES COURSE NO:005

by the

REV. JIM VAN ZYL, B.A.M.A

THE DOCTRINE OF THE WORK OF CHRIST

CHAPTER III

THE HOLINESS OF GOD AND ITS CONSEQUENCES I. GOD'S HOLINESS 1)

Foundational 2) Foundational to his Being

3) Righteousness and Justice (i) Righteousness (ii) Justice (a) A cultural interpretation of justice (b) In the Old Testament (c) In the New Testament II. GOD IS JUST III. THE AUTONOMOUS MAN 1) The Final Reference point 2) The Heart of the Matter V. THE ANGER OF GOD 1) Revealed 2) God's Anger 3) Metaphors of God's Anger 4) The Seriousness of it all.

GOD'S HOLINESS. 1) Foundational. An appreciation of the holiness of God is central to an understanding of the doctrine of the Work of Christ. God is Holy and He cannot overlook sin, He has absolute, unalterable Standards. God's Holiness necessitates a Penalty of Death being attached to the breaking of His Law(s) Christ became sin for us, by taking upon Himself the full consequences of God's just anger and wrath. 2) Foundational to his Being. If we imagine that God has deliberately set us unattainable standards of holiness we do Him a great injustice, we question His integrity, justice and loving kindness to the creatures He has made.

We do not complain about the "Love" of God, because it suits us not to do so. Neither do we complain about God's omnipotence, omniscience or His omnipresence. We complain about God's sovereignty as this impinges on our freedom. When we consider His holiness we feel out of our depth. We are so unholily, with so many evil thoughts and motives and live in such a darkened world, that the concept of "holiness" is foreign to us.

"Holiness" is the ground and base of God's Being. "The root *qdsh* is usually derived from the root *qd*, meaning to cut, to separate, hence it indicates apartness, separateness... The word holy is used ...with reference to all kinds of persons and things which have been separated from their ordinary sphere, and placed in a peculiar relation to God and to His service." (Herman Bavinck, *The Doctrine of God*, Banner of Truth, 1977 edition, pp. 210-211)

This separation is only possible because of the inherent, foundational holiness of God. Holiness is relational, a relation of Creator to creature. "...it pertains to God in the first place, and to the creature in the secondary sense. Creatures are not holy in themselves, neither are they able to sanctify themselves. All sanctification and holiness proceeds from God. Jehovah is holy;..." (Bavinck, *ibid.*, p. 213)

Isaiah often uses the name "the Holy One of Israel" (29:23; 40:25) God's Name is holy. The Bible speaks of His Holy Majesty (2 Chron. 20:21) When speaking of His holiness God is not referring exclusively to one attribute that is separate from the others, attributes such as "Love" and "Omnipresence" are not any less holy. It is a major principle that holiness is part of Deity.

God's holiness "cuts Him off" or "separates" Him from all unholiness, causing Him to regard it with supreme horror, wrath and anger. His nature is in never-ending conflict with unholiness. Holiness is Truth; unholiness is untruth. Just as God is utterly hostile to untruth, so He is hostile to unholiness. Unholiness always causes disharmony, uncleanness, injury and chaos and brings into the creation, that God "made very good", a foulness and filthiness which ruins the beauty and wonder of His creation.

3) Righteousness and Justice.

God is incapable of "neutrality" in the face of unholiness. This feature distinguishes the God of the Christian Faith from the Greek and Roman deities, who were nothing more than "deified" human beings. Immorality and drunkenness amongst the gods themselves rendered them neutral to unholiness.

God's is impelled to take retaliatory action in the face of sin. He is not a good-natured, old-fashioned courteous gentleman who minds His own business. God is no Deist! The Universe and the creation are God's business. He cannot adopt a neutral attitude toward that which he has made with such loving care. (i) Righteousness. There is a close relationship between the holiness and righteousness of God. His righteousness is seen in history, in the government of the world and in the providential guidance of Israel. It is revealed throughout Creation, for example, consider the "rightness" of mathematical equations and the "righteousness" (ie. motive and attitude) of God in His actions. He deals "righteously" with each man. It is significant that in Scripture God's remunerative justice is much more prominent than His retributive justice. God is "righteous" in that His judgement is impartial (Job.13:6-12 etc), and He shows no favour and does not take bribes.(Deut.10:17) In His righteousness God recognizes the justice of the righteous and causes it to be brought out into the light. God is righteous because He protects the pious (Ps.7:9), helps them (Ps.31:1), answers them (Ps.65:5) and hears them.(Ps.143:1) He forgives because of His righteousness and this righteousness involves deeds of redemption, salvation and deliverance.

Righteousness is usually a 'forensic' or legal concept. In the OT the most important task and the most impressive evidence of righteousness is seen in the protection of the oppressed, as well as the deliverance of the needy.

The "righteousness" of salvation does not consist entirely of outward blessings "...but especially in this, that God grants His people forgiveness of sins, that He pours His Spirit into their hearts, that He grants them a new heart and that He writes His law in their hearts...God will be their God in the fullest sense, and they in like manner will be His people (Is.43:25; Ezek.11:19; 36:25;)" (Bavinck, *ibid.*, p.218)

(ii) Justice. The concept of justice is important, around it centres the reason for, manner of, and necessity for, the Penal Atonement of Christ. The problem of sin, of man's relationship to sin and to other sinners, to social, political and cultural factors and the sinner to God relationship, centres in this pivotal concept of Justice. (a) A cultural interpretation of justice. In our culture 'just' and 'justice' have become pawn words used in political game-fighting. The terms are often related to social issues, such as the demand for war on poverty and the urge to rid the system of "inequities". The emphasis has been on "action" (which is obviously necessary), rather than on objective, legal and penal prescriptions. A leading black theologian, James H. Cone suggests that: "If black theologians and clergy...had been more reflective about fusing black theology and black power...we would not have overlooked the need to place it within the worship and organizational life of independent black churches..." (J.H.Cone. *For My People. Black Theology and the Black Church.* Skotaville Publishers, 1985, p.113) On a more strident note Leo Tolstoy, speaking about a closely related subject, the Law, says "Laws are rules, made by people who govern by means of organized violence, for non-compliance with which the non-complier is subjected to blows, to loss of liberty, or even to being murdered." (George Woodcock. *The Anarchist Reader.* Fotana/Collins, 1977. Article entitled "The Violence of Laws" by Leo Tolstoy, p.117)

Contemporary issues color ideas so that words like "justice and law" are given a twist never intended in the original and certainly not in biblical usage.

(b) Old Testament. Where the English words "just" or "justice" occur one of two Hebrew words can usually be found. The first is "mishpat" which occurs over 400 times in the OT and covers judicial functions such as litigation, a judicial decision, or the execution of a judgement.

The second word is "sadaq". These words suggest that definite moral and ethical norms exist, and that actions in harmony with those norms are "just". Actions not in harmony are classed as unjust and constitute injustice. (c) New Testament. The concept of justice is expressed by "dikaiois", which means "just", "upright", "righteous". Words in this family reflect the Hebrew word "sadaq". The NIV translators inevitably chose the word "righteous" to express the meaning of "dikaiois", instead of "just." Three key passages here are: Rom.3:24-25; 1.John.1:9; 2 Th.1:6. These passages and various thoughts already expressed will be examined.

II. GOD IS JUST. (i) As Governor of the universe and because of His Trinitarian Godhood of Justice, God is morally bound to condemn the guilty. This is not an abstract, philosophical idea.

by the fact that the sinful nature predominates throughout. To quote Cornelius Van Til: "For sin is that by which men seek to interpret facts apart from the revelation of God. The sinner seeks a criterion of truth and knowledge independent of the revelation." (C. Van Til. *A Christian Theory of Knowledge*. Presbyterian and Reformed, 1969, p. 33)

2) The heart of the Matter. Through the fall of Adam, men and women have set aside the Law of their Creator. The vacuum, in man's own judgement, has been filled with his own law. Man has become subject only to himself and the laws he has made.

PERHAPS THIS PASSAGE COULD BE OMITTED? DFP 19.4.91 Let me use a modern singer, Barbra Streisand, as an example. She is a strong-willed, independent kind of personality. When she was still fairly young in show business she had a stage manageress who told her to stop chewing chewing-gum while on stage! So being who she was she defied her by sticking it under her chair or to the roof of her mouth! She said: "Sometimes gum is right. It's a defiance. Like, I'll always say, 'I'm not gonna do nothing.' And somebody will say, 'You mean anything.' And I'll say, 'No, I mean nothing. I'm not gonna do nothing.'" (S. Considine. *Barbra Streisand*. Arrow Books, 1987, p. 10. Italics is author's) I am simply using this as an illustration, but do you see how it illustrates the earlier theological statements?

Humanity, since the fall, has assumed God's defining, legislative and executive powers. We define, outline and execute our own man made laws and have attempted to fill the vacuum ourselves. Paul Johnson, speaking about the "intellectuals" and their influence during last 200 years, says "For the first time in human history, and with growing confidence and audacity, men arose to assert that they could diagnose the ills of society and cure them with their own unaided intellects..." (P. Johnson. *Intellectuals*. Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1988, p. 1) What does this mean in practical terms? IV. THE ANGER OF GOD. 1) Revealed. Prof. Leon Morris points out that man is so sinful that even God's "anger against sin" has to be revealed. Morris quotes Rom. 1:18 "The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men..." He says: "Paul does not speak of his views on the wrath of God as a result of his personal evaluation of the situation... It is something that is 'revealed'." (L.M. Morris. *The Cross in the New Testament* Paternoster Press. no date p. 191.)

2) God's Anger. To quote Prof. Morris again, this concept is not only uncongenial, but is explained away as being an impersonal expression of wrath, meant to point us to a process of cause and effect, in which a wrathful God is not personally active. (Morris, *ibid.*, 189) This does not do justice to God who is, after all, personally touched by our breaking His Law. Yet, even Christians find this teaching uncongenial. Prof. C.H. Dodd, in his *Commentary on Romans*, suggests that Paul uses the word *orge* (anger or wrath) "in a curiously impersonal way" (J.R.W. Stott. *The Cross of Christ*. Inter Varsity Press, 1986, p. 103) His argument is that when Paul uses the word *anger*, God is not included in the statement. Yet "grace" is sometimes used without reference to God (Rom. 5:20-21) and we do not "depersonalize" that word! (Stott, *ibid.*, p. 105) This hostile reaction to God's anger results from a tendency to equate our anger with that of God. Our anger, even when justified, contains elements of impure human hostility, indignation, self-righteousness and bitterness. We imagine that God's wrath is the same. Far from it. His anger is pure, not arbitrary, uninhibited, vengeful, malicious or vindictive. I must comment briefly on that oft-used, but rather shallow statement "God hates sin, but loves the sinner". Sin and the sinner are not separate entities. Jn. 3:16 is clear about God's love for sinners, but this love does not exclude anger. Exod. 4:14 says that His "...anger burned against Moses..."

3) Metaphors of God's Anger. Sin, says John Stott, cannot approach God; neither can God tolerate sin in His presence. Stott suggests several Biblical metaphors to illustrate mutual intolerance. The first metaphor is height. God is often described as "God most high" (Gen. 14:18-22; Ps. 7:17 and 9:2), indicating transcendence. The second is distance, as in the incident when God came down on Mount Sinai and told Moses to put limits around the base so that the people should not come too near. The third and fourth metaphors are light and fire. Both discourage close approach. Brilliant light blinds and God "...lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see" (1 Tim. 6:16) Fire too keeps one at a distance, "...for our God is a consuming fire" (Heb. 12:29) The fifth is found, *inter alia*, in Rev. 3:16. The Greek word

for “spit” is “vomit” which literally means to vomit. As Stott says: “The picture may be shocking, but its meaning is clear. God cannot tolerate or digest sin...” (Stott, *ibid.*, p. 108) 4) The Seriousness of it all. Let me end with a quote from John Stott “The kind of God who appeals to most people today would be easygoing in his tolerances of our offences. He would be...accommodating... even in the church we seem to have lost the vision of the majesty of God...In public worship our habit is to slouch...It is more characteristic of us to clap our hands...than blush with shame or tears.” (Stott, *ibid.*, p. 109) We need to hear again the Apostle Peter’s sobering words: “Since you call on a Father who judges each man’s work impartially, live your lives in reverent fear.” (1 Pet. 1:17) (Stott, *ibid.*, pp. 108-109)

QUESTIONS

1. Why are Holiness and Righteousness foundational to God’s Being? 2. Write an essay on the Justice of God. 3. What does Scripture teach us about the Anger of God and the seriousness of it? FIRST EDIT 7.6.91 DFP COURSE NO:005

FIRST

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19.4.91 □

THE BIBLE INSTITUTE OF SOUTH AFRICA BIBLE STUDY CORRESPONDENCE COURSES by the REV. JIM VAN ZYL. B.A.M.A. DOCTRINE OF THE WORK OF CHRIST COURSE NO: 005 CHAPTER IV SATISFACTION FOR SIN - PART ONE

I. THE CONTROVERSY OVER GOD'S NEED FOR SATISFACTION 1) Criticisms leveled at the idea of God's need for "satisfaction" 2) Right and Wrong II. SATISFYING THE DEVIL 1) Early Church views about Satan (i) Satan credited with too much power. (ii) The Cross seen as a Divine Transaction with the Devil. (iii) Deception 2) The Devil's Real Defeat III. THE BASIS OF PUNISHMENT 1) Why did Christ have to die in order to achieve satisfaction for sins? 2) Satisfaction, Substitution and Punishment 3) Our sin deserves death 4) Checkmate? IV. THE PERFECTION OF SATISFACTION 1) Real History 2) We made no contribution to the satisfaction 3) Christ made "satisfaction" once and for all. CONTROVERSIAL 1) Criticism. Few words in the Christian vocabulary have raised more criticism than the words "satisfaction" and "substitution." Why, it is asked, does a God of love require "satisfaction" before he can love and forgive. Why did Christ have to die such a terrible death to satisfy God. Are such ideas not unworthy of God? Sir Alistair Hardy, formerly Linacre Professor of Zoology at Oxford expressed "...his inability to come to terms with the 'crude' beliefs he thought 'so many orthodox churchmen' entertain. "(John Stott, *The Cross Of Christ*. Inter-Varsity Press, 1986, 111) He went on to add that he could not accept the hypothesis that the appalling death of Jesus was a sacrifice in the eyes of God for the sins of the world. God thinks and acts differently to us. To the unregenerate the cross is an "offense" (Gal. 5:11), and the preaching of the cross is "foolishness" (1 Cor. 1:18, 23, 27) Yet in First Corinthians Paul calls it God's "wisdom" and "power" (1 Cor. 1:18, 21, 23, 25, 30) The Fall caused man's thinking, understanding and epistemology to become warped, particularly, as far as spiritual, moral and ethical matters are concerned. The sinner is unable to distinguish truth from untruth. This explains the difference in Sir Alistair Hardy's understanding of the cross ("an appalling death"), and that of Christians who "glory in the cross". In spiritual terms the non-Christian's views are a complete reversal of those of the Christian. 2) Right and Wrong. The main questions are: who and what is right? Do the words "satisfaction" and "substitution" adequately express the concept of satisfying God? What is satisfaction? What are God's demands for satisfaction? How is it to be made and who could do it? How would he know what to do? And where? And why do it at all? Let's take a closer look at these questions?

II. SATISFYING THE DEVIL.

1) The Early Church. The theory that it was the devil who made the cross necessary was widespread in the early Church. Some were unwise in the emphasis given to the power of the Devil, who was seen as a major tyrant, the lord of sin and death. It was believed that mankind was captive to sin, guilt and the devil. These conclusions were faulty. (i) The Devil was credited with too much power. The devil was credited with more power than he has. He was portrayed as a rebel, robber and usurper. The early church "...tended to speak as if he had acquired certain 'rights' over man which even God himself was under an obligation to satisfy honourably." (J. Stott, *ibid*, p. 113) Centuries later the idea of the power of the Devil still haunted Medieval and Renaissance painters. This is seen particularly in the paintings of Albrecht Durer (1471-1528) e.g. "The Knight, Death and the Devil" (1513)

(ii) Divine Transaction. Some early Christians thought of the cross as a transaction with the Devil. It was the ransom price paid to release sinners from their captivity to him. (iii) Deception. Some went further, suggesting that the Devil deceived himself or was deceived. Although in the case of sinners he "holds the power of death" (Heb. 2:14), he had no power or authority over the sinless Christ. They maintained that Satan had hounded Christ to death under the guise of the Jewish and Roman authorities and in so doing over-reached himself by causing innocent blood to be spilt. Having abused his power, Satan was thenceforth deprived of it.

