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Editorial: Articulating, Defending, and Proclaiming Christ our Substitute

Stephen J. Wellum

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This edition of *SBJT* is devoted to the theme of the atoning work of our Lord Jesus Christ. Why? For at least two reasons. First, there is no more glorious subject to contemplate than the triumphant cross work of our Lord. In fact, if we are thinking biblically and theologically, we must gladly confess that the subject of Christ's cross is at the heart of the entire message of Scripture and, as such, it takes us to the very heart of the gospel (see, e.g., Luke 24:25-27; 1 Cor 1:8-2:5). No apologies ever should be given for time spent on such a topic of immense and critical importance. But, unfortunately, there is a second reason why we are focusing our attention on the theme of the atonement, and it is this: in the evangelical church today we are in danger of downplaying and even distorting the true meaning and significance of the cross.

A number of examples could be given to demonstrate this last observation, but I want to focus on one disconcerting trend that is increasingly occurring in evangelical theology, namely, an effort to reinterpret the cross in non-substitutionary terms. At least since the eleventh century, and particularly since the Reformation, evangelical theology has sought to argue that the Bible's view of the cross, at its heart, is substitutionary. John Stott in his classic work on the cross rightly captures this view when he argues that "substitution is not a 'theory of the atonement.' Nor is it even an additional image to take its place as an option alongside the others. It is rather the essence of each image and the heart of the atonement itself. None of the images could stand without it" (*The Cross of Christ* [InterVarsity, 1986], 202-03). Stott, in our view, is precisely correct.

No doubt, the best of evangelical theology has always acknowledged that the Scripture is rich in its presentation, interpretation, and understanding of the cross. In order to theologize correctly about the cross, it is absolutely necessary to do justice to the entire biblical presentation of the atonement. One must faithfully unpack all of the biblical language, images, and themes, across the canon, to grasp correctly the "Bible's view of the cross." In fact, when one does this properly, the cross of our Lord is truly presented in all of its depth, breadth, and glory, for in that cross our redemption is achieved; we are reconciled to God; God's wrath is propitiated; the justice of God is satisfied and our justification is achieved; victory over the powers is won, and so on. To adopt a slogan that is often used today: "The NT's interpretation of the cross is not monochrome." This is a true statement indeed.

However, this does not mean (as many today think) that the Bible's diverse presentation of the cross entails divergence or that there is no basic logic or substructure to the Bible's teaching. Rather, when all of the biblical data regarding the cross is investigated and unpacked, none of that biblical language makes sense apart from it being rooted and grounded in substitu-

tion. In other words, at the heart of the diverse way that the Scripture presents the cross, is Christ as our substitute—the glorious Son of God made flesh—dying in our place, paying our penalty due to our sin and rebellion against our triune God, and thus winning the victory over the power of sin, death, and the devil by first and foremost satisfying God and his righteous, just, and holy requirements. In the end, understanding the cross in substitutionary terms—indeed penal substitutionary terms—is not only true to Scripture (which is reason enough to embrace it), but it is also essential in helping us grasp better the glorious gospel of God's sovereign grace.

But, sadly, this understanding of the cross is being downplayed, caricatured, and even rejected in recent theology—not merely non-evangelical theology where this has always been the case—but now, even within evangelical theology as well. In fact some of the standard objections to penal substitution outside of evangelical theology are now creeping their way into evangelical treatments of the cross. For example, many are now attacking the doctrine as unbiblical because, in their view, substitutionary atonement does not do justice to all of the biblical data. Or, others are saying that substitutionary atonement gives us a merely Western, mechanical, legal view of the cross instead of a more relational view. As many of the authors in this issue of *SBJT* point out, others are even embracing a typical, yet awful caricature of penal substitution, by arguing that a substitutionary view of the cross does not present us with a loving God but a sadistic one who delights in the abuse of his Son—a kind of divine child abuse. All of these criticisms are groundless and usually reflect both a caricature of substitutionary atonement as well as the impoverishment of the critic's own theology and understanding of Scripture. But what is truly unfortunate to note is that all of these criticisms, which have been leveled for hundreds of years by opponents of Christianity as well as liberal Christianity, are now being echoed in some form by many self-avowed evangelicals.

In light of these trends, it is necessary to think through again the Bible's presentation of the cross of our Lord. Obviously, in order to do justice to such a vast and important subject a lot of data needs to be studied afresh. Though this edition of the *SBJT* can only begin to scratch the surface on such an important subject, we hope it will make a contribution to the current discussion. From the articles to the Forum essays, we have assembled a group of scholars who attempt to think through the biblical data in light of historical and contemporary discussions. And it is our goal and prayer that we will think clearly and faithfully about the glorious cross of our Lord in light of the teaching of Scripture so that Christian teachers, preachers, and other witnesses will seek to expound anew with clarity and conviction the glory of divine substitution because, in the words of John Stott, "the better people understand the glory of divine substitution, the easier it will be for them to trust in the Substitute" (*The Cross of Christ*, 203).

A History of the Doctrine of the Atonement

Gregg Allison

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The church has historically explained the atonement—"the work Christ did in his life and death to earn our salvation"—in various ways.[1] At times, it has viewed the death of Christ as a payment to Satan; at other times, Christ's death has been considered a tribute offered to God to restore his honor lost through humanity's sin. Some in the church have focused on the great example of Christ's life as his chief accomplishment; others have underscored how much the death of Christ demonstrates the love of God and prompts humanity to love in return. The number of different views is quite extensive.

Unlike many important doctrines, the atonement has never been the subject of an ecumenical, or general, church council. Thus, whereas the Trinity, the deity of the Son of God, and the incarnation of Jesus Christ have definitive statements that have stood the test of time and are embraced by all Christians, no similar doctrinal formula on the death of Christ exists. The prevalent view among Protestants in general and evangelicals in particular is called the penal substitutionary view: "Christ's death was 'penal' in that he bore a penalty when he died. His death was also a 'substitution' in that he was a substitute for us when he died."[2] It will be the purpose of this article to outline briefly the development of the doctrine of the atonement with particular attention given to the various theories or models of the atonement formulated by the church throughout its history.

The Atonement in the Early Church

The early church offered various descriptions of Christ's sacrificial work. At first, these were quite simple explanations. For example, Clement of Rome described Christ's work of substitution: "Because of the love he had for us, Jesus Christ our Lord, in accordance with God's will, gave his blood for us, and his flesh for our flesh, and his life for our lives."[3] This suffering on behalf of others becomes the example for Christians to follow: "You see, dear friends, the kind of pattern that has been given to us. For if the Lord so humbled himself, what should we do, who through him have come under the yoke of his grace?"[4] In another approach, the *Letter to Diognetus* exalted the transaction that took place between Christ and sinners worthy of punishment and death:

> O, the surpassing kindness and love of God! He did not hate us, or reject us, or bear a grudge against us. Instead, he was patient and forbearing; in his mercy he took upon himself our sins. He himself gave up his own Son as a ransom for us—the holy one for the lawless, the guiltless for the guilty, "the just for the unjust" (1 Pet. 3:18), the incorruptible for the corruptible, the immortal for the mortal. For what else but his righteousness could have covered our sins? In whom was it possible for us, the lawless and ungodly, to be justified, except in the Son of God alone? O the sweet exchange! O the incomprehensible work of God! O the unexpected blessings, that the sinfulness of many should be hid-

> den in one righteous man, while the righteousness of one should justify many sinners![5]

The early church focused discussion on different aspects of Christ's work as well. Rehearsing the themes of the curse and healing, Justin Martyr explained, "The Father of all wished his Christ to take upon himself the curses of the entire human family—while knowing that, after he had been crucified and died, he would raise him up.… His Father wished him to suffer this, in order that by his stripes the human race might be healed."[6] Melito developed the theme of redemption by means of sacrifice, playing off the offering of Isaac (Gen 22): "In place of Isaac the just, a ram appeared for slaughter, in order that Isaac might be liberated from his bonds. The slaughter of this animal redeemed Isaac from death. Similarly, the Lord, being slain, saved us; being bound, he freed us; being sacrificed, he redeemed us."[7] Similarly, Irenaeus appealed to Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac to portray Christ's work of redemption through his sacrificial death: "According to his faith, Abraham followed the command of the Word of God. With a ready mind, he delivered up, as a sacrifice to God, his only begotten and beloved son, in order that God also might be pleased to offer up for all his offspring his own beloved and only-begotten Son, as a sacrifice for our redemption."[8]

Irenaeus was also responsible for formulating one of the earliest well-developed views of the atonement, called *the recapitulation theory*: "When the Son of God was incarnate and made man, he recapitulated—or summed up—in himself the long line of the human race. In so doing he obtained salvation for us in a brief and complete way, so that what we had lost in Adam—that is, to be according to the image and likeness of God—we could recover in Jesus Christ."[9] Irenaeus' model focused on the events in the life of Jesus Christ as the recapitulation, or summation, of all the life events of fallen humanity. However, instead of these being lived out in disobedience to God, Christ lived them obediently. Therefore, he reversed the sinful direction in which people were headed, saved them, and provided them with a new orientation:

> Jesus Christ came to save all humanity through means of himself—all, I say, who through him are born again to God—infants, children, boys, young men and old. Therefore, he passed through every age, becoming an infant for infants, thus sanctifying infants; a child for children, thus, sanctifying those who are of this age (at the same time becoming an example of holiness, righteousness and submission); a young man for youths, becoming an example to young men and thus sanctifying them for the Lord. Similarly, he was an old man for old men, that he might be a perfect master for all, not merely in regard to setting forth the truth but also in regard to age, sanctifying at the same time the aged also, and becoming an example to them as well.[10]

Thus, Christ's life repeated the course of human existence, with this important difference: the sinful course was reversed, and Christ's obedient life was exchanged for it.

But it was not only the curse-reversing *life* of Jesus Christ that Irenaeus emphasized; he also saw Christ's *death* as undoing human disobedience:

> In order to do away with that disobedience of humanity that had occurred at the beginning by means of a tree, "he became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Phil. 2:8). By this he rectified that disobedience that had occurred by means of a tree through that obedi-

> ence that was on the tree—that is, the cross. We had offended God in the first Adam, when he did not obey God's commandment. In the second Adam, however, we are reconciled, being made obedient even unto death.[11]

Thus, according to Irenaeus' recapitulation theory, what Adam is to disobedience, Christ—through both his life and death—is to obedience: "For as by the disobedience of the one man—who was originally formed from virgin soil—the many were made sinners and forfeited life, so was it necessary that, by the obedience of one man—who was originally born from a virgin—many should be justified and receive salvation."[12]

Another common theme in the early church's understanding of the atonement was rescue from Satan, the enemy of humanity. The person most commonly associated with this view is Origen, who popularized *the ransom to Satan theory* of Christ's work: "Christ submitted to death, purchasing us back by his own blood from him who had got us into his power, sold under sin." For Origen, Satan had usurped God's rightful ownership of human beings; thus, all people illegitimately belong to Satan. Christ's death was the ransom that was paid to release people from this tragic situation, and the ransom was paid to Satan. As Origen reasoned, "To whom did Christ give his life a ransom for many? Certainly not to God. Could it then be to the evil one? For he was holding us fast until the ransom should be given him—that is, the life of Jesus—being deceived with the idea that he could have dominion over it, and not seeing that he could not bear the torture in retaining it."[13] Origen's wording made it seem as though Satan was the one who dictated the terms of salvation: "If we are bought with a price, without doubt we are bought by someone whose slaves we were, who also demanded what price he would, to let go from his power those whom he held. Now it was the devil that held us, to whom we had been sold by our sins. Therefore, he demanded the blood of Jesus as our price."[14] Though he demanded Christ for a ransom, Satan did not anticipate the consequences of this transaction, out of his own ignorance.[15] Once Satan had Christ in his clutches, he could not hold him; rather, Satan was forced to let Christ go. Thus, he lost not only his former slaves, who had been ransomed by Christ, but the ransom—Christ himself—as well. Thus, the death of Christ dealt "the first blow in the conflict that is to overthrow the power of that evil spirit, the devil, who had obtained dominion over the whole world."[16]

Popularized by Origen, the ransom to Satan theory was reworked by many who came after him. Strange twists were often added to the basic view. For example, Gregory of Nyssa conceived of Christ's work as an exquisite deception—with God being credited with tricking Satan and causing the loss of his victim.[17] The deception entered by means of Christ's deity being enclosed in human flesh. Lured by the powerful miracles of Christ, Satan desired to conquer him as the ransom for humanity. But Satan was tricked, for he had no idea that hidden under Christ's flesh was the divine nature. Gregory used the metaphor of bait on a fishing line, luring hungry fish:

> In order to be sure that the ransom on our behalf might be easily accepted by Satan who required it, the deity of Christ was hidden under the veil of our human nature. Thus, as with hungry fish, the hook of the deity would be gulped down along with the bait of flesh. In this way, life

> would be introduced into the house of death, and light would shine in the darkness. And so that which is diametrically opposed to light and life would vanish. For it is not the nature of darkness to remain when light is present, nor of death to exist when life is active.[18]

Thus, Gregory of Nyssa presented Satan as a fish that was lured by the bait of Christ's human nature but was then caught by the hook of his divine nature. The ransom that was to be paid to Satan destroyed him and left him with nothing.

Another modification of the ransom theory was made by those who dissented from the idea that the ransom was paid to Satan. For example, John of Damascus proposed that Christ ransomed fallen humanity through his death, but that ransom was given to God the Father because the sin of humanity had been committed against him. Rather than Satan being tricked, it was death that was lured by the bait of Christ's humanity and deceived by his deity.[19]

Though it became the most common view of the work of Christ in the early church, the ransom to Satan theory did not enjoy a monopoly. Some church leaders emphasized the substitutionary nature of the death of Christ. For example, Tertullian presented Christ's death as an atonement for sin, with escape from hell and eternal life in heaven as the results.[20] Similarly, Athanasius described how Christ's sacrifice paid the penalty for the sins of all humanity:

> It was necessary that the debt owed by everyone should be paid, and this debt owed was the death of all people. For this particular reason, Jesus Christ came among us.… He offered up his sacrifice on behalf of all people. He yielded his temple—that is, his body—to death in the place of everyone. And so it was that two wonderful things came to pass at the same time: The death of all people was accomplished in the Lord's body, and death and corruption were completely done away with by reason of the Word that was united with it. For death was necessary, and death must be suffered on behalf of all, so that the debt owed by all might be paid.[21]

Thus, Christ "became to us salvation, and became life, and became propitiation" by offering his death as a sacrifice to pay the penalty for sins.[22]

This idea of substitution was joined with various other themes in Augustine's understanding of the atonement. Focusing on Christ as the one mediator between God and humanity, Augustine noted, "Christ is both the priest who offers and the sacrifice offered."[23] In this dual role, Christ fulfills the four aspects of a fitting sacrifice—*to whom* it is offered, *by whom* it is offered, *what* is offered, and *for whom* it is offered: "The one and true Mediator himself, reconciling us to God by the sacrifice of peace, remained one with the Father to whom he offered it, made one in himself the believers for whom he offered it, and he himself was both the offerer and the offering."[24] Specifically, this sacrifice was for sin: "We came to death through sin; Christ came to it through righteousness. Therefore, as our death is the punishment of sin, so his death was made a sacrifice for sin."[25] Furthermore, this sacrificial death brought redemption for sinners: "Christ, though guiltless, took our punishment, that he might cancel our guilt and do away with our punishment…. Confess that he died, and you may also confess that he, without taking our sin, took its punishment."[26]

In terms of the benefits of Christ's work, Augustine saw the death of Christ as a ransom offered to Satan that liberates

people from his evil power.[27] But he did not limit his discussion to this one benefit. Another benefit is escape from the second death, or eternal death that is meted out on the wicked after the resurrection. For believers, however, the death of Christ rescues from this horrific end.[28] Another benefit is the removal of God's wrath and reconciliation to friendship with God.[29] Furthermore, when Christ's death is viewed as the supreme demonstration of God's love for humanity, a final benefit that flows from it is a stimulus to love God in return.[30] The cross of Christ demonstrates God's love for fallen humanity, and those who see this demonstration are encouraged to respond with love.[31]

In summary, the early church, working from the background of the Old Covenant sacrificial system, the teachings of Jesus Christ, and the writings of the apostles, developed various theories or models.

The Atonement in the Middle Ages

After many centuries of domination by the ransom to Satan theory, a fresh view of the atonement of Christ was offered by Anselm. It is often referred to as *the satisfaction theory*. In his influential book *Why God Became Man,* Anselm set forth the major aspects of his model, beginning with the problem of sin:

> To sin is nothing other than not to give God what is owed to him. What is the debt which we owe to God?… This is righteousness or uprightness of the will. It makes individuals righteous or upright in their heart, that is, their will. This is the sole honor, the complete honor, which we owe to God and which God demands from us.… Someone who does not render to God this honor due to him is taking away from God what is his, and dishonoring God, and this is what it is to sin.[32]

Anselm lived in a feudal system in which overlords provided protection for their serfs, who in turn provided food and services for their lords. In this feudal system, restitution of honor was a key concept. If a serf dishonored his lord by stealing ten chickens, for example, the satisfactory solution to this problem was not merely restoration of what had been stolen—ten chickens. Satisfaction demanded a payment that went beyond what was due, so the serf owed, say, fifteen chickens to his lord. Anselm picked up on this concept of satisfaction, and viewed the solution to human sin in the same light:

> As long as he does not repay what he has taken away, he remains in a state of guilt. And it is not sufficient merely to repay what has been taken away: rather, he ought to pay back more than he took, in proportion to the insult which he has inflicted.… One should observe that when someone repays what he has unlawfully stolen, what he is under an obligation to give is not the same as what it would be possible to demand from him, were it not that he had seized the other person's property. Therefore, everyone who sins is under an obligation to repay to God the honor which he has violently taken from him, and this is the satisfaction which every sinner is obliged to give to God.[33]

At this point, Anselm denied that "it is fitting for God to forgive a sin out of mercy alone, without any restitution of the honor taken from him."[34] Two options remained: "It is a necessary consequence, therefore, that either the honor which has been taken away should be repaid, or punishment should follow."[35] To not restore God's honor is unthinkable, so Anselm focused on a satisfactory payment for sin:

> It is impossible for God to lose his honor. For either a sinner of his own accord repays what he owes or God will take it from him against his—

> the sinner's—will. This is because either a man of his own free will demonstrates the submission which he owes to God by not sinning, or alternatively by paying recompense for his sin, or else God brings him to torment, and in this way he shows that he is his Lord, something which the man himself refuses to admit voluntarily.[36]

Perhaps, then, God could simply punish all humanity—each and every person—for his or her sins. That would satisfy his justice. But Anselm could not accept this idea, for a reason that he picked up from Augustine: God cannot punish every human being, because a number of human beings equal to the number of fallen angels must be saved.[37] This would restore the original creation to its balance and harmony. So satisfaction for sin—in one way or another—is necessary.[38]

Could it be that a man could pay the debt himself? Anselm imagined what could be offered to God as a payment for sin: "Penitence, a contrite and broken heart, fasting and many kinds of bodily labor, the showing of pity through giving and forgiveness, and obedience."[39] But Anselm quickly dismissed these as things already owed to God.[40] Thus, if owed to God, these things cannot be given to him in payment for sin. And there is another problem as well:

> Because of the man who was conquered [Adam, in the fall], the whole of humanity is rotten and, as it were, in a ferment with sin—and God raises up no one with sin to fill up the complement of the renowned heavenly city. Correspondingly, supposing a man were victorious, because of him as many humans would be brought out of sin into a state of righteousness as would make up that full number…for the completion of which mankind was created. But a man who is a sinner is in no way capable of doing this, for one sinner cannot make another sinner righteous.[41]

So man is helpless to save himself.

For Anselm, the only one who can save humanity is one who is both God and man:

> [Satisfaction] cannot come about unless there should be someone who would make a payment to God greater than everything that exists apart from God.… It is also a necessity that someone who can give to God from his own property something which exceeds everything which is inferior to God, must himself be superior to everything that exists apart from God.… Now, there is nothing superior to all that exists which is not God—except God.… But the obligation rests with man, and no one else, to make the payment.… Otherwise, man is not making recompense. If, therefore … no one can pay except God, and no one ought to pay except man: it is necessary that a God-man should pay it.[42]

Therefore, Jesus Christ, the God-man, is the only one who can offer satisfaction for the sin of humanity. Moreover:

> He ought to possess something… which he may give to God voluntarily and not in payment of a debt.… If we say that he will make a present of himself as an act of obedience to God…this will not constitute giving something which God does not demand from him in repayment of a debt. For every rational creature owes this obedience to God. [But] to hand himself over to death, for the honor of God…is not something which God will demand from him, in repayment of a debt, given that, since there will be no sin in him, he will be under no obligation to die.[43]

Thus, the death of Christ is the sufficient and necessary satisfaction that he willingly offered to God. In doing so, Christ obtained a reward, but it was a reward that he did not need. It only makes sense

that Christ would give this reward to fallen human beings, "for whose salvation … he made himself a man."[44] So Christ directs that his reward should be given to sinners so as to provide satisfaction for their sins, and the Father gives redemption to all who embrace the Son.[45] In this way, Anselm explained the work of Christ in terms of the satisfaction theory of the atonement.

While reaction to Anselm's theory was generally positive, dissenters expressed contempt for his view. Chief among these was Abelard, who originated *the moral influence theory* of the atonement. Actually, he rejected both of the prevalent theories of his time—the ransom to Satan theory and Anselm's satisfaction view. In their place he proposed another position: "I think that the purpose and cause of the incarnation was that Christ might illuminate the world by his wisdom and excite it to the love of himself."[46] What people need, according to Abelard, is a persuasive exhibition of God's love. Christ provided this demonstration by his life and especially by his death, the crowning act of love: "Our redemption is that supreme love shown in our case by the passion of Christ. This not only liberates us from slavery to sin, but also wins from us the true freedom of the children of God, so that we may fulfill all things from love rather than from fear."[47] The work of Christ, being an exhibition of divine love, stimulates people to love God.[48] In short, Abelard did not minimize the death of Christ, but he denied that it has a necessary connection to the forgiveness of sins. Also, he removed the atonement from an objective reality—what Christ accomplished on the cross—to a subjective influence on people—it kindles within them a love for God. This, for Abelard, is the heart of the Christian faith: "Christ died for us in order to show how great was his love for humanity and to prove that love is the essence of Christianity."[49]

In discussing Christ's atoning work, Thomas Aquinas developed Anselm's idea that Christ went beyond the call of duty in dying—his was a work of *supererogation*.[50] For Anselm, this had meant that Christ's infinite satisfaction through his death could be applied to the infinite penalty accumulated by humanity's sin. But Aquinas viewed both the life and the death of Christ as "a superabundant atonement for the sins of humanity."[51] This atonement, according to Aquinas, has to be appropriated by several means: "Christ's suffering works its effect in those to whom it is applied, through faith and love and the sacraments of faith."[52] Specifically, these sacraments are baptism—to remove original sin and actual sins committed before baptism—and penance—to deal with actual sins committed after baptism.[53] Thus, while affirming that Christ's death was a superabundant atonement, Aquinas held that a human cooperation with the work of Christ is necessary. Faith, love, and participation in the sacraments unite people to the atonement of Christ and become a necessary part of it. It is easy to see how this idea could turn into a system of human works designed to merit the grace and forgiveness of God. This was one of the reasons that people like Martin Luther and John Calvin sought to reform the church.

Atonement during the Reformation and Post-Reformation

The Reformers introduced another view of the atonement, generally called *the penal substitutionary theory*. In some ways, it was similar to Anselm's satisfac-

tion theory, but with this major difference: Instead of grounding the atonement in the honor of God—that of which God had been robbed by the sin of humanity—the Reformers grounded it in the justice of God. Because he is holy, God hates sin with wrathful anger and acts against it by condemning and punishing sin. Thus, an eternal penalty must be paid for sin. Humanity could not atone for its own sin, but Christ did: as the substitute for humanity, he died as a sacrifice to pay the penalty, suffered the divine wrath against sin, and removed its condemnation forever.

Martin Luther expressed the penal substitutionary theory in this way:

> An eternal, unchangeable sentence of condemnation has been passed—for God cannot and will not regard sin with favor, but his wrath abides upon it eternally and irrevocably. For this reason, redemption was not possible without a ransom of such precious worth as to atone for sin, to assume its guilt, pay the price of the wrath and thus abolish sin. This no creature was able to do. There was no remedy except for God's only Son to step into our distress and himself become man, to take upon himself the load of awful and eternal wrath and make his own body and blood a sacrifice for sin. And he did so, out of the immeasurable great mercy and love toward us, giving himself up and bearing the sentence of unending wrath and death.[54]

Luther emphasized the dreadful state in which sinful humanity finds itself, due specifically to its failure to obey God's law. This results in a curse on all people. Jesus Christ accomplished salvation by bearing the curse for everyone: "Putting off his innocence and holiness, and putting on your sinful person, he bore your sin, death and curse. He became a sacrifice and a curse for you, in order to set you free from the curse of the law."[55] Luther specified that Christ became this sacrifice and curse by dying on the cross as a substitute for sinful human beings.[56] This sacrifice, then, is a propitiation: "Christ … truly born, suffered was crucified, died, and was buried, in order to be a sacrifice not only for original sin but also for all other sins and to propitiate God's wrath."[57] In so doing, Luther contributed to the development of the doctrine of the atonement.

John Calvin located the penal substitutionary atonement within Christ's larger work of exercising the three offices of prophet, king, and priest.[58] As priest, Christ reconciles sinful people to God by his sacrificial death:

> As a pure and stainless mediator, Christ is by his holiness to reconcile us to God. But God's righteous curse bars our access to him, and God in his capacity as judge is angry toward us. Thus, an expiation must intervene in order that Christ as priest may obtain God's favor for us and appease his wrath. Thus, to perform this office, Christ had to come forward with a sacrifice. The priestly office belongs to Christ alone because by the sacrifice of his death, he blotted out our own guilt and made satisfaction for our sins.[59]

In discussing the details of Christ's atonement, Calvin emphasized several key points: Atonement is necessary because of God's righteous wrath against sin. Calvin described the situation of a typical sinner: "Scripture teaches that he was estranged from God through sin, is an heir of wrath, subject to the curse of eternal death, excluded from all hope of salvation, beyond every blessing of God, the slave of Satan, captive under the yoke of sin, destined finally for a dreadful destruction and already involved in it."[60] The atoning work of Christ intervened

into this human nightmare. Involved in this work were substitution, cleansing, expiation (removing the liability to suffer punishment through satisfaction), and propitiation (appeasing the divine wrath).[61]

According to Calvin, it was not only by his death that Christ accomplished all of this; his life of obedience was also involved: "From the time when he took on the form of a servant, he began to pay the price of liberation in order to redeem us."[62] But this life of obedience was not the key element: "To define the way of salvation more exactly, Scripture ascribes this especially and properly to Christ's death."[63] Calvin underscored the voluntary nature of this death. And he emphasized that Christ died as an innocent and righteous man, in place of sinful humanity.[64] Thus, "the guilt that held us liable for punishment has been transferred to the head of the Son of God."[65]

Furthermore, the very form of death suffered by Christ—crucifixion—was meaningful for Calvin. By dying on a cross, Christ became the curse for humanity: "The cross was accursed, not only in human opinion but by decree of God (Deut. 21:23). Thus, when Christ is hanged upon the cross, he makes himself subject to the curse. It had to happen in this way in order that the whole curse—which on account of our sins awaited us, or rather lay upon us—might be lifted from us, while it was transferred to him."[66] And by dying as a sacrifice, as pictured in the sacrifices under the Old Covenant, Christ removed the wrath of God against humanity:

> What was figuratively represented in the Mosaic sacrifices is manifested in Christ, the archetype of the figures. Therefore, to perform a perfect expiation, he gave his own life as an *Asham*—that is, as an expiatory offering for sin—upon which our stain and punishment might somehow be cast and cease to be imputed to us. The Son of God, utterly clean of all fault, nevertheless took upon himself and the shame and reproach of our iniquities and in return clothes us with his purity![67]

Thus, in terms of benefits for humanity, "we have in Christ's death the complete fulfillment of salvation, for through it we are reconciled to God, his righteous judgment is satisfied, the curse is removed, and the penalty paid in full."[68]

Calvin and Luther focused on the atonement as a penal substitution, Christ paying the penalty of death as a substitute for sinful humanity. Lutheran and Reformed theology following them continued to develop this theory. For example, the Lutheran *Formula of Concord*, speaking about condemned people, affirmed

> [I]t is their duty to believe that Jesus Christ has expiated all their sins and made satisfaction for them. He has also obtained remission of sins, righteousness before God, and eternal life, without the intervention of any merit on their part.[69]

Similarly, the Reformed *Belgic Confession* described the multi-faceted nature of the atonement:

> We believe that Jesus Christ is ordained with an oath to be an eternal high priest. He presented himself on our behalf before the Father, appeased his wrath by his full satisfaction, offered himself on the tree of the cross, and poured out his precious blood to purge away our sins. He suffered all this for the remission of our sins.[70]

Furthermore, the Reformed *Heidelberg Catechism* echoed much of Anselm's satisfaction theory, with the key difference introduced by the Reformers: Instead of

grounding the atonement in the honor of God, it focused on the holiness of God as its foundation.[71] Thus, the penal-substitutionary theory of the atonement was developed during the Reformation.