Origen, one of the Church Fathers, was the first to teach unequivocally that the death of Jesus was both a ransom-price paid to the Devil and the means of his deception and overthrow. (Stott, *ibid*., p. 113)

2) The Devil's Real Defeat. Such theology is non-Christian since it ignores Satan's defeat on the cross. F.E. Marsh puts it this way: "Satan seemed to overwhelm Christ when he focussed all the powers of darkness upon him at the cross. But he was only bruising the heel of Christ. Christ by means of that very death has overwhelmed the power of darkness..." (F.E. Marsh. Why did Christ Die? Kregel Publications, 1985, p.127)

Paul says: "Having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross." (Col. 2:15) The word "disarmed" basically means "stripped", like someone stripping for combat.

"Dr. Maclaren remarks: 'We see the whole process before our eyes - the victor stripping his prisoners of their clothes, of arms and ornaments and dress, then parading them as his captives, and then dragging them at the wheels of his triumphant car (chariot)' The powers of hell are degraded and humiliated by the death of Christ. He stooped to conquer, and he conquered by means of his stoop." (Marsh, *ibid.*, p.129)

III. THE BASIS OF PUNISHMENT

1) Why did Christ have to die to achieve satisfaction? We saw at the beginning of this Chapter that the words "satisfaction" and "substitution" have been severely criticised. We then saw that the concept of paying satisfaction to the Devil was pure heresy.

"We deny," says John Stott, "that the devil has any rights over us which God is obliged to satisfy. Consequently, any notion of Christ's death as a necessary transaction with...the devil is ruled out." (Stott, *op.cit.*, p.114)

I now want to come back to a theme touched on earlier as it is closely linked to both "satisfaction" and "substitution". Christ, the Bible teaches us, is our "satisfaction and substitution". The insistent question is: why did He have to go through pain, suffering and death to achieve these two things. Was there not an alternative path?

2) Satisfaction, Substitution and Punishment. In the final analysis "satisfaction and substitution" involves punishment. "God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us..." (2 Cor. 5:21) and "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: 'Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree.'" (Gal. 3:13) Bearing our sin and becoming a curse for us involved, inevitably, punishment. That was God's warning to Adam.

This leads to yet a further question: on what grounds is punishment based? Answer: "The teaching of the Christian Faith is that punishment is based on the concept of justice." (D.B. Knox. Not By Bread Alone. Banner of Truth, 1989, p.45)

Justice can be defined as giving everyone their due. The Bible makes it clear that God acts on the basis of justice. Man is the only created object that God deals with in this manner, he does not deal with plants, trees, rocks, cells or the stars on the basis of justice. This is because there is no moral dimension to them, only man has a moral dimension as he is made in the Image of God.

When considering punishment the question is always: "What does the Crime deserve?" 3) Our sin deserves death. Christ suffered as a "substitute" and had to experience death because this is what our sin deserved.

The problem with those who oppose capital punishment, says Dr. Knox is that they concentrate on the 'effect', not the crime itself. "...the first thing to establish is, 'What does the crime deserve?' In other words, we must look back to the crime and not forward to the effects of the punishment on the criminal." (Knox, *ibid.*, p.47) This should always be our starting point. If we go wrong here, then we go wrong everywhere else. The humanist in the guise of social worker, penologist, psychiatrist and even judge, very often begins with the consequences of the crime.

One should examine the crime and the penal sanctions which the crime legally and objectively deserves. Retribution is a necessary part of this type of justice, or it ceases to be justice. 4) Checkmate. Where does mercy fit into the picture? How, to paraphrase Paul, can God remain perfectly Just and completely Moral, having laid down that crime or sin is punishable, and yet find a way to be merciful and gracious to sinners?

Gospel grounded in real history, but to a "Christ" who functions in the realm of supra-history and with whom one has a subjective, existentialist "encounter".

What of God's Revelation in Scripture? Cullmann says that "...the biblical accounts of creation and the second coming are 'myths'. He is not completely willing to admit the reality of revelation as inscripturated, infallible truth." (H.M. Conn. Contemporary World Theology. Presbyterian and Reformed, 1973, p.43)

We will return to this topic of "Heilsgeschichte" in a later Chapter.

2) We made no contribution to the "Satisfaction" The "Satisfaction" made was done so independently of any contribution from us." A work was perfected which antedates any and every recognition or response on the part of those who are its beneficiaries... The historical... events (such as the Incarnation etc.)... in time cannot be erased... And what is true ... of the incarnation is true also of the redemption wrought. Both are historically located and neither is supra-historical...." (J. Murray. Redemption-Accomplished and Applied. Eerdmans, 1955, p.61)

3) Christ made satisfaction once and for all

We must refer to the Roman Catholic position in which Christ is sacrificed all over again at every Mass. The Evangelical position is that Christ made satisfaction only once, at a certain point in time and at a definite geographical location. "He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself." (Heb. 7:27) It was a once-for-all-Satisfaction. We will return to this point in a later Chapter.

Scripture tells us that Christ occupied the offices of Prophet, Priest and King. In rendering Satisfaction Christ was acting in his Priestly office. In this capacity he functioned in a dual role. As Priest he offered himself as satisfaction ('the slain Lamb'), and as Priest he is now our Great High Priest interceding for us before the Father (Heb. 7:26-27 and Heb. 9:24 respectively)

This 'finality' is of immense encouragement to Christians. It means, (i) the Christian's salvation is a finality, he need never worry about again. The Mass is therefore a futile repetition of something that was finalized and accomplished 2,000 years ago. The Son has "satisfied" the Father once. To continue sacrificing Christ casts doubt on the original efficacy and perfection of Christ's once for all sacrifice.

(ii) If the sacrifice is continually repeated then we have not, in principle, moved any further than the OT sacrificial system. The whole, built-in presupposition of Christ's coming and rendering full satisfaction is that the sacrifice of the thousands upon thousands of animals would be replaced with the Sacrifice and Satisfaction of the One, Single Lamb, who when he died put an end to the constant sacrifices (Heb. 7:26-27; 9:6; 10:1-8; 7:26-27; 8:8; 9:12)

(iii) I close with a quote from Prof. Murray: "Christ discharged the debt of sin. He bore our sins and purged them. He did not make a token payment... Our debts are not cancelled; they are liquidated. Christ procured redemption and therefore he secured it." (Murray, *ibid.*, p.65)

Christ's satisfaction was final and complete.

QUESTIONS

1. Give, in your own words, the reasons why as Evangelicals we do not accept the concept of Christ paying some sort of "Satisfaction to the Devil." 2. What is the "Basis for Punishment?" 3. Would you agree with the statement that this Satisfaction is Perfect? Give reasons for your answers.

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THE BIBLE INSTITUTE OF SOUTH AFRICA
BIBLE STUDY CORRESPONDENCE COURSES COURSE NO:005

by the

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DOCTRINE OF THE WORK OF CHRIST

CHAPTER V

SATISFACTION FOR SIN PART TWO

. THE INTRINSIC WORTH OF CHRIST'S SATISFACTION

- 1) Inherent Integrity of Christ's Godhood
- 2) Christ's own Claims (i) His Actions (ii) His Claims (iii) His Life (iv) Pride (v) Presumption

II. CHRIST SATISFIED THE DEMANDS OF THE LAW OF GOD

- 1) The Law must be Upheld
- 2) Lawlessness
- 3) Christ's Satisfaction of the Law (i) Key Verse (ii) Obedience

III. SATISFYING THE JUSTICE OF GOD

- 1) Outline
- 2) What is meant by Justice?
- 3) Vindictory Justice
- 4) No Satisfaction - No Pardon

IV. HUGO GROTIUS

I. THE INTRINSIC WORTH OF CHRIST'S SATISFACTION.

1) Inherent integrity of Christ's Godhood. "This perfection of the satisfaction of Christ... (is due)... principally to the infinite dignity of his person." (C. Hodge, Systematic Theology, Vol. Two, Eerdmans, 1952 ed. p. 483)

Jesus was not merely a 'good man', He was a man with a righteousness and perfection both equal and superior to that of Adam's. In the world of ideas an idea can be illustrated by use of analogy. We say of a particularly brilliant and perceptive man that he has a mind like a steel trap or of a vain person that he or she is as vain as a peacock.

One cannot draw analogies between Christ's human perfection and anything else, certainly nothing human. All men and objects are tainted. The Fall has left nothing untouched by sin in some form or other. An 'analogy' does not necessarily constitute 'proof' either. It is merely drawing a likeness between two objects.

In a sense an analogy would give an incorrect idea of Christ since his integrity and worthiness flows from his Godhood, and what can possibly be likened to or equal it. The very thought is sacrilegious.

2) Christ's own Claims. A man's claims must be backed by his character and morality, he is no more in practice than he is in his being and nature. An interesting point to be made is that sooner or later a man's true nature will manifest itself publicly. He may make great claims and may fool people for some time, but he cannot hide the reality of his nature.

In a time of testing, of strained relationships, of stress at work the "real" John Smith will publicly reveal himself for what he "really" is.

The principle is that no man can be more than the reality of his nature. In certain situations "nature" will always take precedence over the public Image. This has been painfully brought home to Evangelicals by the moral failure of leading Churchmen both in the USA and elsewhere.

The classic example of congruence between being and nature is provided by our Lord Jesus Christ. If you'll pardon the contradictory expression: He was what He was because He was what He was! The extraordinary statements and claims He made must be seen against his "real moral and ethical nature". When we do this we find no conflict between the public "image" and the private, inner "nature."

(i) Christ's actions, were extraordinary! He drove out the animals and money changers from the temple, saying "Get these out of here! How dare you turn my Father's house into a market." (Jn.2:16) He described himself as the "Light come into the world" (3:19) and spoke of himself as the "living water" (4:10) He maintained that he could give "eternal life" (4:13) and also claimed to be "the Messiah" (4:26)

(ii) Christ's claims. He claimed that no one could come to God except through Him (6:65) He also claimed that His teaching was from God (7:16-18) If God were really your Father you would recognize and accept me (8:42) He claimed to be God: "...before Abraham was born, I am." (8:58)

(iii) His Life. When you examine Christ's nature and life there is no suggestion of those characteristics of personality and cultic status afforded leaders of cults.

(iv) Pride. In Christ there is no spiritual or intellectual pride. When set against the ethos of Christ's personality and nature the claims and statements he made seem perfectly natural, genuine and valid. Coming from another's lips they would be blasphemous. When one becomes a Christian and the Holy Spirit indwells and teaches one, one cannot imagine Christ not saying them!

(v) Presumption. In 1954 Sun Myung Moon founded the "Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of World Christianity". He proclaims the belief that he is "The Lord of the Second Advent."

Judge Rutherford of the Jehovah's Witnesses presented himself as "God's chosen vessel." The late L. Ron Hubbard placed his authority above that of Scripture. Guru Maharaj Ji presented himself as the "perfect master." Meher Baba of the Bahai cult says plainly: "There is no doubt of my being God personified... I am the Christ." (D. Breese. Know the Marks of Cults. Victor Books, 1986, pp. 45-46)

None of these men fulfilled their promises. In the historical documents of the NT Gospels and Epistles our Lord lived, worked, spoke, and behaved as Messiah, He fulfilled all His promises.

Jesus was not lionized in the way in which many cultic leaders are. Our Lord refused to be crowned king by the crowds and as far as he could refused praise 'since he knew what was in the heart of man.' One reads of the fabulous cars and houses cult leaders possess. Jesus, quite literally had nothing except the clothes and sandals he wore.

Jesus entire attitude was a unique blend of humility and authority. His relationship with his disciples was noteworthy. The normal pattern would be one of subservience and subjugation to "The Master", every wish would be obsequiously pandered to.

The working relationship between Christ and his disciples was quite different. One senses their awe and worship, but equally a robustness that allows them to express their feelings openly without obsequious subjugation.

Christ was not a mystic seeking "special" attention, nor was he the 'Jim Jones' type who builds an organization around himself, with his followers enslaved to him and so psychologically dependent upon him that when he leaves the organization collapses.

The Satisfaction Jesus paid arose from His own intrinsic worth as the Son of God and from his inherent Godhood. These aspects were manifest in His growth in the grace of God, during his early years, in his Godliness, Moral Perfection, Psychological Balance, Sobermindedness, Graciousness, Absolute Integrity and Compassionate Nature.

We move from a consideration of His Worthiness to the Satisfaction itself.

II. CHRIST SATISFIED THE DEMANDS OF THE LAW OF GOD.

1) The Law must be Upheld. The law cannot be separated from the nature of God, it is an expression of His nature and being. Just as God cannot change His nature, so He cannot alter His law, His law flows out of His unchangeable nature.

God cannot reduce the law's penalty for transgression as this would involve an adjustment to his nature. God is God, the law the law and the penalty unalterable.

When using the word "law" I refer to the Moral Law as summed up in the Ten Commandments, and also to the various moral and ethical laws, decrees, statutes, and commands found scattered throughout Psalms, Proverbs, the Prophets and embodied in the general principles of the NT. I do not refer to the civil, social, governmental and hygienic laws of Israel.

To satisfy God's demands, which flow from his nature, His laws must be kept. This is logical since He is our Creator as well being the Creator of His laws.

2) Lawlessness. The problem is: the Creator has made rules to be obeyed but men and women have disobeyed and broken these rules. As the Apostle John says: "sin is lawlessness" (1 John 3:4) Every man, woman and child (from the age of accountability) is therefore "lawless".

I came across an interesting passage relating to the life of Daniel Rowland, whom God used greatly in 1740 revival in Wales. It is pertinent to our topic.

Northern Wales was hostile to the Gospel. Both clergy and laity were implicated in this hostility. The indomitable Rowland travelled north to the Llyn Peninsula to meet this challenge.

At one place the use of the church was denied him, so he preached from the steps of the churchyard gate. "As he spoke of Christ's willingness to render perfect obedience, which God's holy Law required, there was a general commotion among the crowd..." (E. Evans. Daniel Rowland. Banner of Truth, 1985, p.236) The commotion was caused by the Holy Spirit's power falling upon the people and causing them to realize that they were "lawless", having broken God's laws.

God cannot tolerate "lawlessness", and so the sinner acquires the Penalty automatically attached to the breaking of the law.

Salvation is firmly grounded in the "keeping" or the "satisfying" of the demands of God's law. If the law reflects the dignity, holiness and justice of God's nature, and if his dignity is to be upheld, then his law must also be upheld, its dignity defended and upheld and its just penalties paid. Only thus is the law of God "satisfied."

John Stott reinforces this idea by citing from Henry Wace, Dean of Canterbury from 1903-24: "...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...God cannot abolish that moral constitution of things which he has established." (J. Stott. The Cross of Christ. Inter Varsity Press, 1986, pp.115-116)

3) Christ's Satisfaction of the Law.

(i) Key Verse. A key verse here is found in the Gospel of John: "Now remain in my love. If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love." (John 15:10.)

The following emerges from this verse:

(a) The word "remain" seems to suggest that the love between the Father and the Son was an ongoing, permanent experience.

It is not unreasonable to infer that this love included the love between the members of the Trinity. If our Lord was aware of the “glory” he shared with the father “before the world began” (Jn.17:5), then he would also be aware of the “love” they shared.

(b) An important point to note is that the love between the members of the Trinity was based on HARMONY OF WILL. Harmony of will is the mutual sharing and continuous action of abiding by certain mutually acceptable principles.

The Three members carry out their different functions and offices within the boundaries and ethos of One Set of principles and rules eternally and mutually agreed upon.

It is NOT suggested that the members of the Trinity at some point negotiated a mutually agreeable set of rules. Because of their mutual and eternal Godhood the boundaries and principles have always just been there. The “Harmony of Will” is really an “Eternal Harmony of Love”

(ii) Obedience. The ‘obedience to God’s commands’ mentioned in the verse above, refers not only to an Eternal Harmony of Will characteristic of an Eternal Trinity, but also and perhaps more pertinently, to Christ’s obedience in human form. Here the following must be noted.

(a) Our Lord obeyed the law both negatively (in the sense of not doing anything wrong) and positively (vindicatory obedience) in that he did everything right.

(b) Vindicatory obedience is of crucial importance to us because it is also the meritorious obedience which is the basis for our justification.

Hodge puts it well: “It follows from this that the satisfaction of Christ has all the value which belongs to the ...obedience of the eternal Son of God, and his righteousness... (and)..is infinitely meritorious.” (Hodge, op.cit.,p.483. Italics mine)

The words “value”, “righteousness” and “meritorious” are related. The keeping of God’s law, perfectly, has a “value” and a “merit” which is the “righteousness” imputed to or credited to the sinner, as if he had kept the law perfectly himself.

What the sinner has not done (kept the law) is credited to him as if he had done it; he is seen by the Father as having kept the law in detail, not because he has but because God has done it for him in and through Christ.

(c) Christ became our Representative and Substitution. Why? Because God’s law is immutable. It had to be kept perfectly, without exception, to satisfy the keeping and Keeper of the law.

(d) Christ lived a perfect life, and this is called His “active” obedience. He also died a perfect death in our place, and that is called His “passive” obedience.

John Stott is correct when he suggests that the adjectives “active” and “passive” are inexact. “His obedience to the Father’s will is one and the same, whether in His conduct or mission, His life or death.” (Stott, op.cit.,p.116. Italics mine)

The value, says Stott, of using two terms “...is that we then distinguish between his fulfilling the demands of the law and his enduring the condemnation of the law.”(Stott, ibid., p.116. Italics mine)

One must be careful not to think of this “double obedience” as two separate entities that bear no relation to one other. How, for example, would one classify The Temptation of Christ? It seems to contain both elements.

III. SATISFYING THE JUSTICE OF GOD.

1) Outline. “Justice” does not simply mean rectitude or uprightness of character. Biblical justice is not the same thing as human integrity.

A more complex definition includes, (i) distributive justice (ie. a life so morally good and excellent that it involves the distribution of rewards, (this is unachievable on earth), (ii) retributive justice (ie. a life so lacking in moral excellence that it involves retribution or punishment. We know this is our due as sinners) This latter form of justice is known as “vindicatory” justice.

A sinner incurs a debt and a penalty. Something must be done to make good the debt. A man having stolen R100 must repay it. The vacuum created by the theft must be filled and the penalty incurred, as punishment for the crime must be paid. Hence the concept of "retribution".

2) What is meant by Justice? "Justice" is that action of God, whereby he rewards the Righteous (in this case only Christ), and punishes those in debt to the law and applies a penalty to them (all men and women)

It should be borne in mind that in the development of our argument: (i) We are still in the realm of theological theory and (ii) we are speaking about the non-believer, not the Christian, who while under 'debt' and 'penalty' of sin discovers, through the Holy Spirit, that Christ has "paid" both and so has satisfied the justice of God.

3) Vindictory Justice. Hodge poses the important question: "Does the attribute of vindictory justice belong to God? Does his infinite moral excellence require that sin should be punished on account of its own demerit..?" (Hodge, op.cit., p.489)

To answer Hodge's question we ask another question: Is God a Just God operating on the full and total foundation of Justice, with all that that implies?

The answer can only be yes. Why? Perhaps one way to get to the nub of this question is to belabour the difference between Man's Forgiveness and God's Forgiveness. A foreman, an executive or a businessman may have discretionary powers to 'forgive', 'reprimand' or impose a 'penalty' as he sees fit. His mandate would extend to moral and ethical issues.

The executive is not bound by an absolute law, his task is to balance 'the laws of the company' with pragmatic compassion. If he fired everyone who 'sinned' against the company, shortly he would have no staff. (Of course some issues can only be resolved by termination of employment, deliberate fraud being a case in point)

Our executive can be flexible because he, like the recalcitrant, is fallible and the company's laws are usually reasonably flexible enough (they are not absolutes" as God's are) to compensate for this. The expertise of a person may be lost by firing him, company morale may suffer in the face of rigidity and inflexibility. At all levels 'sinful' human beings are involved in the operations of the company.

God's Forgiveness for the breaking of His law is a more complex issue and differs radically from the "discretionary flexibility" approach of the executive. The most significant difference is in (i) the Nature of God, and (ii) the nature of the law. With regard to His law God, because he knows ONLY Perfection, has a settled indignation and hostility to anything other than His law because (iii) that law, like himself, is Absolute and never relative. This leads us to our next point.

4) No satisfaction - No Pardon. This is the dilemma facing Paul in the first chapters of Romans. How can God "...be just and the one who justifies..." (Rom.3:26) ? He loves sinners (Jn.3:16), but before Him stands the glacial rock of his Absolute law which cannot be breached. Unless? Unless Someone, as Absolutely Morally Perfect as Himself, were to assume for man his debt, guilt and the penalty with the accompanying punishment.

Perhaps this is why Paul continually stresses the point that we are "accepted by God "IN" Christ." We are not acceptable in and of ourselves but we are "in Christ", for then, God does not see us but only Christ's Absolute Righteousness.

Two helpful quotes from Hodge follow:

" That God cannot pardon sin without a satisfaction to justice, and that he cannot have fellowship with the unholy, are the two great truths which are revealed in the constitution of our nature as well as in the Scriptures...

It is because the demands of justice are met by the work of Christ, that his Gospel is the power of God unto salvation, and that it is so unspeakably precious to those whom the Spirit of God has convinced of sin." (Hodge, ibid., p.492)

IV. HUGO GROTIUS (1583-1645)

The work of Grotius must be briefly mentioned as he had a substantial influence on Reformed theology, mostly negative.

Grotius was a Dutch lawyer. In the God, man and sin relationship, he did not see God as the offended one demanding satisfaction. He did not see Him as the Judge of all the world. Rather, God was the Supreme Moral Governor of the world and universe.

Grotius held that “public justice” was of greater importance to God than “individual retributive and vindicatory justice”. Consequently Grotius saw the satisfaction made on the cross as being for “public justice.”

While Grotius did not deny Christ’s satisfaction on behalf of individuals, what was more important was His “...preoccupation with the public vindication of God’s justice...’God has...most weighty reasons for punishing’, but chief among them in Grotius’ mind was the resolve to uphold the established order of law...” (Stott, op.cit., p.122)

This was his “rectoral” or “governmental” interpretation of the cross. Several 20th Century theologians have taken up his vision of God as ‘as the Moral Governor of the world.’ P.T. Forsyth was one.

Emil Brunner another. The most “...striking statement of the inviolability of the moral order has been made by Emil Brunner in his...book The Mediator.” “It is more that ‘an attack on God’s honour’,...it is an assault on the moral world order which is an expression of God’s moral will.” (Stott, ibid., p.122)

Evangelicals and those of classic Reformed persuasion reject Grotius’ theory. The first and most obvious reason is that it is totally absent from the NT. The most obvious books to look at, so see if Paul, believed in this theory would be Romans, Galatians and Ephesians. Support for the theory is absent from Paul’s writings.

With regard to Brunner, surely the “moral world order” cannot, if you wish to remain remotely biblical, take precedence over “God’s honour.” Such thinking reverses the biblical order and comes close to idolatry. Dare we elevate anything above God and his honour?

“ Acknowledge and take to heart this day that the Lord is God in heaven above and on the earth below. There is no other.” (Deut.4:39)

COURSE NO:OO5

----- QUESTIONS

1. Why does the Satisfaction Christ made have any Intrinsic Worth, particularly in the light of Christ’s actions and claims?
2. Describe how Christ satisfied the demands of God’s Law, noting particularly the fact (i) that the law must be upheld and (ii) Christ’s satisfaction of the law.
3. Write an Essay on “Satisfying the Justice of God”, concentrating on what is meant by Justice, what Vindictory justice is and what the expression “No Satisfaction-No Pardon” means.

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THE BIBLE INSTITUTE OF SOUTH AFRICA BIBLE STUDY CORRESPONDENCE COURSES by the REV. JIM VAN ZYL. B.A. M.A. DOCTRINE OF THE WORK OF CHRIST COURSE NO: 005 CHAPTER VI THE WORK OF CHRIST IN THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS PART ONE -----I. APPROACH GOD WITH AWE

1) The Majesty of God 2) The Majesty of God Highlighted 3) Understanding the Epistle II. GOD AS THE JUDGE OF ALL: NOTHING IS HIDDEN FROM HIM 1) Accountability 2) Judgment III. THE COMPASSION OF GOD 1) Ultimate Compassion 2) Promises IV. CHRIST'S DEATH 1) A Covenantal Necessity 2) Conflict with the Devil V. THE EXALTATION OF CHRIST 1) The Exaltation of the Christ 2) Subsequent Place in Heaven-----

-----I. APPROACH GOD WITH AWE 1) The Majesty of God. I am indebted to Leon Morris's "The Cross in the New Testament", for much

of the material used in this Chapter. The writer to the Hebrews is aware of the wonder and greatness of God's love. A great deal of the Epistle is dedicated to a description of that love. The old sacrificial system in the OT is contrasted with "a better way" which is encapsulated in the NT. The writer does not take Christ's sacrifice for granted, to him it is awe-inspiring. Men are insignificant, sinful creatures and God's saving mercy cannot be taken for granted. Apart from other considerations, the Vindictive Justice of God requires satisfaction. Unless we experience the awe-inspiring fear of God's Judicial demands, we will never appreciate the salvation in Christ that God has accomplished for us, at great cost to Himself and His Son, in the Penal Atonement, which is expounded in the Epistle to the Hebrews. Without an understanding of the awesomeness of God one cannot appreciate the sweetness of His salvation. The sweetness is appreciated more after the acridness of a bitter herb. God is not to be trifled with. It is significant that in an Epistle which so powerfully exhibits the love and sacrifice of God in Christ, the writer feels it necessary to remind Christians of the fearfulness of Mount Sinai: "If even a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned; and so fearful was the appearance that Moses said, "I exceedingly fear and quake." (Heb. 12:18-21) It is only when one understands the awesomeness of God's majesty, His hatred of sin and our own peril, our being on the brink of destruction, that we can really appreciate the "new covenantal system of Christ's sacrifice which replaces the old." 2) The Majesty of God Highlighted. To illustrate the lack of awareness of the majesty of God and consequently the lack of a sense of the terrible danger on the part of men and women, Prof. Morris quotes a letter written to a Melbourne newspaper during a series of evangelistic meetings held in the city by Dr. Billy Graham. After complaining vociferously about the meetings the writer says bluntly: "I have never felt that it (his soul) was lost. Nor do I feel that I daily wallow in the mire of sin... Give me a practical religion that teaches gentleness and tolerance... that teaches children of goodness and not sin. If in order to save my soul I must accept such a philosophy as I have recently heard preached, I prefer to remain forever damned." (L. Morris. The Cross in The New Testament. Paternoster, no date given, pp. 271-272) One can only weep at the apparent arrogance displayed, the abysmal misunderstanding of both God's wrath and God's love and the appalling desire to remain damned forever rather than accept Christ. The writer obviously has no concept of what it means to fall into the hands of the living God (Heb. 10:31) and does not understand that God is a consuming fire (Heb. 12:29) 3) Understanding the Epistle. Understanding Hebrews means understanding that God is a living and awesome God (Heb. 3:12; 9:14; 10:31;) He shines in radiant glory (1:3), He is the 'Majesty in heaven' (1:3), He judges (3:16-19) and His Word is living and active (4:12) God's eyes penetrate our innermost being (4:13), He is Just (6:10) and He swears by Himself, since there is no one higher than God to take His oath (6:13ff) The high priest only entered the Most Holy Place once a year, so serious a matter it was to appear before God (9:7) The might, holiness, glory and majesty of God characterizes the unfolding of the New Covenant through Christ's Sacrifice. One can only understand and appreciate Christ's sacrifice against this backdrop. The high value placed on Christ's sacrifice, as depicted in Hebrews, reflects the Infinite worth and Holiness of God. II. GOD AS THE JUDGE OF ALL: NOTHING IS HIDDEN FROM HIM. 1) Accountability. As he looks to the end of this earthly life, the writer of Hebrews says: "Just as man is destined to die... after that (he will have) to face judgment." (9:27) This important principle was mentioned earlier on (6:1ff) It is basic to the underlying argument of the Epistle, that God, who created all men, will in the end call upon men to render an account of themselves. God is even referred to as "the Judge of all" (12:23) Says Prof. Morris: "We are not concerned

with a passing show of no particular significance which has its little day and speedily disappears to be seen no more. We shall stand before God and face a serious reckoning for what we have done and what we have not done.” (Morris, *ibid.*, p.273)*****

*****I AM UNDECIDED ABOUT THESE PARAGRAPHS - THEY DO ADD SOMETHING BUT SEEM RATHER LONG. DFP 26.4.91 Hear how some Pop Singers of today (88/89) view themselves, others and the world “ I started drinking at the age of 15, which is when I stopped growing up emotionally” (Gilson Lavis, Squeeze) -”I’m young - what am I supposed to think about except music and art and sex?” - (Terence Trent D’Arby) - “Your metabolism is built around gigs. At nine o’clock (pm), which is gig time, your whole body goes into overdrive. When we’re not touring I just go down (to) the pub at nine (pm) and start singing along with the juke-box or talking really loudly and then I won’t be able to sleep until two in the morning” - (Fish) (L. Bradley, ed. *The Schweppes Rock Yearbook*. Volume 9, 1988, pp.52-58) Or how’s this for world views. The latest Madonna hit “Vogue” has the ambiguous lines: “Let your body move to the music... Let your body go with the flow...” The couplet is repeated five times. It sounds mindless until you see the Video version and the ambiguity drops away and once again you find yourself faced with mindless, sordid sex. (Smash Hits. 21 March-3 April 1990, pp.1-2) Or on a more serious note. It’s not commonly known that “...the Beatles are one of the most important things in the world (of music today).. the Beatles significance as a cultural touchstone and spiritual anchor cannot be overestimated.” (Rolling Stone, Feb. 8th., 1990, p.45) And that was the 1970s!*****

*****8 The modern world view is temporal, concerned only with the pleasures of this world. The Shorter Catechism’s question “What is the chief concern of man?” would surely not elicit the answer “To glorify God and enjoy Him forever”, from anyone holding such a world view. The Christian world view is totally alien to these people. 2) Judgment. The tragedy of the modern world view is that it will leave us speechless before the Judge of all the earth one day. Now, whether you are a Pop Singer or Barbara Hutton, the Woolworth heiress, richest woman in the world of her day, makes not the slightest difference. We will all have to stand before the Inevitable wrath and judgment of God (3:11; 4:3) III. THE COMPASSION OF GOD. 1) Ultimate Compassion. Notwithstanding the fact that the writer puts considerable emphasis on God’s activity as Judge, the main thrust of the Epistle lies in its emphasis on salvation, stemming from the grace of God. He uses the word salvation in a variety of ways, see 4:16; 10:29; 12:15,28; 13:9,25. It was by the “grace of God” that Christ died for men (2:9), this same Christ “...became to all that obey him the author of eternal salvation” (5:9), he is also “...the author and perfecter of our faith” (12:2), and he is “...able to save to the uttermost” (7:25) At times the writer of Hebrews associates salvation with the Father. While he will call on all men to give account of themselves, the Father is also gracious and it is from him that they obtain mercy and grace (4:16) and blessing (6:14) Those who are ‘saved’ are described as ‘called’ (9:15), a term which stresses the divine initiative. 2) Promises. The compassion of God is seen more particularly in the “promises”, to the called, of God. One of the most precious “promise” passages in Scripture is that which describes Christ as High Priest, whom having undergone all our temptations is now able to comfort us. Consequently we are encouraged to “...approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.” (4:14-16) We are promised a quiet conscience (10:22), unusual blessings (11:11), and that all-embracing promise that God will never leave, nor forsake us (13:5) The writer of Hebrews lays particular emphasis on the faithfulness of God in chapter 11. God also fulfilled his promises to Abraham (6:15; 7:6; 11:9,17) Those who are the recipients of salvation are referred to as “those who have inherited the promises” (6:12) or as “the heirs of the promise” (6:17), or the “...promise of the eternal inheritance 9:15) The idea of a promise rests on God’s faithfulness. This is where it is so important to know something about God, His nature and His attributes. God’s promises are no stronger than His essential essence and nature. Obviously were there any weakness in His nature, He could not only NOT be God, he certainly could not carry out his promises. This was the rationale behind Satan’s temptation of Christ. Were Christ to have weakened in the face of that momentous and vicious attack, He would not have been able to carry on, let alone make promises He could not keep. To sum up this section: Salvation is both “promised” to us and put into practice when we experience salvation for ourselves. IV. Christ’s