Although this theory became the standard view of the atonement among Protestants, it did not go unchallenged. The heretical Socinians developed a view similar in some ways to Abelard's moral influence theory; it is called *the example theory* of the atonement. Like Abelard's position, it rejected the idea that God, because he is just, punishes sin by meting out judgment.[72] Indeed, for Faustus Socinus, founder of the movement, justice leading to punishment, and mercy leading to forgiveness, are completely contradictory. Thus, if Jesus Christ suffered punishment to satisfy the justice of God, there can be no mercy leading to forgiveness. However, we know that God is merciful. This means that he forgives sin without demanding that his justice is satisfied. This is possible because divine justice and mercy are a matter of the will, and so God can simply choose not to exercise his justice:

> There is no such justice in God that absolutely and inexorably requires that sin is punished and that God himself cannot repudiate. There is a kind of justice that we are accustomed to call by this name and that is seen only in punishment of sin. But the Scriptures by no means dignify this with the name of justice; rather, they call it wrath or anger. Thus, they are greatly in error who, deceived by the common use of the word justice, suppose that justice in this sense is a perpetual attribute of God and affirm that it is infinite.[73]

Because God could choose not to exercise his justice, he willed to exercise his mercy instead. Therefore, Christ did not have to offer himself as a satisfaction to God. As Socinus argued, "Why should God have willed to kill his innocent Son by a cruel and damnable death when there was no need of satisfaction? If this were the way, both the generosity of God would perish and we would invent for ourselves a God who is base and sordid."[74]

Socinianism also maintained that Jesus was an unusually holy man who was equipped with the power of God, but who was not God himself. It pointed to this powerful example of virtue and integrity in the life of Jesus as the model for all humanity to follow. The crowning moment of his exemplary life was Jesus' death, the supreme act of obedience. Thus, by his life and death, Jesus provides a wonderful example that moves people to break with their sins and live holy lives: "Christ takes away sins because by heavenly promises he attracts and is strong to move all people to repentance, by which sins are destroyed. He draws all who have not lost hope to leave their sins and zealously to embrace righteousness and holiness."[75] Like Abelard's moral influence theory, the Socinian example theory removed the atonement from an objective reality—what Christ accomplished on the cross—to a subjective influence on people—it moves them to receive the forgiveness of God, which he wills to exercise instead of his justice.

Hugo Grotius disagreed with the Socinians that God does not require a payment for sin, for he could not will to set aside his justice and simply show mercy by forgiving sinful people. But Grotius also rejected the Reformers' idea that Christ's death is a propitiation that removes God's wrath from sinners. So he developed a new view of Christ's work, called *the governmental theory* of the atonement.

Grotius' position envisioned God as

Governor of the universe—thus, the name *governmental theory*. As Governor, God could choose to relax his standards and forgive sinful people through his mercy. This was due to the fact that as the Lawgiver, God himself was not subject to his law. Actually, God as Governor could eliminate the law or relax it. The former was the option that Socinus had chosen. Grotius opted for the latter. And he based God's relaxation of the law on two goods, both of which would have been eliminated had God as Judge strictly upheld the law: "If all humanity had been given over to eternal death as sinners, two most beautiful things would have perished from the earth: reverential piety toward God on the part of humanity, and the demonstration of a wonderful goodness toward humanity on the part of God."[76] But why did God not simply eliminate the law entirely and be merciful toward sinful people? Citing Isa 42:21 ("It pleased the Lord for the sake of his righteousness to make his law great and glorious"), Grotius drew two conclusions: upholding the law to some degree underscored the holiness of God as Governor, and it was in the best interests of the governed for God to support the law in some measure. Grotius called this the "common good—the preservation and example of order."[77]

At this point, Grotius introduced the work of Christ as meeting the requirements of the relaxed law. His death underscored the terrible nature of sin and emphasized that the law must be respected. And Christ's sharing in human nature allied him closely enough with people so that God could mete out punishment on him instead of sinners: "There is nothing unjust in this: That God, whose is the highest authority in all matters not in themselves unjust, and is himself subject to no law, willed to use the sufferings and death of Christ to establish a weighty example against the immense guilt of us all, with whom Christ was most closely allied by nature, by sovereignty, by security."[78] But Christ's sufferings and death did not meet the exact requirements of the divine law; his work only satisfied the less stringent demands of the relaxed law. Thus, Christ's work is only "some sort" of satisfaction. More than anything else, it protected the interests of God's government of the universe.

Grotius summarized his governmental theory:

> Among all the attributes of God, love of the human race stands first. Therefore, though he could justly punish the sins of all people by a worthy and legitimate punishment—that is, eternal death—and though he was moved to do so, God willed to spare those who believe in Christ. But when it was determined to spare them, either by instituting or not some example against so many and so great sins, God most wisely chose that way by which the greatest number of his attributes could be manifested at the same time. These were both his mercy and his severity, or hatred of sin, together with his concern for upholding the law.[79]

By placing God's government of the world and his love for humanity as the highest priorities of God, Grotius developed a theory that dismissed the atonement of Christ as an exact payment of the penalty demanded by the justice of God and expressed in his law. Christ suffered and died, not as a satisfaction for the exact penalty, but as a token of God's concern to uphold his moral law.

Modern Theories of the Atonement

Most Protestants embraced the penal substitutionary theory of the atonement,

originated by the Reformers and developed by their successors. Challenges like those of the Socinians and Hugo Grotius were fairly uncommon and repudiated by most Protestant theologians. But new challenges to the position arose in the modern period and were accepted by more and more churches. Able apologists for the penal substitutionary view also defended and developed that position against these new theories.

William G. T. Shedd was a stalwart defender of this doctrine of the atonement. Affirming that "the atonement of Christ is represented in Scripture as vicarious,"[80] Shedd demonstrated both its substitutionary nature and penal character, the penalty in this case being the sufferings endured by Christ as substitute for sinful human beings.[81] Charles Hodge was another outstanding defended of the penal substitutionary theory of the atonement, which he summarized in the following:

> It is the plain doctrine of Scripture that Christ saves us neither by the mere exercise of power, nor by his doctrine, nor by his example, nor by the moral influence that he exerted, nor by any subjective influence on his people, whether natural or mystical, but as a satisfaction to divine justice, as an expiation for sin and as a ransom from the curse and authority of the law, they reconciling us to God, by making it consistent with his perfections to exercise mercy toward sinners, and then renewing them after his own image, and finally exalting them to all the dignity, excellence, and blessedness of the sons of God.[82]

Hodge also addressed numerous possible objections that had been and would continue to be offered against his view of the atonement. One such objection emphasized the love of God to the exclusion of all the other divine attributes—including the divine justice.[83] A second objection was that "the idea of expiation—the innocent suffering for the guilty and God being thereby propitiated—is declared to be pagan and revolting."[84] Hodge responded: "No one has the right to make one's taste or feelings the test of truth. That a doctrine is disagreeable is no sufficient evidence of its untruth.... So far from being revolting, it is cherished and delighted in as the only hope of the guilty."[85] Both Shedd and Hodge echoed the Reformed doctrine of the atonement and defended it against its many critics.

One such critic was Friedrich Schleiermacher. In *The Christian Faith*, he offered a new theory of the atonement in line with his vision of religion as a feeling of absolute dependence on God. But God, for Schleiermacher, is not a personal, transcendent being. Rather, God is the infinite spiritual reality that flows through all that exists. Christianity, therefore, is not about doctrines and beliefs; rather, it is about the heart, nurturing the intuitive awareness of being united with, and dependent on, this world spirit that pervades everything. With this notion of religion, Schleiermacher maintained that Christ redeemed humanity from this sinful power by providing the supreme example of a man in whom the intuitive sense of dependence on God was nurtured. He was not the God-man; rather, "the Redeemer is like all people in virtue of the identity of human nature, but distinguished from them all by the constant potency of his God-consciousness, which was a real existence of God in him."[86] Because of this, "the Redeemer assumes believers into the power of his God-consciousness, and this is his redemptive activity."[87] Thus, Schleiermacher developed a completely subjective idea of the atonement.

In the twentieth century, Gustav Aulen rehabilitated the ancient *Christ as Victor theory*. In his book, *Christus Victor,* Aulen set forth this view of the atonement: "Its central theme is the idea of the atonement as a divine conflict and victory: Christ—*Christus Victor*—fights against and triumphs over the evil powers of the world, the 'tyrants' under which humanity is in bondage and suffering. In him God reconciles the world to himself."[88] These powers holding humanity in slavery include sin, death, the law, and demonic forces. Joining together sin and death, Aulen offered, "Sin takes the central place among the powers that hold man in bondage; all the others stand in direct relation to it. Above all, death, which is sometimes almost personified as 'the last enemy that will be destroyed' (1 Cor. 15:26), is most closely connected with sin. Where sin reigns, there death reigns also."[89] As for the law enslaving humanity, Aulen explained, "The way of legal righteousness that the law recommends or, rather, demands, can never lead to salvation and life. It leads, like the way of human merit, not to God but away from God, and deeper and deeper into sin."[90] The final group that holds humanity in its sway is the demonic realm: "The array of hostile forces includes also the complex of demonic 'principalities,' 'powers,' 'thrones,' 'dominions' that rule in 'this present evil age' (Gal. 1:4) but over which Christ has prevailed. There is comparatively little direct mention of the devil, but he is without doubt regarded as standing behind the demonic hosts as their chief."[91] For support for his view, Aulen appealed to many passages of Scripture (Col 2:15; 1 John 3:8; 5:19) that emphasize Christ's victory over evil forces. Aulen also marshaled historical evidence in support of his view. For example, he reinterpreted the recapitulation theory of Irenaeus and the penal substitutionary theory of Martin Luther so that they agreed with his position. Of course, he also pointed to the many ransom to Satan theories, insisting that his Christ the Victor theory was at the core of all of these.[92]

Though not written specifically in response to Aulen's model, J. I. Packer's "What Did the Cross Achieve? The Logic of Penal Substitution" became one of the most important expressions of this theory of the atonement. According to Packer, the classical model is anchored

> within the world of moral law, guilty conscience, and retributive justice. Thus is forged a conceptual instrument for conveying the thought that God remits our sins and accepts our persons into favour not because of any amends we have attempted, but because the penalty which was our due was diverted on to Christ. The notion which the phrase "penal substitution" expresses is that Jesus Christ our Lord, moved by a love that was determined to do everything necessary to save us, endured and exhausted the destructive divine judgment for which we were otherwise inescapably destined, and so won us forgiveness, adoption and glory. To affirm penal substitution is to say that believers are in debt to Christ specifically for this, and that this is the mainspring of all their joy, peace and praise both now and for eternity.[93]

The penal substitutionary model continued to find able defenders.

In the twenty-first century, the doctrine of the atonement has come under fierce attack. Particularly singled out for criticism is the penal-substitutionary theory because, according to its detractors, it privileges one (outmoded) metaphor of the atonement, it fosters passivity in the face of evil and oppression, and it even

encourages child abuse. Some evangelicals, disturbed by these criticisms, have sought to revise the traditional doctrine. Many evangelicals, however, rehearse and defend the penal substitutionary model.[94]

In conclusion, what does the history of the doctrine of the atonement teach Christians and churches today? Three important lessons can be learned. First, we should resist attempts at reducing the multifaceted wonder of Christ's atoning work to any one particular element of it. Still, a focus on the penal-substitutionary element has strong biblical warrant. Second, theologians should be encouraged to continue the development of this doctrine, recognizing that one reason for the proliferation of theories of the atonement has been a general failure to construct the doctrine within its proper biblical-theological framework. Third, all Christians and churches should give great praise and thanksgiving to God for the gracious and costly work of atoning sacrifice by the God-man, the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, on behalf of us created yet fallen human beings.

ENDNOTES

[1]Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 568.

[2]Ibid., 579.

[3]Clement of Rome, *The Letter of the Romans to the Corinthians* 49, in *The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations* (ed. Michael W. Holmes; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), 85.

[4]Ibid., 16. This is the lesson that Clement drew from descriptions of the Suffering Servant in Isaiah 53 and Psalm 22.

[5]*Letter to Diognetus* 9, in *The Apostolic Fathers*, 547. This is the strongest statement using substitutionary language that we find in the early church.

[6]Justin Martyr, *Dialog with Trypho the Jew* 137, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 1 (10 vols.; ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956), 1:268. Cf. Justin Martyr, *Dialog with Trypho the Jew* 95.

[7]Melito of Sardis, from the *Catena on Genesis*, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 8:759.

[8]Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 4.5.3, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 1:467.

[9]Ibid., 3.18.1.

[10]Ibid., 2.22.4.

[11]Ibid., 5.16.3.

[12]Ibid., 3.18.7.

[13]Origen, *Commentary on Matthew 16:8.* Cited in J. N. D. Kelley, *Early Christian Doctrines* (rev. ed; San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1978), 185.

[14]Origen, *Homilies in Romans,* 2:13. Cited in H. D. McDonald, *The Atonement of the Death of Christ in Faith, Revelation, and History* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985), 142.

[15]Origen, *Homilies in Ps.* 35 (34):8. Cited in R. S. Franks, *The Work of Christ: A Historical Study of Christian Doctrine* (Nelson's Library of Theology; ed. H. H. Rowley; London: Thomas Nelson and Sons), 40.

[16]Origen, *Against Celsus* 7:17, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 4:617. Though certainly a questionable theory of Christ's work, seeing that it lacks extensive biblical support, the ransom to Satan theory was only one aspect of Origen's overall understanding of the death of Christ. He also placed a strong (and biblical) emphasis on Christ's death being a vicarious substitution (e.g., *Homilies in John* 28.19.165. Cited in Kelley, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 186. Cf. *Homilies in John* 28.14; and *Homilies in Numbers* 14.1. Cited in Franks, *The Work of Christ,* 41).

[17]Gregory of Nyssa, *The Great Catechism* 22-23, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* (second series; 14 vols.; ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1954), 5:492-93.

[18]Ibid., 24.

[19]John of Damascus, *Exposition of the Orthodox Faith* 3.27.

[20]Tertullian, *On Flight in Persecution*, 12, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 4:123.

[21]Athansius, *On the Incarnation of the Word* 20, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, 4:47.

[22]Athansius, *Four Discourses Against the Arians* 1.63, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene*, 4:343.

[23]Augustine, *The City of God* 10.20, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* (first series; ed. Philip Schaff; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, n.d.), 2:193.

[24]Augustine, *On the Trinity* 4.14.19, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* (first series), 3:79.

[25]Ibid., 4.12.15.

[26]Augustine, *Reply to Faustus the Manichean* 14:4, 7, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* (first series), 4:208-09.

[27]Augustine, *Sermon* 163.1. Cited in Alister E. McGrath, *Iustitia Dei* (3rd ed.; New York: Cambridge University, 2005), 29.

[28]Augustine, *The City of God* 13.11.

[29]Augustine, *Enchiridion on Faith, Hope and Love* 33, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* (first series), 3.249.

[30]Augustine, *On the Trinity* 13.10.13.

[31]Augustine, *De catechizandis rudibus*, 4.7. Cited in McDonald, *Atonement*, 161.

[32]Anselm, *Why God Became Man* 1.11, in *Anselm of Canterbury: The Major Works* (ed. Brian Davies and G. R. Evans; Oxford World's Classics; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 283. In the original, "honour" and "dishonouring" have been changed to "honor" and "dishonoring" to reflect American English spelling.

[33]Ibid.

[34]Ibid., 1.12.

[35]Ibid., 1.13.

[36]Ibid., 1.14.

[37]Ibid., 1.16. Augustine expressed this idea in his *Enchiridion on Faith, Hope and Love* 29.

[38]Anselm, *Why God Became Man* 1.19.

[39]Ibid., 1.20.

[40]Ibid.

[41]Ibid., 1.23.

[42]Ibid., 2.6.

[43]Ibid., 2.11.

[44]Ibid., 2.19.

[45]Ibid., 2.20.

[46]Council of Sens. Cited in McDonald, *Atonement*, 174.

[47]Peter Abelard, *Exposition of the Epistle to the Romans, The Epitome of Christian Doctrine*, comment on Romans 3:26. Cited in ibid., 175.

[48]Ibid., 175-176.

[49]Peter Abelard, *Sentences*, 23; and *Exposition of the Letter to the Romans*. Cited in Gordon R. Lewis and Bruce A. Demarest, *Integrative Theology* (3 vols.; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), 2:374. Reaction to Abelard's view was quick. Its chief opponent was Bernard of Clairvaux, who wrote to the pope with his concerns: "What benefit is there for Christ to instruct by example us if he did not first restore us by his grace? Are we not instructed in vain if the body of sin is not first destroyed in us, so that we may no longer serve sin? … Thus, we also affirm that it is necessary for righteousness to be restored to us by Christ—not by instruction, but by regeneration and by righteousness of life (Rom. 5:18)." Bernard of Clairvaux, "To Pope Innocent, Against Certain Heads of Abelard's Heresies," *Letter* 190.23, in *The Works of Bernard of Clairvaux*, microfiche, 589. In keeping with these concerns, the Council of Sens, in 1140, condemned Abelard's moral influence theory for being incomplete.

[50]*Supererogation* comes from two Greek works indicating "a work that goes beyond" what is required.

[51]Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, part 3, question 48, article 2.

[52]Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, part 3, question 49, article 3.

[53]Ibid.

[54]Martin Luther, *Epistle Sermon. Twenty-fourth Sunday after Trinity*. Cited in McDonald, *Atonement*, 182.

[55]Martin Luther, *Luther's Works*, 26:288. Cited in ibid., 183.

[56]Ibid., 26:279.

[57]*Augsburg Confession*, article 3.

[58]John Calvin, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion* (2 vol.; ed. John T. McNeill; trans. Ford Lewis Battles; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), 1:495.

[59]Ibid., 1:501-02.

[60]Ibid., 1:505.

[61]Ibid.

[62]Ibid., 1:507.

[63]Ibid.

[64]For Calvin, Christ's condemnation before Pontius Pilate, a mere "moral man," taught this lesson. Ibid., 1:508-09.

[65]Ibid., 1:509-10.

[66]Ibid., 1:510.

[67]Ibid.

[68]Ibid., 1:520.

[69]*The Formula of Concord*, article 5, 4, in *The Evangelical and Protestant Creeds* (vol. 3 of *The Creeds of Christendom*; ed. Philip Schaff; repr., Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 127.

[70]*The Belgic Confession*, article 21. in ibid., 406-07.

[71]*The Heidelberg Catechism*, questions 12-18, in ibid., 311-13.

[72]Faustus Socinus, *De Jesu Christo Servatore* 3.1. Cited in McDonald, *Atonement*, 197.

[73]Faustus Socinus, *De Jesu Christo Servatore* 1.2. Cited in ibid., 198.

[74]Ibid., 198.

[75]Faustus Socinus, *Praelectiones Theologia* 591. Cited by L. W. Grensted, *A Short History of the Doctrine of the Atonement* (repr., Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2001), 287.

[76]Hugo Grotius, *Defense of the Catholic Faith on the Satisfaction of Christ, against F. Socinus* 3. Cited in McDonald, *Atonement*, 204.

[77]Ibid., 4.

[78]Ibid.

[79]Ibid., 5.

[80]William G. T. Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology* (3rd ed.; ed. Alan W. Gomes; Phillipsburg: P & R, 2003), 690.

[81]Ibid., 690-719.

[82]Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology* (3 vols.; repr., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 2:520.

[83]See Ibid., 2:495-543.

[84]Ibid.

[85]Ibid.

[86]Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith* (ed. H. R. Mackintosh and J. S. Stewart; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1928), 385.

[87]Ibid., 425.

[88]Gustav Aulen, *Christus Victor: An Historical Study of the Three Main Types of the Atonement* (London: SPCK, 1931), 20.

[89]Ibid., 83.

[90]Ibid., 84.

[91]Ibid., 86.

[92]The response to Aulen's proposal was mixed. On the one hand, many appreciated his emphasis on the victory that Christ achieved over sin, death, the law, and demonic forces. On this point, they granted that Aulen was correct and right in drawing the church's attention to a much-overlooked aspect of the atonement. On the other hand, many decried the one-sidedness of his position: It both overlooked crucial biblical data that emphasized other aspects of the atonement and twisted the views of Irenaeus and Luther to fit in with its understanding. Still others noted that the victory achieved by Christ over sin, death, the law, and demonic forces was the *result* of his work on the cross, not the actual work itself.

[93] J. I. Packer, "What Did the Cross Achieve? The Logic of Penal Substitution," *Tyndale Bulletin* 25 (1974), 3-45.

[94]See, e.g., John Stott, *The Cross of Christ* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1986).

The Atonement in Isaiah's Fourth Servant Song (Isaiah 52:13-53:12)[1]

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Many exegetes and theologians have mined Isa 52:13-53:12 for biblical instruction on the death of the Servant and expounded its meaning in terms of a penal substitutionary atonement, focusing in particular on the contribution of the third stanza (53:4-6). This exegetical study will focus specifically on the first and fifth stanzas (52:13-15 and 53:10-12) as improved interpretations of these stanzas can provide a full-orbed understanding of the meaning and significance of the death of the Servant.

Situating the Text in the Larger Work

Interpretation of the Fourth Servant Song[2] should begin by situating the text within the larger literary structure of the book as a whole. Although recent studies of Isaiah have focused more on the canonical shape of the text rather than fragmentary sources adduced by critical scholarship, few have laboured to discover the larger literary structure inherent to the work as a whole.[3] Prophetic preaching and writing certainly does not follow the patterns of Aristotelian rectilinear logic so fundamental to our discourse in the western world. Instead, the approach in ancient Hebrew literature is to take up a topic and develop it from a particular perspective and then to stop and take up the same theme again from another point of view. This pattern is kaleidoscopic and recursive. The book of Isaiah is no exception to this technique. After the topic is presented in approximately seven major sections, the reader ends up with a full-orbed mental picture, the equivalent of stereo surround-sound in the audio world.[4]

Isaiah makes the first round of his theme in 1:2-2:5, beginning with the broken covenant between God and Israel—excoriating the people for their sins—and concluding with the vision of a future transformed Zion. From 2:6 to 4:6 Isaiah makes the second round of his theme, moving again in a short treatment from sin and judgment in the present corrupt Zion to the vision of a future transformed Zion.

Chapters 5 to 37 comprise at least three sub-units that treat in detail the issues of failure to keep the Covenant/Torah and the threat of judgment. Isaiah focuses on the failure of the people to practice social justice in spite of many, many acts of divine discipline. The covenant is broken and irreparably violated. Everything is in order in their services of worship, but the people have failed to demonstrate the lifestyle required of them as God's new humanity. The instruction in the covenant can properly be summarized by the term social justice.[5] As a community in covenant relationship to Yahweh, they are called to mirror to the world the character of Yahweh in terms of social justice and to be a vehicle of divine blessing and salvation to the nations. But the way that the people of God have treated each other is characterized by social injustice. The City of Truth has become a whore (Isa 1:21).

The Lord has no choice now but to fulfill the gravest curses and threats entailed in the Covenant in Deut 28. The final threat is exile, and this theme is taken up in chapters 5-37.

The Fourth Servant Song is found in the sixth section of thematic treatment (covering chapters 38 to 55), which is focused in particular on comfort and redemption for both Zion and the world. The following outline, adapted from the commentaries by Motyer,[6] is effective in clarifying the movement of thought in this cycle dealing with the transformation of Zion in the old creation to Zion in the new creation:

Isaiah 38-55: The Book of the Servant

A. Historical Prologue:
Hezekiah's Fatal Choice (38:1-39:8)
B[1]. Universal Consolation (40:1-42:17)
1. The Consolation of Israel (40:1-41:20)
2. The Consolation of the Gentiles (41:21-42:17)
C[1]. Promises of Redemption (42:18-44:23)
1. Release (42:18-43:21)
2. Forgiveness (43:22-44:23)
C[2]. Agents of Redemption (44:24-53:12)
1. Cyrus: liberation (44:24-48:22)
2. Servant: atonement (49:1-53:12)
B[2]. Universal Proclamation (54:1-55:13)
1. The Call to Zion (54:1-17)
2. The Call to the World (55:1-13)

The larger literary structure is crucial to correct interpretation of the Fourth Servant Song in at least three ways.

First, the outline of the literary structure of Isaiah 38-55 shows that the return from exile involves two distinct issues and stages. As already noted, Isaiah 38-55 looks farther into the future, beyond the judgment of exile, to the comfort and consolation of Israel, i.e., bringing them back from exile. Then the Lord will establish Zion as the people / place where all nations will seek his instruction for social justice. This is described in the language of the Exodus so that the return from the Babylonian exile will be nothing less than a new Exodus—indeed a greater Exodus![7] This new Exodus is also described by the term "redeem" (*gāʾal*) which refers to the duties of the nearest relative. Since by virtue of the Mosaic Covenant Yahweh is Israel's nearest relative, he will "buy back" his people from exile as he once delivered them from bondage and slavery in Egypt. The return from exile, however, is not a simple task. The promises of redemption are divided into two distinct sections: release (42:18-43:21) and forgiveness (43:22-44:23). Release refers to bringing the people physically out of exile in Babylon and back to their own land; forgiveness entails dealing fully and finally with their sin and the broken covenant. It has been neatly expressed that you can take the people out of Babylon, but how do you get Babylon out of the people?[8] The books of Ezra and Nehemiah show that the people have returned from exile, but have not changed at all in terms of their relationship to God: the failure to practice social justice remains a central problem. That is why for a post-exilic prophet like Zechariah the return from exile is both a present reality and a future hope. The exile will be over only when God deals with their sin and renews the covenant, the temple is rebuilt and the Lord returns to dwell in the midst of his people as King. Zechariah 3:9 and 5:11 show that the forgiveness of sins is still future. Indeed, the major point of Daniel's Vision of Seventy Weeks is that the exile will not be over in seventy years, but rather in seventy weeks of years: "seventy sevens are decreed for your people and your holy city to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision

and prophecy and to anoint the Holy of Holies" (Dan 9:24). So there are two issues in the return from exile: physical return from Babylon and spiritual deliverance from bondage and slavery to sin. And corresponding to these two issues there are two distinct agents of redemption: Cyrus and the Servant. The former will bring about the first task: physical return to the land of Israel (44:24-48:22); the latter will bring about the second task: the forgiveness of sins (49:1-53:12).

This first point cannot be emphasised sufficiently. One's doctrine of atonement is an understanding of what God *does* as an answer to a problem.[9] One's understanding of the problem determines one's understanding of the solution. The literary structure makes abundantly clear that the work of the Servant is to deal with the sin of Israel (and it turns out, also of the nations). Texts in the section entitled Promises of Redemption that address the issue most pointedly are 42:23-25, 43:22-28, 44:21-23. The last of these is worth citation and a brief comment:

> Remember these things, O Jacob,
> for you are my servant,
> O Israel.
> I have made you, you are my
> servant; O Israel, I will not
> forget you.
> I have swept away your offenses
> like a cloud, your sins like
> the morning mist.
> Return to me, for I have redeemed
> you (NIV).

This passage is programmatic for Isaiah 53 showing that what will be involved is the permanent removal of offenses and sins as an act of redemption. The Hebrew word "redeem"[10] comes from the Torah and refers to the duty of the nearest relative to buy back their kin when either their property is mortgaged (Lev 25:23-38) or their person is enslaved (Lev 25:39-55). The Mosaic Covenant establishes Yahweh as Israel's nearest relative (Exod 24) and the Exodus is a picture of this work. Thus the work of the Servant will bring about a deliverance from bondage to sin.

Second, the larger literary structure clarifies why there is a gap in the text between the first of the servant songs (42:1-9) and the last three (49:1-13, 50:4-9, 52:13-53:12). The first Servant Song belongs to the introductory opening section which is devoted to the theme of the consolation of Israel and of the nations (40:1-42:17). The Abrahamic Covenant undergirds this introductory section. At the heart of the covenant with Abraham is the promise that blessing will come to the entire world through Abraham and his family, Israel. The arrangement in this section is important. The consolation of Israel comes first because at this time Israel is under a curse; she is part of the problem and not part of the solution. First God must console and restore Israel and only then can he use Israel to be an instrument of consolation and restoration for all the nations. After consolation is defined in terms of redemption (1) from exile and (2) from sin in 42:18-44:23, Isaiah describes in 44:24-53:12 the work of Cyrus to accomplish the former before proceeding to develop the work of the Servant of the Lord to accomplish the latter. At this point three passages on the Servant of the Lord are placed together to focus on redemption from sin. Each passage consists of a first presentation of the topic, a comment as a second presentation of the topic, and a response section:[11]

Outline of Isaiah 49:1-55:13

A[1]. The Servant's Double Mission: Israel and the World (49:1-6)
- B[1]. Comment: Mission to World and Israel Confirmed (49:7-13)
  - C[1]. Response: Zion Despondent and Unresponsive (49:14-50:3)

A[2]. The Servant Obedient and Responsive in Suffering (50:4-9)
- B[2]. Comment: The Obedient and the Self-Willed (50:10-11)
  - C[2]. Zion Summoned to Respond (51:1-52:12)

A[3]. The Servant Successful, Sin-bearing and Triumphant (52:13-53:12)
- B[3]. Response: Invitation to Israel and the World (54:1-55:13)

Third, the literary structure sheds light on the identity of the servant. Debate over the identity of the servant has literally raged for centuries and continues to the present time unabated.[12] One good reason for this debate is in the text itself: it is characteristic of Isaianic style to begin discussing a topic in an ambiguous and mysterious manner and to add critical information bit by bit until the matter is plain.[13] For example, in the oracle against Babylon in 21:1-9, Isaiah begins by talking about the wilderness by the sea. Only at the end, in v. 9, does one realize that the prophet is speaking about Babylon. Isaiah's presentation of the Servant of Yahweh is similar. At the start in 41:8, the servant is Israel, who in the biblical theological scheme of the larger story has inherited the Adamic roles of son of God and servant king, and who in the covenant at Sinai in Exod 19:5-6 was called to be a holy nation and a kingdom of priests. The servant, however, seems to be deaf and disobedient in 42:18-19. This contradicts the picture of the servant in 42:1-9 and especially in 50:4-11. Israel as a servant is in dire need herself, not just of rescue from exile and all that entails, but also of a full resolution of the problem of a broken covenant relationship (e.g., 43:22-28). Idolatry and social injustice are endemic in Israel. This is the dilemma: how can God keep his promises to Abraham when Israel has completely failed as the Servant of the Lord? Israel was to model three things to the rest of the nations: (1) faithfulness and loyalty in their relationship to God, (2) social justice in their human relationships, and (3) responsible stewardship of the creation / environment.