Death. 1) A Covenantal Necessity. Remembering the ultimate compassion of God, Heb.9 points out that no “promise” or “covenant” of salvation - even one made by God - can be realized or applied practically until the “testator” (the one who drew up the will) does actually die. It is an unusual argument centering mainly around chap. 9:15-28, with v.17 being the key verse.-----

-----REPETITION? This is his argument: Before a man’s last will and testament can come into effect he must (unhappily) first die! As long as he lives, the “promises” contained within the Will are untouchable, hence ineffective.----

-----The Greek word used is “diatheke” (both “e’s” are long as in “they”), and is used to translate the Hebrew word “berith” (here the “i” is long so that it is phonetically pronounced “bereeth”), meaning “covenant”. There is an air of finality about the words used. They have two implications: (i) The Will, Covenant or Testament is final and complete. There are no alternatives or other options in this testament drawn up by God. The sinner must accept God’s terms for the provision for sin or not at all. Only Christ entered the presence of God with his own blood, having obtained eternal salvation (9:12) Only Christ’s blood can cleanse our consciences (9:14) Christ is the only Mediator (9:15) Only Christ appeared once to deal with sin (9:26,28) There is no other Way! (ii) All the blessings of Salvation are useless until Christ dies. As Prof. Morris puts it: “Jesus establishes the new “diatheke”, or “covenant”, and His death is necessary to establish it, just as the death of any testator is necessary to establish his “diatheke”, his “will”. No “diatheke”, is in force without a death... And the point the writer is making is that the death of Christ is an absolute necessity. A “Will” is completely inoperative until the testator dies.” (Leon Morris, op cit., pp.278-279. Italics mine)

2) Conflict with the Devil. Jesus came to earth to destroy the Devil (2:14) Taken in conjunction with this verse, the Gospels suggest that his whole life might be viewed as an never-ending struggle against the Devil. The struggle and conflict reached its climax at his death. “Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death - that is the Devil...” (2:14) Morris quotes Delitzsch as saying that this sharing of humanity and ultimately sharing death is really another way of speaking of the Substitutionary Atonement of Christ on our behalf. (Morris, ibid., p.280, footnote 19) I do not think that we fully realize (i) how deeply we have, or the non-Christian has, fallen into slavery with the Devil, and (ii) every event in Christ’s life was designed to reconquer ground that the Devil had come to ‘rule’ (for only God is really Sovereign) As to (i) it is a principle of life that the greater the effort, the greater the problem or difficulty or hostility being faced. The sharing of the humanity (2:14), taking on the role of High Priest (4:14), the offering up of prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears (5:7), His reverent submission to the Father (5:7), the shedding of His own blood (9:12), His becoming Mediator (9:15) and the offering of Himself as a sacrifice (10:12), indicates the extent of the problem with humanity. In other words, what Christ became and what He suffered for us has a depth of quality far beyond our understanding and indicates the depth of sin and ruination the non-Christian has fallen into. Sin is therefore not some small weakness or minor non-conformity. The extent to which Christ had to go indicates the deep gravity of the non-Christian’s hostility towards God (cf. Rom.1:18-3:23) Extensive injury demands extensive reparations. Regarding point (ii), much the same is true. The extent to which Christ had to go shows how much ground the Devil had planted his (albeit temporary) banner of victory in. All the ground had, in one sense, to be reconquered. There exists an entity called the “dominion of darkness” (Col.1:13) Non-Christians are “rescued” from this dominion of darkness and brought by God “...into the kingdom of the Son He loves...” (Col.1:13) Every “rescue operation” causes the dominion of darkness to shrink. The events in Eastern Europe in 1989, particularly East Germany, serve as an illustration here. When the crossing points and the Berlin Wall came down 2-3 million (if my memory serves me correctly) East Germans poured into West Berlin. Not all stayed but East Germany shrunk by the amount who did. The same happened in Albania in July, 1990. Thus every event in Christ’s Life, from the Incarnation to the casting out of demons, to His victory over Satan on the cross and Resurrection - and I must add by the ongoing conversions of non-Christians today - by so much is Satan’s dominion of darkness shrinking every day.

V. THE EXALTATION OF CHRIST. 1) The Exaltation of the Christ. In Hebrews, as in every other Epistle - indeed throughout the NT - the Atoning Sacrifice of Christ on the Cross is central. It must never be minimized. It is also important not to stop there, for the writer of Hebrews speaks too of the “Exaltation” of Christ. He places it among the “first principles” about Christ in Heb.6:1. (The NIV has “elementary

teachings” which could be misleading, since ‘repentance’, ‘faith in God’, ‘the resurrection from the dead’ and ‘eternal judgment’ are hardly elementary teachings!) Christ’s exaltation is in evidence from chapter one. Previously God spoke through earthly spokesmen, such as prophets, but now He has spoken to us by His Son, -and that is no small honour! (1:1-2) The Father has appointed Him “...heir of all things” (1:2) Through Christ, the Father made the Universe with its millions of galaxies each filled with many millions of stars. (1:2) All this is in the first two verses of the first chapter! The exaltation goes further. The Son is the “...radiance of God’s glory...” (1:3) He sits at the right hand (signifying supremacy, pre-eminence, glorified status) of God the Father (“the Majesty”) in heaven (1:3) The Father instructs the angels to worship Christ (1:6) and about his own Son He says:” Your throne, O God will last for ever and ever.” (1:8) The Father has made all things subject to Him (2:8) He has been exalted to the place of High Priest as everlasting Advocate on our behalf (4:14; Rom.8:34) He is of the order of Melchizedek “... without beginning of days or end of life...” (7:3) Christ is also exalted as the High Priest of the New Covenant (chapters 8,9,10), who, through the blood of the eternal covenant (a reference to His victorious conquest of sin, Satan and death in His Atoning Death) was Resurrected! (13:20) 2) Subsequent Place in Heaven. After obedience to God unto death, Christ is seated majestically as the Victorious One at the right hand of God the Father. The sitting down is a symbol of rest from labour. Christ had laboured to obtain our atonement through his once-only sacrifice for us. There is a close relationship between the “sitting down” and the “atonement”. The sitting down was only possible because atonement had been made. The symbolism of the “right hand” points to honour, especially since it is linked to the “throne”. Morris quotes T.H. Robinson as saying: “ To ‘sit’ in oriental phraseology is to be unoccupied, to be quiescent. The fact that Jesus should have seated himself for all time at the right hand of God, ...implies the supreme honour of his exalted position, but suggests ...that... Jesus sits because his duties are accomplished once and for all and he has no need to remain at work.” (Morris, *ibid.*, p.283, footnote 25) Jesus continues to intercede for us and providentially guide us, but the Great Work of the Atonement is final and complete. -----

QUESTIONS 1. How should we mere mortals approach God? 2. Write an Essay on the Compassion of God. 3. What did Christ’s Death involve and (briefly) how do we know whether the purpose of His death was ever accomplished? Initial edit 29.7.91

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THE BIBLE INSTITUTE OF SOUTH AFRICA BIBLE STUDY CORRESPONDENCE COURSES COURSE NO:005 by the REV.JIM VAN ZYL.B.A.M.A. DOCTRINE OF THE WORK OF CHRIST CHAPTER VII THE WORK OF CHRIST IN THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS PART TWO -----I. THE PRIESTLY SACRIFICE 1) High Priest 2) Christ: The Final Priest 3) Priest-Mediator 4) Christ's genuine HumanityII. JESUS CHRIST: TRULY HUMAN AND TRULY PERFECT 1) The necessity of Christ's sinlessness 2) Perfect through Suffering Firstly: Being and Becoming Secondly: (i) Antinomy (ii) Becoming not Being (iii) Partial Answer (iv) Secular Occupation: You can Glorify God (v) Not "Superspiritual" 3) Learning Obedience: A Process of Suffering (i) Learning Obedience was Painful in Itself (ii) Suffering to Learn Obedience (iii) The Great HorrorIII. THE TEMPTATION OF CHRIST 1) The Problem 2) A Partial Answer (i) Disposition (ii) Reality (iii) Significance for us (iv) "Man for man"-----

----- I. THE PRIESTLY SACRIFICE. 1) High Priest. The epithets "priest" and "high priest" are applied to Christ again and again in Hebrews. This is particularly the case when the writer speaks of Him as a high priest "...after the order of Melchizedek" (5:6,10; 6:20; 7:11,15,17) We are told very little about this mysterious figure, except that He was a king-priest "of God Most High", and that He blessed Abraham. The point is that by the time of Christ, Abraham, as the forefather of the nation was given a place of superiority far above the other Hebrew patriarchs. To suggest that Melchizedek was superior to Abraham was to afford him an unbelievably high or preeminent place. Christ's priesthood, being after the order of Melchizedek, surpassed the Levitical priesthood. (Heb.5:6) Christ was the "king-priest", as was Melchizedek. The writer places special emphasis on the aspect of "timelessness". Melchizedek was "without father, without mother and without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life..." (7:3) By analogy we must say the same about Christ. 2) Christ: The Final Priest. It is significant that the writer does not say that Christ is like Melchizedek. Rather, the author reverses the concept and says that Melchizedek "...was made like the Son of God"(17:3) It is the priesthood of Christ that sets the standard and Christ is the Ultimate and Final Priest. Melchizedek is only an illustration. The quality of Christ's life, as indissoluble, determines the character of His priesthood. That quality is eternal, and from that we draw the conclusion that Christ's priesthood is equally eternal and final. There can be no priests after Him. Aaron's priesthood had its day and had passed away, its role and purpose was fulfilled. By contrast the Priesthood of Christ will never pass away, since it rests upon His own Trinitarian eternalness. Neither, of course, will it ever be superseded. The teaching that believes in the restoration of a literal temple and the reinstitution of the sacrificial system in Jerusalem is Biblically unfounded and in effect suggests that Christ's Priesthood is not final and complete. The finality of Christ's sacrifice and priesthood is fundamental to the basic teaching of Hebrews. 3) Priest-Mediator. The very essence or purpose of a priest was "to stand in the middle". That is to say, between God and man. In terms of our salvation Christ shares both the nature of God and the nature of man. What ordinary priests did symbolically, Christ did perfectly. The OT priests stood between God and man -particularly the high priest- only as symbols of the Final, Great High Priest to come. The writer clearly views Christ as being divine. One has only to read through the first few chapters of Hebrews to realize that (1:8; 7:26; 9:14) "Throughout the Epistle, Christ comes before us as One who shares the nature of deity, who cannot be understood apart from His connection with the Father." (L.Morris. The Cross in the NT. Paternoster, no date given, p.287) Not only is this "Priest-Mediator" Deity Incarnate, He is also Perfect Humanity. 4) Genuine Humanity. In chapter two the writer speaks of Him who is "sanctified" (ie.Christ), and "they that are sanctified" (here He is referring to Christians), saying that they "are all ONE." What is this "oneness"? What does it refer to? The answer is in the same passage where we read that "...He is not ashamed to call them brethren ..." (2:11f) By "brethren" Christ is indicating that He is also part of humanity. We must never lessen Christ's humanity to what might be called 'tokenism'. That is to say that He adopted a few human traits merely as 'tokens' to show that He has some understanding of what people feel like. Sinless though He was, Christ was a human male person. When considering His humanity Christ must never be made into a kind of superman. As P.E.Hughes puts it: "The requirements of the second Adam, therefore, were that, like the first Adam, He should be truly man, He should be truly innocent, He should be truly tested, and that, unlike the first Adam, He should be truly victorious in His encounter with the powers of evil." (P.E.Hughes. The True Image. Eerdmans/Inter-Varsity

Press,1989,p.331)II. JESUS CHRIST: TRULY HUMAN AND TRULY PERFECT. 1) The Necessity of Sinlessness. The success of atonement was entirely dependent on Christ's complete purity in living and in entering into the final battle on the cross and in His remaining in this purity until He gave up His spirit. I wonder if we even partially understand the stress, tension and struggle He was involved in? The writer to the Hebrews writes that He "...offered himself unblemished to God..." (9:14) Our entire destiny depends upon that one word "unblemished". We can say what we want about the Incarnation, the Atonement, Salvation and Redemption, but when we have packed our theological tomes neatly back on the bookshelves and participated in (necessary) argumentation and debate, and everything falls silent, we are faced with probably the most crucial word in all theology and the Bible, the word "unblemished". Without that there could be no acceptable sacrifice to God, no atonement, no redemption, no reconciliation, no adoption into God's family, no Christian Faith, life or Church, no victory over death, no resurrection, no glorification, no hope, grace or peace, - only a black abyss, a void, a nothingness, an absurdity, and a meaninglessness beyond description. We come back again to God's Holy Nature and the Scriptures make no apology or even argue the point, -the sacrifice offered to Me must be equal to My Holiness. It may sound dogmatic, yet how often do we not say: "I am what I am. I cannot and will not change to suit others. It's my life."*****
 ***8*THIS COULD BE SHORTENED? i.e. Immoral stars are often afforded more understanding than a righteous God.

(Rev. V.'s personal touch does add something but the illustration is laboured? May date rapidly? DFP 2.5.91) If it's not out of place I would like to refer at this point to that great actor, Richard Burton. My wife took a very recent (1988) major biography on him out of our local library recently (Rich, The life of Richard Burton by Melvyn Bragg, Hodder and Stoughton, 1988) It looked so interesting and so well written that I've started nibbling away at it myself. He was a far deeper, more complex, serious man than people realize. For example, he never went away for a weekend or to make a film without his single volume of Shakespeare. He was a Shakesperian actor of formidable ability. Of him Bragg says: "What he relied on...and what he always came back to was that "natural" self which he did not understand...but which gave him his power." (Bragg, ibid., p.77) Bragg doesn't cover up the less savoury aspects of him either. He lived his "natural" life allowing no one and nothing to get in his way. He could be stubborn, vain, modest, courageous (he had a serious back injury), always driving himself, hospitable or downright rude. In many ways a great man, in many ways a child. But he lived his life according to his rules. Why the illustration? Because.*****
 *****It has always puzzled me that we make "allowances" for the VIPs of this world, but are very quick to point (an arrogant, rebellious) finger at God if he dares to draw a line and warn us that he will punish us if we step over it. Then suddenly he is no longer loving, but puritanical and harsh and heavy-handed and (God forgive us) unfair! God is God, the High and Lofty one, the Creator, who is beyond our comprehension and understanding. In the realm of a sacrifice for our sin, God's Godhood demands that the sacrifice for sin be an unblemished one. This rule and principle is non-negotiable. It is clear, unbending, binding and beyond argument. Christ was that "unblemished" sacrifice. 2) Perfect through Suffering. Christ's atonement for us was only made possible through terrible personal suffering and agony. In bringing many to salvation "...it was fitting that God ... should make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering." (2:10) To which he adds as a complimentary verse: " Although He was a son, He learned obedience from what He suffered, and once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation..." (5:8) To these two verses must be added one more: " For we do not have a high Priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are -yet without sin." (4:15) There is, as we shall see a very real connection between the "suffering" and the "temptation", although there are other elements involved. A number of points ought to be made at this stage. Firstly, as Hughes puts it: " The perfection of Jesus, then, was not a perfection of BEING but a perfection of BECOMING.... (Hughes, op.cit., p.331) The "perfection" of 2:10 and the "learning obedience" of 5:8, was in no sense a progression, on the part of Jesus, from imperfection to perfection, or from a less than perfect "obedience" to a totally, perfect obedience. Whatever other problems there are in those three verses, and there are some tough, perhaps even insoluble problems, we must begin with the settled, deductive

principle that Christ was always, and at all times, never anything less than equal to God the Father's expectations, standards, and indeed to God's own perfection. Secondly, whatever theological problems are raised, the Bible, God's own Word, explicitly states that Jesus was made "perfect through suffering". Furthermore He "learned obedience through suffering". Logic demands a movement here. If through suffering you are made perfect, then human logic demands that you were less than perfect to begin with! If through suffering you learned obedience, then you must have been less obedient to start with! Where do we go from here? The following might help: (i) We are faced here with one of Scripture's famous "antinomies". An "antimony" is an apparent or supposed contradiction, to which there is an answer, and for which the Omniscient God has an answer, but you, as yet don't. A similar problem is experienced with God's Election and Man's responsibility and how they relate to each other. In other words (Deut. 29:29) it is one of God's secrets. (ii) We should realize that this "perfection" does not in any way touch Christ's BEING, i.e. the real, essential, perfect manhood. "God made him WHO HAD NO SIN to be sin for us..." (2 Cor. 5:21) Had He at any time been imperfect, or had He even momentarily lapsed into disobedience, Christ would have failed in all He had come to do, and would have become like the first Adam, -incompetent to save others and needing to be saved himself! (iii) Perhaps a partial answer to the phrase "learning obedience" is that (a) Jesus was never disobedient in any manner, (b) He had, before the incarnation, in his Godhood, no need to "obey" the Father, for Father, Son and Holy Spirit were in constant, cohesive, mutually loving fellowship, but (c) in His Incarnate state He was joined in union with God, whilst in an alien human body. (Theologians are pleased to call this the "Hypostatic Union") In other words, Christ entered into a new as yet unexperienced dimension as a human being. In this new dimension and experience - in His new humanity - Christ had to learn obedience to the Father as a completely new experience in a completely new and foreign dimension, environment and ethos. I hesitate to elaborate, and do so reverently, but in a very real sense what we as humans take for granted was utterly alien to Christ. From God the Son to a human being! From an environment of constant peace and harmony, with rich, divine fellowship, no angularities or inconsistencies or disharmony or the slightest shadow of anything sinful, or evil, our Lord Jesus Christ came and lived in and amongst all that was alien and even perhaps repulsive to him. We as Christians, I would like to suggest by way of illustration, sometimes have similar experiences. How often have you not in your morning devotions felt particularly close to God. You have felt an unusually rich and loving fellowship with Christ through his Word and in your spirit, so much so that you can hardly tear yourself away from it. Then when you enter the harsh reality of the "world" it jars and disagrees with you? It is discordant with what you have just enjoyed. There is a stridency, a raucousness and a grating that strikes deep into your soul. It is inharmonious, off key, unmelodious.