This matter is addressed immediately in the Second Servant Song which begins the detailed response to this question (49:1-13). At the beginning of this second song we hear again in 49:3 the affirmation that Israel is the servant, as in 41:8. So the servant is the nation. Yet in vv. 5-6, the servant's task is to bring the nation back. This is a return from exile, both physically and spiritually, as described earlier. How can the servant be both the nation and the deliverer of the nation? There is only one possible solution that resolves this conundrum fairly, and Isaiah has prepared us for this in the first part of his work: the Servant must be the future king described earlier (e.g., 11:1-10). As an individual, the king can say, "I am Israel." The king can represent the nation as a whole, yet he can be distinguished from Israel. This is difficult for Americans to grasp because we have no monarchy. In monarchies, both ancient and modern, there is a sense in which the king *is* the nation. At the same time, the king is the deliverer of the nation and fights her battles for her. Many Christians move too quickly to identify Jesus of Nazareth as the Servant of YHWH without following carefully the progression in the text. The main problem

with the standard Jewish interpretation of identifying the servant as the nation is that the nation of Israel is, neither in the text nor in history, able to rescue itself, let alone atone for its own sins.

A detailed discussion of the identity of the Servant is not possible here, but several points in the text, especially in the Fourth Servant Song, show that a future king descended from David is uppermost in the author's thought. First, D. I. Block's recent study "My Servant David: Ancient Israel's Vision of the Messiah" provides strong evidence that need not be repeated here that the figure of the Servant of Yahweh in Isaiah is both Davidic and royal.[14] To be called "the servant of Yahweh" is significant in itself and this title most frequently refers to David. Second, the reference to the root and shoot in Isa 53:2 clearly connects the Fourth Servant Song to the vision of the future Davidic King and Kingdom in Isaiah 1-37 by allusion to the majestic, stately tree cut down in Isa 6:13 and to the root and shoot of Jesse in Isa 11:1, 10. As J. Alec Motyer notes, "the reference to *Jesse* indicates that the *shoot* is not just another king in David's line but rather another David" (italics in original).[15] The connection between the future king of Isaiah 9 and 11 and the Servant of Yahweh in Isaiah 53 in the history of interpretation is as old as the Septuagint. There the interpretive rendering of *yônēq* ("tender shoot") in 53:2 by παιδίον ("child" or "servant") shows a clear connection with the "child" of 9:5 in the mind of the Greek translator.[16] Thus the Fourth Servant Song resolves the dilemma put in sharp focus in Isa 49:3 and 6 in the Second Servant Song.[17] One text says the servant is Israel; another text affirms that the servant will restore the tribes of Jacob. The servant is Israel, yet restores Israel. How can we resolve this enigmatic contradiction? When the Servant is seen as a royal figure, we can propose a solution. There is a sense in which the king *is the nation in himself*, and yet can also be the deliverer of the nation. In the New Testament, the Servant is understood to be Jesus of Nazareth because he is both the King of Israel and Servant of the Lord who accomplishes the task of bringing back the exiles. To see how this works we must now turn our attention to the Fourth Servant Song.

The Poetic Structure of the Fourth Servant Song

The literary structure of the Fourth Servant Song is both clear and instructive. The poem is a song in five stanzas consisting of three verses each (although in the Hebrew text the five stanzas number 9, 10, 12, 13, and 13 lines respectively).[18] The first stanza forms a prologue for the poem as a whole where the main themes are adumbrated. After the prologue follow four stanzas: the second and fourth stanzas describe the sufferings of the servant and the third and fifth stanzas interpret the events described in the first and third stanzas respectively:

Outline of Fourth Servant Song[19]

Stanza 1: Prologue (52:13-15)
Stanza 2: Pains in Life (53:1-3)
Stanza 3: For Us (53:4-6)
Stanza 4: Pains in Death (53:7-9)
Stanza 5: For Us (53:10-12)

An alternative analysis sees a chiastic arrangement:

Chiastic Outline of Fourth Servant Song[20]

A¹ The Servant's Exaltation (52:13-15)
  B¹ The Rejection/Suffering of the Servant (53:1-3)
    C Significance of the Servant's Suffering (53:4-6)
  B² The Rejection/Suffering of the Servant (53:7-9)
A² The Servant's Exaltation (53:10-12)

The first and last stanzas describe the exaltation of the Servant, the second and fourth describe the rejection and suffering of the Servant, and the centre stanza provides the significance of the suffering. Sometimes "discovery" of chiastic patterns actually forces the details of the text onto a Procrustean bed. Naturally the resurrection in 53:10-12 constitutes an exaltation of the servant, but this by no means exhausts the content of this stanza. Moreover, the resurrection is part of what stands as an interpretation of the Servant's death. It demonstrates divine acceptance of the sacrifice (Rom 4:25b) as will be described later. Earlier the literary structure of the section from 49:1-55:13 revealed a pattern of topic, commentary, and response in the three passages on the Servant of the Lord. At first glance this pattern seems to break down for the Fourth Servant Song as the third passage in this sequence. Yet if the third and fifth stanzas are seen as commentary on the second and fourth stanzas according to the first outline of the Fourth Song, then the pattern of topic and comment is indeed there, but is doubled. The pattern is then completed with the response, which is an invitation to Israel and the nations (54:1-55:13).

The structure of the Fourth Song in terms of topic and commentary is instructive. Events are not self-interpreting. If we consider, by way of illustration, the crucifixion of Jesus and the people who actually witnessed it at the time, we would find a variety of different interpretations.[21] People passing by hurled insults at him: "So! You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, come down from the cross and save yourself" (Matt 27:40). They saw Jesus as a failed prophet. The Jewish leaders, the chief priests, said "He saved others, but he can't save himself! Let this Christ, this King of Israel come down now from the cross, that we may see and believe" (Matt 27:42). They saw him as a false King, a false Messiah. They saw him as a liar and blasphemer who was getting the penalty justly due him. The women were there who had supported Jesus in his ministry and cared for his needs. No doubt they were thinking, "Here was a gentle, meek soul who was always kind and loving and now he's been betrayed by the system." The bandits and insurrectionists were there, hanging on either side of him. One saw Jesus as a fellow bandit, the other trusted him as Messiah. Roman soldiers were there and the centurion in charge confessed, "Surely this was a righteous man" (Luke 23:47). Mark records the centurion as saying, "Surely this man was the son of God!" (Mark 15:39). The disciples, Jesus' closest friends, did not know how to interpret the events as the debate on the Emmaus Road revealed. But Paul, in Rom 4:25 says, "he was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification." Paul interprets the death of Jesus of Nazareth, and, as we will see, his interpretation is based upon that of Isaiah 53. The structure of the Fourth Servant Song indicates that Isaiah not only foretells and predicts events in the future, but he interprets these events as well. This is crucial for a proper understanding of the death of the Servant.

Space and time do not permit an exhaustive treatment of all that this text teaches concerning the death of the Servant and its relevance for a doctrine of penal substitutionary atonement. Since much has been made of stanza 3 in this regard, the focus in this brief treatment will be on the contribution of the Prologue

(stanza 1), where the essential teaching is given "in a nutshell," and the contribution of stanza 5.

The Fourth Servant Song has more than its share of grammatical, lexical, and textual difficulties. Moreover some aspects of the evangelical exegetical tradition as seen in our commentaries and translations in the last one hundred years have obscured to some degree the clear teaching of this text.[22] As S. Lewis Johnson, Jr. said concerning Rom 5:12, so we may also say here of the exegetical issues: "to handle [them], we must retrace our steps a little, remembering humbly that the terrain is wild, rugged, infested with exegetical booby traps, and dotted with the graves of interpreters who fell into them."[23] No apology is given here for dealing with these issues in depth as this is the only way forward to a better understanding of the redemptive work of the Servant.

First Stanza: The Prologue of the Fourth Servant Song (52:13-15)

Between the Third and Fourth Servant Songs is a section calling upon Zion to respond (51:1-52:12). It begins with three brief paragraphs marked by a command to pay attention or listen (51:1, 4, 7). Then several sub-sections are marked off by double commands or imperatives: "Awake, awake!" (51:9), "Rouse yourself, rouse yourself!" (51:17), "Awake, awake!" (52:1), and "Depart, depart!" (52:11). These literary structures tie the pieces of this section together and so the attention-getting particle, *hinneh,* in 52:13 is the literary signal that marks the start of the Fourth Servant Song.

The Prologue consists of nine lines of poetry: the first two describe the Servant achieving success and lofty status (13ab); the third line (14a) and last three lines (15bcd) note the astonishment of many, including great leaders in the world. Three lines in the centre (14bc-15a) describe what in the servant's role and work cause this astonishment.

Three exegetical problems are crucial to the interpretation of the Prologue: (1) the "as … so … so" structure governing 14a-15a. (2) the meaning of the verb in 15a—should it be translated "sprinkle" or "startle"? (3) the meaning of the term in v. 14b rendered "marred" by the KJV ("his visage was so *marred* more than any man"). D. Barthélemy has offered excellent solutions to these issues,[24] but they are not widely known in North America since Barthélemy's work is in French. I hope in what follows to build upon the proposals of Barthélemy.

Let us begin by considering the "as … so … so" grammatical structure. The clause structures of vv. 14-15a are governed by the sequence of particles כאשׁר ... כן ... כן. The following literal translation highlights these particles with italics:

(14a) *just as* many were appalled / astonished at you
(14b) *so* his appearance was disfigured (?)
…
(15a) *so* he will sprinkle / startle (?) many nations

The particles correlate the two affirmations of 14bc and 15a with that of 14a. It is difficult, however, to make sense of the sequence of thought. Medieval Jewish interpreters construed the first "so" clause as quoting what the "many" say to "you" (in spite of a rapid shift to 3rd person). The Geneva Bible led Christian intepreters in a new direction by understanding the first "so" clause as a parenthesis. This solution was popularised by the KJV. In desperation, the commentator Duhm corrected the text from כן ("so") to כי ("because")

and was followed in the apparatuses of *Biblia Hebraica* and by many scholars. Few modern translations, if any, faithfully present the structure in Hebrew. The NIV is representative:

> 14 Just as there were many who
> were appalled at him—his
> appearance was so disfigured
> beyond that of any man and
> his form marred beyond human
> likeness—
> 15 so will he sprinkle many
> nations,

Note how the first "so" is put immediately before the verb instead of before the clause. This is problematic since כן is normally clausal in scope and does not modify just the verb. In addition, the "as … so … so" is obscured to the reader. There is no reason to correct the text as Duhm did, for the Septuagint and the Dead Sea Scrolls (1Q[a] and 1Q[b]) support the reading of the Masoretic Text (MT). Moreover the structure in this poetic text is well substantiated in prose (e.g., Exod 1:12 and Josh 11:15), and the English versions faithfully represent it there. In sum, neither Christian nor Jewish interpretations in the past adequately come to grips with the grammatical structure in the text. This structure will affect how we deal with the disputed words in 14b and 15a. We must choose an interpretation that honors this syntactic structure.

First consider the verb *yazzeh* in 15a. Two main options have held the field of interpretion. The first option analyzes the form as Hiphil imperfect of *nazah* meaning 'to sprinkle': "so he will sprinkle many nations." Objections have been raised to this interpretation because of the construction found in this verse. The normal construction for the verb *nazah* is to sprinkle a liquid (e.g., blood) on a person or thing (e.g. Lev 5:9; 8:11; 30) or before someone (Lev 4:17; 14:16). In Isa 52:15, however, no liquid is mentioned, and there is no preposition על ("upon") before "nations" to mark the object being sprinkled. This objection can be answered by a careful examination of all available occurrences of the verb. There are instances where the liquid that is sprinkled is omitted if it can be assumed from the context (Exod 29:21; Lev 14:7; Num 19:19).[25] There are also cases where the object or person sprinkled is the direct object of the verb instead of being indicated by a prepositional phrase using "upon" (Lev 4:6, 17). Since Isaiah is poetry, the direct object marker את is normally omitted, and so "nations" can be construed as the object sprinkled, with the liquid (blood of a sacrifice) being omitted.

A number of scholars who have found the first option unacceptable have proposed to derive the verb from a root related to an Arabic verb *nazā* that means "to jump" or "leap up." They then translate, "he will cause people to jump / leap up," i.e., he will startle them. This may yield a contextually suitable sense, but support for this proposal is weak because the verb in Arabic is not used of being emotionally startled and then leaping up. The appeal to Arabic, therefore, is linguistically suspect. Also, the verb נזה "to sprinkle" is well attested in MT as it occurs some twenty-three times. To suggest that Isaiah's audience easily recognized an otherwise unknown verb instead of a common one is not plausible. Linguistically, then, "to sprinkle" has more to commend it if one can argue that it fits the context well.

The second disputed word is the noun *mišḥaṯ* which is rendered "disfigure" (NIV) or "marred" (KJV). Barthélemy offers the most detailed and thorough

treatment of the history of interpretation of this word, and this will be conveniently summarized here.[26]

Almost all interpreters from ancient times to the present have connected the word with the root שׁחת ("to corrupt / ruin / spoil"). Most interpreters also do not indicate the analysis that supports their interpretation. This is the case with the Septuagint (a functional equivalence translation in Isaiah) rendering ἀδοξήσει, with the Aramaic Targum (דהוה חשוך), and with the medieval Jewish scholars Saadya and Yéfet ben Ely. Among exegetes who do give an analysis of the word, some treat it as a noun. Salmon ben Yeruham, for example, gives the meaning as "corruption, ruination" and suggests a noun of the pattern מִשְׁפָּט. Others such as Abraham ibn Ezra, Radaq, Aaron ben Joseph, and Shelomo ben Melek treat the word as an adjective. Finally, some have construed the word as a passive participle, either like a Niphal Participle נִשְׁחָת (so certain medieval Hebrew-French Glossaries and Tanḥum Yerushalmi) or as מָשְׁחָת—a Hophal participle (Abuwalid, Judah ibn Balaam, Isaiah ben Mali).

If the Masoretic Text is respected in both consonantal text and vocalization, there are two possibilities: (1) a noun with preformative *mem* (like מִשְׁפָּט) derived from the root שׁחת ("to ruin"), or (2) a feminine noun derived from the root משׁח ("to anoint") following a noun pattern like אִמְרָה. The meaning of the noun, then, is either "ruining" or "anointing" depending upon whether option (1) or (2) is adopted.

Before weighing the merits of these two options, note that the grammatical construction מִשְׁחַת מֵאִישׁ is unusual: we have a bound noun in a construct phrase where the free member is separated from the bound member by the preposition *min* (= from) in between. This difficulty must be resolved by all interpreters regardless of the solution preferred for the meaning of the noun. Although normally nothing comes between the bound and free member of a construct phrase, this anomaly is attested elsewhere with the preposition *min* (Gen 3:22; Isa 28:9(*bis*); Jer 23:23(*bis*); Ezek 13:2; Hos 7:5). These examples show that the construction here is fastidious and refined rather than belonging to common speech.

Thus two translations are possible. Either "his appearance is an anointing beyond that of men" or "his appearance is a destruction beyond that of men." The first option is to be preferred for the following reasons.

(1) The noun מִשְׁחָה ("anointing") is well attested in the biblical text (sixteen instances in the absolute state and seven instances in the construct state) whereas a noun מִשְׁחָת ("destruction") is otherwise unknown in the Hebrew Scriptures.[27]

(2) Regulations concerning a special anointing oil devoted strictly for particular occasions and persons and not for common use by any others is found in Exod 30:30-33. The anointing of the high priest with this oil to install him into his office set him above his fellow priests (Lev 21:10), and the anointing of the king to indicate his divine election for this office set him above his fellow Israelites (Ps 45:8[7]). Such parallels show, then, that an expression "an anointing above that of men" is natural in biblical Hebrew while an expression "a destruction above that of men" is not and is otherwise unattested. To make the meaning "destruction" work, one might better construe the *min* as causal; hence "a destruction caused by men." Yet this does not seem to be an

approach taken by commentators and exegetes.

(3) Parallel to מַרְאֵהוּ, "his appearance" is תֹּאֲרוֹ, "his form." A lexical study of this parallel term is instructive. In form, the noun is a (U-Class) Segholate pattern which is frequently employed for infinitival nouns. The related verb has to do with marking / sketching / tracing the form of something, i.e., its outline. Thus the noun indicates the physical form or figure of an object: in one instance of fruit (Jer 11:16) and in two instances of animals (Gen 41:18, 19), but thirteen of the sixteen occurrences are of humans. As in our text, the term is paired with מַרְאֶה, "appearance" also in 53:2 and Gen 29:17, 39:6, Esth 2:7. The term may be neutral, hence requiring an adjective like יפה "beautiful" (e.g., Gen 29:17; 39:6), or it may indicate a good figure by itself (Judg 8:18). Only in Lam 4:8 is the term used of a bad form, that of nobles or princes whose "form" is now no longer what it once was. Many renderings in English versions or other translations focus on someone as physically beautiful or handsome, but the word has to do with "form" or "outline" like a silhouette that indicates the fine bearing and dignity of a person. We have an expression in English: "he cut a fine figure." This term is not just indicating that a person may be beautiful or handsome, but also connotes their bearing, rank, and social status indicated by their form. At least five or six of the thirteen instances referring to a human have to do with a royal figure (Judg 8:18; 1 Kgs 1:6; Esth 2:7; Lam 4:8; Isa 53:2). The example in Judg 8:18 is instructive:

> Then he [Gideon] asked Zebah and Zalmunna, "What kind of men did you kill at Tabor?" "Men like you," they answered, "each one with the bearing of a prince" (NIV).

In Isa 53:2 the same usage is found: "He had no form or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him." This means that the servant does not have a royal bearing in his appearance. He does not cut a fine figure so that people will say, "We want him for a king." This stands in contrast to Israel's choice of Saul in 1 Sam 9:1-2, 10:23-24. Thus the word-pair "appearance and form" are well suited to describe the dignity and social status of a high office like that of the High Priest or King whose entry into office is symbolized by anointing.

(4) The meaning "anointing" suits the progression of thought from the first "so" clause to the second. According to the Torah, a priest can only sprinkle or make atonement when he is first anointed as priest:

> The priest who is anointed and ordained to succeed his father as high priest is to make atonement (Lev 16:32, NIV).

The meaning "anointing" makes excellent sense of the sequence in this text. The servant sprinkles *because* he is anointed. As we have already seen, the symbolism of anointing indicates that the High Priest was exalted above his fellow Israelites. This anointing qualifies him to atone for the nation. In the same way in our text, the servant is exalted above *all humans* and so atones for *all the nations*. This interpretation also explains the exaltation of the servant described in v. 13b better than any other proposal.[28]

(5) The meaning resulting from construing the term as anointing best honors the "as … so … so" structure in the text. This seems difficult for some to understand. Jan Koole's commentary is an excellent exam-

ple of a scholarly treatment that evaluates Barthélemy's proposal and rejects it for the traditional view.[29] It is worth quoting Koole's objections at length:

> All things considered, it seems that, generally speaking, we have to choose between a derivation from משח = "to anoint" and שׁחת = "to corrupt". The first possibility was considered by some medieval Jewish exegetes (in Barthélemy, 388f.), Foreiro, and L. De Dieu. But a positive sense of משחת clashes with the previous stich, which does not talk about surprise but about aversion with regard to the Servant. The line should therefore not be connected with v. [14a] but with v. 15 (Barthélemy, 390ff.). The advantage of this is that the 2.p. form of v. 14a can be related to the past and the 3.p. forms of the other lines to the future, but the problem is that the nominal sentence structure does not yet suggest a future event and also that one expects in this line an explanation of the aversion of the "many" to the Servant. Apart from that, it is questionable whether מִשְׁחָה can refer not to the anointment itself but to its object. For the same reason a deliberate ambiguity of "destruction" and "anointment" (Koenig, *loc. cit*.) seems unlikely. In my view, most exegetes and newer translations are right in believing that the line refers to the Servant's contemptible appearance.[30]

It is true that the best translation of v. 14a is "just as many were appalled at you." The action is one of horror at some object or person rather than surprise. But again, apparently Koole does not grasp the "as … so … so" structure in the text. Note the use of this structure in Exod 1:12:

> just as they [the Egyptians] mistreated them [the Israelites], so they increased and so they spread.

Clearly, in this structure, the "so" clauses are the opposite of the "just as" clause. So here, too, the anointing and sprinkling of the Servant is opposite to the horror many feel looking at him. The "so" clauses do not need to explain what causes their horror. The fact that they are appalled is sufficient anticipation of what comes later in the poem. The "so" clauses show a different situation: the exaltation of the servant. His exaltation in his anointing and sprinkling is proportional to the horror they feel in looking at him. This has already been alluded to in Isa 49:7. Koole violates the grammar and structure by correlating v. 14b and v. 15 and by construing the line as a parenthesis. The correlation is instead between 14a and 15bcd where the astonished horror of the many is turned to astonished recognition of the greatness of the Servant. And by adopting the traditional view, Koole admits he cannot explain the vocalisation of מִשְׁחַת in our received text.

The sense of "anointing" is the interpretation that is easiest to support, which fits well with the meaning of *nazah* that is easiest to support, and which alone makes sense of the grammar of the "as … so … so" structure. While the meaning "destruction" does have the weight of tradition behind it, tradition cannot be equated with truth. Barthélemy discusses five Jewish interpreters from the twelfth to ninteenth centuries who adopted "anointing" as the best interpretation, and two Christian interpreters from the sixteenth to seventeenth centuries who held such a view.[31] In addition, this is clearly the understanding of the scribe of 1Q-a, the Great Isaiah Scroll from Qumran (100 BC). The actual reading of 1Q-a is משחתי, which may be a syntactic facilitation, but nonetheless, its reading shows the antiquity of this interpretation.[32]

There is a final word that may be said in support of the interpretation for which I

have argued. The idea of many being horrified at the Servant and of an anointing and sprinkling that goes beyond that of Israel so that it applies to *all* the nations best explains the exaltation of the Servant and why so many in the end are told something they have never before seen or understood. And it is natural in the prologue of a poem to find in germ form the ideas unfolded later. The idea that the servant is disfigured more than others or beyond human recognition is both difficult to believe and not consonant with the rest of the song. The rest of the song affirms that the Servant is despised, but not that his appearance is disfigured more than others or beyond human recognition. But the idea of a priest offering a sacrifice that benefits the many is a major thought developed later. This interpretation, then, shows best how 52:13-15 suits the rest of the work *as a Prologue*. It fits the style of Isaiah well because frequently the introductory part of a major poem or section adumbrates cryptically the teaching to be unfolded within the section.[33]

A final brief comment on v. 13 is appropriate. The collocation of the terms "high" (רום) and "lofty" (נשׂא) which are ascribed to the Servant in this verse is found elsewhere only as an attribution of Yahweh (Isa 6:1, 57:15) although it is what the nations desire for themselves (2:12-14). This is the basis for the Apostle John's identification of the Servant with Yahweh, and of both the Servant and Yahweh with Jesus of Nazareth in John 12:36-41. The context in John's Gospel for this equation is the passage where Jesus talks about being "lifted up" as a way of describing his sacrificial death (John 12:32-33). It seems that the exegesis of the Prologue advocated here is consonant with that of the Apostle John's. Thus the Prologue ends where it started: the Servant will act with insight, prudence and skill. He will be successful. As a result he will be exalted to the highest position. Many will be utterly astonished; the greatest leaders of the earth will be left speechless.

Second Stanza: The Rejection / Suffering of the Servant (53:1-3)

As indicated at the outset, the focus of the present study is on the first stanza (Prologue) and last stanza. Nonetheless, a brief overview and summary treatment is given here of stanza two to four in order to maintain the flow of thought necessary to connect the discussion of stanzas one and five.

A believing remnant is speaking in 53:1. They are bringing back a report concerning the act of deliverance brought about by the servant of the Lord. The act of deliverance is like the Exodus in its greatness, in its magnitude, so that these believers can say they have seen the arm of the Lord.[34] But the way that God brought about deliverance, the way in which he rolled up his sleeves and did his mighty work of salvation, was not at all in the way that they expected. And as they told people about it, they did not believe. It was contrary to all expectations. It was not only contrary to all expectations, the new Exodus is so much greater than the first that one can say "Where has the power of the Lord been seen at all except here in the sufferings of the servant?"[35] In one sense, the arm of the Lord has not been revealed at all until now.

First, the servant who delivers is a mighty king, but not recognized as one. Verse 2 speaks of him as growing up before people like a little sapling or sucker, like a root out of dry ground. This is once more the image of a tree that is a metaphor

for kings and kingdoms both in Isaiah and the Old Testament as a whole. In many passages, kings and kingdoms are pictured as plants, as vines, and especially as majestic, stately, tall trees.[36] In addition, the picture of the root from the dry ground directly recalls Isa 11:1, the passage that predicts not just a descendant of David, but a new David, not only someone better than bad king Ahaz, but also someone far greater than good king Hezekiah. He will bring into political reality the social justice of the Torah, the character of God himself expressed in the Torah, and a paradise, a new creation, will result. Isaiah intends a connection between the servant of Isaiah 53 and the coming King of Isaiah 11. The Septuagint actually translates "sapling" by the word "child," to indicate that the translators connected the Servant of Isaiah 53 with the son given in Isaiah 9 who ends up as King in chapter 11. So this connection was not only really intended by Isaiah, but also understood by the earliest commentary we have on this text, two hundred years before Christ.

Second, having identified the servant as king, Isaiah reveals in his prophetic vision that this king will not look like one. He will not be majestic and royal in his bearing and form. He will not look like royalty. As a matter of fact, he will be the kind of person people look down on, someone who is really insignificant as far as the human race is concerned. The description goes further. The servant is not only insignificant, he is subject to much pain, sickness, and suffering. The poetry hits us like a hammer as the word "despised" is repeated along with the notion of people turning their faces away because of his sufferings. And the believing remnant acknowledge that they just did not reckon him to be anybody special. The problem is that Israel did not recognise in the servant her own sorry state. In Isa 1:5-6, this was the description of Israel, and it has been transferred to the servant. This stanza, then, speaks of the humble and lowly bearing of the king and also of pain and suffering so that others turn away from him.

Third Stanza: Significance of the Servant's Suffering (53:4-6)

In the third stanza Isaiah turns from describing the details and facts of the sufferings of the servant to the meaning and significance of these sufferings. Verse 4 shows that the general population considered him to be punished by God for his own crimes and misdemeanors, but instead, he was paying the penalty of the sins of the people in their place, as a substitute for them.

The predictions of the sufferings of the servant are fulfilled in the death of Jesus of Nazareth by crucifixion. It is interesting to look at attitudes to crucifixion in the first century of the Greek and Roman world.[37] Crucifixion was considered by the Romans to be a barbaric form of execution of the utmost cruelty. It was the supreme punishment. "Barbaric" meant that not only was it cruel and inhuman, but it was only for peoples who were not Romans. This form of punishment could not be given to a Roman citizen. It was typically the penalty given to rebellious foreigners, violent criminals, insurrectionists, and robbers. Above all, it was the *slaves'* punishment, a penalty reserved for slaves. This gives a new meaning to the term "servant" used in Isaiah. It can also mean slave. Jesus died the death of a slave. Nowhere in Greek or Roman literature and myth had anyone been crucified and become a hero.

From the Jewish point of view, a person put to death by hanging was cursed by God. Paul brings this out in Gal 3:13. This conception goes back to the Law of Moses. Deuteronomy 21:22-23 indicates that a person put to death by hanging was cursed by God. It is interesting that this law is given next to the one about the rebellious son. Deuteronomy 21:18-21 describes the procedure for dealing with a rebellious son. This makes our text ironic. The servant was given a death penalty as if he were a rebellious son, but in fact, it is Israel that is the rebellious son. The servant dies in Israel's place.

There is an old story from England about how a fox gets rid of his fleas.[38] He goes along the hedgerow and picks up little bits of sheep's wool. Next he rolls the wool into a ball in his mouth. Then he goes down to the river. Slowly he walks out deeper and deeper until he is almost completely submerged—only his head and nose are showing with the ball of wool in his mouth. Last, he sinks below the surface and lets the ball of wool go with all of the fleas climbing onto it for safety. All of his fleas have been transferred to the sheep's wool and the fox emerges clean. This is a perfect picture of the suffering servant. The Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all so that we might go free. This passage clearly teaches penal substitution. This creates problems for some. How can the servant take the sins of the world upon himself? One way to help us understand is to remember that he is the king. As king, he fights the battle with evil for his people. The next stanza brings forth the image of a lamb being led to slaughter. This would bring before the minds of Israel the sacrificial system where a human person would lay their hands on a sheep to symbolically transfer their sins to the animal and then the animal would be put to death instead of them.