You feel out of pitch and out of place, an alien almost, in a strange and foreign place. The environment and ethos from which you have just come jars and shudders in the harsh, insensitive, godless, blaspheming community into which you have to go to conduct your daily business.

(iv) It is not that working in the secular world is wrong; it is not that your profession is dishonouring to God; it is not that you cannot glorify God in your vocation; it is not that you are displeasing God in your secular job.

It does not mean that you must now seek seclusion in a monastic order to retain as permanently as possible what you experienced in your devotions; it is not even that the level of your spirituality has dropped (Jesus lived in the world for over 30 years!) You have not suddenly become "worldly" in the negative sense of the word. I believe profoundly that in terms of "common grace" we must seek to bring "all things" under God's control. That is, all things in the world that are not sinful; on sin we wage war! It is simply that one recognizes in one's spirit that one has moved from a godly environment and ethos into an ungodly environment and ethos; The transition grates or jars one to the core of one's being, much like the grating of gears in a car. (v) The transition is from its very nature uncomfortable, distressing and even painful to bear. I am not being "superspiritual" in suggesting that the transition, from communion with God to the ungodliness of the world, is often a spiritually painful experience. Dare we use this as an analogy of Christ's "suffering" in the process of "learning obedience"? I hesitantly suggest that to some extent we can. 3) Learning Obedience: A Process of Suffering. What I would like to

suggest, keeping in mind the illustration of the Christian and his devotions and the metaphor of the grating gears, is that our Lord Jesus (by becoming man) was called on to learn something which was totally foreign to His previous experience. What was this? And how did it cause so much suffering? (i) Just "learning obedience" might very well have been infinitely more painful than we realize. The very concept of "obedience" was in and of itself painful. Never in all eternity had Christ occupied a position of submission. He was the Logos through whom the world was created. He was present at the creation of angels or spirit beings. His eternal experience was to rule with Father and Spirit. He entered a new domain as the obedient One! To do anything new is difficult enough for human beings. For Christ the Lord to become Christ, the Obedient Servant, surely could only have been a keenly, unusually, contradictory and painful experience. (ii) Prof. John Murray pointedly says: "We must not view this obedience in any artificial or mechanical sense... we must not think of it as consisting simply in formal fulfillment of the commandments of God." (J. Murray. *Redemption Accomplished and Applied*. Eerdmans, 1955, p.28) Prof. Hughes adds: "The road to His perfection was the road of intense and unremitting struggle, as He joined battle with the Devil himself, met the hostility of men... agonized at Gethsemane, and experienced dereliction on the cross." (Hughes, *op.cit.*, p.331) What was the point of this suffering? We are told that it was to learn obedience, an obedience that was credited to us, to cloak us in righteousness. Every "disobedience" by man, from Adam, had to be cancelled out by an equal "obedience" by the Son. Disobedience lies at the heart of sin. (iii) There is a further aspect. This obedience involved obedience "... unto death, even death on a cross." (Phil.2:8) Was this not the ultimate in obedience and in suffering? Was this not the whole point, His Death and Atonement for sinners? His suffering prepared Him to be obedient "even unto death?" We dare not forget that there was something horrific and appalling about His death that Jesus, even as Perfect Man, feared most dreadfully. This does not mean that He was one whit less the God-Man that He was, nor does it suggest cowardice. No one can read the profoundly poignant passage in Luke 22 without acknowledging that a great horror and fear cloaked Christ in the last stages of His life on earth. (a) Jesus feared the "cup", (b) He was so distraught and weakened that an angel from heaven appeared to strengthen Him, (c) He was in anguish, praying even more earnestly, (d) He was so overwhelmed that "... His sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground." (Luke 22:39-44) Mark adds that His soul was overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death and that He was deeply distressed and troubled (Mark.14:32-39) Matthew says Jesus' soul was "sorrowful and troubled." (Matt.26:36-44) No one will ever penetrate fully that mysterious, harrowing fear, distress, sorrow and trouble that came upon our Lord. That it was very real is unquestionable. One can only speculate that such deep agony was probably occasioned by (a) the knowledge that He was to be made sin in our place, and (b) possibly the knowledge that He was to die. Only when you look deeply, not only at Christ's sinlessness, but also at His hatred of sin and the horror of even being touched by it, and at the thought that he who was Life had to submit to the humiliation and indignity of Death, can you begin, even vaguely, to understand the emotions which turned sweat into drops of blood.

III. TEMPTATION. 1) The Problem.

A question that has been discussed in the Christian Church for centuries is "... whether Jesus was immune to the power of temptation." (Hughes, *ibid.*, p.331) It is doubtful if this problem will ever be solved by a human mind. There are equally sound Evangelical men, so it seems, on both sides. Donald Guthrie says that any discussion about whether the sinlessness of Jesus meant that He could not sin (*peccare non potuit*) or that He was able not to sin (*potuit non peccare*) is not foreshadowed in the NT, and is therefore speculative. (D. Guthrie. *New Testament Theology*. Inter-Varsity Press, 1981, p.235) With respect to Dr. Guthrie, that is not very helpful. What must we then make of the fact that Christ can sympathize with our weaknesses, since He has been tempted in every way, just as we are? (Heb.4:15) Stuart Olyott asks the question: "But could Jesus have sinned?... (and concludes)... If He could have sinned, then the Son of God could have sinned, which is unthinkable." (S. Olyott. *Son of Mary, Son of God*. Evangelical Press, 1984, p.83. *Italics author's*) Again, with respect, while such an event as the Son sinning is unthinkable, it does not answer some far-reaching questions raised in the verse quoted above, i.e. Heb. 4:15. Charles Hodge, in startling contrast says the very opposite: "The sinlessness of our Lord, however, does not amount to absolute impeccability (i.e. that He could not sin). If He was a true man He must have been capable of sinning.... Temptation implies the possibility of sin. If from the constitution of His person it was impossible for Christ to sin, then His temptation was unreal

and without effect, and He cannot sympathize with His people.” (C.Hodge, Systematic Theology, Vol. Two, Eerdmans, 1952, p.457) P.E. Hughes asks: “ But is it unthinkable that He could have been conquered by the tempter? Is it right to believe, as some do, that it was a priori impossible for Jesus to sin? “ (Hughes, op.cit., p.331. Italics author’s.) 2) A Partial Answer. Although we cannot fully understand the relationship between temptation and the possibility or not of Christ sinning, the relationship between Christ’s humanity and Deity, and the preservation of a perfect humanity and the influence or not of the divine in Christ upon that humanity, we can at least lay down some principles as necessary (a) to preserve his sinlessness, (b) to ensure that He can genuinely “sympathize” with us, and (iii) to preserve His Deity intact. Some principles, will simply take the form of a statement. (i) George Bowman points out a crucial difference between our nature’s and Christ’s nature in relation to disposition.” “Within each one of us is an inclination, a disposition, or a propensity towards evil. This inward disposition ... responds to outside influences so that, by nature, we find ourselves being attracted to evil rather than to good. Though Jesus Christ became a human being in every way, He was free from any such disposition toward evil.” (G. Bowman. Don’t Let Go! An Exposition of Hebrews. Presbyterian and Reformed, 1982, p.16) We must, then, support the idea of a Virgin Birth. He was born not merely sinless or neutral, but also had a perfect human constitution which was supremely and powerfully pro-Righteous. I think we can go further and say that this perfect humanity considered all forms of sin as loathsome and repulsive. There was not the slightest flaw or crack in his disposition. In fact Jesus says in the Gospel of John that “...the prince of this world is coming. He has no hold on me, but the world must learn that I love the Father and that I do exactly what my Father has commanded me. (John 14:30-31) It is significant that in a single passage Jesus negatively reinforces the idea that Satan had no control over Him, and positively affirms His solid, undeviating obedience to the Father. The juxtaposition of these two opposites is not coincidental. Jesus is in fact saying that while the Devil had NO hold over any part of Him, the Father, by contrast, had FULL control over his obedience, and thus over him. (ii) We are forced by Scripture (!) to take the phrase “tempted in every way, just as we are” (Heb. 4:15) very seriously. As Hughes puts it: “If temptations have no force to be withstood and no hope of succeeding, they are deprived of reality and cease to be a threat to be taken seriously.” (Hughes, op.cit., p.332) The temptation becomes mere play-acting, pretence and make believe and there is no genuine, authentic victory of Christ over temptation. It becomes a merely academic matter that is out of touch with reality.

I have no idea how one reconciles numbers (i) and (ii), but here too, however mysterious, we dare not minimize the total, ferocious and hostile impact of Satan’s temptations, as well as the fact that, for example Christ’s temptation’s in the desert, was an unremitting war between Christ and Satan in an ethos of the deepest reality. (iii) Keeping number (i) firmly in mind, we are bound to conclude that if Jesus was not genuinely and fully tempted in every way as we are, then He can hardly have “sympathy with our weaknesses” (Heb.4:15) Then His temptation really has no significance for us. To approach someone who did not experience the full spectrum of temptation would be futile and meaningless. (iv) Newman has a hymn with this stanza in it: “O generous love! that he, who smote/ In Man for man the foe,/ The double agony in Man/ For man should undergo.” This leads us to consider the link between the first and second Adams’. Whatever the mysteries are, it is essential that our Lord, in order to win our redemption, faced and conquered temptation as the first Adam did; that He was obedient where the first Adam was not; that He gained an authentic victory within the full circle and ethos of “real” temptation. If not “real” then it has a hollow ring. It is with joy that we accept Paul’s verdict: “ And having disarmed the powers and authorities, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.” (Col.2:15) ----- QUESTIONS 1. Write an Essay on “The Priestly Sacrifice” concentrating on any three of the four sub-headings in that section. 2. Was our Lord Jesus Christ truly human and truly perfect? Include in your answer (i) the necessity of sinlessness on Christ’s part, as well as (ii) Christ’s learning to be obedient. 3. Discuss the Temptation of Christ and what significance it has for us as Christians. COURSE NO:005

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THE BIBLE INSTITUTE OF SOUTH AFRICA
BIBLE STUDY CORRESPONDENCE COURSES COURSE NO:005
by the
REV.JIM VAN ZYL.B.A.M.A.
DOCTRINE OF THE WORK OF CHRIST
CHAPTER VIII
CHRIST'S PROPITIATION

I. THE NEED THAT ARISES FROM THE ANGER OF GOD

- 1) God: Angry?
- 2) The Object of Propitiation

II. REINTERPRETATION

- 1) C.H.Dodd
- 2) Greek Words: Confusion

III. THE EVANGELICAL POSITION

- 1) The Evangelical Answer
- 2) Further Evidence

IV. THE ISSUE SETTLED

- 1) The Cause
 - 2) The Origin
 - 3) The Subject
-

I. THE NEED THAT ARISES FROM THE ANGER OF GOD.

1) God: Angry? Does God really get angry, or to use the older term "wrathful"? Is such a concept not a hangover from a pagan past?

According to a recent report in Newsweek, a new dance-music craze is sweeping across England and parts of Europe. It is called "Madchester" since it originated in the English city of Manchester.

Commenting on the craze, the deputy-editor of the London based weekly 'New Musical Express', Danny Kelly, said of it: " We're all happy people now. We love each other and dancing..." (Newsweek/July 23, 1990. Article "Madchester!" by Jennifer Foote, pp.44-49)

In a world, where amongst other things the New Age Movement with its own emphasis on love, peace, and universal brotherhood, is spreading rapidly, where does the anger (if at all) of God find a place? Is there room for such a view today?

Let me say immediately that crude concepts of a capricious, hostile, pleasure-condemning God, who maliciously enjoys anger and punishing offenders, are not only non-Scriptural but downright blasphemous.

This does not mean one does away with the biblical teaching of God's 'righteous' anger toward sin or against the sinner! What is revealed to us in Scripture, viz-a-viz God's anger, is an objective, settled, indignation and hostility towards anything less than His own holiness.

It is only when we have comprehended, as fully as our limitations will allow, just how evil sin is, and how holy God's holiness is, that we can begin to grasp how essential it is to placate God's anger towards sin and sinners. This is the heart of "propitiation".

The opposite is of course equally true. Those who cannot come to terms with the concept of God's anger, reveal (i) that they have no real grasp of the enormity of sin, manifested in various malignant forms, or the way in which it makes the beautiful ugly.

(ii) They also reveal that they have a feeble understanding of God's holiness and majesty, and (iii) do not understand that God's Godhood is so constituted that His righteous anger towards sin must be propitiated to shield the sinner.

2) The Object of Propitiation. The critical question in the polemic surrounding "propitiation" is whether the object of the atoning action on the cross was focussed on God or man?

To solve this problem we will have to do some hard thinking. What follows may seem to be academic rather than practical. In fact it lies at the heart of the Gospel!

It concerns a family of words, which the AV translates as "propitiation" or "propitiatory". The Greek words are the noun "hilasmos", (1.John.2:2; 4:10); the adjective "hilasterios" (Rom.3:25) and the verb "hilaskomai" (Heb.2:17 as well as the passive form in (Lk.18:13)

If the Object of the atoning action on the cross is God then the correct word to use is "propitiation"; if the object is man then the appropriate word to use is "expiation" (which deals with sin and guilt)

If, for years, you've thought the two words meant the same thing and could be used interchangeably, or that substituting "expiation" for "propitiation" in Bible translations was quite legitimate, then you've been badly misinformed.

"To propitiate means to 'placate', 'pacify', 'appease', 'conciliate.'" (Prof. J.Murray. Redemption Accomplished and Applied. 1955, p.36) Its focus or Object is God. To "Expiate" involves the cancelling out, the erasing of sin and guilt, its focus is man, not God.

II. REINTERPRETATION

1) C.H.Dodd. No discussion about this subject is complete without looking at the British theologian, C.H.Dodd, who attempted to reinterpret both the Greek words and thus the English words as well.

This is what he has to say about Rom.3:25 "...the meaning conveyed ...is that of expiation, not that of propitiation. Most translators and commentators are wrong." (J.R.W.Stott. The Cross of Christ. Inter Varsity Press, 1986, p.170, footnote 3) He expresses a similar opinion with regard to 1.Jn.2:2.

Since C.H. Dodd was director of the panels which produced the New English Bible, it's not surprising that his influence comes through in the passages of Scripture mentioned above. For example, in Rom.3:25 the phrase "expiating sin" is used, while in 1.Jn.2:2 and 4:10 the key phrase is rendered "...he is himself the remedy for the defilement of our sins." The word "remedy" is ambiguous, to say the least.