Verse 5 ends with the words, "by his wounds we are healed." Christians have debated hotly the meaning of these words. Some have said that the death of Christ guarantees physical healing while others have argued that it is spiritual healing that is the main thrust of the text. It is false to distinguish between physical and spiritual healing. The cross of Christ brings healing in the fullest sense of the word. The Book of Isaiah ends with a new Heavens and Earth, a new Creation. But the New Testament makes plain that there is an "already" and "not yet" to our salvation. If anyone is in Christ, he or she *is* new creation (present tense).[39] But it begins inside, and only at the resurrection will it include the outside. Pentecostals who insist on full physical healing now are actually diminishing the work of Christ. The healing will be much bigger than they think. It will include a new body in a new creation.

Fourth Stanza: The Rejection / Suffering of the Servant (53:7-9)

The fourth stanza returns to the theme of the second stanza: a description of the sufferings of the servant. Here we reach the climax: he suffers to the point of death. These verses speak of his death and burial. It is amazing how many predictions and prophecies from these verses were fulfilled in the events of the life of Jesus of Nazareth.

Verse 8a is difficult to interpret. Several interpretations are possible and fit the context. It may mean he was taken from arrest and sentencing to execution, or it may mean he was taken without arrest and justice, indicating he had no fair trial.

The next sentence is also difficult. The

verb means "to complain," or "to muse" or "ponder," "to speak meditatively," "to mutter about." The word "generation" means his circle of contemporaries. "Who considered his contemporaries?" This may mean that people no longer gave consideration to the Davidic dynasty from which he came and thought that God had abandoned his promise of an everlasting dynasty and house to David.

Verse 7 is easier to interpret. As he is led away to death he is silent. Writers of the New Testament see this fulfilled in the trial of Jesus where he remained silent and did not defend himself before Pilate (Matt 27:12-14; Mark 14:60-61; 15:4-5; John 19:8-9) and before Herod (Luke 23:8-9).

In verse 9 we have a better text as a result of the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls. He was assigned a grave with the wicked, but his *tomb* (בומתו) was with the rich. Jesus was crucified with bandits and insurrectionists—those who led a group of outlaws to defy the might of Rome. But in the end, he was buried in the tomb of a rich man, Joseph of Arimathea, because he had done no violence and did not deserve to be classified as a criminal.

The Final Stanza of the Fourth Servant Song

The fifth and final stanza turns attention away from the details and facts reported concerning the suffering of the servant to the interpretation and significance of these events. Here we learn the most amazing and startling things concerning the suffering servant: his death is a guilt or reparation offering—not for his own sins, but for the sins of the many. And after his death he lives. He is a conqueror and victor over death and evil. The power of his resurrection is such that his victory is shared with the many. There are numerous problems in the text and we must not shrink from carefully thinking through them if we desire an accurate and solid understanding of the atoning work of the servant. A literal translation is provided to give the reader help in following the discussion of the text by showing how the lines of poetry are divided and how decisions were made concerning difficulties in the text:

10 But Yahweh accepted the crushing of him whom he had made sick,
If his soul makes a reparation offering
He will see offspring, he will prolong days
What Yahweh wants will prosper by his hand.
11 Because of the labor of his life he will see light, he will be satisfied;
By his knowledge, the just one my servant will bring justification to the many
and he will bear their offenses
12 Therefore I will apportion for him among the many
And he will divide spoil with the numerous
Because he bared his life to the point of death
and was numbered with transgressors
And he bore the sins of many
And interceded for their transgressions.

Lines 10abcd and 11a describe the intention and plan of both Yahweh and the Servant in relation to the Servant's death as well as the benefits accruing to the Servant from offering himself as a sacrifice. Lines 11bc-12abcdef detail the relation between the Servant and his many offspring.

First, in v. 10a, we see that the death of the Servant was no accident. It was part of God's plan. It was also intentional on the part of the Servant. God accepted the crushing of his servant if he offered

himself as a guilt offering. For v. 10a the Masoretic Text has the words וַיהוָה חָפֵץ דַּכְּאוֹ הֶחֱלִי. Let us consider the four words in reverse order. הֶחֱלִי can be analyzed as a hiphil perfect 3 m.s. from the root חלה and can be construed syntactically as an asyndetic relative clause, "whom he made sick." The form actually corresponds to the form of a III-א root, but verbs from III-ה and III-א are confused at times.[40] The Septuagint (τῆς πληγῆς - "of the plague") as well as the later Jewish Revisors (Aquila τὸ ἀρρώστημα - "the illness," and Symmachus ἐν τῷ τραυματισμῷ - "by wounding") and Jerome in the Vulgate (*in infirmitate* - "in sickness") all seem to have read a noun: הֶחֳלִי. These are surely syntactic facilitations. Since 4Q-d is unvocalized (החלי) one cannot conclude whether a noun or a verb has been read. On the other hand, 1Q-a has ויחללהו, clearly substituting חלל, "to wound," for the verb in MT to create an agreement with verse 5.[41] The Syriac Peshitta has interpreted the word as an infinitive like the preceding word and the midrash of the Targum cannot serve as a textual witness. It is possible, then, to construe the form in MT from חלה and to see the other textual witnesses as facilitations of a difficult text.

As Barthélemy notes, before coming to conclusions about the last word a satisfactory understanding of דַּכְּאוֹ is necessary.[42] He observes that the medieval sages Abuwalid and Ibn Ezra construed the form as a bound infinitive (piel) and understood the pronominal suffix as direct object: "the crushing of him." He prefers, however, the proposal of Gousset in 1702 that the form is a nominal (adjective or noun) דַּכָּא found in Ps 34:19 and Isa 57:15. One must then explain why the long vowel is reduced (cf. מִקְדְּשׁוֹ in Num 18:29 and נִדְּחוֹ in 2 Sam 14:13) and show the pronominal suffix as agent (cf. חֲלָלֶיךָ = "those whom you have wounded" in Ps 69:27). According to this analysis דַּכְּאוֹ = "his crushed one," i.e., "the one whom he crushed." When דַּכְּאוֹ is taken as the direct object of חָפֵץ, and חָפֵץ understood in the sense of "accepting a sacrifice" (cf. Isa 1:11; Hos 6:6; Ps 40:7; 51:18, 21) הֶחֱלִי fits naturally as an asyndetic relative sentence whose goal is to explicate the pronominal suffix on דַּכְּאוֹ. Nonetheless, in spite of the proposal of Gousset and Barthélemy, a bound infinitive is much more likely. The suffix may be subjective "his crushing," or objective "the crushing of him" = "his being crushed." The net result of the latter option is identical in meaning to that achieved by Barthélemy without having to explain rare words and problems in vocalization since the reduction of the vowel in the infinitive is standard.

This exegesis not only handles well all the problems in the line, it makes better sense than that of the KJV and NASB which translate "it pleased the Lord to crush him." This makes it seem that God took delight in making the servant suffer and much popular preaching and teaching has followed this point of view. This is not the meaning of the text at all. Here "delighted" is being used in the context of a sacrifice. God is delighted or pleased with the sacrifice in the sense that he accepts it as sufficient to wipe away his indignation, his offense and his outrage at our sin. This text contrasts with Isa 1:11 where the same verb is used, "I have no pleasure in the blood of bulls and lambs and goats" (NIV). God will not accept the sacrifices of a corrupt Zion, but here he is pleased with the death of his servant, the king of the transformed Zion. He accepts his sacrifice. Why? Verse 10b explains it for us.

This line is also four short words in Hebrew: אִם־תָּשִׂים אָשָׁם נַפְשׁוֹ. Again we are confronted by difficulties. The language is sacrificial as indicated by the term guilt or reparation offering. Yet the verb for bringing an offering in Leviticus is normally the Hiphil of בוא. Here the verb is תָּשִׂים, a Qal Imperfect from שִׂים, "to put / place / set." MT is well supported here by 1Q-a and also probably 4Q-d (תשׂם) and 1Q-b, although the last of these preserves only the last three letters, while the versions (Greek, Syriac, Targum, and Vulgate) have free renderings. In Gen 22:9 this verb is used for placing the victim (i.e., Isaac) on the altar. It is natural here to take אָשָׁם as the direct object, leaving "his life/soul" as the subject: "if his soul offers a guilt offering."[43] The NASB translates this way, but the KJV and NIV construe the verb as 2 m.s. instead of 3 f.s. This is possible, but not likely, since it involves an awkward shift from third to second person. The "you" might be an individual, Motyer thinks possible,[44] but how could the death of the servant be a guilt offering if some individual construes it that way? Or Yahweh could be the "you," but then Yahweh is making an offering to himself. This is not as straightforward as the Servant offering himself. The Servant makes the offering, and at the same time he is the offering. He is both the priest and the sacrifice. This line indicates that the death of the Servant is intentional on his part as well as on the part of Yahweh.

The use of the term אָשָׁם is significant. The life of the servant is given as a "guilt" or "reparation offering," not a burnt or purification/sin offering. This is the fifth offering described in Leviticus and is detailed in 5:14-26[6:7] and 7:1-10. New studies have cast light on this offering and show what is emphasized by this offering in contrast to the others that makes it significant for Isaiah 53.[45] First, this offering emphasizes making compensation or restitution for the breach of faith or offense. Sin involves a breach of faith against God as well as a rupture in human relationships and society. According to Lev 5:15-16 an offender would offer a reparation sacrifice, usually a ram, in order to make restitution. Isaiah is explaining here how restitution is made to God for the covenant disloyalty of Israel and her many sins against God. According to the Prologue, this sacrifice is sufficient not only for the sins of Israel, but also for those of the nations. Second, this offering provides satisfaction for every kind of sin, whether inadvertent or intentional. That is why Isaiah in 54:1-55:13 can demonstrate that the death of the Servant is the basis of forgiveness of sins and a New Covenant not only for Israel but also for all the nations. Third, D. I. Block notes that in the regulations given by Moses the ʾāšām is the only regular offering that required a ram or male sheep. Since this same word for ram is often used metaphorically of community leaders, the ʾāšām is perfectly suited to describe a sacrifice where the king suffers the penalty on behalf of his people.[46]

Verse 10b begins with אִם ("if"), indicating that this is the protasis ("if" clause) of a conditional sentence. Probably both 10a and 10cd-11a should be considered as the apodosis ("then" clause) so that the position of the protasis separates the benefits of the sacrifice to Yahweh in 10a on the one hand from those to the Servant in 10c-11a on the other.

The three lines of poetry comprising 10cd-11a, then speak of the benefits received by the Servant if he offers his life as a reparation sacrifice. These lines

contain five short sentences that are simple and straightforward apart from one problem in the textual transmission of v. 11a. There the first verb "he will see" has no object in the Masoretic Text which is supported by the first and second century Greek revisions of Aquila, Symmachus and Theodotion[47] as well as the Vulgate, the Syriac, and the Aramaic Targum. Although this support seems strong, diverse, and earlier, witnesses such as the Septuagint, 1Q-a, 1Q-b, and 4Q-d have the word אור, "light" after the verb. Since the reading in the Masoretic Text may well be due to a scribal error or even a correction motivated by theology, the reading "light" is superior both in view of its textual witnesses and in terms of transcriptional probabilities.[48] The original text of Isaiah, then, is almost certainly "he will see light."

Among the benefits given to the Servant for his atoning death is no less than resurrection. "There is no doubt," says C. Westermann, "that God's act of restoring the Servant, the latter's exaltation, is an act done upon him after his death and on the far side of the grave."[49] This must be the meaning of "he will see offspring, he will prolong his days" granted this context and comes to clearest expression in the fourth sentence: "after the painful toil of his soul he will see light." The expression "to see light" generally refers to some kind of renewal or restoration. When the context is (the death of) exile (Isa 9:1) or physical death (Ps 36:10[9], Job 33:28), a restoration to life is indicated. The prepositional phrase מֵעֲמַל נַפְשׁוֹ may be translated "after his life's painful work" or "because of his life's painful work." The context here is closest to that of Isa 9:1[9:2] where "they have seen a great light" is connected to 8:20[9:1] and indicates a restoration *after* the darkness and death of exile, hence the first option is to be preferred.

So the Servant conquers death and lives again. Verse 10c speaks about seeing offspring in the context of a long life. This contrasts with verse 8 where the Servant seemed doomed not to have any offspring at all because of an early, untimely death. Yet just as parents give life to others in offspring, so the Servant gives life to others who can be considered his offspring. The background to this text and, indeed, to all of Isaiah 40-55 are the covenant promises to Abraham in Genesis 12, 15, and 17.[50] It is fundamental to the correct interpretation of the text. God's plan and purpose was to choose Abraham and his family as a means of bringing blessing to all the nations. The fivefold repetition of the word "blessing" in Gen 12:1-3 matches the fivefold use of the word "curse" from Gen 1-11 (3:14; 3:17; 4:11; 5:29; 9:25). This promise of seed or descendants seems in great danger of being broken and unfulfilled as the judgment passages of Isaiah reduce Israel to a tenth, and then even the tenth is greatly wasted (Isa 6:13). Yet vv. 11-12 speak of many who will benefit from the Servant's life work. The first will be Israel, but the nations will also be included as is clear from the fact that the many (רַבִּים) in 11b, 12a and 12e explicates the many in 52:14a and 15a, who are the nations.[51] The inclusion of the nations is clearly stated in 49:6 and many parts of the Servant Songs. Isaiah has a special way of bringing this out because the Servant who is the figure towering over 40-55 spawns the servants in 54:17 (cf. 54:13). Even more astonishing is 56:6 which makes plain that individuals from the nations are included as the servants of the Lord (cf. 66:21). Then in 63:17 the watchman on the walls of Zion prays for God to show mercy on his ser-

vants. This prayer is answered in prospect in Isaiah 65 as we see the blessings to be poured out on the servants of the Lord (65:8, 9, 13 (*ter*), 14).

Satisfaction comes from a long life with many offspring. This is true of the Servant. He will live a long life, and "the will of Yahweh will prosper by his hand" (53:10d). The noun חֵפֶץ can mean "delight" or "(good) pleasure," and this statement is sometimes rendered "the (good) pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand" (KJV, NASB). Yet especially in Isaiah 40-55, the term refers to God's plan or will to be accomplished, first through Cyrus in releasing his people from Babylon (44:28; 46:10; 48:14) and now through his Servant in redeeming his people from their sins.[52] The divine intention, plan, and will of God for the servant has been delineated clearly in the First and Second Servant Songs. Isaiah 42:4 declares, "he will not falter or be discouraged till he establishes justice on earth. In his law [Torah] the islands will put their hope" (NIV). The vision in Isaiah 2 of the nations streaming to Zion to receive instruction or Torah from Yahweh is to be accomplished by Zion's King according to 42:4 as the instructions for the King in Deut 17:14-20 and the fulfilment of them by means of the Davidic Covenant (2 Sam 7:19) would lead us to expect. Isaiah 49:6 expands on God's plan for the Servant: "It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth" (NIV).

The Servant's job or task is described in 49:8. "He will be a covenant for the people. He will restore the land, he will apportion out desolate inheritances, he will announce to the captives to come out of exile." Where do these images come from? If we stop for a moment and think carefully, we will see that this is exactly the work God gave Joshua to do at the time of the Exodus when he brought the people out of Egypt into Canaan, the land promised to the Israelites. His job was to restore the land once belonging to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob back to Israel. His job was to apportion to them each an inheritance in the land. His job was to free the captives from Egypt by bringing them into the freedom of the land of Canaan. We see then, that the Servant is a greater Joshua, a new Joshua, who is bringing about a greater Exodus, a new Exodus. Micah, another prophet, speaks in exactly the same way. "As in the days when you came out of Egypt, I will show them my wonders" (Mic 7:15). This is also a clear promise of a new Exodus. What kind of Exodus will it be? "Who is a God like you?" asks Micah three verses later, "who pardons sin and forgives the transgression?" The deliverance has to do with sin. Later he makes this even clearer. "You will hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea" (7:19). In the first Exodus, God cast the chariots of the Egyptians into the sea. With the work of the Servant, who is also called Joshua, or Jesus in Greek, he will cast the wrongdoings of our broken relationship with God to the bottom of the sea and bring us into the land of a restored relationship with our Creator.

So the Servant cannot be confused with Israel; he is the new Joshua who brings to completion the new Exodus.[53] "Why then is he called Israel?" asks H. Blocher in his study of the Servant Songs. His answer is so crucial to the understanding of the atonement in Isa 53 it must be cited in full:

There are two biblical concepts which can help us to understand the strange relationship of the Servant to the people, his bearing their name while being distinct from them. The first is that of headship—covenantal headship. Many scholars today think that what they call "corporate personality" is the key to Hebrew mentality. It is much better to recognize that this is not just a structure of Hebrew mentality, but the teaching of Scripture. Men are not merely individuals, added to one another yet independent of each other. No man is an island. We really belong together… God has created us in communities which must not be thought of as accidental groupings of self-contained units. Communities and the bonds that bind us are essential dimensions of human life. A community has a real unity which is expressed in its head. This applies especially to covenant communities. God's covenant with Adam and thus with the whole human race; God's covenant with Abraham and with Moses and thus with Israel; a man's marriage covenant with a woman too: all exhibit the same structure. They institute headed communities. The head sums up or represents the whole, yet it cannot be mistaken for the body, not even in a kind of vague fluid dialectic between the two. It is the head, not the body. And yet, at the same time, the body is nothing without the head, and the head truly expresses the body. Now the Servant seems to be the head of Israel, the head of that community which he is to redeem and restore.

The second concept is what is known as Delitzsch's pyramid. Franz Delitzsch was not an ancient Egyptian Pharoah but a German evangelical scholar in the nineteenth century. He showed from the Bible that as the history of salvation proceeds, the scope of God's redemptive dealings with man seems to grow narrower and narrower. God starts, as it were, with the whole human race, first at the time of Adam, and then again after the Flood. Then one line of the human race is chosen: God makes his covenant with Abraham and his descendants. But he does not make it with all Abraham's descendants: only Isaac and his line are chosen—Isaac, not Ishmael. Even among Isaac's children, only one Jacob, not Esau, is chosen. And then, getting narrower, the prophets make it clear that not all those who descend from Israel (Jacob) are truly Israel. Only a remnant will inherit the promise. But where is this remnant when we look for it. When God looks for a man to intervene and establish justice in the land he finds none (Isa 59:16, Ezek 22:30). Ultimately only one person remains after the sifting process, only one is truly Israel, in whom God is glorified. And he said so. He said quite clearly, "I am the true Israel." He used the Old Testament's most common symbol for Israel; the vine: "I am the true vine" (John 15:1ff.; cf. Ps. 80:8-16; Is. 5:1-7; Je. 2:21; 6:9; Ho. 10:1; see also Mt. 21:33-43 and parallels). In him, the pyramid reaches its apex.

The lines, however, do not stop there. Starting from Christ, there is a symmetrical broadening. In him, the true Israel, the true vine, are the branches which feed on his life and are purified by him. Those who find salvation in him inherit the promise which belongs to the true remnant. To them also, in a secondary sense, the name Israel truly belongs (Rom 9:6-8; Gal. 3:6-9; 6:15, 16; Phil. 3:3). All the Gentiles who have faith in Christ are incorporated into this community. So this new Israel, the Israel of God, is a new humanity, spreading over the whole earth. As the Second Song puts it, the Servant is to be a "light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth". What a perfect geometry in God's plan![54]

The plan and will of the Lord for the Servant, then, resolves the issue of the broken covenant between God and Israel made at Sinai, and moreover, brings to fulfilment the divine promises to Abraham which are now to be accomplished in and through the Davidic King.

Isaiah 54 and 55 show a New Covenant issuing from the sacrificial death of the Servant. The theme of chapter

54 is bringing back the exiles, bringing about reconciliation between God and his people, restoring the covenant relationship, and rebuilding Zion since the city of God in terms of people has been so decimated. What ties together the diverse paragraphs and sections is a metaphor in which the people of God are represented as a woman. In verses 1-3 the people of God are pictured as a barren woman who now has more children than the married woman. In verses 4-10 the people of God are portrayed as a deserted wife, someone who has long borne the reproach of widowhood, but who is now reconciled and married to her Creator God. Included in this section is a comparison of the promise of the New Covenant to the promise of the Noahic Covenant—just as God promised that never again would he judge by a flood, so now he promises never again to be angry with his people. Finally, in verses 11-17, the woman is the City of Zion, lashed by storms, but now fortified by redoubtable foundations and battlements and rebuilt with stunning precious jewels and stones. Thus, in the brief span of 17 verses, this New Covenant is in some way either compared or correlated and linked to all of the previous major covenants in the Bible: the barren woman represents the Abrahamic Covenant, the deserted wife the Mosaic Covenant, and the storm-lashed City of Zion the Davidic Covenant.[55]

It is important to realize that these are not digressions in explaining the last stanza of Isaiah 53. Isaiah's Hebrew patterns of thought follow a cyclical and recursive treatment of themes and topics rather than the Aristotelian rectilinear mode of discourse so entrenched in our culture from our Greco-Roman heritage. As a result, the explanation of the text of Isaiah 53 must tie together the passages in the cycles treating the same topics. This is the only accurate and effective way to explain all that is meant in the statement "the will of the Lord will advance successfully by his hand" in Isa 53:10d which is now a shorthand reference to these other treatments.

Lines 11b-12f now detail the benefits of the Servant's death given to others who are simply referred to as "the many" (11b, 12a, 12e). Again we cannot shrink from the problems in the text if we are to gain a full-orbed understanding of the Servant's work.

Two problems in textual transmission in v. 12 can be handled quickly. First, in v. 12e I have translated "and he bore the *sins* of many." The plural חטאי is supported by the Dead Sea Scrolls (1Q-a, 1Q-b, 4Q-d), the Septuagint, Symmachus, the Syriac, and the Targum. The singular is only supported by our Masoretic Text and the Vulgate, where it seems to be an assimilation to the singular of vv. 6 and 8. Clearly the reading in MT is secondary.

In the next line, 12f the original text is probably וּלְפִשְׁעֵיהֶם ("for their transgressions") rather than MT וְלַפֹּשְׁעִים ("for their transgressors"). The former reading is supported again by the three Dead Sea Scrolls and the Septuagint, while the latter by the Vulgate and the three Jewish Revisors, Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotion. The text of MT may be explained as an assimilation to פֹּשְׁעִים in 12d or a correction motivated theologically. The standard construction in Hebrew for the verb is "פגע ב x ל y" meaning to entreat someone (x) with respect to something (y). Thus וּלְפִשְׁעֵיהֶם fits the construction that is normal, while the phrase וְלַפֹּשְׁעִים is anomalous in the Hebrew Bible.

A major misunderstanding of v. 12,

however, is due to bad exegesis persisting in the Christian tradition. The meaning is obscured by most modern translations; the KJV, NASB, and NIV are all basically the same: "therefore I will divide him a portion with the great and he shall divide the spoil with the strong." The word being rendered "great" is רַבִּים. Exactly the same term is also found in 11b and 12e where all translate by "many" in English. Why, then, should it be translated "great" here in 12a? Probably because the term in the line parallel to this has עֲצוּמִים and the common equivalent in English for this is "strong." Hence "great" is chosen for רַבִּים to make the parallelism work. But the Hebrew term עֲצוּמִים could also be translated "the numerous." The root can mean either "to be many" or "to be mighty." The relationship between these two meanings is obvious: strength comes from numbers. Amos 5:12 and Prov 7:26 are excellent examples where רַבִּים and עֲצוּמִים are paired in synonymous lines, and the clear meaning is "the many" and "the numerous." It is interesting to note that "great" is not a common meaning for רַבִּים and that often גְּדֹלִים is paired with עֲצוּמִים when the meanings "great" and "mighty" should be selected (e.g., Deut 9:1; 11:23; Josh 23:9). A better approach, then, is to give רַבִּים the same value it has in 11b and 12e, i.e., "many," and then maintain the parallelism by translating עֲצוּמִים as "numerous."[56] We can then translate as follows: "therefore I will divide for him a portion among the many and he will share spoils with the numerous." Not only does this translation preserve a consistent value for רַבִּים from 11b through 12a and 12e, but also preserves a consistency of thought: this section begins in 11c focused on the relationship of the one and the many and ends in 12ef in the same way. It is this same relationship that is being pursued in 12a and b. In fact, there may be a chiastic structure. The section begins and ends by stating that the one bore the sins of the many, and the middle affirms that the many receive the spoils of the victory of the one. Here Isaiah draws out the relationship between the one and the many, between the king and his people, and shows that the work of the Servant is to justify the many, to bring them into a right relationship to God.

Central to the last section, 11b-12f, describing benefits of the Servant's death is the corporate solidarity of the one and the many, which it turns out, is the relationship of the king and priest to his people. Here the priestly picture from the first stanza and the kingly role of the servant from the second stanza come together. First, according to the bookends in 11bc and 12ef, the one has born the misdeeds (*ʿāwôn*, 11c), offences (*pešaʿ*, 12f) and sins (*ḥēṭʾ*, 12e) of the many. All the major words for sin in the Old Testament are here in the plural, showing that the sacrificial death of the Servant is all-encompassing, effectively compensating for the guilt of the many. Moreover the Servant renders the verdict "not guilty" for the many. From a negative perspective, the many are acquitted; from a positive perspective, the many are reckoned as righteous. The statements in Isa 53 assume the corporate solidarity of king and people. Why should the king not fight the battle for and on behalf of his people? Since the Enlightenment Period, various voices have complained that the one bearing the guilt of others is immoral. In America, a worldview derived from the Enlightment has idolized a rugged individualism and fails to think in terms of corporate categories. And it is this worldview that fails the test of morality

when offence is taken at the teaching on penal substitution in this text.

Second, according to 12ab, God shares the Servant's victory among the many and the servant himself distributes spoils with the many. Thus the many share the the triumph and victory of the one: healing, peace or reconciliation, righteousness, and resurrection. There can be no doubt that it is this text that is the foundation of Paul's teaching in Rom 5:12-21 where the central thought is also the one and the many in the same way that we see in Isaiah 53. Specific reasons given in the text as to what act of the one made possible such a victory for the Servant and for those associated with him is that he bared his soul to the point of death and was counted as an offender (12cd). Those who do not understand why death is the penalty required to make restitution have not understood from the first pages of the Scriptures that disloyalty in a covenant relationship results in death. This is what the fivefold curse of Genesis 1-11 makes plain. And the fivefold blessing of Abraham's family, coming now through the King of Israel, will remove this curse and bring salvation for both Israel and the world.[57]

The prepositional phrase בְּדַעְתּוֹ, "by his knowledge" is connected by the accents in MT to 11b and not to 11a as in the Septuagint and modern printed Hebrew Bibles.[58] The spacing in 1Q-a and 4Q-d supports this division of the text in MT while 1Q-b has a lacuna and so cannot attest either way to this issue. The uncials of the Vulgate and Jerome's Commentary on Isaiah also support this interpretation. So exegesis and translations following our modern printed Hebrew texts should be disregarded. In addition, the division of the stichometry adopted here results in 11a and b matching in line length, whereas the alternate approach creates problems for analysis of the poetic structure.[59] The third m.s. pronominal suffix may be interpreted in two ways: "by his knowledge" or "by knowledge of him." If the first is intended, then Isaiah is saying that by means of the knowledge possessed by the servant, he succeeds in justifying the many. This knowledge is the knowledge he has of God and his ways. In this text we see that instead of paying back evil with evil, he bears the evil of others paid to him and gives only love in return. It is this knowledge or way that justifies the many. Or it could mean by knowing him. That is, if we by faith come to know him, we become part of the community, part of his offspring who are justified so that our sins are exchanged for his long life and success in advancing the will of God. Either statement is true according to teaching elsewhere in Scripture. The first meaning is probably what Isaiah had in mind. In the Third Servant Song, the Servant learns morning by morning and this knowledge results in him giving his body, his back and his cheeks to those who mistreat him, and trusting the results to the Lord (Isa 50:4-9).

R. N. Whybray has argued that it is a heinous crime for the wicked to be justified by exploiting to the full the statement in Exod 23:7 where Yahweh says, "I will not justify the wicked." Whybray concludes, "it is clear that such an action would never be performed or approved by God."[60] Apparently in the Fourth Servant Song this is exactly what Yahweh does and it is precisely because of the suffering Servant! The Servant entreats God on behalf of the many, bears their penalty, and offers himself as a restitution sacrifice—vicarious suffering is the only way to resolve this dilemma!

Conclusion

The "atonement theory"—to employ an anachronistic term—provided by Isaiah's depiction of the work of the Servant in the Fourth Servant Song is multifaceted and variegated. The Servant is a figure both Davidic and royal. He is Israel and he restores Israel (Isa 49:5). He endures enormous suffering as evil is heaped upon him by his own people and by the world. But the description is more specific than this generality. He dies as a *restitution sacrifice* to pay the penalty for the offenses, sins, and transgressions of the many.[61] This brings the forgiveness of sins and a right relationship to God. This brings reconciliation with God resulting in a new, everlasting covenant of peace where faithful loyal love and obedience are maintained in our relationship to God. This also brings redemption in that just as the Exodus delivered Israel from years of slavery to Egypt, so the new Exodus delivers the many from bondage to sin. The Servant is not only the sacrifice, he is also the priest (also clearly expressed in Jer 30:21). He makes the offering. Moreover, he is a super-High Priest. The High Priest sprinkles only Israel, but this priest sprinkles the nations who are also included in the many. His ultimate anointing leads to an ultimate sprinkling on an ultimate day of atonement! And as King, the Servant fights the battle for his people and wins. He conquers not only their sin, but death itself. The many share in the victory of the one just as the one has borne the sins of the many. The broken Mosaic Covenant is replaced by a New Covenant in which all the promises of the Abrahamic and Davidic Covenants come to fruition and fulfillment.[62] The Servant does for the nation what it could not do for itself and at the same time brings blessing to all the nations.

ENDNOTES

[1]I acknowledge with gratitude Daniel I. Block, Stephen G. Dempster, John Meade, Jim Rairick, and Jason Parry for constructive criticism of earlier drafts. They not only rescued me from many mistakes, but stimulated my thinking in significant ways.

[2]The four songs were demarcated and labelled by Bernhard Duhm, *Das Buch Jesaja* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1892): 42:1-9, 49:1-13, 50:4-9, 52:13-53:12.

[3]A notable exception is the commentary by Motyer.

[4]The major recursive sections of Isaiah may be roughly delineated as follows:

The Book of Isaiah:
From Zion in the Old Creation to
Zion in the New

(1) The Judgment and Transformation of Zion Part 1 (1:2-2:5)
(2) The Judgment and Transformation of Zion Part 2 (2:6-4:6)
(3) The Judgment of the Vineyard and Immanuel (5:1-12:6)
(4) The City of Man versus the City of God (13:1-27:13)
(5) Trusting the Nations versus Trusting the Word of Yahweh (28:1-37:38)
(6) Comfort and Redemption for Zion and the World (38:1-55:13)
(7) Keeping Sabbath in the New Creation (56:1-66:24)

This outline is indebted in part to J. Alec Motyer. Discourse grammar markers demand a major break between 37:38 and 38:1 which considerations of space do not permit to be set forth here.

[5]See Thomas L. Leclerc, *Yahweh is Exalted in Justice: Solidarity and Conflict in Isaiah* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001) and

especially, Peter J. Gentry, "Speaking the Truth in Love (Eph 4:15): Life in the New Covenant Community," *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 10, no. 2 (2006): 70-87.

[6]See J. Alec Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah: An Introduction and Commentary* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1993) and idem, *Isaiah: An Introduction and Commentary* (Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1999).

[7]For a discussion of Exodus language and themes in Isaiah see Bernhard W. Anderson, "Exodus Typology in Second Isaiah," in *Israel's Prophetic Heritage: Essays in Honor of James Muilenburg* (ed. Bernhard W. Anderson and Walter Harrelson; New York: Harper, 1962), 177-95.

[8]The vision in Zech 5:5-11 of the woman in a basket carried by flying women back to Babylon seems to symbolize the task of removing Babylon from the people.

[9]See the emphasis in N. T. Wright, *Evil and the Justice of God* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2006) that the Bible is more about what God does in response to evil than a description of its origins.

[10]The root is גאל. Psalm 130:8 speaks of redeeming Israel from all her offense, but employs a different root, פדה ("to ransom").

[11]Once again I have adapted my outline from Motyer, *Isaiah*, 383.

[12]See Murray Rae, "Texts in Context: Scripture in the Divine Economy," *Journal of Theological Interpretation* 1.1 (2007): 1-21, for documentation of recent discussion. His concern for a canonical interpretation is commendable, but his post-modern solution to keep both Christians and Jews happy is implausible. Even during the last year discussion on the Internet between Christians and Jews was considerable.

[13]Goldingay has noted this as well in his study of Isaiah: "As is often the case, the prophet begins by hinting at something that will receive further explication" John Goldingay, *The Message of Isaiah 40-55: A Literary-Theological Commentary* (London: T & T Clark, 2005), 492.

[14]Daniel I. Block, "My Servant David: Ancient Israel's Vision of the Messiah," in *Israel's Messiah in the Bible and the Dead Sea Scrolls* (ed. Richard S. Hess and M. Daniel Carroll R. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 17-56. See also Ivan Engnell, "The 'Ebed Yahweh Songs and the Suffering Servant Messiah in 'Deutero-Isaiah'," *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 31 (1948): 93; and E. J. Kissane, *The Book of Isaiah: Translated from a Critically Revised Hebrew Text with Commentary* (2 vols.; Dublin: Browne and Nolan, 1943), 2:179-80.

[15]Motyer, *Isaiah*, 121.

[16]This insight I owe to Stephen Dempster.

[17]I am painfully aware of the brevity of my statement concerning the identity of the servant in contrast to the difficulties in interpretation and the voluminous literature on this topic.

[18]This division into stanzas is essentially identical to the work of Korpel and de Moor; although, I differ in many details of exegesis—see Marjo C. A. Korpel and Johannes C. de Moor, *The Structure of Classical Hebrew Poetry: Isaiah 40-55* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 545-75. Their proposed resolution of exegetical problems in 10a is not satisfactory and this led them to include 10a wrongly with Stanza 3. See discussion below for a response to them.

[19]Adapted from Henri Blocher, *Songs of the Servant* (London: Inter-Varsity, 1975), 61.

[20]Motyer, *Isaiah*, 423.

[21]See S. Craig Glickman, *Knowing Christ* (Chicago: Moody, 1980), 89-129.

[22]Note that the recent study of Barthélemy (see below) has not been disseminated widely in North America because it is in French. See my review of John Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah* in *The Baptist Review of Theology* 8 (1998): 150-55.

[23]S. Lewis Johnson, Jr., "Romans 5:12—An Exercise in Exegesis and Theology," in *New Dimensions in New Testament Study* (ed. Richard N. Longenecker and Merrill C. Tenney; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974), 300.

[24]See Dominique Barthélemy, *Critique Textuelle de l'Ancien Testament*, vol. 2, Isaïe, Jérémie, Lamentations (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1986).

[25]Some compare the use of *nazah* to constructions with *yarah* and appeal to Ps 64:5 and 64:8 as examples where the object is omitted, but this seems weak because these are cases of gapping in Hebrew poetry. See Barthélemy, *Critique Textuelle*, 387.

[26]See Ibid., 385-86.

[27]The closest form is the noun מָשְׁחָת ("corruption") found only in Lev 22:25.

[28]Goldingay adds significant support: "[t]he observation that, following his desolation, the servant is superhumanly anointed fits with the description of his superhuman exaltation in v. 13. The reference to anointing (mišḥaṯ) parallels the account of David's anointing as a person good in appearance and a man of [good] looks (1 Sam. 16:12-13, 18; cf. *Grimm/Dittert). It also again parallels Ps. 89:19-20, 50-51 [20-21, 51-52], where Yhwh's 'servant' David is 'anointed' as well as 'exalted' and his successor as Yhwh's 'servant' and 'anointed' is taunted by 'many' peoples. Further, the anointing of this servant as if he were a king parallels the designation of Cyrus as Yhwh's anointed in 45.1. Tg was not so outlandish in adding reference to Yhwh's anointing in 52.13 as at 42.1" (Goldingay, *Isaiah 40-55*, 491).

[29]Another recent scholar who maintains the traditional view is Klaus Baltzer, *Deutero-Isaiah: A Commentary on Isaiah 40-55* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001). He renders the word "maltreated" and proposes in a critical note reading מוֹשְׁחַת on the basis of one manuscript or מָשְׁחַת as in the Babylonian Tradition (see p. 392). In terms of principles of textual criticism, the appeal to one medieval manuscript (Kennicott MS 612) is ludicrous. The form given by Kennicott is unvocalized and probably is a plene spelling for the form in the Babylonian Tradition (see B. Kennicott, *Vetus Testamentum Hebraicum cum Variis Lectionibus* [Oxford, 1780] 2:68). The critical edition of the Babylonian Tradition has a lacuna at Isaiah 53, see Amparo Alba Cecilia, *Biblia Babilonica: Isaias* (Madrid: CSIC, 1980). Baltzer should have consulted a better edition than *BHS*, e.g., M. H. Goshen-Gottstein, *The Book of Isaiah* (Hebrew University Bible; Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1995). The sole support for the Babylonian Tradition is a fragment from the Cairo Genizah (Kb 13) in which a corrector has changed the vocalization to מָשְׁחַת. This demonstrates an exegetical tradition within medieval Judaism more than a witness to a pristine text.

[30]Jan L. Koole, *Isaiah III: Volume 2 / Isaiah 49 - 55* (Historical Commentary on the Old Testament; Leuven: Peeters, 1998), 269.

[31]Barthélemy, *Critique Textuelle*, 388-90. It is noteworthy that the interpretation proposed by Barthélemy and developed here is also that expounded recently by John Goldingay, *Isaiah 40-55*, 490-92, although no reference is made to Barthélemy and discussion of grammatical, lexical, and textual issues is extremely limited (these, however, are not the focus of his work).

[32]Again, Koole misses the import of this variant. See Jan L. Koole, *Isaiah 49 - 55*, 269.

[33]E.g., 65:1 cryptically expresses the idea of an offer of salvation to the nations which is developed more fully in 66:18-24 at the end of this section.

[34]Although the use of "arm" or "hand" to express power is common ancient Near Eastern idiom, the expression "the arm of the Lord" is stereotypical of the Exodus (Exod 6, 12, 16) and later references to it (Isa 51:5, 9; 52:10).

[35]See D. J. A. Clines, *I, He, We and They: A Literary Approach to Isaiah 53* (Sheffield: *JSOT*, 1976), 15.

[36]Examples of kings or kingdoms pictured as majestic, stately trees: king of Israel (Ezek 17), kings of Egypt and Assyria (Ezek 31), Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon (Daniel 4:10-12). General instances: Isa 10:19 (עֵץ יַעַר), cf. 10:33-34; cedars Isa 2:13; 14:08 (אַרְזֵי הַלְּבָנוֹן); firs Isa 14:08 (בְּרוֹשִׁים); oaks Isa 2:13 (אַלּוֹנֵי הַבָּשָׁן). Not only trees as a whole represent kings or kingdoms, but also parts of trees as well: root (שֹׁרֶשׁ) Isa 11:01, 10; 53:2; Dan 11:07; stem, stump (גֶּזַע) Isa 11:01; branch (חֹטֶר) Isa 11:01; growth (צֶמַח) Jer 23:05; 33:15; Zech 3:08; 6:12 (cf. Ps 132:17); shoot (יוֹנֵק) Isa 53:2; shoot (יְנִיקָה) Ezek 17:04; shoot (נֵצֶר) Isa 11:01; 14:19; Isa 7:4 משני זנבות האודים העשנים = from these two tails of smoking sticks; shade (צֵל) Isa 30:3.

[37]This paragraph summarizes the important research in M. Hengel, *Crucifixion in the Ancient World and the Folly of the Message of the Cross* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977).

[38]Adapted from N. T. Wright, *Following Jesus: Biblical Reflections on Discipleship* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 48.

[39]Not "a new *creature*" or even "*a* new creation," but "he / she is new creation" is what the grammar of the original text requires as the correct translation.

[40]2 Kgs 13:6 would be an example of החטי from חטא and תַּחֲלֻאִים in 2 Chron 16:12 shows חלה treated as a III-**א** verb.

[41]So E. Y. Kutscher, *The Language and Linguistic Background of the Isaiah Scroll (1Q Isaa)* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1974), 236-37.

[42]Barthélemy, *Critique Textuelle*, 400-02.

[43]*Pace* John T. Williams, "Jesus the Servant—Vicarious Sufferer: A Reappraisal," in *"You Will Be My Witnesses": A Festschrift in Honor of the Reverend Dr. Allison A. Trites on the Occasion of His Retirement* (ed. R. Glenn Wooden, Timothy R. Ashley, and Robert S. Wilson; Macon: Mercer, 2003), 53-80, this analysis of the clause by no means obliterates the aspect of vicarious suffering (see esp. p. 69).

[44]Motyer, *Isaiah*, 439-40.

[45]See John E. Hartley, *Leviticus* (Word Biblical Commentary 4; Dallas: Word, 1992), 72-86; Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16* (Anchor Bible 3; New York: Doubleday, 1991), 319-78; idem, *Leviticus: A Book of Ritual and Ethics* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004), 46-61, G. J. Wenham, *The Book of Leviticus* (New International Commentary on the Old Testament; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 103-12.

[46]The following instances of "ram" (ʾayil) as a metaphor for a community leader are listed by Block: Exod 15:5; 2 Kgs 24:15; Jer 25:34; Ezek 17:13; 30:13; 31:11, 14; 32:21; 39:18. See Block, "My Servant David," 51-52 and n. 150. Block, however, is wrong to follow John Walton's proposal that the Mesopotamian ritual of the substitute king is the background to Isaiah 53. The situation in Isaiah 53 is completely opposite to this ritual. The Mesopotamian ritual involves a common man who subsitutes temporarily for the king in order that evil omens and threats may fall upon the commoner instead of on the king. In Isaiah 53 the king bears the offenses, sins, and transgressions of his people. For the proposal, see John H. Walton, "The Imagery of the Substitute King Ritual in Isaiah's Fourth Servant Song," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 122 (2003): 734-43. Isaiah 53 can be better explained by appeal to the larger story of Scripture than to supposedly subtle connections to this Mesopotamian ritual. In personal communication, however, D. I. Block has convincingly suggested that Isaiah may well have intended to provide a *reversal* of the Mesopotamian pattern.

[47]The attribution is based on one source, i.e., manuscript Barberini Graeci 549 in Rome, Bibl. Vat.

[48]Korpel and de Moor follow A. Gelston, "Some Notes on Second Isaiah," VT (1971): 517-21, in arguing that אור is secondary due to either dittography or an explanatory gloss (so Korpel and de Moor, *Hebrew Poetry*, 549, n. 18). Yet surely haplography is more probable, and the appeal to a gloss no more plausible than a correction motivated theologically in MT. The external support for אור is earlier and much stronger than the evidence from the Jewish Revisors and Vulgate, Syriac and Targum. See Jan de Waard, *A Handbook on Isaiah* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1997), 196-97.

[49]Claus Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1969), 267.

[50]Some passages in Isaiah directly related to the Abrahamic Covenant are as follows: 48:18-19; 51:2; 54:2; 60:12; 60:22; 61:9; 62:2-5; 63:16; 65:9; 65:15-16.

[51]The repetition of the word "many" is one feature that ties the Prologue to the Epilogue in the chiastic structure or as an inclusio (cf. John Goldingay, *Isaiah 40-55*, 491).

[52]G. Johannes Botterweck "חָפֵץ ḥāpēṣ," *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* (ed. G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 5:105-06.

[53]Adapted from Henri Blocher, *Songs of the Servant*, 40.

[54]Ibid., 40-42. For those wishing to consult Blocher's source, see F. Delitzsch, *Isaiah* (Commentary on the Old Testament in Ten Volumes by C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, 7; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 174-175, 257-258.

[55]This approach to Isaiah 54 is outlined in William J. Dumbrell, *The End of the Beginning* (Homebush West: Lancer, 1985), 18.

[56]I arrived at this conclusion already in 1990. It is encouraging that a recent scholarly commentary is also propounding a similar view: Koole, *Isaiah 49 - 55*, 336-43. An earlier proponent of this view has also come to my attention: John W. Olley, "'The Many': How is Isa 53,12a To Be Understood?" *Biblica* 68 (1987): 330-56.

[57]See H. W. Wolff, "The Kerygma of the Yahwist," *Interpretation* 20 (1966): 131-58; and N. T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 262.

[58]Korpel and de Moor place בְּדַעְתּוֹ with 11b citing the Septuagint and the Syriac for support, but not mentioning that the evidence of the Dead Sea Scrolls listed in their sources is against this division. See Korpel and de Moor, *Hebrew Poetry*, 557.

[59]According to O'Connor's method of analyzing poetry in Hebrew, 11a and b would constitute "heavy lines," and this would appropriately function to articulate the division in the stanza between benefits to the Servant and benefits to the many associated with him. See M. O'Connor, *Hebrew Verse Structure* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1980).

[60]R. N. Whybray, *Thanksgiving for a Liberated Prophet: An Interpretation of Isaiah 53* (Sheffield: University of Sheffield, 1978), 67. See also John T. Williams, "Jesus the Servant—Vicarious Sufferer: A Reappraisal," 53-80. Their approaches are well answered by Stephen G. Dempster, "The Servant of the Lord," in *Central Themes in Biblical Theology: Mapping Unity in Diversity* (ed. Scott J. Hafemann and Paul R. House; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 128-78.

[61]N. T. Wright describes the work of Jesus Christ in terms of taking upon himself all the evil of the world and completely exhausting it, giving only love in return. This ends the vicious cycle of paying evil for evil and shows the power of love instead of the love of power, e.g. N. T. Wright, *Evil and the Justice of God* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 89. While he does clearly speak of Jesus bearing the sins of Israel, his depiction of the larger picture can be reductionistic in terms of the actual emphasis in Scripture. Isaiah 53 talks about the Servant bearing offences, sins, and transgressions, not just evil in a general sense.

[62]In general, the expression employed by the prophets indicate a New Covenant initiated which takes the place of the Mosaic Covenant (כרת ברית). Occasionally, this is also seen as a renewal of the Mosaic Covenant (הקים ברית, e.g. Ezek 16:60). The distinction between these expressions established by Dumbrell in general holds up to careful scrutiny and the attempt by Paul Williamson to critique Dumbrell fails utterly; see W. J. Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1984), 16-26; and Paul R. Williamson, *Sealed With an Oath: Covenant in God's Unfolding Purpose* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2007), 69-75. Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 23-27* (Anchor Bible 3B; New York: Doubleday, 2000), 2343-46, supports Dumbrell's thesis.

Songs of the Crucified One: The Psalms and the Crucifixion

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Songs, of all descriptions, have an amazingly powerful ability to lodge their words and music in our minds. Few of us are far, for any length of time, from radios, televisions, DVDs, iPods, or mp3s, repetitively churning out the latest hit or the classic favorite. Whether in our homes, in shopping malls or on public transport, we are surrounded by music. The consequence is that many can easily drop into singing a song whether or not they have intentionally learned it. The memory of songs learned decades ago can be triggered by the slightest hint and easily come to mind to be quoted or sung accurately. Would that Christians knew the words of Scripture as confidently as they can repeat the songs of the world!

The world of Jesus' day was, of course, different and lacked the ability to broadcast and electronically reproduce its music. Yet, for all that, the songs of Israel exercised a remarkably powerful influence on the minds of Jesus and his disciples and, as today, they resorted to quoting or alluding to the songs very easily. In their case, the songs were the Psalms, often spoken of as the hymnbook of the second temple. Sabbath by Sabbath the Psalms were read in the synagogues, so that either every Psalm was read within the year or every Psalm read on a three-year cycle. There is evidence for both approaches.[1] Regularly, the doxologies at the end of each book within the Psalms (41:13; 72:19; 89:52; 106:48 and 150:6) were used in worship. Attendance at the great festivals in Jerusalem would have added to these routine experiences. The pilgrim band sang the Psalms as they made their way to the Holy City, and pilgrims heard them performed chorally (and joined in the performances) in the temple itself. No wonder the words of the Psalms exercised a "great influence on the hearts and minds of religious people."[2] The Psalms, too, might not only have had a role in the worship life of Israel but in its instruction to the faithful as well.[3]

In the light of this it is not surprising that the Psalms surface in the Gospels with twenty-three identifiable, direct quotations,[4] several of which specifically relate to the betrayal and crucifixion of Christ. But these quotations are more than happy, or perhaps more accurately unhappy, coincidences or convenient sound bites. Jesus saw them as prophecies of his crucifixion and he saw himself as bringing these old covenant songs to fulfilment in the new. We know this because after the resurrection he said to his disciples, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets, *and the Psalms*" (Luke 22:44).[5] They were messianic predictions of his cross.[6]

Usually only the briefest quotations—a single verse or less—find their way into the Gospel accounts. But, given the cultural context, such short extracts may justifiably suggest that more than the limited quotation was in mind and that the extract

might legitimately serve as a window onto the wider vista of the Psalm. James Mays, for example, argues in reference to Jesus quoting Psalm 22:1 that, "it is not just the opening words that are involved. Citing the first words of a text was, in the tradition of the time, a way of identifying the entire passage."[7] So, although we cannot be dogmatic about such an issue, we may reasonably review not just the discrete quotation but also its context to shed light on the crucifixion.

What, then, can we learn if we view the cross through the lens of the Psalms? What do the "Songs of the Crucified One" reveal concerning his suffering and death?[8] We shall trace the songs in reference to the way the events of the crucifixion unfolded, in so far as we can tell.

The Song of Betrayal

Psalm 41:9, "Even my close friend, someone I trusted, one who shared my bread has lifted up his heel against me," is quoted by Jesus at the last supper in the Upper Room. It is cited in John 13:18[9] and alluded to in Matt 26:23, Mark 14:20, and Luke 22:21. Psalm 55:12-15 similarly voices the horror that a "companion" and "close friend" is unmasked as the source of betrayal that leads to an innocent person suffering.

Psalm 41 is a chiastic structure and may be understood as follows:

- a The mercy of God as Saviour (vv. 1-3)
  - b Prayer for mercy (v. 4)
    - c Lament concerning opponents (vv. 5-9)
  - b[1] Prayer for mercy (v. 10)
- a[1] The mercy of God as restorer (vv. 11-13)

*The Victim's Sufferi*ng

The structure draws the eye to the middle section that dwells on the sense of betrayal felt by the Psalmist. The heading claims it as a "Psalm of David," but it cannot be placed easily into an episode of his life. Yet, as John Goldingay has recently written, "in general one can imagine David testifying to Yhwh's deliverance along these lines; one can also imagine subsequent kings using it."[10] Indeed, the words might well be imagined as falling from the lips of Job or other righteous sufferers. Yet, as Calvin claims, "certainly we ought to understand that, although David speaks of himself in this psalm, yet he speaks not as a common and private person, but as one who represented the person of Christ, inasmuch as … it was necessary that what was begun in David should be fully accomplished in Christ."[11]

The suffering emanates from two sources, in verses 5-9. First, there is the suffering initiated by enemies (vv. 5-8) and then the suffering initiated by a close friend (v. 9). The suffering initiated by enemies fits the experience of Jesus no less than that initiated by Judas the betrayer. Just as the Psalm in its original setting refers to the rejection of God's appointed ruler, so when Jesus entered the world as God's emissary, so too he was rejected by the very people who should have welcomed him (John 1:11). Particular phrases in Psalm 41 match the hostility Jesus faced throughout his life. Verse 5 discloses that the king's enemies could not wait to dispose of him. Impatiently they cry, "When will he die and his name perish?" So the crowds and the rulers demonstrated an equally impatient desire to dispose of Christ as a troublemaker and disturber of the peace (e.g., Luke 4: 29; John 10:31; 11:50). The phrases of verse 6—"speak falsely … gather slander … spread it abroad"—point forward to the mountain

of criticism and accusation Jesus would face. He was "demon-possessed" (John 8:48), a "sinner" (John 9:24) a speaker of "blasphemy" (John 10:33) and a political insurrectionist (John 18:28-40) as well. Then the Psalm enters a note of misplaced diagnosis. The psalmist is said to be ill because "a vile disease has beset him," according to verse 8. The "vile disease," literally translated, is "a thing of Belial" suggesting, as Craigie puts it, "a devilish disease."[12] Although the original meaning is somewhat obscure and may have meant that the Psalmist's illness was as a result of a curse, it reminds one of the accusations subsequently faced by Jesus that he was demon-possessed (e.g., Matt. 9:34; 12:24; John 8:48). The leaders of Israel completely misunderstood the origin of the one who stood before them doing good and bringing wholeness to broken lives.

In addition to general opposition the Psalm particularly mentions the betrayal of "my close friend (lit. "a man of peace"), someone I trusted, one who shared my bread" (v. 9). Jesus quotes this phrase in reference to Judas Iscariot, who has been described as "the most famous traitor in history." Little is known of Judas. The description "Iscariot" most likely alludes to his coming from Kerioth in Moab, but could possibly indicate he came from Issachar or possibly even signify he was "an assassin."[13] The portrait of Judas in the Gospels is far from flattering. His name constantly comes at the end of the list of disciples, perhaps indicating a subsequent negative evaluation of him. But, as treasurer of the disciples, it was known that he was a thief (John 12:6). Yet, these are retrospective judgments on him. At the time, it was clear from the reaction to Jesus' announcement at the Last Supper that someone around the table would shortly betray him, that his fellow disciples did not suspect him (John 13:22).

A great deal of interest has been shown in Judas Iscariot recently, not least because of the so-called "gospel of Judas," and various imaginative conspiracy theories, which have sought to rehabilitate him.[14] Some argue that his motives in betraying Jesus were good, not greed. In doing so, Judas was seeking to force Jesus' hand to advance openly his kingdom and had not anticipated that it would end in Jesus' death. But such interpretations are speculative at best and fanciful at worst. The Gospels credit him with other motives and ultimately attribute his action to the work of the devil (John 6:70), even while never absolving him of the human responsibility for his decisions. What is more, we must never forget that all this happens under the sovereignty of God who uses such human treachery and demonically-inspired action to accomplish his good will and salvation plan.

The treachery was deep because sharing bread together in the culture of Jesus' day signified intimacy, trust, and genuine friendship. It is described in the Psalm as an act whereby the close friend has "lifted up his heel against me," words that are reiterated by Jesus. The allusion goes back to Gen 3:15, and according to E. F. F. Bishop signifies, "a revelation of contempt, treachery, even animosity" which suggests that "in his inmost attitudes he really despised his Master."[15] The betrayal was no last minute, spontaneous, chance decision, but the outworking of a deep loathing.

The Victim's Prayers

Psalm 41 is not limited to describing the innocent sufferer's opponents. It also records the persecuted man's prayers in

verses 4 and 10. He cries out for God to "have mercy." One cannot read these cries without thinking of Jesus crying out in Gethsemane for God to remove the cup of suffering from him (Matt 26:39; Mark 14:36; Luke 22:41).

There is no difficulty in relating the prayers for mercy to the experience of Gethsemane but the second lines in each of these verses causes problems in relation to Christ. The problems may indicate that it is not right to force every element of these ancient songs to fit the death of Christ. But perhaps the quest to do so should not be given up too quickly.

In verse 4 the prayer continues, "heal me for I have sinned against you." In what sense can that be true of Christ? In its original setting, VanGemeren speaks for many in commenting that the words are "a general confession of unwitting sins rather than betraying that he (the Psalmist) was deeply burdened by particular sins."[16] Is it stretching the point too far to acknowledge that though Jesus Christ was the sinless one who never had need to confess his own sin, he was also the one who had our sins laid on him and was made "to be sin for us, so that we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Cor 5:21)?

The difficult line in verse 10 is problematic because it smacks of the Psalmist wishing to take revenge on his enemies and many readers cannot square that with what they know of Christ or of New Testament Christianity generally. But there are a number of answers to this. While some say the quest to repay one's enemies reveals an old covenant understanding that is in need of fuller revelation in the future,[17] others propose a different solution. We are surely wrong to read this as a cry for personal revenge. Calvin argues that this reflects David in his judicial role as King of Israel, and, if it reflects David, then it reflects Jesus Christ in that role even more.[18] Might it not be true that this speaks of Jesus in his role as the eschatological judge, the one who will one day rule in complete righteousness as described, for example, in John 5:24-30? Might not our difficulties with this line lie in our having too shallow an understanding of the role of the crucified Christ and our being too shaped by the over-tolerant age in which we live?

The Victim's God

The beginning and end of this Psalm affirm the gracious action of God who operates in grace on behalf of the victim, even when circumstances seems to suggest otherwise. So God is shown to be the saving God (vv. 1-3) who does not neglect but "delivers" the weak in times of trouble. He is the God who "protects" and "preserves" them in trouble and "sustains" and "restores" them in sickness.

The note of restoration is picked up again at the end of the Psalm (vv. 10-13). In the midst of the troubles he experiences, the Psalmist confidently asserts that God will come to his aid and he will be restored for justice (v. 10b), to life (v.11), and for relationship (v.12) with God. The experience of his merciless rejection by enemies and friends alike will be reversed when he is securely placed "in (God's) presence for ever." This anticipates exactly what Heb 11:2 affirms: "For the joy that was set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."

Psalm 41 sets before us two ways: the way of Judas and the way of Jesus. The way of Judas is that of greed, arrogance, and self-aggrandisement which ends in

a wretched death. The way of Jesus is the way of generosity, humility, and self-giving, that endures a wretched death but then gives way to the joy of resurrection life. It sets before us a theme that is common in the Songs of the Crucified One, that of the example of the righteous sufferer who trusts in God through it all. It also serves as a warning that the church should remain faithful, upholding the testimony of the apostles to Christ "and not join the company of Judas" by betraying the Savior.[19]

The Song of Desolation [20]

Undoubtedly the best-known Psalm connected with the crucifixion is Psalm 22. It has aptly been named "the fifth gospel," and the resonances between it and the crucifixion of Christ are numerous. Matthew 27:46 and Mark 15:34 record Jesus as repeating the opening verse—"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"—from the cross. In both cases, the cry is one of terrible desolation but it seems to weigh more heavily in Mark's leaner, darker account of the crucifixion than it does in Matthew. Before looking at its application to Jesus we shall examine the Psalm in its own terms.