How did Prof. Dodd come to hold this position? We need to know this since we need to know where we stand as Evangelicals.

2) Greek Words: Confusion. Prof. Dodd acknowledged that in pagan Greek the regular meaning of the word "hilaskomai" meant "to propitiate" or "placate" an offended person, especially a deity. But he denied that this was the meaning amongst Greek-influenced Jews or in the NT.

Dodd argued that when the OT Greek Bible (known as the Septuagint or LXX) translated the Hebrew word "kipper" (meaning "to atone") into the Greek "hilaskomai" the meaning is expiation or the removal of defilement. If you've been following the argument thus far you will realize that this means that the atonement is directed towards Man's sinfulness and not God's wrath.

This is how Dodd describes it technically: "Hellenistic Judaism, as represented by the LXXX, does not regard the cultus as a means of pacifying the displeasure of the Deity, but as a means of

delivering man from sin...the performance of prescribed rituals...had the value, so to speak, of a powerful disinfectant.” (Stott, *ibid.*, p.170)

Therefore, his conclusion is that the NT occurrences of the “hilaskomai” word-group should be interpreted in the same way. “By his cross Jesus Christ expiated sin; he did not propitiate God.” (Stott, *ibid.*, p.171)

Dr. Donald Guthrie takes up the case against Dodd: “ It is significant, for instance that Dodd evaporates from the idea of wrath all thought of anger...the wrath of God describes ‘an inevitable process of cause and effect in a moral universe’. He admits that this depersonalizes it, but justifies this as a development away from the more primitive concept of a God who strikes terror into men.” (D. Guthrie. *NT Theology*. Inter Varsity Press, 1981, p.469, footnote 203)

With regard to this interpretation and conclusion I would like to stick my neck out. Without for one moment questioning Prof. Dodd’s integrity, I wonder if his interpretation is not influenced by an emotional aversion to the concept of God’s anger.

We have no difficulty in accepting that God is love but, on an emotional and psychological level we find the idea of God’s “anger” something of a stumbling block. Perhaps the reason for this is that we subconsciously draw an analogy, either:

(i) with our own human anger which is seldom righteous, but, more often than not, plain bad temper or worse, unbridled and undisciplined malignant anger.

Or (ii) with the pagan gods of various civilizations who are forever to be placated with sacrifices, some of a most bloodthirsty and cruel type (such as the habit of the Aztec’s of plunging a knife into the body of a still-living person and physically ripping the beating heart out)

I cannot emphasize strongly enough how strongly Evangelicals have no wish to draw an analogy with (i) or how non-godlike, unreligious and brutalizing they find (ii)

God’s anger is aroused in an objective, justified, disciplined, and wholly righteous manner when an Absolute law of His is broken. The reason for this is that God’s absolute laws are so much part of His Godhood and Being, that breaking a law is like attacking His very Person! The question of personal animosity or dislike of a malicious nature does not even bear discussion.

III. THE EVANGELICAL POSITION.

1) The Evangelical Answer. Prof. Dodd’s views have been rigorously scrutinized by, inter alia, Dr. Leon Morris and Dr. Roger Nicole. (Dr. Leon Morris: “The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross”, Tyndale Press, 3rd ed. 1965 and “The Cross in The NT”, Paternoster, no date given; Dr. Roger Nicole: “C.H. Dodd and the Doctrine of Propitiation”, Westminster Theological Journal, xvii.2, 1955, pp. 117-157)

Both have shown that Dodd’s conclusions rest on incomplete evidence or questionable deductions.

To revert to the technical again, Prof. Dodd’s assessment of the “hilaskomai” word-family makes no reference to the books of the Maccabees (which were part of the LXX, and which contain several passages of “the wrath of the Almighty” being averted, or to the works of Josephus and Philo, although in them the meaning to “placate” prevails. Stott, *op.cit.*, p.171, footnotes 7+8)

Dodd also overlooks the fact that the early Christians (Clement’s First Letter-end of the 1st century and the Shepherd of Hermas-beginning of the 2nd Century) used “hilaskomai” quite plainly as “propitiating” God. This has been pointed out by F. Buchsel. (Stott, *ibid.*, p.171, footnote 9)

2) Further Evidence. One could say more but we will leave the discussion here. Suffice it to say that Evangelicals have done enough scholarly research to bring in a verdict of “Not Proven” against Prof. Dodds.

To conclude let me say that even in the OT itself there are numerous instances in which “kipper” and “hilaskomai” are used in the sense of propitiating the anger of men (Jacob seeking to pacify

Esau's supposed anger) or of God (like Aaron and Phinehas who turned God's anger away from the Israelites)(Gen.32:20; Num.16: 41-50)

In the NT the word "hilasmos" ("propitiation") occurs in the context of Christ as our Advocate (1.Jn.2:1), which implies the displeasure of the One before whom he pleads our cause!

IV. THE ISSUE SETTLED

1) The Cause. At the risk of repetition, we must understand why the act of propitiation, within the great Act of Atonement, was really necessary. It was necessary because of the unrelenting anger, or "wrath" of God, against anyone who breaks His laws.

It might be useful to consider a specific case here, the incident in 1 Chron. 13:1 to 1 Chron. 16:1ff. The Ark of God, which was normally in the Holy of Holies in the Tabernacle and later in the Temple, was - during this particular time of Israel's history- stored in the house of Abinadab (13:7) David decided that the time had come for it to be brought to Jerusalem.

Having consulted various authorities and 'the assembly of the people' a decision was made. It seems as if a considerable number of people, from "...the Shihor River in Egypt to Lebo Hamath..." came together both to witness this event and accompany the Ark. It was to be a great and memorable occasion".

From one end of the country to the other there was, amongst the people, what M. Wilcock calls: "This quality of 'excitingness'... Planned as a procession, it becomes a positive carnival." (Michael Wilcock. The Message of Chronicles. Inter-Varsity Press, 1987, p.66) The possibility that it took on something of a carnival atmosphere is also suggested by Charles Simeon, below.

We read of celebration "... with all their might before God, with songs and with harps, lyres, tambourines, cymbals and trumpets." (13:8) This may have some bearing on what was to follow.

Charles Simeon seems to suggest that the celebrations might have got out of hand: " They are occupied so much about themselves as almost to forget their God:..." (C.Simeon. Expository Outlines on the whole Bible. Vol. 4. 1 Chron. through Job. Zondervan, 1956, p.13. The Italics are Simeon's.)

Shihor was the river reckoned as the boundary between Canaan and Egypt. The 'entrance' to the state of Hamath, Israel's northern neighbour, lay between the mountain ranges of Lebanon and Hermon (see Josh.13:3-5) What was in mind was a march from Jerusalem to Kiriath- Jearim (where the Ark was located) and back, a round trip of some 17 miles (about 27-30 kms)

The story is well known. At the threshing floor of Kidon, with the Ark on a new cart (incorrect in itself as the Levites should have carried it with poles placed through rings attached to the Ark. Nothing was to touch the Ark), the oxen pulling the cart stumbled.

It must obviously have looked as if the Ark was about to tumble out of the cart since a man named Uzzah "...reached out his hand to steady the Ark...The Lord's anger burned against Uzzah, and he struck him down because he put his hand on the Ark. So he died there before God." (13:9-10)

Now at first sight - and I say this reverently - Uzzah's death seems to be "unfair". Our reasoning would be that he was in fact trying to do something "good", ie. stop the Ark from falling off the cart and perhaps smashing itself to pieces. One or two things must be said here:

(i) The incident -which includes Uzzah's action, David's anger (13:11) and our first reaction - is a classic example of the difference between man's way of thinking and God's.

Our first and natural reaction is invariably PRAGMATIC. To put it crudely, the man Uzzah was really trying to help God, although it is questionable if in the quickness of his action he thought that far. But in retrospect that is what it comes down to. God's laws for the transport of the Ark were very clear.(Exod.25:10-22; 40:20; Deut.10:1-10 and other passages)

(ii) Why then did Uzzah die? God, by almost violent contrast to man (keeping Uzzah's incident in mind), always thinks primarily in terms of PRINCIPLES. No doubt God realized that Uzzah, as far as we know, meant well BUT WITH GOD THAT WAS NOT THE POINT.

With God, Law and Principle overrides and over-rules everything else! Are we to assume that this is because His anger is like that of a unfeeling robot or computer lacking in sensitivity, compassion, and heart, in which “cause” and “effect” are determined at the push of a button?

Most emphatically No! The terrible death of our Lord, God’s only begotten Son whom he loved with a love totally beyond our comprehension; the Atoning Death planned by God the Father, which would involve forsaking His Son - AND ALL THIS FOR US SINNERS - dashes any concept of a cold, impersonal God.

(iii) Uzzah’s death lies, inter alia, in at least the following facts: (a) The PRINCIPLE that by touching the Ark Uzzah was breaking a law of God which in turn meant an act of rebellion against the Person of God himself!

Try to view the incident from God’s point of view instead of your own. As God is the Creator and Giver of all life, He has the right to a primary or first point of view.

God cannot separate his laws from his Person. Touch one and you affect the other. Break one and you break the law of a Person. Break the law of a Person, in this case God’s, and you are in effect saying: “I don’t care about your laws. They have no meaning for me and therefore no authority over me. In fact, I don’t care about You!”

Uzzah by breaking a law of God was rebelling against God. (Set aside ‘feeling’s’ for a moment and think in terms of a Principle!) What is more Uzzah broke the law publicly! Give God His due! Could He have allowed such blatant breaking of His law to have gone unpunished?

For God to have done nothing, would have amounted to a renunciation of His Godhood. Why? Because He would have allowed a violation of His Godhood. The stability of the integrity of his Godhood would have broken down. God is always consistent.

Allowing Uzzah to go unpunished would have revealed a flaw in the stability and integrity of God’s Being, and He would have been no better than any other pagan god. It is precisely His Principled Godhood that makes the difference, -apart from other factors.

(b) A second fact emerges which Michael Wilcock puts thus: “The fate of Uzzah is a fearful warning against over-familiarity with God. His attitude to the thing (ie. the Ark) should have been as reverent as his attitude to the Person. That, indeed, is the meaning of holiness. The Ark belongs to God. It is specially his, consecrated to him. Therefore to be regarded with appropriate awe, and treated with appropriate respect. It is holy.” (M. Wilcock, op.cit., p.67)

If you read (a) and (b) as a unit you will see just how close they are in thought. -----

To return then to our original question: why is propitiation necessary to ‘placate’ God? It is necessary because of His wrath and anger against sin, to be more specific, the breaking of His laws.

“The wrath of God...is His steady, unrelenting, unremitting, uncompromising antagonism to evil in all its forms and manifestations.” (Stott, op.cit., p.173)

Donald Guthrie adds: “We cannot properly appreciate the idea of propitiation in Paul’s thought without setting it alongside his teaching of the wrath of God (orge)..It must denote an active revulsion of holiness against unholiness...he cannot abide sin... When Paul speaks of propitiation, he must have had in mind God’s righteous wrath against sin.” (D.Guthrie. NT Theology. Inter-Varsity Press, 1981, pp.469-470)

2) The Origin. The second important question that we must seek to answer is: Who makes the propitiation?

In any pagan context human beings seek to divert or avert the ‘divine’ anger by the performance of rituals or the recitation of magic words or the offering of vegetable, animal or even human sacrifices. This is thought to placate an angry deity, often with the hidden implication that he is being placated against his will, but is bound by the power of the magic words or sacrifice.

In the Christian Faith the position is entirely and totally reversed. The initiative springs from God Himself. To put it plainly: God propitiates Himself. This is already clear in the OT

(Lev.17:11) It is even plainer in the NT where we hear from Paul that “ God presented Him (Christ) as a”sacrifice of atonement” or “propitiation”.....” (Rom.3:25)

In other words: God did the providing himself! All of which confirms the magical words of 1.Jn. 4:10 “ This is love: not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent his son as an atoning sacrifice (propitiation) for our sins.” From this we note the following:

(i) Propitiation does not cause God’s love. Rather, God’s love causes propitiation. Prof.J.Murray puts it this way: “ The atonement does not win or constrain the love of God. The love of God constrains the atonement...It must be regarded, therefore, as a settled datum (ie. ‘fact’) that the love of God is the cause or source of the atonement.” (J.Murray. Redemption Accomplished and Applied. Eerdmans, 1955, p.14, footnote 1)

(ii) Propitiation is not the turning of the wrath of God into love. Such a concept is decidedly pagan. It is one thing to say that the wrathful God is”made” loving. That would be entirely false. It is another thing to say that the wrathful God “is” loving. That is profoundly true. It is also true that His anger was propitiated through his own gift of Christ as the Lamb on the cross.

(iii) To close this sub-section, some words from Prof. Leon Morris: “He provides the way whereby men may come to Him. Thus the use of the concept of propitiation witnesses to two great realities, the one, the reality and seriousness of the divine reaction against sin, and the other, the reality and the greatness of the divine love which provided the gift which should avert the wrath from men.” (L.Morris. The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross. Tyndale, 3rd ed. Sept. 1965, p.211)

3) The Subject. Now, it is perfectly true, seen from one point of view, that the Subject offered to propitiate is Christ. Yet the whole theme goes deeper than that, for on a much deeper level the Subject propitiated is God himself, and the choice of Christ not an arbitrary, but very deliberate choice.

Prof.Murray sums it up:” The Atonement is that which meets the exigencies of holiness and justice. (Murray, op.cit., p.38)

Let’s simplify it if we can. Because God loves Himself supremely, He cannot allow what belongs to the integrity of His Being - His Law(s)- to be compromised or broken at will, without retributive action. His Being and Glory would be compromised and this would result in His defeat.

From this (and from His deliberate Propitiatory Act through a deliberately chosen vehicle, His Son), we can only conclude that God, who does nothing arbitrarily, Propitiated Himself (i) to restore every broken law, and (ii) by so doing vindicated the perfections of His glorious Person and Being once again.

Put another way: To have left His laws broken and His glory violated would have meant His defeat at the hands of the devil. This is both unthinkable and impossible. In His Propitiatory Act God (to quote Prof. Murray again)”...meets the exigencies of (His own) holiness and justice.” (see quote above) -----

QUESTIONS

1. What causes the “Need” for propitiation?
2. How does Prof. C. H. Dodd seek to “reinterpret” propitiation, and what is the Evangelical’s answer to him?
3. What is the Evangelical Doctrine of Propitiation?
4. Discuss and give your own understanding of the Cause, the Origin and the Subject of the Issue.

COURSE OO5

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THE BIBLE INSTITUTE OF SOUTH AFRICA
BIBLE STUDY CORRESPONDENCE COURSES COURSE NO:005

by the

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DOCTRINE OF THE WORK OF CHRIST

CHAPTER IX

CHRIST'S SUBSTITUTION

I. THE HEART OF IT

- 1) The Problem of Forgiveness.
- 2) How then?

II. THE RICHNESS OF A "SUBSTITUTIONARY-GOSPEL"

- 1) Metaphors.
- 2) Not just "Representation". (i) Lack of Clarity. (ii) The Problem of Personal Delegation. (iii) Definitions.

III. CONCLUDING MERITS

- 1) A Genuine Attempt to face the Problems.
 - 2) The Nature of God.
-

I. THE HEART OF IT.

1) The Problem of Forgiveness. "We have located the problem of forgiveness in the gravity of sin and the majesty of God, that is, in the realities of who we are and who God is. How can the holy love of God come to terms with the unholy lovelessness of man?" (J.R.W. Stott. The Cross of Christ. Inter-Varsity Press, 1986, p.133)

The problem is not outside of God, but is located within His Being. Because God cannot contradict Himself, He must be true to Himself and act in absolute consistency with His Nature and Character. He cannot "simply" forgive and leave broken laws scattered around, as it were.

In the previous Chapter it was made clear that to allow this would mean a violation of God's Perfect Holiness and the rules that govern the violation of that Holiness. It would mean, in effect, leaving sin unpunished and "undealt" with.

This is made clear in the remarkable passage Isaiah 6:1-7. In verse eight it is apparent that the Lord God, ("high and exalted"-v.1), is searching or looking for someone to take a message to the people of God. The message is outlined in vv.9-13.