The first part of the Psalm, verses 1-21, is an individual lament. There is a marked change of tone in the second section, verses 22-31, as the psalmist voices praise in the community. But dividing the psalm into these two blunt sections does not do justice to its "finely wrought compositional design."[21] The truth is that the first section of the Psalm interweaves trouble with trust, despair with hope.

Trouble (vv. 1-2, 6-8, 12-18)

Three distinct forms of trouble are mentioned, beginning with the most profoundly disturbing form of all, that of the absence of God. All human beings have a tendency to cry, "Why me, Lord?" when tragedy and suffering strike. But the cry of desertion expressed in verse 1 is of a deeper nature than this. The psalmist feels abandoned by God just at the point when he needs him most. All his life the psalmist had been taught to believe in a loving God who was near those who called on him. But now his experience contradicts his belief. Rather than being near, God is "so far" (v. 1) from him. His incessant crying out to God day and night makes no difference: God does not show up. There is no relief from his condition.

Even if they have no personal experience of feeling deserted by God, pastors soon encounter many who have. It is not uncommon for high profile Christian leaders to endure periods of such abandonment. The silence of God can appear to be most unyielding at the precise time when we most urgently need him to speak to us.

The psalmist's trouble is compounded because added to the absence of God there is the all-too-real presence of enemies. Verses 6-8 provide an intense account of the derision heaped upon the sufferer. What hurts most is that they mock him for having been apparently abandoned by God. Verse 8 indicates that the things the sufferer had most passionately believed and preached are now hurled back in his face. The net effect is to leave the sufferer feeling more of a worm than a human being (v. 6).

This leads to the third form of trouble: that of self-pity, mentioned in verses 12-18. His tormentors hide behind animal masks. They come at him like the bulls of Bashan, which were well known for their size. They tear at him as if they were lions

devouring their prey. They trap him like snarling dogs. "The words," writes Peter Craigie, "evoke the abject terror of one who is powerless, but surrounded, with no avenue of escape."[22] At last he gives free rein to his feelings. He is a bag of useless bones, ready to be laid to rest. Others have decided that his life is over, so they parcel out his clothes since he has no further use for them. He has no strength to resist. He is physically drained, socially isolated, emotionally scarred and spiritually bereft. Life is spent and shattered.

Trust (vv. 3-5, 9-11, 19-21)

In spite of the terrifying experiences and the profound questions of faith that arise as a result, the psalmist is not prepared to abandon his God. The flame of faith continues to flicker, sometimes bursting into bright light in the midst of darkness. Faith jostles with perplexity. Trust wrestles with the questions. So wonderful affirmations about God are woven into the expression of abject terror. The absent God is described in the most personal of terms. The absent God remains "My God."

The psalmist asserts *God's position* (v. 3). He is "enthroned as the Holy One." He is still sovereign in his universe and has not been overthrown by other gods. He asserts *God's power* (vv. 4-5). He evokes the memory of the Exodus when Israel trusted God and was delivered from oppression, against all apparent odds. He asserts *God's purpose* for his life (v. 9). His birth was not the result of merely human wills, still less of blind chance. God brought him out of the womb and gave him security. He asserts *God's providence* (vv. 10-11). As he reflects on life he recalls the times when he was cast on God and God came to his aid. So, now, he trusts in *God's promise* (vv.19-21) and prays in the belief that God will hear and rescue him again. He seeks not to forget in the dark what he knew of God in the light.

Walter Brueggemann has pointed out that what he calls the "core testimony" of Israel's faith is constantly arguing with "counter testimony" of her experience.[23] Counter testimony is not afraid to face the raw reality of life. It does not take false refuge in a Disney-like view of faith, denying the harsh contradictions we encounter and pretending that all is well when it patently is not. Part of the glory of scripture is its integrity. It deals with "life as it comes, (which) along with joys, is beset by hurt, betrayal, loneliness, disease, threat, anxiety, bewilderment, anger, hatred and anguish."[24] The Psalm does not tell us how the tension between the core and the counter testimony of our lives are to be resolved. Only the cross does that.

Thanksgiving (vv. 22-31)

No hint is given as to why the Psalm dramatically changes direction from verse 22 onward and concludes on such a positive note of thanksgiving. We are jolted from a preoccupation with introspective musings and catapulted into a "great assembly" (v. 25) of worshippers where the psalmist's deliverance from trouble is celebrated. Having been rescued he keeps his vow (v. 25) to give thanks to God. Verse 26 suggests he does so not merely through song and words but also by a peace or fellowship offering in which even the poor would join "and be satisfied."[25] The vow gives way to a far-sighted vision. The sufferer who felt deserted now looks forward to the day when geographically ("all the ends of the earth," v. 27), socially ("all the rich," v. 29), and eschatologically ("future

generations," v. 30) the Lord's name will be universally praised. In this respect the Psalm anticipates Phil 2:10-11 and the vision of Revelation 5.

Application to Christ

The Psalm fits the experience of Jesus on the cross like a well-fitting glove. Numerous references point to the cross. The taunts he endured (vv. 7-8), the thirst he experienced (v. 15), the piercing of hands and feet (v. 16), and the dividing of his clothes (v. 18) are remarkably prescient details of crucifixion.[26] But we leave these details on one side for the moment to focus on the cry of dereliction in verse 1, which is repeated by Jesus on the cross.

Throughout his life, Jesus had enjoyed an intimate and uninterrupted relationship with his Father, but now, at the hours of his greatest need, his Father appears to be unresponsive to him. Jesus experienced the hiddenness of God more than any other human being. Why so? Some argue that the cry of desertion is merely the understandable expression of emotional vulnerability. How can it be, they argue, that the eternal relations of the Trinity are ruptured? But though such an argument is understandable it is surely not enough. And though alternative explanations leave one with mysteries, does that rule them out? Surely the abandonment is due to the fact that Christ was made "sin for us" (2 Cor 5:21) and that God, whose "eyes are too pure to look on evil" (Hab 1:13) had to abandon his Son at the time in which he was bearing our sin.

The cross holds the secret for reconciling the tension of core and counter testimony. It is, as Luther taught us, that God reveals himself in his hiddenness of the cross. By the Father and Son acting harmoniously together leading to the manifest abandonment of the Son, the Father reveals his love and effects salvation for sinners. "The God with whom we are dealing" writes Alister McGrath, "the God who addresses us from the cross—to use Luther's breathtakingly daring phrase—is 'the crucified and hidden God.'"[27]

If, by quoting verse 1, Jesus had in mind the entire Psalm, then we see how it points not only to his desertion by God but his subsequent deliverance in the resurrection too. Jesus' words, then, would not only have been the genuinely anguished cry of an abandoned Son but the genuinely hopeful cry of a trusting Son. Abandonment now would lead to discovery that God "has not hidden his face from him but has listened to his cry for help" (v. 24), and the suffering and scorn that have been endured leads to the sufferer being vindicated and a growing crescendo of praise to God. The final words of the Psalm emphasize that God, far from being unreliable, has proved faithful in all his actions.

The Songs of Execution

Three times John's account of the crucifixion speaks in terms of the scripture being fulfilled (John 19:24, 28, and 36) and each time it cites a verse from a Psalm as evidence. Here, through the lens of John and looking backwards rather than forwards, as we have been doing, we investigate the quotations and the details of the crucifixion they highlight. A superficial reading of the Gospel accounts of the crucifixion appears to suggest they are merely reporting what happened without theological comment. But it is in their choice of details and the manner in which those details are reported that their interpretation of the cross and its atoning significance lies.

A Seamless Robe (Ps 22:18 and John 19:23-24)

Crucifixion was a method of execution invented by barbarians and the Persians. It became widespread under Rome and was inflicted on the slaves, the lower classes, and the seditious. It was designed to be barbarically cruel but also extremely humiliating. The Roman ritual of crucifixion involved the condemned person being tortured before being crucified, paraded through the streets bearing the cross beam on which he was to be pinioned, stripped naked and, with outstretched arms, nailed through a variety of body parts and left to die, exposed to the jeers of the crowd and the elements of the weather.[28] The Gospels report the death of Jesus as discreetly as possible but in a manner consistent with what we know of crucifixion elsewhere.

Part of the ritual was the stripping of the condemned man of his clothes at the site of execution so that the process of stripping him of his liberty, rights, possessions, dignity was complete. It was common practice that the execution squad, probably four of them, should keep the condemned man's clothes. John tells us that the squaddies, as Psalm 22:18 had predicted, had divided the garments into four but that they then were left with a seamless tunic. The four garments were probably Jesus' sandals, belt, outer garment, and headdress. What was left was the tunic, which the NIV and TNIV, perhaps less than happily, translate as "the undergarment." Don Carson explains that this *chiton*, even though worn next to the skin was more like a suit than contemporary underwear.[29]

The real question, however, arises out of the comment that this garment was "seamless." What is the significance of that? Several explanations have been advanced.[30] Though some have put forward the idea that the garment was that of a rich person, this seems not to be supported by the evidence. Others, on the basis of a remark by Josephus who says the High Priest's robe was "woven from a single threat," think it points to the priestly ministry of Christ. But there is a difference between the High Priest's outer garment and the one in view here. Furthermore, John shows "no interest in a High Priestly typology elsewhere."[31] Rather, it would seem, that the garment was that of an ordinary person. Its significance must be sought elsewhere.

Daly-Denton[32] draws attention to the way in which Samuel tore Saul's robe once his kingship had been rejected by God (1 Sam15:27-28). The prophecy predicted that the kingdom of Israel would be given to "one better" than Saul. She also points out how Ahijah tore a cloak into twelve pieces to symbolise the division of the kingdom under Jereboam (1 Kgs 11:29-31). If this is relevant, the significance lies in Christ reasserting God's kingship over his people. In addition, the significance lies not so much in that the garment was seamless, as in the fact that, being seamless, it was not torn into pieces. The cross of Christ overcomes divisions, uniting and reconciling warring parties.

Carson believes the interpretation that has most merit is one that ties John 19:23-24 to John 13:1-17, where Jesus "took off his outer clothing" to wash his disciples' feet.[33] If this is the explanation, then the significance of the symbolism lies in his voluntarily self-humbling and his acceptance of the status of a servant. The crucifixion takes this to its ultimate conclusion and there laying aside his glory, epitomized by the laying aside

of his clothes, Jesus humbles himself "becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross" (Phil 2:8). Paradoxically this way of shame, disgrace, weakness and humiliation is the means by which God has chosen to rescue the world, delivering men and women from their sin and re-establishing his rule over all.

A Quenched Thirst, Ps 69:21 (Ps 22:15) and John 19:28-30

Anyone who underwent the process of crucifixion was very soon likely to become dehydrated. Even if they had not reached that point before, being suspended in the mid-day Middle Eastern sun would quickly ensure the condemned person would suffer intolerable thirst. I remember the consequences of dehydration when visiting Ephesus one summer noontime a few years ago, and that was without going through what a crucified man would have endured!

On arrival at Golgotha, Jesus was offered "wine mixed with myrrh" (Mark 15:23), possibly as an act of kindness to deaden his pain, but Jesus "did not take it." Having been nailed to the cross, however, and knowing that the end was very near, he cried, "I am thirsty." On this occasion he drank the coarse soldier's wine that was offered to him in fulfilment of the prophecy of Ps 69:21. Contrary to many an artist's impression, the cross need not have been very high, yet they offered him the drink via a sponge placed "on a stalk of the hyssop plant." This detail connects his death with the Passover meal.

In an attempt to discern the theological motif that might be implicit in this saying, Daly-Denton sees it as a metaphor for a deep longing for God, in line with Ps 43:2 or 63:1.[34] This, she claims, is "in keeping with John's theological schema." While I do not seek to deny this, for the motif of Christ retuning to his Father is evident in John, such a view seems to miss the more obvious motif in John's Gospel whereby Jesus is revealed as the great thirst quencher. To a spiritually, relationally, and emotionally parched woman from Samaria he promises living water. Pointing to Sychar's well, he claimed that those who drank its water would thirst again, "but those who drink the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life" (John 4:14). The theme is repeated when Jesus visits the temple during the Feast of Tabernacles (John 7:1-52), in which the water ritual that symbolised the Messianic hopes of Israel were so central. Jesus claims to be the fulfilment of their longings and invites all who were thirsty to come to him and drink (John 4:37).

The one who quenched the thirst of others now hangs in desolation and agony, epitomized, as Beasley-Murray puts it, by his own thirst.[35] Is this not the path the thirst-quencher must inevitably travel? Tom Smail helpfully explains,

> Christ comes to the cross as the fireman comes to the fire, as the lifeboat comes to the sinking ship, as the rescue team comes to the wounded man in the alpine snow. They have what it takes to help and deliver, but they must come to where the fire burns, the storm rages, the avalanche entombs and make themselves vulnerable to the danger that coming involves. So Christ on the cross comes to where the Father in his holy wrath has handed over the sinners to the consequences of their sin.[36]

So, he must absorb the dehydration of others in his own being if he is to quench their thirst; just as he carries our sin to free us from sin, accepts our punishment

to release us from sin's penalty, pays our debt to discharge us from debt, and undergoes our death to deliver us from death.

True though this may be, such an explanation does not go far enough. In Gethsemane, Jesus declared his intention to drink the cup the Father had given him (John 18:11). Yet he recognized the horror of what he was being asked to do and, according to the synoptic accounts, asked the Father, if possible, to remove the cup from him (Matt 26:39; Mark 14:36; Luke 22:42). The cup, to which allusion had already been made in conversation with his disciples (Mark 10:38), was evidently not a pleasant drink. Indeed, the allusions must be to the cup of God's wrath and judgment against wickedness, spoken of in Isa 51:17, 22, and Jer 25:15. Jesus was to drink the cup to its dregs, experiencing in full the wrath of God on a sinful humanity. By freely drinking it himself, he releases those who take refuge in him from ever having to do so.

Jesus can still quench the dryness of the most thirsting individual because he has entered into the most barren of all experiences on the cross, and endured the pain himself as a victim of extreme thirst.

The Unbroken Bones (Ps 34:20 and John 19:3)

The third fulfilment to which John draws attention comes from Ps 34:20 where the psalmist affirms God's providential care for the righteous and asserts that God delivers them "and protects all their bones, not one of them will be broken."[37] Within the context of the Psalm, the claim of God's protection might be said to be "extravagant"[38] but in the light of the crucifixion of Jesus it might to be said to be remarkably prophetic.

Using a mallet to break the legs "was a customary procedure in the crucifixion of criminals."[39] Its original purpose may have been to add to the barbarity of the punishment but the truth is that it was often a merciful act because it hastened the death of the condemned one.[40] In Jesus' case there was an added reason for breaking his legs and those of his fellow sufferers because "the next Day was to be a special Sabbath (and) the Jewish leaders did not want the bodies left on the crosses during the Sabbath" (John 19:31). But when they came to Jesus they discovered he was already dead and so "they did not break his legs" (John 19:34). To verify (or ensure) the death was real, however, a spear was thrust into the body resulting in "a flow of blood and water" (John 19:35).

Without setting aside the opinion that the song being sung is Ps 34:20, it is obvious from the context that the reference to Jesus' bones not being broken is meant to connect the death of Jesus to the death of the Passover Lamb. Exodus 12:46 and Num 9:12 both given the instruction that the bones of the Passover Lamb were not to be broken. John lit the fuse of the Passover theme as far back as 1:29 and 36.[41] And as the cross approaches so he increasingly intrudes the presence of the Passover into the story. In 13:1 he says, "Just before the Passover Feast, Jesus knew that his hour had come for him to leave the world." The verdict at Jesus' trial was pronounced on "the Day of Preparation for the Passover" (John 19:14). George Beasley-Murray points out the significance of this:

> The place, the day, and the hour are all mentioned, for the Evangelist is conscious of the momentous nature of the event now taking place .... It is the sixth hour (noon) of the Prepara-

tion Day; at this hour three things take place: Jews cease their work, leaven is gathered out of the houses and burned, and the slaughtering of the Passover lambs commences. The Passover festival, for all practical purposes begins.[42]

John's chronology is no accident. Nor is the mention of hyssop as the stalk on which Jesus was offered a sponge of wine vinegar. It is in an interesting detail that further connects the story with the Passover ritual (cf. John 19:29 and Exod 12:22). The approach of the special Sabbath, which had encouraged the soldiers to speed the deaths of the condemned, further reinforces the fact that Passover is firmly in view. So, it becomes inescapable that, in John's eyes, Jesus is the Passover Lamb whose death will secure the liberation from their enemies (to wit: sin, the law, Satan, death, and judgement) of Jew and Gentile alike, just as surely as the Passover Lamb sacrificed centuries in Egypt before had secured Israel's liberation of Israel from Pharaoh.

John's quotations from the Psalms establish Jesus as the humbled deity who stooped to save, the thirst quencher who thirsts himself to renew life, and the Passover Lamb who dies to remove sin.

The Song of Trust

The song of the Crucified One that Luke recalls in found in Ps 31:5. His account of the crucifixion differs significantly, of course from John's, but also in a number of respects from that of Matthew and Mark. The actual crucifixion is briefly told. What is striking is Jesus' concern for those around him, He tells the women of Jerusalem not to weep for him but for themselves (Luke 23:28). He prays to the Father that the execution squad (and probably the multitude who stand behind them in the story) might be forgiven (Luke 23:34). He assures the dying, but repentant, thief that they would see each other in Paradise that very day (Luke 23:43). Throughout, in line with Luke's general portrait, Jesus is presented as a compassionate Savior.

A second impressive feature of Luke is that he presents Jesus as a trusting Son. Matthew and Mark presented him as a rejected Son. They recorded him as singing the song of desolation, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me" (Psalm 22:1). But this cry is absent in Luke, replaced instead by the song of quiet trust, from Psalm 31, "Father into your hands I commit my spirit" (Luke 23:46). Perhaps, as some have suggested, Luke makes explicit the silent cry referred to by Matthew (27:50) and Mark (15:37). Even if this is true, the fact that they do not provide us the words gives their account an altogether different colour. There need be no contradiction between the two sayings. Relationships are complex and multi-layered. They move swiftly from one form to another. It is easily conceivable that Jesus should have felt that his Father had both deserted him and yet was worthy of trust at the same time.

Donald Senior has insightfully commented that when we face crises "shallow relationships fall away (and) the true values of our deepest soul well up to the surface, and the rare treasures of life and fidelity stand out luminously."[43] So it is that when the crisis breaks, Jesus reveals the quality of relationship he always had with his Father by trusting him, rather than doubting him. He is sure that God would prove trustworthy and that not even his death would prove otherwise. Here is a quiet confidence that all would turn out right and life would not be

snuffed out forever.

Psalm 31 is sometimes considered to be two Psalms joined together since the themes of verses 1-8 are repeated in verses 9-24. But, as Goldingay claims, it is natural to go through things more than once and sometimes it is necessary to pray about something more than once.[44] Though lament and trust are interwoven throughout, the net effect is that we are left with "a model of prayer that is confident of being heard."[45]

The Warp of Lament

It is impossible to be precise as to the situation that lay behind the original Psalm since its language seems to indicate a number of potential threats. Life is in danger (vv. 1-3), testing is near (vv. 4-5), the soul is in anguish (vv. 6-7, especially v. 7c), the body is weak, (vv. 9-10), friends have deserted (vv. 11-13), lies are told (vv. 14-18, especially v.18), hope is holding on (vv. 19-20), and loneliness is real and rejection deeply felt (vv. 21-22). Cumulatively, like the lament of Psalm 22, the picture fits the experience of crucifixion where suffering comes, to use Shakespeare's phrase, "in battalions." Yet, the warp of lament lies alongside the weft of trust.

The Weft of Trust

However extreme the psalmist's experience of suffering he cannot let go of God. The psalmist knows from a range of earlier experiences in life that God is "a rock of refuge" and "a strong fortress" (v. 2), a "crag" ("rock," TNIV) in which to hide, and "a fastness," as Goldingay translates "fortress" in verse 3.[46] God is a God of salvation, whose love sets our feet in a spacious place (vv. 7-8).[47] He is a God of mercy (v. 9), a personal God (v. 14), a good God (v. 19), and a protecting God (v. 23). The logical conclusion of this is that an innocent sufferer should "be strong and take heart," continuing to hope in the Lord (v. 24).

This is the context in which the psalmist commits his spirit to his faithful God (v. 5). The commitment is reinforced by the psalmist's parallel acknowledgement in verse 15 that "My times are in your hands; deliver me from the hands of my enemies, from those who pursue me." Both verses evince a humble trust and a strong faith. The psalmist is saying to God, "I trust my life to your sovereign disposition."[48] The sufferer does not demand, hector, or protest. He does not assert his rights or cry out for justice to be done. He leaves matters in the hands of God. It is up to God what happens to him, and the sufferer is happy that it should be so. He lives in total dependence on the God he knows. All this makes this prayer "eminently suited as the last words of the dying Saviour whose life, from beginning to end, was lived in a unique relationship with God."[49]

But these words also have implications for us. Reflecting on them, Calvin leaves us with this challenge: "To conclude, whoever relies not on the providence of God, so as to commit his life to its faithful guardianship, has not yet learned aright what it is to live."[50]

The last song sung on the cross, which is taken from the collection of Psalms, is not the lament of Psalm 22 but the expression of trust found in Psalm 34. It is appropriate that it should be so, for Jesus' confidence in God was not disappointed. Indeed, further songs could be mentioned that lead us even more clearly to see that God vindicated his Son and led him through the cross and the grave to the resurrection. Ps 16:10 declares, "you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor

will you let your faithful one see decay,"[51] while Ps 118:22-23 reminds us that, "The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. The Lord has done this, and it is marvellous in our eyes."[52]

Conclusion

Indeed, "it is marvellous in our eyes." First, the "Songs of the Crucified One" testify to the exact and detailed fulfilment of messianic prophecy. Second, they lead us deeply into the state of mind of the one who, on the cross, was betrayed, yet accepting; rejected, yet trusting; tortured, yet faithful. Third, they show his ministry to be that of the reconciler, the Lamb who still takes away the sin of the world and the one who quenches the deepest thirst of our fallen humanity. The focus is all on him. As such, he is not only Lord and Savior, but he also proves to be a model of deep spirituality for those who trust him, teaching us how to trust God in the darkness.

ENDNOTES

[1]J. A. Lamb, *The Psalms in Christian Worship* (London: The Faith Press, 1962): 12-15; Gerard Wilson, "The Shape of the Book of Psalms," *Interpretation*, XLVI (1992): 2, 130, n. 3 and 137f.

[2]Lamb, *The Psalms in Christian Worship*, 17.

[3]J. Clinton McCann Jr., "The Psalms as Instruction," *Interpretation* XLVI (1992): 2, 117-28.

[4]According to the list given by Dale A. Brueggemann, "The Evangelists and the Psalms," in *Interpreting the Psalms* (ed. Philip S. Johnston and David G. Firth; Leicester: Apollos, 2005), 264-66. Brueggemann identifies a further nine quotations in Acts, two of which are repetitions from the Gospels. This article is restricted to the Passion narratives in the Gospels otherwise attention might have been paid profitably to the use of Psalm 40 in Hebrews 10:5-7.

[5]Cf. Luke 24:25-27.

[6]For a recent discussion of the interpretation of the Messianic Psalms see, Richard P. Belcher Jr., *The Messiah in the Psalms: Preaching Christ from the Psalms* (Fearn: Christian Focus Books, Mentor Imprint, 2006).

[7]James L. Mays, *Psalms* (Interpretation; Louisville: John Knox, 1994), 105. Others might take a different view, but adopting this approach opens up the wider testimony of the Psalms concerned, which when treated as a whole usually display a remarkably close fit with the crucifixion.

[8]It should be noted that a little recent scholarly work has been done in this area, but not much. See Douglas J Moo, *The Old Testament in the Gospel Passion Narrative* (Sheffield: Almond, 1983), 225-300; and Steve Moyse and Maarten J. J. Menken, ed., *The Psalms in the New Testament* (New York: Continuum, 2004), 25-45 and 61-137.

[9]The scholarly literature rightly demonstrates particular concern with which Hebrew version of the Psalms is being quoted. That will not be our concern here but readers are referred to the literature cited above should they wish to pursue the issue.

[10]John Goldingay, *Psalms, Vol 1: Psalms 1-41* (Baker Commentary on the Old Testament: Wisdom and Psalms; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 582.

[11]John Calvin, *Commentary on the Book of Psalms* (5 vols.; trans. James Anderson; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1949), 2:122.

[12]Peter C. Craigie, *Psalms 1-50* (Word Biblical Commentary; Waco: Word, 1983), 318; and Willem A. VanGemeren, "Psalms,"

in *Expositor's Bible Commentary* (vol. 5; ed. Frank E. Gaebelein; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), 328.

[13]D. J. Williams, "Judas Iscariot" in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospel* (ed. Joel B. Green, Scott McKnight, and I. Howard Marshall; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1992), 406.

[14]For a recent discussion see N. T. Wright, *Judas and the Gospel of Jesus* (London: SPCK, 2006). See pp. 15-20 for a good defence of Judas as "a figure of history."

[15]Cited by George Beasley-Murray, *John* (Word Biblical Commentary; Waco: Word, 1987), 236.

[16]VanGemeren, "Psalms," 326.

[17]E.g., A. Weiser, *The Psalms* (Old Testament Library; London: SCM Press, 1962), 344.

[18]Calvin, *Psalms*, 123f.

[19]Beasley-Murray, *John*, 97.

[20]This section is a summarised version of a longer exposition of Psalm 22 to be found in the author's *The Message of the Cross* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2001), 85-99.

[21]Mays, *Psalms*, 108.

[22]Craigie, *Psalms 1-50*, 200.

[23]Walter Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997), part 2.

[24]Walter Brueggemann, *The Psalms and the Life of Faith* (Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 1995), 67.

[25]See Lev 3:1-17; 7:11-27.

[26]Crucifixion was invented by the Persians and made much use of by the Romans. These details that fit crucifixion so well are either to be understood more loosely of other forms of suffering or encourage one to think of a late date for this Psalm. The reference to "they pierce my hands and feet" is "an exegetical problem," VanGemeren, "Psalms," 207. It could be translated, "like lions they maul my hands and feet."

[27]Alister McGrath, *The Enigma of the Cross* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1987), 104f. See also his, *Luther's Theology of the Cross: Martin Luther's Theological Breakthrough* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1985).

[28]For further details see, Martin Hengel, *The Crucifixion* (London, SCM Press, 1977).

[29]D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 612.

[30]The details can be found in ibid., 611-15.

[31]Moo, *Old Testament in the Gospel Passion Narrative*, 255f.

[32]Margaret Daly-Denton, "The Psalms in John's Gospel," in *The Psalms in the New Testament*, 132f.

[33]Carson, *John*, 614. The explanation falls foul of the same difficulty in relating this to the High Priest's robes. One has to accept that the outer garment shed in the Upper Room is equivalent to the inner garment shed at the cross.

[34]Daly-Denton, "Psalms," 135. She refers to Ps 43:2 and 63:2 but I have followed the usual number system of English translations.

[35]Beasley-Murray, *John*, 351.

[36]Tom Smail, *Once and For All: A Confession of the Cross* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1998), 107.

[37]Scholars differ over whether the allusion is primarily to Ps 34:20 or Exod 12:46 and Num 9:12. Daly-Denton points out the close linguistic parallel between John 19:36 and Ps 34:20 ("Psalms," 135), and so it might have some claim to priority. However, Moo (*Old Testament in the Gospel Passion Narrative*, 314f.) favours the references to the Passover Lamb as having priority regarding these texts as closer to John's wording. I see no need to choose between them.

[38]Goldingay, *Psalms*, 485.

[39]Moo, *Old Testament in the Gospel Passion Narrative*, 316.

[40]Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John 13-21* (2 vols.; Anchor Bible; New York: Doubleday, 1970), 2:934.

[41]I am aware of the debate as to which Lamb John has in view in these verses but believe that, at the very least, the Passover Lamb would have been embraced by his use of the title Lamb of God. See Derek Tidball, *The Message of the Cross* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2001), 177.

[42]Beasley-Murray, *John*, 341.

[43]Donald Senior, *The Passion of Jesus in the Gospel of Luke* (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1989), 166.

[44]Goldingay, *Psalms*, 437.

[45]Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalms 1-59* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1988), 365; and Mays, *Psalms*, 143.

[46]Goldingay, *Psalms*, 438.

[47]A spacious place is one where there is freedom. Cf. 18:19.

[48]Mays, *Psalms*, 144.

[49]Moo, *Old Testament in the Gospel Passion Narrative*, 281.

[50]Calvin, *Psalms*, 503.

[51]Quoted in Acts 13:35.

[52]Quoted in Matt 21:42; Mark 12:10-11; Luke 20:17; and Acts 4:11.