It is a hard message of judgement...the cities will be ruined...the houses left deserted...the fields ruined and ravaged. (v.11)

What is significant is the extreme care God takes to find the right person to take this message. Perhaps one should rather say the most righteous person (in the light of v.7)

Before the question: "Whom shall I send?", which occurs in verse 8, three incidents have occurred:

- (i) A moving and majestic description of God in His holiness. This takes up the first four verses of Is.6.
- (ii) Isaiah's own overwhelming sense of sinfulness in v.5

(ii) The cleansing of Isaiah's lips with the live coal, and the core or heart of the matter with the pronouncement in v.7: "...your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for."

God is not prepared to allow anyone to pronounce His judgement, until that person's sins have been cleansed and atoned for. Before it reaches that point we must first have a lesson in God's holiness!

All of which brings us back to our subtitle, namely, the problem of forgiveness. The passage in Is.6 underlines this in a most emphatic manner. How? Where it starts! It does not start with Isaiah's sense of sin, or with his guilt being atoned for. It starts with God's Holiness.

As I have said: the PRIMARY problem with forgiveness is GOD'S HOLINESS. Stott quotes P.T. Forsyth: "Without a holy God there would be no need for atonement. It is the holiness of God's love that necessitates the atoning cross..." (Stott, *ibid.*, p.132)

This is not necessarily an endorsement of all Forsyth's theology, but he makes the point better than I. Substitute Forsyth's word "atonement" with the word "forgiveness", and hopefully the point I've been trying to make in this section will be clearer.

2) How then? How then can we marry God's Holiness with the Forgiveness of sin? Or, put another way, how can God simultaneously express or reveal His Holiness-in-Judgement and His Love-in-Pardon? Or, to narrow it even further, how can God maintain both at the same time?

Only by providing a divine (ie. 'God-appointed') Substitute for the sinner, in such a way that the substitute would receive the judgement and the sinner the pardon.

In the OT the concept of "substitution" was central. In laying his hands on the head of the offering (eg. a lamb) the priest transferred symbolically (remember this is still the OT!) the sin, liability and guilt of the Israelite to the 'sin-offering'.

Says Prof. J. Murray: "This is the pivot on which the transaction turned. The notion in essence was that the sin of the offerer was imputed to the offering and the offering bore as a result the death penalty. It was substitutive endurance of the penalty or liability due to sin." (J. Murray. *Redemption Accomplished and Applied*. Eerdmans, 1955, p.31)

For those for whom this is perhaps the proverbial, theologically impossible-to-understand statement, let us simplify it without emptying it of the profundity of which only Prof. Murray was so very capable of filling his statements.

The 'player's' in the Drama, (or: *dramatis personae*), together with their 'action's', are as follows:

(i) There is first the "offerer" or sinner. (ii) He is under a liability or penalty because he has sinned. (iii) This penalty or judgement is that of 'spiritual and physical death'. (Gen.2:17) (iv) The "offerer" or sinner has no means by which to wipe out his sins or make holy his sinful nature. These are his "liabilities" or, collectively speaking, his "liability". -----

(v) The "offering" - such as a lamb - is the SUBSTITUTE which the sinner now "offers" in his place. To do what? (vi) To symbolically (in the OT) take both his "liability" and "penalty" off him and upon itself. That is, both his sin and the judgement of death. How? (vii) By literally dying in his place. The "offering" endures (remember that tough little phrase in the quote, "substitutive endurance," ?) death in the place of the "offerer". (viii) In the NT our Lord Jesus Christ is NOT any longer simply a SYMBOLIC Substitute, but a REAL Substitute who really takes all our Liability of sin and the Judgement of Death off us and upon Himself. He is thus our Substitutionary-Offering or Sacrifice. -----

I have run ahead deliberately, because this concept of "Substitution" can sometimes be difficult to grasp at first. Hopefully, a foundation will be laid making it easier to understand what, DV, is to come.

II. THE RICHNESS OF A "SUBSTITUTIONARY-GOSPEL".

1) Metaphors. A number of the great "salvation words" in the Scriptures have a kind of built-in metaphorical imagery.

To refresh your memory let me remind you of the definition of a metaphor: It is a figure of speech in which two things or two actions are likened to each other, on the strength of some common quality, -though- in all other respects they are different or unlike.

A "Simile" (which is a 'long' metaphor) would, for example, be: "Miss Amelia Jones is like a fussy old hen."

A "Metaphor" (which is a 'short' simile) would, for eg., be: "Miss Amelia Jones is a fussy old hen."

The whole idea revolves around some similarity or common quality. Now let's move on to higher things! -----

What we must see then is the link-up between these "salvation words" and the concept of "substitution" in terms of metaphorical similarity.

"Redemption" is substitutionary because it means that Christ paid the liability (see above: I,2),(ii),(iii),(iv) and (viii)) or price that we could not pay. He paid with His blood in our stead. As a result, we -as sinners- go free.

"Justification" looks at our salvation legally or judicially, and the NT teaches that Christ took our legal liability in our stead. Perhaps you are a little confused having just read the paragraph above in which the word "liability" also appears.

Let us clear this up before we proceed: (i) In the paragraph dealing with "Redemption" the liability referred to is the actual price paid for our redemption, ie. the blood of Christ; (ii) In the paragraph dealing with our "Justification" the legal liability which Christ takes upon himself in our stead is the breaking of God's laws! Hence it being 'legal'. He took our law-breaking upon himself. Thus, in both cases, there is the idea of "substitution" - "in our place".

"Reconciliation" means the making of two alienated parties at one with each other by taking away the cause of the alienation and hostility. In this case the cause is sin, and Christ removed that cause by becoming "sin for us" (2.Cor.5:21) This was a substitutionary act.

"Propitiation" points to the removal of God's holy anger from us. Our Lord took the wrath off us onto Himself; our sin drew it down on us, but Christ bore it for us. (The key thoughts in this section on "Metaphors" came from Prof. Leon Morris, although I took the liberty of explaining and expanding further. L.Morris. The Cross in the New Testament. Paternoster, no date given, p.405)

2) Not just "Representation". The whole idea of "Substitution" seems to be out of favour. Yet there are clearly passages which are extremely difficult to understand, let alone exegete and explain unless substitution is taken into account, cf. Rom.5:6+8; 2.Cor.5:21; Gal.3:13-14; Heb.7:26-27; 9:26-28; 1.Pet.2:24 and of course Isaiah 53.

This section is not so much a condemnation, per se, of the concept that Christ was our "Representative". It rather has the intention of pointing out the weaknesses of such a view, especially for the theologian who is unhappy with the Evangelical concept of Substitution and tries to wriggle his way out of the situation with the, perhaps, more acceptable and blander-sounding word "Representative."

(i) Lack of Clarity. Prof. L. Morris suggests that the "...concept of representation as commonly used suffers from lack of accurate definition. Very few who accept this and reject substitution take the trouble to give a definition of either term." (Morris, ibid., p.407)

If one accepts the Evangelical doctrine of Substitution then it may be doubted if there is a great difference between them, or that the distinction is so great.

The World Book Dictionary defines the word "represent" (as it is relevant to our theme): "to act in place of; speak and act for;" and "representative" as "a person appointed to act or speak for others".

The Oxford English Dictionary defines it as: "The fact of standing for, or in place of, some other thing or person, especially with a right or authority to act on their account; substitution of one thing or person for another."

The same Dictionary gives as the meaning of “substitution”: “The putting of one person or thing in place of another.”

Applying especially the latter two definitions to Christ’s Death it is difficult to see where to draw the line of difference between the two words “representative” and “substitutionary”. Except that the theological concept of “Substitution” is much sharper and clearer.

As we shall see in a moment that ‘exception’ may be very telling and significant in certain circumstances.

(ii) The Problem of Personal Delegation. The ‘exception’ that reveals how flawed the word “representative” can be, is found in the last part of the definition given by the World Book Dictionary above, namely, “a person appointed to act or speak for others.” It all depends upon who makes the appointment.

Dr. Bruce Milne has the following to say about the usage of the word. The word “representation”, he points out, is acceptable enough to describe our union with Christ in His death and resurrection (Rom. 6:1f; Gal. 2:20; Col. 2:12; 3:1f; 2.Tim. 2:11) It also covers the concept of Christ as the last Adam (Rom. 5:12f; 1.Cor. 15:22f.)

Milne then continues: “As far as atonement is concerned, however, it cannot tell the whole story, for it implies that the representative is provided and put forward by those he represents. At that point the word is fundamentally misleading; we do not put Christ forward on our behalf. We are helpless and condemned...He acts for us in the radical sense of going on our behalf where we cannot, doing in our place what we cannot do. Substitution is the...only way of expressing that essential factor at the heart of the atonement.” (B. Milne. Know The Truth. Inter-Varsity Press, 1982, p. 159. Emphasis author’s)

Prof. Morris concludes that unless “representation” is specifically linked with “substitution” it is better avoided. (Morris, op.cit., p. 409, also footnote 122.)

(iii) Definitions. In the work of Salvation there are at least six crucial words. They are: “Sacrifice, Substitution, Expiation, Propitiation, Reconciliation and Redemption.”

With Prof. J. Murray’s help the following may help to more narrowly define each of the words above:

: Sacrifice is the result of the need created by our guilt.: Substitution is the need which arises from an acceptable substitute to stand in our place in dealing with sin.: Expiation is the need created by the pollution of sin.: Propitiation is the need that arises from the wrath or anger of God: Reconciliation is the need arising from our alienation from God.: Redemption is the need arising from the bondage or slavery to which our sin has consigned us. (See: Murray, op.cit., p. 49)

III. CONCLUDING MERITS

1) A Genuine Attempt to face the Problems. The relationship of the sinner to God bristles with problems. There is of course much truth in the now somewhat-clichéd statement that we have and must preach “The Simple Gospel.”

In a world where there is little theological coinage left and where even the simplest of concepts can no longer be taken for granted, it is downright folly to make the Gospel so complex in our testimony that it only deepens its mysteries.

If you will allow me a short diversion here (hopefully it will give your perhaps overworked brain some relaxation too!) I would like to share an illustration of the position we have reached, particularly in the West, but not excluding large parts of the East.

It is related to my earlier remark that, from a Biblical and Evangelical perspective, even the simplest or most obvious concepts of, for example, “Morality”, are no longer even considered a viable alternative. The example comes from the Time magazine of July 30, 1990. The article by Leonard Schulman is “Imagining Other Lives.”

America’s most influential ‘Gay’ writer is Edmund White. He is “...a man of admitted compulsive-obsessive sexual behaviour.” (Time, ibid., p. 64) He is the author of such books as

“States of Desires: Travels in Gay America”(1980), “A Boy’s Own Story” (1982) and others. He has been diagnosed HIV-positive, but does not as yet have the symptoms of AIDS.

I will not comment on his writing, I am not qualified to do that. The French newspaper ‘Le Monde’ considers him the most accomplished American novelist since Henry James. Be that as it may, my observations lie elsewhere.

What strikes one forcibly is, what might be called, the ‘uncritical-openness’ with which the subject of homosexuality is simply accepted and discussed. No moral or ethical dimension is introduced anywhere in any meaningful manner, -even though it falls within the parameters of morality.

This is in fact the point! The writer of the article and Time magazine itself have removed the subject of homosexuality (in this article at any rate) from the dimension of morality and placed it within the ethos of what is “normal”.

For example, the writer describes a small dinner party hosted by Edmund White where White openly states (and remember that he is also ‘openly’ stating this to the approximately 4 million plus readers of Time as well!), that he’s not sure how much longer he’ll be at Brown University. Why?

Because, as he says to the acting chairman of the French Department, Henry Majewski, who is one of the guests: “Quite frankly, it all depends on whether they let my boyfriend in or not...”. (Time, *ibid.*, p.66) The “they” is a reference to the U.S. Immigration Department.

The striking photograph of Edmund White plus the ethos of the whole article has stripped homosexuality from any moral dimension, and thus from an Evangelical point of view, from the realm of any moral guilt as well. In the light of our present theme it also removes it from the realm of “Needs” associated with the six crucial salvation words in the previous section (II,2),(iii) “Definitions”)

This is how far away we have drifted, in our Culture, from what Evangelicals view as issues of morality. In such a society, where basic theological concepts are no longer considered to be germane to the circle of morality, we do need to preach a complex Gospel ‘simply’, so that it can be understood. Sinners - and I realize how paradoxical this must sound - are blind enough as it is! Let us not make it worse. -----

Having said this, we must not confuse “simple” with “simplistic”.

This is said for a very good reason. A “simple” answer has as its object the purpose of reducing something complex to something easier, something more basic in order to help someone understand a truth (note!) at a level at which they can understand it without stripping it of its basic accuracy.

It also has the built-in presupposition that having understood the truth in its simpler form, one can then build on that to understand that same truth as it grows in complexity. This is true of almost any field of truth, be it mathematics, physics, chemistry and so on.

From the simple equation $2+2=4$ the student will, with perseverance, move on to understand the complex theories of Einstein and Stephen Hawking and the mysteries of Mathematics and Physics. But note that whether simple or complex the student never strays from the truth!

Being “simplistic” is another story altogether. Here the truth is changed to suit the hearer to make him think he understands the truth, even complex truth. Facts are twisted and the hearer ends up with an untruth or half-truth which inevitably leads to the labyrinth of untruth. -----

Now, one of the great merits of viewing salvation, and more especially the Atonement, by means of “Substitution” is not only that as a metaphor it can be fairly quickly grasped, but it makes a genuine attempt to face the bristling problems of the relationship of the sinner to God.

In the rash of Christian books, popular magazines, sermons, conference messages, and films, today, great emphasis is laid on the present and future in terms of forgiveness, reconciliation,

fellowship, love, the Christian's self-image, learning to love yourself (by which is sometimes meant: 'learn to accept God's forgiveness')

Furthermore, much emphasis is placed on victorious Christian living, Christian marriage, aggressive witnessing, the use of Christian apologetics, the Christian's role in society, culture, politics and so on.

No one can deny that these areas are important and that many are neglected, to the detriment of the Church.

(To demonstrate that I have no axe to grind I ought to perhaps mention my own interest for over 20 years in the Christian's understanding of and relationship to our 20th Century culture and in particular such areas as films, TV, advertising, 'Pop' music and other forms of popular culture. How does a Christian live in such an ethos and world? How does one make the Gospel relevant without making it cheap or run the risk of 'simplification'?)

However, in sometimes over-emphasizing one of these areas through lack of wisdom and theological insight and the discipline of seeing the total picture, we run the risk of forgetting Christian basics.

It is unhealthy and unbalanced for any Christian to be solely an expert in marriage counselling or on 'relationships' or by and large only concentrate on the victorious and inspirational side of Christianity, without, for example having a firm grasp of "Substitution". Why?

The answer is: the inherent merit which an understanding of substitution brings in answering critical questions that the other topics cannot answer, topics and questions of the utmost importance. Such as?

Such as the problem of the removal of that which causes alienation between God and myself, namely sin. The other topics I mentioned above are often overworked, stand or fall, are understood Biblically or not and are preached correctly or not, depending on one's grasp or not of such a basic truth as substitution.

Put another way. Christ's substitutionary act answers questions relating to sin, guilt, God's anger and judgement, God's Law and concept of Justice, why He demands perfect Righteousness, why and what penalty Christ paid in our stead, why He was even on a cross, why He had to suffer so terribly and why He - of all people - had to die.

Critical questions about basic Christian truths are answered in a way in which the other approaches are unable to answer. Other approaches build on the basics laid by the substitutionary approach.

2) The Nature of God. A further merit that "Substitution" has is that it clearly portrays the Nature of God. He is not, when you have a fully orbed view of substitution, a God who ignores sin. The doctrine shows very clearly His absolute standards of holiness and His judicial integrity.

It reveals God's implacable hostility towards sin in all forms. To return to a previous point, it reveals God's integrity because it shows that He has dealt with sin in the only way possible: by not allowing it an 'existence' of its own by shrugging it off, or by passing it over as some kind of psychological mishap. Forgiveness is not handed out in a sentimental-compassionate manner (sentimental-compassion is fraudulent quite simply because it is 'sentimental' and not 'realist')

God dealt with sin properly, ie. in a legal and judicial way because sin is essentially a breaking of the law which must, if it is to retain its legality and integrity, have penalties attached to it, - such as God's anger, punishment and ultimate alienation from God in hell. All this God deals with in substitution and at the same time He remains a Just God.

God's astonishing love for sinners is revealed. Prof. Sinclair Ferguson is quite correct when he says that despite "...assumptions to the contrary - the reality of the love of God for us is often the last thing in the world to dawn upon us." (S.B. Ferguson. Children of the Living God. Banner of Truth, 1989, p.27. Italics mine)

Like the Eldest son in the Parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15), we have our eyes so fixed upon ourselves (and our sins and failures) that we fail to see the rich love of God toward us. A proper understanding of substitution redresses that.

As Paul puts it: “ But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” (Rom.5:8) The three words “...his own love...” are most precious to any Christian. Not another’s love; not some abstract love of a cosmic, pantheistic kind of god; not even the Son’s love (although that is indisputable), but the Father’s own, personal love demonstrated!

To a discovery of this love there is only one possible response, that of the Psalmist:” Praise the Lord, all my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name...who forgives all your sins...who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion.....”. (Ps.103:1-4) Amen. -----

QUESTIONS

1. Describe and discuss the heart of “Substitution”.
2. Would you agree with the statement that the Gospel of Substitution is very “rich”, from a spiritual point of view? Outline the reasons why you think so.
3. Write an Essay on the Merits of “Substitution”. Make use of the notes of the entire Chapter.

COURSE 005 -----

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THE BIBLE INSTITUTE OF SOUTH AFRICA
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by the
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DOCTRINE OF THE WORK OF CHRIST
CHAPTER X
THE PERFECTION OF THE ATONEMENT

I. PROTESTANT AND ROMAN CATHOLIC DIFFERENCES

- 1) Imperfect Satisfaction
 - (i) The Roman Catholic View of Sin
 - (a) Two Stages
 - (b) "Donum Superadditum"
 - (ii) Practical Implications of the Roman Catholic View
 - (iii) The Lord's Supper
- 2) Perfect Satisfaction

II. ONE SINGLE HISTORICAL ACCOMPLISHMENT

- 1) Once for all
 - 2) It's Historic Objectivity
 - 3) Heilsgeschichte or Salvation-History
-

I. PROTESTANT AND ROMAN CATHOLIC DIFFERENCES

1) Imperfect Satisfaction. I must start off by stating that it is not the purpose of these Chapters or Courses to violently attack any persons or theological views with deliberate malice. That such outbursts belong to the realm of the fanatic and emotionally unbalanced.

On the other hand this does not mean that we do not hold to clear, unambiguous, orthodox and classical Protestant and Evangelical Theological views. We do so unashamedly and where necessary may have to respectfully but firmly differ from views other than Protestant and Evangelical.

I trust that we will never knowingly distort an opposite point of view. We may however, with charity in our hearts, but in clarity of thought, make use of our freedom of conscience and on the basis of Scripture alone take up a position against a non-Evangelical one. This will become very apparent in the Course on the Cults.

Such is the case with the Atonement and the Roman Catholic view of Sin and the Lord's Supper, both of which are closely allied to the RC theological position on the atonement. A brief analysis, critique and (hopefully gracious) but firm rejection of the RC position is thus of necessity here since we are dealing in these Chapters with the Work of Christ. -----

(i) The Roman Catholic View of Sin. It is important that we know the RC position as it has a direct bearing on one's perception of the finality and perfection of the atonement.

(a) Two Stages. Perhaps the analogy of a two-stage rocket will not be out of place to explain the RC position. To simplify things we may say that the first stage is indwelling concupiscence. This is a spiritual disorder, force or impulse rooted in human nature (sometimes related to sexual lust)

It is not in itself sin. It is, however closely related to sinfulness, and is -so to speak - the gasoline or petrol that fuels sin. The Latin word is 'fomes'.

In this area, so it seems, RC theologians place the dispositions and habits that are not really in accord with the will of God. They are of a sinful character, but they are not sins in the strict sense of the word.

The second stage consists of real sin. To quote Berkhof, the RC position is that: "Real sin always consists in a conscious act of the will." (L. Berkhof Systematic Theology. Eerdmans, 1953, p.235. The emphasis is mine.) Real sin is fueled by the concupiscence which is at the back of sin.

(b) "Donum Superadditum." The background to all this is the belief that when Adam fell he only lost what is called the "donum superadditum" which refers to the 'superimposed gift or gifts' that were special and supernatural gifts which Adam received at his creation. This was over and above what he already had.

It was a special grace "...which made it possible for him to gain special insight into himself, his maker, and the world." (S. Ozment. The Age of Reform.: 1250-1550. Yale University Press, 1980, p.27) It is also called "original righteousness".

The upshot of the Fall was that Adam only lost this original righteousness, leaving man in a kind of neutral position, but able to gain 'spiritual merit' with God. This immediately means that the RC view of the Fall, Sin and gaining Righteousness is diametrically opposite to the Evangelical view. It also means that the RC view of Forgiveness and Atonement is different.

The Evangelical position is that Adam was perfectly Righteous at his Creation and that when he fell the whole inner structure of his spiritual life in terms of mind, emotions and will, etc. collapsed to such an extent that he can do nothing towards (i) gaining any 'spiritual merit' through any 'good works', and (ii) is totally dependent upon God's grace as revealed in Christ's atoning work for sinners.

(ii) Practical Implications of the RC View. The RC position cannot really make allowance for a final and therefore perfect substitutionary atonement by Christ.

According to RC theology, says Prof. Murray "...the work of satisfaction accomplished by Christ does not relieve the faithful of the necessity of making satisfaction for sins which they have committed." (J. Murray. Redemption Accomplished and Applied. Eerdmans, 1955, p.59)

Baptism blots out all past sins as regards their eternal and temporary punishment. As regards future sins the eternal punishment of believers is also blotted out by baptism. However, as regards post baptismal sins (sins committed after baptism) there is an interim or temporary punishment for which the faithful must make satisfaction either in this life or the next in purgatory. Thus the RC view.

Partial satisfaction is closely linked with the ongoing usage of the Seven Sacraments. These are: Confirmation, Penance, Extreme Unction, Ordination in Holy Orders, Matrimony (the so-called five 'lesser' sacraments), and then to complete the Seven there is Baptism and the Lord's Supper (the two major sacraments or 'mysteries')

(iii) The Lord's Supper. The RC understanding of this sacrament is that of Transubstantiation. In a miraculous manner the elements of bread and wine are literally changed into the actual body and blood of Christ.

What is important for our purpose is that "...inasmuch as there is the real presence of Christ in the supper - body, blood, soul, and divinity - a sacrifice is offered to God...(and)...that the sacrifice offered is propitiatory...". (W.A. Elwell, Ed., Evangelical Dictionary of Theology. Baker Book House, 2nd. Printing, Jan. 1985, p.654. Italics mine)

From this it becomes clear that at each "Mass" Christ is sacrificed again and the continual utilization of the Mass acts - ex opere operato - as an agent for forgiveness from God.

2) Perfect Satisfaction. The Protestant position is the exact opposite of what seems to be a complex system of actions done for and by the faithful in the RC theological system.

The Protestant and Evangelical position is, we believe much simpler and is based on the straightforward exegesis and understanding of both the OT and NT teaching. It is that "...the satisfaction of Christ is the only satisfaction for sin and is so perfect and final that it leaves no penal liability for any sin of the believer." (Murray, op.cit.,p.59)

II. ONE SINGLE HISTORICAL ACCOMPLISHMENT.

1) Once for all. It is immensely important to realize that the atonement was a Once-for-all happening. Pointing the way to it were the symbolic sacrifices in the OT.

Yet, even here there are Messianic passages such as Ps.22 and Is.53, as well as the references to the "Suffering Servant", which indicated that a time would come when the OT sacrifices would end and be consummated in the Person of the Messiah. The symbolic lamb would become the sacrificial Lamb of God.

The writer to the Hebrews stresses this in particular. Unlike other high priests who had to offer sacrifices day after day, both for himself and for the nation, - an incredible, unending event that never ceased in the Tabernacle or the Temple (except when the people were driven into exile), stretching across centuries of history, the greatest High Priest of them all, Christ was: "...sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself." (Heb.7:27)

In another part of Hebrews the writer repeats something of his previous argument but adds an important rider. Christ, he says, has not entered any earthly Temple with his blood as a sacrificial offering. He entered directly into the presence of the Father in heaven itself.

Neither -and it seems to me this shatters the RC teaching that Christ is offered anew in every Mass - does Christ "...enter heaven to offer himself again and again"

Why not? The writer answers that if that were the case: "Then Christ would have had to suffer many times since the creation of the world, but now he has appeared once for all... to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself.(Heb.9: 25f) So," "...Christ was sacrificed once..." (Heb.9:28)

As if that were not enough he continues arguing in the very next chapter pointing out that at one stage daily sacrifices were necessary because the blood of animals did not ultimately cleanse from sin. Again comes the contrast: "But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins...because by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever...etc."(Heb.10:12-13)

Having re-emphasised the oneness five times in the space of four chapters, one wonders how many more times he needs to repeat this theological, literal, historical and practical fact to convince us of it?

One thing is very clear. The writer wants to reinforce the singularity of this event in order to drive home the fact that when Christ died on the cross and the curtain separating the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies was torn apart(Lk.23:45) all sacrifices in the Temple should have ceased instantly, because the Ultimate Sacrifice had been made; perfect, acceptable to God, fulfilling the OT and final! -----

In astronomical circles the main theory for the beginning of our Universe is the so-called Big Bang Theory. I'm quite sure if you read the newspapers and Time or Newsweek you will have heard of the theory. There are two aspects of this Theory I want to use to illustrate the "Once-for-all" aspect of Christ's sacrifice.

I use a secular theory a little reluctantly to illustrate such a truly Holy event, but do so reverently.

In the Big Bang Theory all matter, so the theory goes, was compressed into one single point of space which they call the point of singularity. Then in one apocalyptic moment that dense point of matter exploded hurtling millions of Galaxies with their millions of stars, etc. across billions of miles or kilometers of light years.

According to the findings of the American astronomer Edwin Hubble in 1929, the galaxies are expanding away from this point of explosion and the farther the galaxy is from us the faster it appears to be speeding away! That does not, of course, mean that we are the center of the Universe.

So there was a One-Time happening, and secondly there were the consequences of an ever expanding Universe. It would be like blowing up a balloon with spotson it. I am not qualified to comment on the Theory; I am just using it as an illustration.

Dare I now apply the theory with Christ's sacrifice in mind? Our Lord's death and sacrifice was a One-Time happening, but the consequences of that one-time happening, some 2,000 years ago, has continued from one point, the Cross, to expand farther and farther around the globe resulting in the application of the atonement to the lives of many millions for whom his sacrifice has become a personal reality.

2) It's Historic Objectivity. The atonement did not take place in a 'metaphysical' or 'spiritual' dimension that is supra-historical or outside the kind of history rooted in the lives of real people, geographical localities, exact physical locations.

It did not happen in a dimension outside the boundaries of time, space and history. In other words it did not take place in a mystical dimension where time, space and history are absent.

Dr. Francis Schaeffer could hardly have put it more graphically when he said that the cross was so real that if you ran your thumb up one of its edges you would get a splinter in it.

Now, as Evangelicals we must insist upon this "historicity" of the cross. The reason is obvious. If the atonement did not take place in real, ordinary, everyday history then it never took place at all.

Why do I put it so strongly? The reason is that I suspect that -inter alia -the theory of evolution has done great harm to the usage of certain English words and their meaning. We speak loftily of "The forces of history..." or "History has proved..." or "Together history and nature have caused...". But "history" is not a person! "Nature" is not a mother! The bottom line is that it is people who create history.

There is such a thing as "real" history, but it is people living at a certain time who actually, really and finally "make" history. If God had not created the Universe and our galaxy and our solar system and a real man, Adam, there would be no history at all, since only God lives in a dimension beyond time and history.

From a theological and Biblical point of view there is only the dimension of "history" that people create and the dimension of non-history ('eternity') where God dwells. We may use the term and concept of "history" in metaphors, poetry, fairy stories, or as a literary medium in literary genres, but that is not real history.

The delightful and perceptive stories of Narnia by C.S. Lewis or the quite magnificent and epic story of Middle-Earth and its Hobbits and "Lord of the Rings" by Tolkien, as well as a host of similar genres spawned by them (the 'Dragon' series of Anne McCaffrey) are perfectly legitimate in their own sphere. But no such lands or countries or people or creatures really exist.

A very important point follows from this principle and that is that because these countries and creatures do not exist, the so-called "historical" actions in them never took place, - except as we enjoyed them in our minds and imagination. That is where they belong: in the delightful land of our imaginations!

We come back to our question: why emphasize the point so much?

3) Heilsgeschichte or Salvation History. I have stressed the historical reality of Biblical history because of the powerful 20th Century theological movement named "Heilsgeschichte", which includes men like Oscar Cullmann, W.G. Kummel, Eduard Schweizer, Eduard Lohse, Ulrich Wilkens, C.H. Dodd, G. von Rad and others.

What do they believe? It is a complex theological system, so only the bare bones, relevant to our theme, will be given.

Let's first establish what they do not believe. Although they trace the roots of their theology back to the Bible and insist that "salvation" must be grounded in the Bible, they nevertheless, paradoxically, accept that the Bible is "...a product of the early Christian community and not a

totally reliable account of the life and teaching of Jesus.” (H.M.Conn. Contemporary World Theology. Presbyterian and Reformed, 1973, p.43. Italics mine)

Furthermore, “...he (Cullmann) calls the biblical accounts of creation and the second coming “myths’ s”.” (Conn, ibid., p.43) Carl F. Henry puts it more technically when he says that these theologians “...still hesitate to regard the meaning of salvation as objectively given and accessible.” (C.F.H. Henry. Frontiers in Modern Theology. Moody, 2nd Printing, 1968, pp.44-45. Italics mine.)

One sees immediately that while giving the Scriptures a certain value in their thinking, they are poles apart from Evangelicals in rejecting them as the final, authoritative, infallible and historically reliable Word of God.

What then do they mean when they use the words “salvation” and “history” in the single phrase “salvation-history”? I am going to avoid the intricate philosophical aspects.

We must, they say, understand these terms subjectively not objectively.

Salvation, to put it simply, is to experience Christ in an “existential” (ie. basically in a mystical, suprarational or if you like ‘beyond the rational’) and “supra-historical” (ie. in a dimension above and beyond what we have defined as real history) manner.

To quote Carl Henry again: “Their emphasis falls... upon individual spiritual encounter not only as the focal point of illumination but as the focal point of the revelation of divine meaning.” (Henry, ibid., p.46)

Thus, it seems, a genuine, existential encounter with Christ results in personal “illumination” (which is the experience of salvation), as well as “revelation” (the Bible becomes the divine revelation of God to you.) Obviously the parameters of Heilsgeschichte Theology is much bigger, but in personal terms this is what it boils down to.

If you grasped what I was speaking about earlier in relation to the ‘imaginary’ worlds of Narnia, Tolkien’s Middle-Earth, etc. then you will grasp what I’m about to put to you now.

We saw that these ‘imaginary’ worlds were supra-historical, ie. they ‘existed’ in a dimension that was outside “real” time, space and history. We also saw that a most important point flowed from that, namely, since such a “history” does not really exist, none of the so-called “historical actions” could have taken place.

Of course the “salvation-history” theological school’s position is more sophisticated, theologically and historically than represented by the analogy above and belongs to a different literary genre, ie. that of theological language.

However, the hard theological fact remains that the “world” or “dimension” of the Heilsgeschichte school of Theology does not exist either. It is basically a sophisticated - but totally imaginary - theological world, a kind of theological middle-earth!

Once you say that the Scriptures are an unreliable guide to the life and work of Christ (see above) then in all honesty you’ve got to stop any further speculation about Christ then and there. We have no other source than the Scriptures and if they are unreliable then we must have the courage of our convictions to accept it and close the file on Christianity.

Having disposed of the Heilsgeschichte school, we must not then proceed to construct an elaborate second theological structure, baptize it with an impressive sounding name and terminology, invest it with a man-made authority, establish it as the “salvation-history” sinners are in need of, audaciously erect it in the place of the Scriptures and try to pass it off as the True Gospel.

That is not Scriptural Theology, it is - if you’ll pardon the frankness - plain and simple heresy! It has done immense harm to the Gospel, misled many and is an utterly imperfect presentation of the atonement as portrayed for us by the writers of the NT.

QUESTIONS

1. What (i) is the Roman Catholic doctrine of sin and (ii) what are its Implications?
2. Why was the Atonement of Christ a single and perfect accomplishment?
3. Why do Evangelicals insist on the “Historic Objectivity” of the Atonement?

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