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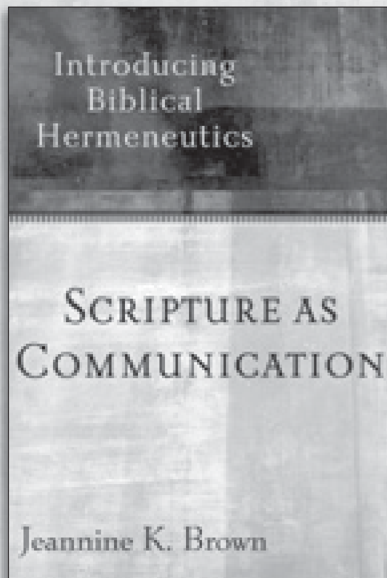

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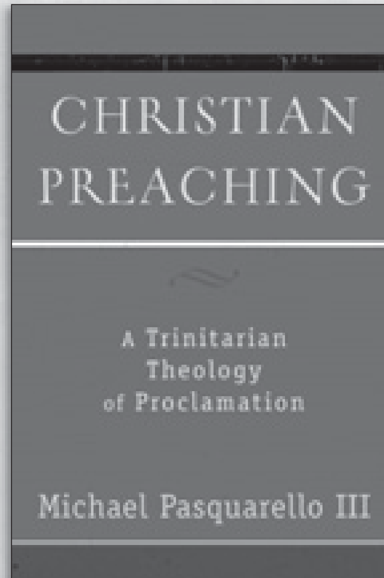

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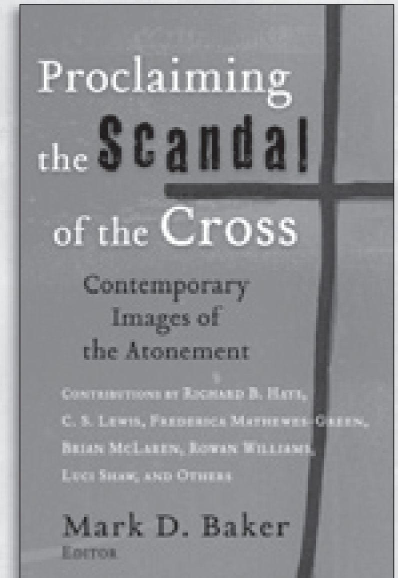

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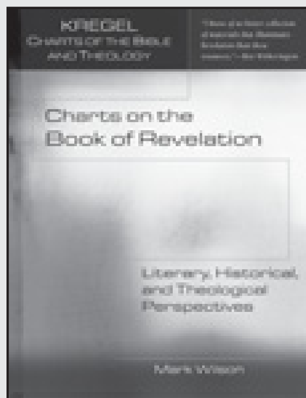

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The Cross and Substitutionary Atonement

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Introduction[1]

A paper about the atonement should need no justification. If the doctrine is under attack (as it frequently is) then there is a need to expound and defend it biblically against its cultured despisers. Even if it is not explicitly under attack, the centrality of the atonement to Christian doctrine requires that we continue to preach it and teach it. So, whether in season or out of season, we all need to be theologians of, and preachers of the atonement.

The focus here will be on the aspect of the atonement usually termed "substitution," for which Robert Letham's and Karl Barth's definitions are helpful:

> Christ himself willingly submitted to the just penalty which we deserved, receiving it on our behalf and in our place so that we will not have to bear it ourselves.[2]

> In His doing this for us, in His taking to Himself—to fulfil all righteousness—our accusation and condemnation and punishment, in His suffering in our place and for us, there came to pass our reconciliation with God.[3]

Although these definitions understand substitution in terms of substitutionary punishment, the issue of penalty will not be treated here below.[4] I intend in this paper simply to answer three questions in connection with substitution. First, *is substitution still important?* Second, *is substitution still alive?* Third, *is substitution still biblical?* The aim of this third section will be both to sift the evidence that has traditionally been used, but also to offer two suggestions of new areas of biblical material that might usefully be taken on board in future discussions of justification.

Is Substitution Still Important?

When does a gospel become a false gospel? Paul knew a heresy when he saw it in Galatia, but Galatians gives us no hard and fast principles to define the limits of acceptable doctrine. This question of where lines should be drawn has become an issue much discussed currently in the U.S.A. with the rise of openness theism, a controversy that seems to have aroused much more than common discomfort. The most recent book on the subject is entitled *Beyond the Bounds*, which, as the title suggests, argues that openness theism is not only wrong but dangerously wrong.[5] In this volume, there is a useful essay by Wayne Grudem that is not focused specifically on the issue of openness theism, but attempts to tackle more widely the problem of heresy. He gives, among other things, some helpful general criteria to assess what constitutes false teaching: for example, under the heading of "Effect on personal and church life," he asks questions such as, "Will this false teaching bring significant harm to people's Christian lives, or to the work of the Church?"[6] This question is significant for our consideration of the *status* of the doctrine of substitution.

The principal reason for this is that

it seems to be logically impossible to have true assurance of salvation if we do not accept that Christ died in our place. The problem with logic of course is that people are not always so consistent that they will inevitably be so logical. But it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that if we do not believe that Christ has in *his* death exhausted the punishment that *we* would otherwise face, then we cannot be certain of escaping the consequences of our sin. Assurance is no optional add-on to the gospel, or something reserved for senior saints: the New Testament constantly asserts or presupposes that assurance of future salvation in Christ is part and parcel of the Christian life. Romans 8.31-39 is one of the most well-known expressions of Christian assurance, in which Paul exhorts his readers: "For I am convinced that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." The ultimate basis for salvation and assurance in Romans 8 is elaborated at the beginning of the chapter: Christian believers have passed *from* being bound to the Law of sin and death *to* the Law of the Spirit of life in Christ (8:2). Hence, "there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (8:1). This is grounded in the atoning work of Christ, in which through the punishment of sin in his flesh, the goal of the Law is reached. Passages such as John 10:11-18 and 1 Pet 1:3-9 are clearly written with a similar aim of instilling assurance. The New Testament, then, assumes that the believer should be able to sing Daniel Webster Whittle's close paraphrase of 2 Tim 1.12:

> I know Whom I have believed,
> And am persuaded that He is able
> To keep that which I've committed
> Unto Him against that day.

There are two contrasting possibilities if one rejects substitution. The first and more obvious consequence of abandoning assurance rooted in the cross of Christ is presumably insecurity at the prospect of judgment. Calvin brings out this point with his characteristic clarity:

> We must specially remember this substitution in order that we may not be all our lives in trepidation and anxiety, as if the just vengeance, which the Son of God transferred to himself, were still impending over us.[7]

Calvin rightly recognizes that no doctrine is an island, and sees clearly the practical, pastoral relevance of substitution.

The alternative to this "trepidation and anxiety" is that rejection of substitution leads to a *false* assurance, as a person is led to rely on something *other than the cross*, whether that be confidence in doctrinal orthodoxy, in membership of the correct ecclesiastical party, or in one's moral calibre.

The integral connection between substitution and assurance is one principal reason, I think, for defending the doctrine of substitution so vehemently. As Fitzsimmons Allison argued in his instructively titled book *The Cruelty of Heresy*, one of the central aspects of false teaching is that it has pastorally disastrous consequences.[8] It is very difficult sometimes to argue that some doctrines are heretical because they detract from God's glory, or even in some cases, that they are inconsistent with Scripture. In the case of substitution, however, it seems that the combination of the Bible's clarity on the issue (as we will see below) and the fact that it is an essential

requirement for assurance means that it is not a legitimate area of disagreement among Christians.

Is Substitution Still Alive? A Review of Recent Literature by Letham, Peterson, and Tidball

At the present time we are actually extremely well served with good literature on the subject. There is of course a lot of bad literature on the atonement, but three recent books in particular are excellent examples of both polemical (in the good sense) defence of the faith, and constructive exposition of doctrine according to its inner logic. The three books are Robert Letham's *The Work of Christ*,[9] *Where Wrath and Mercy Meet*, edited by David Peterson,[10] and Derek Tidball's *Message of the Cross*.[11] All three defend the classic doctrine of penal substitution.

Robert Letham's *The Work of Christ* has the advantage of not being a book about the cross *per se*; rather it follows the pattern of the traditional taxonomy of the work of Christ as the threefold office: Christ as *prophet*, as *priest*, and as *king*. As one might expect, the account of the atonement comes under the second head, as part of Christ's priestly work. He expounds the doctrine of the atonement principally in terms of *penal* substitution. The Levitical sacrificial system, he argues, provides evidence of the penal doctrine in the Old Testament, and Letham's exegesis is generally maximalist in its interpretation of Old Testament texts in penal-substitutionary terms. Corresponding to this are the key New Testament passages such as 2 Cor 5:21, 1 Pet 3:18, and so on. Relying on Leon Morris, Letham sees the principal argument for substitution in the preposition *for* (Christ dying *for* us), and in the famous reference to propitiation (*hilastērion*) in Rom 3:25. (We will be returning to these biblical passages later.) He goes on to *defend* the doctrine of penal substitution, arguing against both theological objections, as well as the caricature of the penal doctrine as "stock exchange divinity." This is an image drawn from Edward Irving via Colin Gunton, parodying penal substitution as a kind of mechanical commercial transaction.[12] Letham comments, "Talk of penal substitution as 'stock exchange divinity' is simply a coded message; its author means 'I do not like it'."[13] The distinctive emphases of Letham's book are a welcome integration of the cross into the work of Christ as a whole, and an emphasis on the death of Jesus in the wider context of his earthly ministry. He notes the way in which penal substitution does not push aside other models of the atonement. While Letham provides an elegant exposition of the doctrine in itself and in the face of critics, it is a shame that the section ends with the rather damp squib of some reflections on Anglican and Roman Catholic dialogue. Again, much of the theological meat of Letham's discussion about the atonement comes in an appendix on limited atonement at the end of the book. But these are rather superficial criticisms of a book full of excellent theological exposition.

The book *Where Wrath and Mercy Meet* is a multi-authored work, but all the chapters really provide a justification for the ongoing importance of penal substitution today. Editor David Peterson contributes two chapters on the biblical evidence ("Atonement in the Old Testament" and "Atonement in the New Testament"). Garry Williams's chapter is entitled "The Cross as Punishment for Sin," and there are essays by M. Ovey ("The Cross, Creation and the Human Predicament") and

P. Weston ("Proclaiming Christ Crucified Today"). All the contributors are, or at least were, lecturers at Oak Hill Theological College, a Church of England training institution.

The various chapters make some points that emerge again and again. The biblical section of the book focuses rightly on the scapegoat part of Leviticus 16, rather than on the offerings whose blood is sprinkled in the Holy of Holies. Peterson and Williams identify the phrase "bearing the sins" as tantamount to "bearing punishment," and assert that the scapegoat does both: they argue for the penal dimension in that the goat goes to its death,[14] and to an *eretz gezerah* ("place of cutting off") in Lev 16:22.[15] Then the book argues that the motif of substitution comes to a high point in Isaiah 53, where Israel's salvation is connected very directly with the servant, who is identified as a scapegoat.

Peterson's first chapter helpfully picks up the observation in the Isaiah commentary of John Oswalt, which points out that the emphasis in Isa 53:4 is on "*he*" who does something for *us*. (This is a point which we will stress further later.) The observation is of "the repeated contrast within the Song between what 'he' the Servant does or endures and the 'we,' 'us' or 'their' group."[16] The substitutionary aspect is particularly clear in the emphatic language of 53:11, which Oswalt renders as "it is *their* iniquities that *he* carries."[17] Isaiah 53.4 could also be said to make a similar point: "our sicknesses *he* carried."[18] The emphasis in *Where Wrath and Mercy Meet* is on the way in which this is taken up in 1 Peter. And we shall see later the same pattern in numerous Pauline statements.

The final chapter of the book does not follow the general approach of *defending* the doctrines of penalty and substitution. Nevertheless, it provides some very salutary points that should influence the way in which we reflect on and preach substitution. The general focus of the chapter is on the need for us to trust the biblical narratives in our preaching and not be over-reliant on illustrations. In particular, we should not use illustrations primarily to "clinch" the argument. Moreover, Weston also observes how a number of illustrations of substitution popularly used can actually have very unhelpful theological implications. The example which he takes is the often-used illustration of substitution from *The Bridge over the River Kwai*, where the Japanese prison camp officer finds a shovel missing and threatens to execute all the prisoners if nobody owns up to the theft. One person steps forward to confess, and is executed, although later it is discovered that due to a miscount, there had not in fact been a missing shovel. But the innocent man had died as a substitute for the many. Weston objects that over-use of emotive illustrations often leads the hearer away from the biblical text, and to focus more on the illustration. What he is equally concerned about, however, is the portrait of *God* that such an illustration paints. Weston's chapter rightly calls for a properly trinitarian understanding of the atonement, wherein God himself undertakes to receive the penalty for sin on our behalf.[19] All talk that carries the implication of a divine punishment on a third party needs the corrective of the theology of the "self-substitution of God" (Stott) or "the judge judged in our place" (Barth).

Derek Tidball's *The Message of the Cross* is organized principally around passages of Scripture, rather than around the components of the doctrine of the cross.

If Letham's book has the merit of setting the theology of the atonement within the wider area of Christ's work more broadly, then Tidball sets it within a wider New Testament theology of the cross. Themes such as the folly of the cross in preaching,[20] the ministry of proclaiming reconciliation,[21] and "a cruciform way of life"[22] also occupy a key place. These sections constitute the theological meat of the book, but in general there is an excellent devotional tone, as the book begins with a review of the understanding of the cross in evangelical history and spirituality, and ends with the great hymns of praise in Revelation.

The middle part of the book deals with the four Gospel narratives. Here, Tidball holds back from seeing substitution here and propitiation there, and instead allows the narrative power of the accounts to shine through. Tidball defends the view that Jesus identifies himself as the suffering servant of Isaiah 52-53, but does not theologize much beyond that here.

Perhaps the most interesting section of the book is the first, which deals with Old Testament anticipations of the cross. He affirms quite rightly the clear presentation of substitution in the Passover, and in Isaiah 52-53, and also deals with Genesis 22 and Psalm 22. In his treatment of Leviticus 16, Tidball focuses on the blood sprinkled in the Holy of Holies, and only devotes a sentence to the scapegoat, which is more clearly substitutionary. He contends that substitution underlies the presentation of the sacrifices in the Levitical system here, which is a fair position to argue. The problem, however, comes when he responds to those who are reluctant to understand the slaughtered offerings in Leviticus 16 in substitutionary terms. He comments, "The sophisticated objections of contemporary men and women sometimes seem to arise more from pride than from anything else. They stand against the long and forceful current of the church's history."[23] The problem with the argument here is not so much with the content: when it comes to the clear depiction of substitution in Isaiah 53 and in the New Testament, I would be tempted to agree. The problem is more with applying this, as Tidball does, specifically to the Levitical system. Leviticus 16 is extremely complicated, and Tidball does not show his usual care here in dealing with the different scholarly interpretations.

He is on much more solid ground in his treatment of Isaiah 53. Interestingly, he highlights the connection between the "suffering servant" and the scapegoat, rather than with the sin offerings and the burnt offering. Here, Tidball's criticisms of Paul Fiddes hit the nail on the head. Comments of Fiddes such as "if the cross of Christ has power to turn the sinner towards good, we may truly say that it wipes away sin" and "the Song of the Suffering Servant SHOWS us the power of sacrifice to transform other human lives"[24] receive this response: "to conclude that the full extent of God's purpose was to bring sinners to repentance by influencing them through the example of the servant is grossly deficient."[25] His explanation of the substitutionary character of Isaiah 52-53 echoes what we noted in *Where Wrath and Mercy Meet*, a point which Tidball makes extremely well: "the emphatic nature of the interplay between HE and OUR in these verses suggests that substitution … is in mind."[26]

With this observation in mind, we can turn to a reassessment of some of the biblical evidence. But I hope that it is also clear from a brief overview of these books

that reports that penal substitution is dead (whether from triumphalistic liberals or over-anxious evangelicals!) are greatly exaggerated.

Is Substitution Still Biblical?

Tidball's remark on Leviticus 16 above indicates the need to be clear about where substitution is in the Bible, and where it is not. Whatever position one takes on Leviticus 16, what should be avoided is the sense one gets from Tidball's exposition that in denying that substitution is in a particular part of the Bible is to deny that it is in the Bible at all. I will attempt here, then, to provide something of an analysis of what I perceive has been helpful and unhelpful in wider biblical scholarship on this question.

The basis of substitution should, in my view, begin with Genesis 1-3, and the understanding that sin leads to death. In Genesis 2, God issues the threat of death for sin: "you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die" (Gen 2:17). In Genesis 3, Adam and Eve receive the penalty of death for their sin (Gen 3:22-23) and this is maintained in the continual references in the Old Testament to the fact that one dies because of sins, usually one's own. To take one example in 1 Kgs 16:18-19, Zimri "died for the sins which he had committed in his evil-doing before the Lord." The NT formulae subvert that expectation of dying for one's own sins in saying that Christ died. Christ had no sin, and yet died for sins. We are sinners, and yet will not die for our sins. We can see very clearly the point about the pattern "*he … for us*" or "*he… for them*" in the following examples:

- *Christ* died *for the ungodly* (Rom 5:6)
- *Christ* died *for us* (Rom 5:8)
- *Christ* died *for our sins* (1 Cor 15:3)
- he made *him* who knew no sin to be sin *for us* (2 Cor 5:21)
- who gave *himself for our sins* (Gal 1:4).
- who gave *himself for me* (Gal 2:20)
- *Christ* redeemed us from the curse of the Law by becoming a curse *for us* (Gal 3.13).
- who gave *himself* as a ransom *for all* (1 Tim 2.6)
- and to give *his life* as a ransom *for many* (Mark 10:45)
- the good shepherd lays down *his life for the sheep* (John 10:11)
- *Christ* suffered *for you* (1 Pet 2:21)
- He himself bore *our sins in his body* (1 Pet 2:24a)
- By *his wounds you have been healed* (1 Pet 2:24b)
- For *Christ* also suffered once *for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous (1 Pet 3:18)*

These examples constitute a significant number of cases of the "he … for us" or "he … for them" pattern. However, it is not the case that all statements about Christ's death *"for* us" *require* the meaning "in our place": the meaning of "for" can be "for the benefit of." Nevertheless, the fact of the interchangeability of statements about Christ's death *for sins* and Christ's death *for us* indicates a substitution. If the statements were limited to talk of Christ's death "for us," then it is possible that the continual implication was of Christ's death *for our benefit*, rather than *in our place*. Statements about Christ's death *for our sins*, on the other hand, mean *taking the consequences of our sins*. The biblical assumption is that death is the consequence of sin, and therefore Christ takes that consequence even though the sin is not his own. In his death, Christ receives the penalty that was due to us.[27] While it would, in theory, be possible to develop this in a non-penal way, in fact it is at this

point in the logic where substitution and penalty become very difficult to prise apart.

In my view, this kind of evidence is much more compelling than complex arguments about the identification of the *hilastērion* in Rom 3:25. It also has the advantage of being very much easier to explain in the pulpit. If we are to assess in retrospect the significance of the Dodd-Morris debate over expiation and propitiation, it is Morris's arguments more broadly for a proper understanding of divine wrath which have survived the exegetical test.[28] C. H. Dodd's frankly feeble arguments for the immanent character of divine wrath simply do not work for Romans 1-2, which is precisely where they need to work if his argument about expiation in Romans 3 is to be believed. On the other hand, Morris's arguments for a clear meaning of "propitiation" from *hilastērion* in Rom 3:25 are not straightforward either, as they rely on pagan Greek parallels to counterbalance the fact that the Old Testament evidence points in a different direction.[29] A growing number of evangelical and non-evangelical commentators tend to view the reference to Jesus as *hilastērion* much more in terms of the *mercy-seat* of Leviticus 16, where the term *hilastērion* clearly does mean "mercy-seat." The idea of propitiation is much better derived from the flow of the argument more broadly, and the idea of specifically *penal* substitution perhaps comes more easily from Rom 8:3 than from Romans 3.[30]

Similarly, when one looks at the sacrificial system, there is additional complexity there. Part of the problem is that in German scholarship there is considerable support for the idea of substitution, but not substitution (let alone *penal* substitution) in the sense in which Anglo-American theologians would generally understand it.[31] The view of scholars such as Hartmut Gese is that in bringing the sin-offering, the worshipper is making an offering which by its death represents the total dedication of the worshipper. Although this may well not be right, the issues surrounding the debate are difficult. Despite the fact, then, that some evangelicals have traditionally invested a lot in the sin-offerings, and the *hilastērion*, I would suggest caution here. This is by no means to say that these are ruled out as evidence, but I would be inclined to encourage more boldness in the "death for sins" formulae than in some of these other images.

Two Proposals

Finally, it may be stimulating to consider two themes which are not ordinarily employed in expositions of substitutionary atonement.

> The Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many (Mark 10:45).

The first is the idea of ransom in Mark 10:45.[32] A point which surprises me in the three books I have mentioned is that they focus (rightly) on the Isaiah background to Mark 10:45, but not on the legal background in Exodus, which probably provides clearer evidence of substitution.[33] This mirrors a strikingly consistent pattern in the commentaries. They mention Exodus in passing, if at all, and then proceed immediately to a long discussion of the apparently far more interesting material in Isaiah. This is true of the commentaries by Cranfield, Lane, Evans and France.

In Mark 10:45, Jesus will "give his life," a phrase clearly meaning to die. The

sense of the term "ransom" is not immediately obvious. In the modern context, it evokes the image of the kidnapper who abducts, for example, a child, and then communicates with the parents in order to procure the payment of a price, on condition of which he will set the child free. Nor is the general OT language of Israel's national restoration particularly closely related to Mark 10:45.[34] The closest parallel to the language of Jesus here in fact comes in the Old Testament judicial law. In Exodus 21, the judicial principles are explained, according to which any who commit murder are themselves subject to capital punishment: "Anyone who strikes someone a fatal blow shall surely be put to death" (Exod 21:12). The chapter delineates what the fair ways are to restitute losses, when one has incurred them at another's expense. The same chapter contains the classic expression of measure-for-measure restitution, *an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth*: "If there is serious injury, you are to take life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, bruise for bruise." (Exod 21:23-24).

A few verses later is the case of the goring bull. If a bull gores a person to death, the bull must be stoned (21:28). However, if it emerges that the bull has a track record of goring, then the owner of the bull is held responsible for not restraining the bull properly. In this case, the owner is liable for the death penalty:

> If, however, the bull has had the habit of goring and the owner has been warned but has not kept it penned up and it kills a man or woman, the bull must be stoned and the owner also must be put to death (21:29).

There is a codicil added to this clause, however. It is possible for the owner to escape death by paying (presumably to the family of the victim) whatever they ask:

> However, if payment is demanded, the owner shall *give a ransom* for *his life,* whatever is demanded (21:30).

Similar language is used later on in the book of Exodus, where during the course of the census, each Israelite must pay the Lord with an offering, in order that he might not receive judgement:

> Then the Lord said to Moses, "When you take a census of the Israelites to count them, each one must *give* the Lord *a ransom* for *his life* at the time he is counted. Then no plague will come on them when you number them" (30:12).

These passages each share in common with Mark 10:45 a connection between "giving," "ransom," and "(his) life": the idea of payment (as in Jesus *giving* his life) to avoid legal retribution, or to avoid the punishment of plague. This is achieved by Jesus' paying his own life. All three (four, including "his") terms in Mark 10:45 are the same as those used in Exod 21:23 where the person who has killed must pay a ransom for the victim. The language that Jesus uses, then, envisages his own life as a "price" that is paid for human sin.

> He asked them again: "Whom do you seek?" And they said, "Jesus of Nazareth." Jesus answered, "I told you that I am he. So if you seek me, let these men go." This was to fulfill the word that he had spoken: "Of those whom you gave me I have lost not one" (John 18:7-9).

Second, let us consider John 18:9. This is the famous incident with which John's account of the trial and death of Jesus (and consequently also Bach's *John Passion*) begins. The officers and soldiers ask for Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus replies "I am he,"

and then says "So if you seek me, let these men go." So far we see a demonstration of Jesus' charity, as Tidball puts it, "showing evidence of the remarkable care for others that would be evident throughout."[35] However, the Gospel-writer John sees far more than this in Jesus' statement. As he puts it, "This was to fulfill the word that he had spoken: 'Of those whom you gave me I have lost not one'" (18:9). The key aspect here is that, if the reference is simply to the physical security of the disciples, the author's explanation is an extremely odd one. The message is much more likely to be that Jesus' death that he must face *alone* as the "lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world" is the guarantee that not one of the disciples will be lost and perish in eternity. It is the fact that Jesus dies alone and thereby guarantees rescue for the disciples that implies substitution here.

These are brief expositions that would require further strengthening, but they are offered here as suggested material (in particular the judicial language from Exodus) which future discussions of substitution could beneficially utilise.

Conclusion

All that remains is briefly to summarize. We saw first with a little help from Calvin and Grudem that substitution is indeed a central Christian doctrine, the rejection of which will be pastorally (and theologically) disastrous. This requires that we engage with the text of Scripture ourselves, not to see substitution everywhere, but to defend the doctrine vigorously by paying attention to the numerous places in Scripture where it clearly does stand out prominently. This may seem a daunting prospect, but we have, to accompany us in this task, three fresh expositions of the historic doctrine. Letham, Tidball, and the staff of Oak Hill Theological College have put us all in their debt by the lucid defences that their volumes provide. This is one debt, however, which can be repaid, by the ransom price of our attentive (and critical) reading of their books.

ENDNOTES

[1]This article was first published in the *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology* 21, no. 1 (2003): 152-65. *SBJT* is grateful for permission to reprint it here.

[2]R. Letham, *The Work of Christ* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1993), 133.

[3]Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* (4 vols.; trans. Geoffrey Bromiley; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1956-69), 4:1:223.

[4]I have discussed it elsewhere, in my "Justified by Faith, Justified by his Blood: The Evidence of Romans 3.21-4.25," in *Justification and Variegated Nomism. Volume II: The Paradoxes of Paul* (ed. D. A. Carson, P. T. O'Brien, M. A. Seifrid; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004).

[5]J. Piper, J. Taylor, P. K. Helseth, ed., *Beyond the Bounds: Open Theism and the Undermining of Biblical Christianity* (Wheaton, 2003).

[6]W. Grudem, "When, Why and for What Should We Draw New Boundaries?," in ibid., 363.

[7]John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (2 vols.; ed. John T. McNeill; trans. Ford Lewis Battles; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2006), 2:16:5. Quoted in M. Davie, "Dead to Sin and Alive to God," *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology* 19 (2001): 162.

[8]C. F. Allison, *The Cruelty of Heresy* (London, 1994).

[9]Robert Letham, *The Work of Christ* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1993).

[10]David Peterson, ed., *Where Wrath and Mercy Meet: Proclaiming the Atonement Today* (Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster, 2002).

[11]Derek Tidball, *The Message of the Cross: Wisdom Unsearchable, Love Indestructable* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2001).

[12]See C. Gunton, "Two Dogmas Revisited: Edward Irving's Christology," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 41 (1988): 367.

[13]Letham, *Work of Christ*, 137.

[14]Williams notes that one meaning of *azazel* is "complete destruction."

[15]The jury is still out, however, on whether this is the correct interpretation, as the phrase could simply mean a distant place. Wenham, however, lists both options as possibilities without adjudicating between them. See G. J. Wenham, *Leviticus* (New International Commentary on the Old Testament; Grand Rapids, 1979), 233-35.

[16]Garry Williams, "The Cross as Punishment for Sin," in *Where Wrath and Mercy Meet*, 80.

[17]J. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah 40-66* (New International Commentary on the Old Testament; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 388 Cited in Williams, "Cross as Punishment for Sin," 81.

[18]Oswalt, *Isaiah 40-66*, 386. Cited in Williams, "Cross as Punishment for Sin," 80.

[19]P. Weston, "Proclaiming Christ Crucified Today: Some Reflections on John's Gospel," in *Where Wrath and Mercy Meet*, 136-63.

[20]Tidball, *The Message of the Cross*, 200-15.

[21]Ibid., 225-26.

[22]Ibid., 232.

[23]Ibid., 77.

[24]P. S. Fiddes, *Past Event and Present Salvation: The Christian Idea of Atonement* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1989), 79-80.

[25]Tidball, *The Message of the Cross*, 108.

[26]Ibid., 107.

[27]Similarly, *ransom* has to imply substitution, although the dominant image is of *price*, rather than of *place*.

[28]Leon Morris's main works here are *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross* (3rd rev. ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965) and *The Cross in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965).

[29]Morris' argument that *hilastērion* cannot refer to the object of the mercy-seat on the basis of the absence of the article must now be considered invalid on linguistic grounds. Since *hilastērion* is the *complement* in the sentence, one would not expect an article. The propitiation view (not necessarily based on Morris' old linguistic evidence) is still followed however by D. J. Moo (*The Epistle to the Romans* [New International Commentary on the New Testament; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996], esp. 234-36) and Peterson, ("Atonement in the Old Testament," 41-42).

[30]However, the demonstration of the divine justice in Rom 3:25-26 does, in my view, point to a penal understanding of Christ's death. (See my essay "Justified by Faith, Justified by his Blood: The Evidence of Romans 3.21-4.25."

[31]See, for example, Hartmut Gese, "Atonement," in *Essays on Biblical Theology* (ed. Hartmut Gese; Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1981), 93-116. This line of thought has had an enormous influence in Germany on both OT and NT scholars, such as Bernd Janowski and Peter Stuhlmacher.

[32]France defines *lutron* ("ransom") as "deliverance by payment of an 'equivalent'" (R.T. France, *The Gospel of Mark* [New International Commentary on the New Testament; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002], 420).

[33]Peterson, ("Atonement in the Old Testament," 30), following C. E. B. Cranfield (*The Gospel according to St Mark* [Cambridge: University Press, 1959], 342) attempts to include the ransom language as part of the Isaiah background by arguing that *lutron* is a possible rendering of *asham* in Isa 53:10, but this is difficult, as *lutron* language never translated *asham* in the LXX.

[34]See, for example, M. D. Hooker, *Not Ashamed of the Gospel: New Testament Interpretations of the Death of Christ* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1994), 55, following her earlier work.

[35]Tidball, *Message of the Cross*, 170; D. A. Carson, *The Gospel according to John* (Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 579, provides a more nuanced account.

Christ Bore the Sins of Many: Substitution and the Atonement in Hebrews

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Introduction

In recent decades there has been a significant reassessment of the atonement within the theological guild, and long-held views such as substitutionary atonement have especially become out of step with many in current scholarship. Accompanying such a reassessment have been a bevy of charges, such as substitutionary atonement is little more than divine child abuse, or that it leads to the oppression of the poor and weak, or that it paints a picture of God as being vindictive and blood thirsty.[1] Further, within evangelicalism itself there is a significant difference of opinion over the very nature of the atonement.[2] Given this, it should come as little surprise that this topic is garnering more interest and reevaluation.[3] We should welcome such reassessment, especially when the topic is as essential to the Christian faith as the death of Christ. It is incumbent on every generation to return to the Scriptures so as to test the veracity of the claims of its theological forebears.

There are many voices within the chorus of New Testament writers, and there is a need for each voice to be heard in its own right. This is never more true than when the issue is the NT writers' interpretations of the death of Christ. Yet quite often in such discussions, Paul's epistles receive star treatment and the spotlight while other writings such as Hebrews are relegated to a "junior varsity" or "special teams" status.

What follows is an assessment of the doctrine of the atonement in the epistle to the Hebrews, with specific attention given to the question of substitution. Does Hebrews affirm this doctrine? What does the author say about the work of Christ with regards to his death as it relates to human sin? If it is true that "atonement through the death of Christ is a more obvious and pervasive theme in Hebrews than in any other New Testament book,"[4] then such a study is more than warranted.

My purpose in the following pages is specifically to focus on the question of substitutionary atonement in Hebrews and to demonstrate that the idea of substitution lies at the heart of the writer's theology of Christ's death. To be sure, substitution is not the only thing that could be said concerning Hebrews and the atonement, but I hope to persuade the reader that substitution is of central importance for the writer of Hebrews. The discussion will proceed in the following manner: First, I will exegete the two primary OT texts, Lev 16:1-34 and to a smaller degree 17:11. Second I will focus on Hebrews 9. In no other portion of the epistle to the Hebrews is the death of Christ more discussed than in 9:1-28. Therefore, significant attention will be given to these verses and to the broader covenantal context of 8:1-10:18. Third, since

the writer of Hebrews arguably cites from the important atonement text of Isaiah 53 in Heb 9:28, this important text must be part of the discussion. Fourth, if Isaiah 53 depicts a measure of wrath-bearing, the question naturally arises as to whether Hebrews has the same in mind in 9:28. Fifth, if such an element is present, then the matter of God's wrath against sin in Hebrews must support such a claim. This will be followed by a brief summary and conclusion.

Biblical Data: Lev 16:1-34 and 17:11

Introductory Matters

In Hebrews, the clear references to the Day of Atonement shed much light on the writer's atonement theology given that he identifies the death of Christ as the fulfillment of the sacrificial system. To be sure, there are more OT sacrifices than those seen in the Day of Atonement, but there are none as significant. With Hebrews' emphasis on blood and purgation from sin, it is clear that the matter of sin and its removal from the covenant people is essential. Such forgiveness and removal is at the heart of the New Covenant, and thus the writer of Hebrews argues that in the death of Christ sins are forgiven. Further, this issue of atonement is found throughout Hebrews, beginning with the epistle's introduction in which Christ's priestly atonement is first mentioned, "when he had made purification of sins" (1:3; cf. 2:17; 5:1-3; 6:19-20).

Regarding the key texts in Leviticus and Hebrews, it seems that at every turn there are questions and disagreements among today's scholars (such as the meaning of *kipper* and the debate over expiation vs. propitiation), but such debate does not mean that answers are impossible. Rather, what is called for is a reexamination of the biblical evidence in order to answer the fundamental hermeneutical question as to what the writer of Hebrews means when he describes Christ's death in terms of the Day of Atonement. Given that most scholars see chapter 9 as the fundamental section to ascertain the writer's atonement theology, and given that there is near unanimity concerning his Christological reading of Leviticus 16 in these verses, it is logical to begin with the OT text that stands at the center of the discussion.

Leviticus 16:1-34

This climactic chapter of Leviticus concludes a lengthy section dealing with matters of purification, and crowns the discussion with directions as to how the people's sins could be atoned for. Ross notes that the central idea of this chapter is "God's gracious provision to provide complete atonement."[5] Verse 34 concludes the passage, "'Now you shall have this as a permanent statute, to make atonement for the sons of Israel for all their sins once every year.' And just as the Lord had commanded Moses, so he did." The people offered sacrifices throughout the year, but it is on this special day that humanity could enter the presence of God (via the representative high priest) and find the mercy and grace of God that provides cleansing from sin's defilement. The deaths of the sacrifices are visible portrayals of what sin requires—the death of the sinner. This identification, Wenham argues, was well understood in OT times, and the idea of substitution is at the heart of the entire sacrificial system. He writes, "In the symbolic system of Israel, clean animals offered in sacrifice represented the Israelite worshipper."[6] No matter the sacrifice, there is a common procedure at the core of the ceremony: the laying on

of hand(s), killing the animal, collecting and using the blood, and burning at least part of the body on the altar.[7] Thus, at the core of each sacrifice is the principle of substitution, and its "immolation on the altar quietens God's anger at human sin."[8] Theologically, what is seen in Leviticus 16 is the gracious provision of God that satisfies the holiness of God and demonstrates his love for and desire for fellowship with his covenant people. By his acceptance of the sacrifices to cleanse the priest and those he represents, it is possible for God the holy one to dwell among a people riddled with sin. His antecedent grace is presupposed in the sacrificial system.

Yet such can only be had on God's terms. After Nadab and Abihu lost their lives in Leviticus 10, Aaron and all subsequent high priests were warned that they were to enter the Holy Place only by means of strict adherence to Yahweh's instructions (1-2). It is noteworthy that Lev 16:1-2 puts the entire ceremony described in vv. 3-34 into a context of "wrath aversion." Though some have suggested that the Day of Atonement does not avert the anger of God over human sin, this view seems difficult to maintain in light of how this climactic chapter begins. The description of the ceremony begins by recalling the tragic events of Leviticus 10, and states that if the priest, the people's representative, does not wish to receive the same treatment as Nadab and Abihu, then all of the following specifics (vv. 3-34) must be obeyed. We see, then, that sin defiles, and God's judgment follows as retribution. "Indeed, the cleanliness regulations and the elaborate ritual required for sacrifices and entrance into God's temple indicate that human beings are unworthy as sinners to enter into God's awesome presence."[9] The presence of sin defiles the holiness of God and brings retributive judgment. As such, the introductory verses set the tone for the ritual. God is angry at sin (vv. 1-2), yet his anger is averted through the bloody sacrifice that cleanses and atones for sin (vv. 3-34).

Some might object that the offense of Aaron's sons is unique, and thus should not be used as evidence for the argument concerning sin and wrath in Leviticus 16. Yet such an objection is answerable from the context. The principle that sin demands death is seen not just in Leviticus 10 or 16:1-2, but arguably throughout the Day of Atonement ritual. What is different is that instead of the sinner himself being killed for his own sins, it is the substitutionary sacrifice of the animal that suffers the fate of death. The difference is that Nadab and Abihu had no substitute for their sin (and thus bore their own penalty), but the principle is still operative quite consistently: sin brings death. Will the sinner pay (as in Nadab and Abihu) or will a substitute pay the penalty? This current flows throughout the chapter.

In verses 3-6, the high priest, dressed in a simple linen tunic, undergarments, sash, and turban first had to be cleansed along with the other priests by offering a bull (v. 6; 11-14). Tidball persuasively suggests that the reason why the high priest dressed so simply was due to the humility required for him to enter the presence of God. When addressing the people as the spokesman from God, he wore the much more elaborate dress of God's authoritative representative to the people, but when addressing God as the people's representative, making atonement for the people in the very presence of God, he came in humble dress as one having no authority.[10] He had to bathe and put on clean garments since he was to enter

the heart of God's sanctuary. Purity was demanded or death was certain. Aaron had to approach God's majestic presence with extreme caution lest his fate parallel that of his two sons.[11] Sin brought death, and this was seen in the sacrificial death of the animal. The blood of the slain bull was to be taken into the innermost sanctuary and sprinkled there on the mercy seat, which atones for the sins of Aaron and the other priests. The young bull was slain instead of Aaron and the priests; their sins must first be atoned for before Aaron can make atonement for the sins of the people. As such, notions of substitution are likely present here.[12] Conversely, one could ask the question of what would be the option if sins were not atoned for by the blood of the animal? What would happen if Aaron were not to slay the bull and offer its blood for sin (Lev 17:11)? From the context, it seems that God's wrath could strike out against Aaron for his sins, were he not to pay heed to the words of the Lord. Thus, it seems that at least at this point there is an element of expiation of sin as well as propitiation of divine wrath. As evidence of the latter, one could point to the events surrounding the burning of the sacrifice. This burning becomes a "soothing aroma" to the Lord (see Lev 1:9; 2:2; 3:5; 4:31). The term translated as "soothing" suggests a divine uneasiness that is quieted by sacrifice.[13] All of the sacrifices detailed elsewhere in Leviticus (particularly Lev 1-5) reached their annual climax in the Day of Atonement ritual,[14] and what was true of the sacrifices on an individual scale (such as the burnt offering and purification offering) reaches its zenith in Leviticus 16. Similarly, Tidball states that all of the instructions about dress, the cleansing of Aaron, the young bull, and the selection of the goats leave one with the powerful impression of God, who is majestic in his holiness, yet who has been "offended in manifold ways by his people."[15] This is what the Day of Atonement was designed to correct.

This action is followed by casting lots for the two goats, one of whom would be sacrificed to the Lord for the sins of the people ("for the Lord," vv. 7-8; 15-19), the other as the scapegoat ("for Azazel," vv. 7-8; 20-22). The first goat ("for the Lord") is then slaughtered as a purification offering for the people (vv. 15-19), and its blood sprinkled in the Holy of Holies on and in front of the mercy seat (v. 15). E. Nicole has shown that the death of this first goat "represented, by its slaughtering and the handling of its blood, the atonement of sin *through substitution*."[16] The mixed blood of both the bull and goat is also used to cleanse the tent of meeting itself along with the sanctuary and the altar (cf. Exod 30:10), having become impure due to the defilements of both priests and people. Wenham notes that the purpose for all of this blood cleansing was to purify the pollution brought into the tabernacle by the people. It was to "cleanse and sanctify the sanctuary and altars from the uncleanness of the Israelites . . . . These atonement-day rituals make the impossible possible. By cleansing the sanctuary they permit the holy God to dwell among an unholy people . . . . Under both testaments there is but one mediator between God and man."[17]

Concerning the second goat, there is much discussion of the meaning of the term "Azazel" in the literature, but the purpose is clear enough despite the various proposals: the goat "for Azazel" symbolically carried away the sins of the people. As Wenham notes, "The symbolism of this ceremony is transparent."[18]

The priest symbolically transfers the sins of the people onto the head of the second goat. Verses 21-22 state,

> Then Aaron shall lay both of his hands on the head of the live goat, and confess over it all the iniquities of the sons of Israel and all their transgressions in regard to all their sins; and he shall lay them on the head of the goat and send it away into the wilderness by the hand of a man who stands in readiness. The goat shall bear on itself all their iniquities to a solitary land; and he shall release the goat in the wilderness.

Vos rightly argues that both of the goats must be taken together in order for the reader to grasp the totality of what is being conveyed. He states that in the symbolism of the ceremony, though there were two goats, the scapegoat

> formed with the other goat in reality one sacrificial object; the distribution of suffering death and of dismissal into a remote place simply serving the purpose of clearer expression, in visible form, of removal of sin after expiation had been made, something which the ordinary sacrificial animal could not well express, since it died in the process of expiation.[19]

Peterson adds, "Both parts of this movement together restore harmony between God and Israel."[20] What is seen in the two goats is a single act of atonement. One dies at the center of the camp, and one is sent to die outside of the camp. Tidball avers, "Both their roles were necessary on this special day. *Both would act as substitutes* for the people of Israel. *Both would bear the sins of Israel*. *Both* would make for full atonement."[21] Thus, the two goats symbolize the cleansing of the people's impurities as well as the removal of their sins. It is one atoning sacrifice in two parts.

This substitution is seen by means of the sins being symbolically transferred via the laying on of hands.[22] This laying on of the high priest's hands points to the fact that the scapegoat bears the sins of the people as a God-ordained substitute, and not mere identification. This is evidenced by the Hebrew term *sāmak* ("to press, lean") in Lev 16:21, where there is an identity between worshipper and victim.[23] Additionally, Lev 16:22 is the only place in the OT in which the sins of the people are explicitly said to be born by an animal. It is in the sending away of the goat to die that one sees a vicarious punishment being carried out. Leach writes, "the plain implication is that, in some metaphysical sense, the victim is a vicarious substitution for the donor himself."[24] Further, it should come as little surprise to find that the Servant of Yahweh in the fourth servant song in Isaiah 52:13-53:12 is the only *person* in the OT who bears the sins of others.[25] To this we will return below. In each of the sacrifices we see that the principle of substitution is at work, the life of the animal instead of the life of the people. The innocent and unblemished dies in place of the sinful and unclean.[26] As such, the people will be forgiven (Lev 4:20).

Yet some such as Jacob Milgrom[27] argue that what is primarily in view here is merely the cleansing or "wiping" of the tabernacle itself. Over time, it becomes polluted, and therefore the meaning of *kipper* should be rendered "to wipe," and in this case, to "wipe clean" the holy place because of ritual uncleanness. Once the uncleanness reaches a certain point, God will no longer dwell there and the people would become the recipients of God's curses. For Milgrom, it is not the sinner that is "wiped clean," but the sanctuary. As such, he sees two different rites involved on the Day of Atonement, one

that purifies the sanctuary via an offering of purification, and one that atones for the moral guilt of the people in the scapegoat. Yet, as many OT scholars note, this is an insufficient reading of the data. The extensive studies of both Kiuchi[28] and Sklar[29] have, in my view, seriously undermined Milgrom's thesis. Concerning the two sacrificial goats, Kiuchi and Sklar each conclude that there is in fact one sin offering in view here with two forms (see above), and that each form deals with the moral guilt of the people. Tidball notes that both atonement offerings removed moral guilt and that the blood does not merely act as a "spiritual detergent," cleaning up what had been unfortunately made dirty.[30] To be sure, the sanctuary is cleansed, but it is so because Aaron momentarily bears the sins and guilt of the people as their representative, and subsequently transfers them onto the live goat by laying his hands on it. When the moral guilt of the people is taken away, the people and sanctuary are clean from the stain brought by the people's rebellion, wickedness, sins, and wrongdoings (Lev 16:16, 21). Guilt is a major concern in the sacrificial system, and blood substitution makes *atonement*, not mere *washing*.[31] In this statement one can see parallels to Hebrews 9 in which the blood of Christ cleanses the guilty conscience in a permanent, non-repeatable way (Heb 9:14; 10:2; ct. 9:9-10). In sum, "the goat that was killed both purifies the sanctuary and atones for people, no less than the goat that was released."[32] One goat is the *means* for propitiation and expiation of Israel's sins while the other goat demonstrates the *effects* of that propitiation and expiation, as Kaiser observes.[33]

After the ceremony participants wash themselves and change their attire (vv. 23-24a, 26, 28), the burnt offerings are then made on behalf of the high priest as well as the people (v. 24b), and the fat of the sin offering is offered up in smoke (v. 25). The bull and the goat whose blood was mixed for the sin offering and sprinkled in the Holy Place are then taken outside the camp to be burned (v. 27). In the final section (vv. 29-34), Moses writes that the ceremony must be kept annually as a permanent rule (vv. 31, 34), and the emphasis here is on the duties of the people. The whole nation must cease from work, and for the ceremony and all of the elaborate efforts of the priest to be effective, all the people must demonstrate true penitence.[34]

Leviticus 17:11

One further text from Leviticus merits discussion. The same principle at work in Leviticus 17:11 ("For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood by reason of the life that makes atonement") is arguably at work in Hebrews 9:22 ("without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness").[35] In his recent doctoral work on the term *kipper*, Sklar concludes that Lev 17:11 "identifies a general theological principle that applies to the atoning sacrifices: the life-blood of the sacrificial animal atones for the life of the offerer. . . . Thus . . . *kipper* in this verse is best taken in the sense of 'ransom.'" He adds, "the traditional reading of this verse . . . is correct, that is, it is stating a general theological principle that applies to all atoning sacrifices, namely, the purification, guilt, and burnt offerings."[36] Similarly, in his work on this verse, E. Nicole rightly argues that substitution is in view, and that *kipper* cannot be reduced simply to the purification of something that is

defiled. Compensation is in view, "which implies God."[37] Such ransom and compensation, paid substitutionally by the sacrifice, turns away that which accounts for the distance between God and people, viz., his wrath towards their sin. Leviticus 17:11 ought to be viewed in terms of averting the destruction of God's wrath due to sin.[38] This is in contrast to Milgrom, who states that while *kipper* does in fact refer to the placation of God's wrath, it only does so *in certain texts*, and argues that ransom from the wrath of God is *not* present in cultic texts such as Leviticus 16 and 17.[39] In his treatment of 17:11, Milgrom argues that only the peace offerings are in view.[40] Yet his attempts to segregate cultic from non-cultic texts in Leviticus are, as Schreiner notes, ultimately dissatisfying in light of the biblical evidence and context.[41] Nicole concludes, "Therefore, in *kipper* rites, purification cannot be disconnected from compensation: through compensation given to God, purification and forgiveness were granted."[42] So, we see that along with the aspect of cleansing we also see compensation (Nicole) or ransom (Sklar) given to God for the offenses committed. This comes via the death of the substitute victim.

The preceding points about purification and forgiveness are helpful for the present study, since they may support the conclusion that for Hebrews there is more than mere purification in view. The sacrificial victim is a sin offering both *to God* and *for the people*. Both cleansing and reconciliation are granted to the worshipper. As in the Day of Atonement, human beings needed more than purification, they needed forgiveness and reconciliation.[43] This is in contrast to the tabernacle and its objects which only needed to be cleansed (impersonal objects cannot be reconciled). This is where, I think, some have erred: looking chiefly to the *objects* in the tabernacle and the tabernacle itself in the Day of Atonement ceremony, and therefore seeing only purification in the cultus. Defiled *objects* need only to be cleansed. Yet defiled *people* need more than to be ceremonially cleansed. We cannot overlook the important fact that for the penitent worshipper (what Morris calls "the right internal disposition"[44]) purification from sin is only the *means* to the end. What is needed is reconciliation and forgiveness—restoration of the relationship to God broken by sin—and that is something tabernacle objects cannot possess. The distance between God and people caused by sin is visibly manifested in the fact that the people had only limited access to the divine presence in the Old Covenant. Yet in Hebrews' treatment of the New Covenant, all of these elements are spoken for. Purification from sin is procured (1:3; 7:27; 9:11-14; 10:10, 14), forgiveness is granted (8:12; 9:24; 10:17-18), relationship with God is no longer hindered (8:10-11), and unfettered access to the presence of the Lord is granted (Heb 4:16; 6:19-20; 10:19-20). Again, purification cannot be disconnected from forgiveness, since in the accomplishing of the New Covenant work, Christ purifies and reconciles sinful people to the holy God.

In the Day of Atonement ritual of Leviticus 16, we see that sin is cleansed by the blood of substitutionary animal sacrifice. This is also seen in Leviticus 17:11. The transgressions of the people have brought impurity to the tabernacle which is cleansed by the blood sacrifices. This atones for the people's transgressions and brings purity to both people and tabernacle. As a result God will continue to dwell among his people. The two parties

are reconciled, given that the sin and guilt of the people are removed by the substitution of the animal for the human. In such acts of *kipper*, humans are the beneficiaries of the verbal action, and the action "was not performed *upon him* [the worshipper] . . . but for *his sake*, outside of him."[45] As such there is an inextricable connection between purification from the person's sin and ransom/compensation to God to placate his offense. Thus we may conclude that in the Day of Atonement ritual, the deaths of the animals are substitute deaths in place of the people.[46] Further, as noted above in the comments on Lev 16:1-2, the cultus is set out in a framework of averting God's wrath against sin. Sin brings death (an axiom seen from the beginning of the Torah in Gen 1-3), and it is no different here. Sin brought the death of Aaron's sons, and would also bring about the death of all of the people, unless their penalty was absorbed by the blood of bulls and goats in the Day of Atonement ritual.

Biblical Data: Hebrews 9

Introductory Matters

Given the conclusions from Leviticus 16 above, and since the writer of Hebrews tells us that the OT sacrifices (first and foremost the Day of Atonement) served as a shadow (10:1) and type or parable (9:9), then we would do well to think in terms of Leviticus when we interpret Hebrews 9. To be sure, there are significant hermeneutical questions concerning the writer's usage of the OT. Though these matters are important, this is not the place for such a lengthy discussion. I have written about this matter elsewhere,[47] and in short one may conclude that the writer of Hebrews is essentially an OT expositor who does not run roughshod over OT meaning. Graham Hughes is correct when he argues that the OT permits the NT writer meanings that are found in light of new revelation.[48] There is continuity between the testaments because it is the voice of God in each, and this revelation only comes into full view by looking at the OT through the person and work of Christ (rather than proof-texting or making use of Philonic exegesis, etc.). Hofius properly argues that for the writer of Hebrews, Christ is the interpretive and hermeneutical key.[49] In these eschatological "latter days" God has spoken in his Son (1:2), and it is in this present "time of reformation" (9:10) brought about by the person and work of Christ that the light of his new revelation can shine back onto the Old Covenant's rituals in order to fully grasp their place and significance. They were a parable and shadow that outlined the reality to come in Christ. As such, the writer of Hebrews' hermeneutic is patently Christological; he views the OT (specifically here the cultus) through the lens of Christ in terms of expectation and fulfillment. This hermeneutic seems clearly to be at work when the writer of Hebrews interprets the death of Christ by means of it fulfilling the Day of Atonement.

At the outset of this section, two things must be stated before proceeding. First, we must think logically and in a historical-redemptive framework about the relation between (1) the death of Christ, and (2) the Day of Atonement and the other purification rituals noted in Hebrews 9. The OT sacrifices are types and parables, mere outlines of the very form of things (10:1).[50] As such, no single type can adequately and fully prefigure the antitype on its own. This is why the sacrifices are referred to as part of the shadow that the Law possesses (10:1).[51]

We must see that each of the sacrifices referred to in Hebrews 9 point to the one sacrifice of Christ, and thus if we are to understand *them* we must understand *Christ's* sacrifice, and not the other way around. This explains how the writer of Hebrews can put together the daily sacrifices, those on Yom Kippur, the red heifer, and covenant inauguration. They all teach the importance of blood as it pertains to cleansing and access to the divine presence.[52] To be certain, they illumine and prepare, functioning pedagogically for what would come in the person and work of Christ. The Day of Atonement does not exhaust the meaning of the death of Christ (9:6-10; 23-25). Similarly, neither the covenant inauguration ritual (9:18-22), nor the red heifer purification ritual (9:13) exhausts the death of Christ. Each of these have something in common to be sure (sacrificial blood), but they each need to be considered separately and together if we are to comprehend the many contours of the death of Christ. *He* is the form, *they* are the shadow. His one New Covenant sacrifice corresponds to the many Old Covenant sacrifices; his single sacrifice fulfilled all of the anticipatory sacrifices under the Old Covenant. His blood atones for sins and cleanses (Lev 16:1-34; Num 19:9, 17), as well as inaugurates the New Covenant (Exod 24:3-8). These are the main emphases of the writer of Hebrews, as seen in chapter 9: atonement for sin and (new) covenant inauguration.

Since no single sacrifice can bear a one-to-one correspondence to Christ's, then it should come as no surprise that when we turn to Hebrews 9 we find more than the Day of Atonement present. Further, since the proper starting place for the writer of Hebrews is the cross, we should not attempt to make every aspect of Leviticus 16 correspond to the cross of Christ, as though Yom Kippur casts a mold into which the work of Christ must fit in every contour. Certainly there is much correspondence, but there is not *perfect* correspondence between Yom Kippur and Calvary. For example, in Leviticus 16 the high priest first sacrifices the animal and then takes the blood into the Holy of Holies. Thus his work has more than one step in the OT's instruction. Yet the writer of Hebrews argues that the work of Christ is completed on the cross, and he nowhere states that the Lord carries his own blood into the presence of God.[53] His work was completed on the cross (in contrast to many Roman Catholic scholars who argue for his continued and perpetual sacrifice). Hebrews 9:12 should be translated as "*after* he obtained eternal redemption, he entered the Holy Place once for all," where he *sat down* as ruler and Lord (Ps. 110:1).

Second, in Hebrews this is all couched in the context of covenant, specifically the New Covenant. Structurally, Hebrews 9 is part of the larger section of 8:1-10:18, which bordered by the inclusio of Jeremiah 31 (8:8-12 and 10:16-18).[54] Exegetically, the Jeremiah text serves as a broad framework for the entire present section, which answers questions that the Jeremiah text raises. Hebrews 9:1-10:18 is an explanation of Jeremiah's prophecy,[55] with the Jeremiah text forming the basis for the writer's ensuing argument. However, Jeremiah makes no mention of the *means* and *manner* by which his prophecy would be fulfilled, how the New Covenant would be established, or how its blessings would take effect.[56] Answers to such fundamental questions lie with the writer of Hebrews in his Christological exposition of Jeremiah through the hermeneutical lens of the "latter day" revelation of the Son (1:1-2).

It is only now, in light of the new eschatological revelation from God, that what Jeremiah foretold can be explained. Such an explanation by Hebrews, in light of the present voice of God in Christ, is in keeping with the writer's hermeneutic. France asserts, "The means by which the problem of sin is finally dealt with may not have been specifically present in Jeremiah's mind, but it involves no distortion of the significance of his words to identify it in the single sacrifice of Christ to take away sins once for all."[57] A covenant that assures forgiveness of sins must be inaugurated with blood, and if there is to be sacrifice then there must be blood as well.

In short, Jeremiah's prophecy of a new covenantal arrangement cannot be understood except in terms of OT cultic practices (i.e., atonement), since sins are dealt with by means of sacrificial blood (9:22). As Ellingworth rightly states, "Purification by blood under the Mosaic law points to the need for blood to be shed under the new covenant, in order that sins might be forgiven."[58] The announcement of a new covenantal arrangement that promises forgiveness of sins would have brought to mind the factors of sacrificial death, blood, priesthood/mediation, and the like, and in Hebrews 9 the Day of Atonement is the chief "connecting link" for explaining the initiation of the New Covenant.[59] In other words, merely the announcement of Jeremiah's New Covenant prophecy frames the cultic backdrop of what follows in Hebrews 9, and the typological structure for understanding Christ's death *primarily* stems from the Day of Atonement for the writer of Hebrews. I would also argue that after the announcement of Jeremiah 31, a discussion of blood and sacrifice would have been *expected*.[60] The author's main point is to demonstrate that the New Covenant and its better promises (8:6) are present by means of Christ's work. Scullion rightly notes, "the new covenant promises forgiveness of sins . . . and the Yom Kippur blood rite provides the mechanism to explain how this forgiveness is effected." The cultic ritual is more than a mechanism—it is a shadow (10:1), a parable (9:9) and a type pointing to what Christ would ultimately do. Jeremiah announces the ends (internalization of the Law, forgiveness of iniquities), while Hebrews explains the means (the atoning blood sacrifice, and the mediation of Christ). Therefore, both structurally and exegetically the context of the atonement in Hebrews is one of covenant.

Given the above brief sketch of writer's hermeneutic and the explication of Leviticus 16 above, I suggest that it is best to interpret the death of Christ in Hebrews 9 in a manner that corresponds to Leviticus 16 unless guided to do otherwise by the writer of Hebrews. In other words, if there is substitution and atonement in Leviticus, we should not be surprised to find the same in Hebrews, albeit expanded in a decidedly Christological direction.

Hebrews 9:1-10

This brief section is set apart by the inclusio regarding Old Covenant regulations in 9:1 and 10, and establishes the cultic character and tone so explicit in Hebrews 9.[61] Verse 1 announces two topics that verses 2-10 take up in reverse order: the earthly sanctuary (9:2-5) and regulations for worship (9:6-10).[62]

In verses 2-5 the writer stresses the earthly nature of the tabernacle, which will soon be contrasted to the heavenly sanctuary (9:11). The tabernacle, with its two divisions and strict regulations were a continual reminder of the holiness of

God and the ritual impurity of the people. There was no direct access to God for the people in the earthly tent. Only priests were allowed to serve the outer tent, and the inner tent, the Holy of Holies, could only be penetrated by the high priest once a year.[63] There was distance between the Lord and the people caused by the incompatibility of their sin and his holiness.

In verses 6-10, the writer of Hebrews draws from the Day of Atonement ritual and brings out its unique character in verses 6-7.[64] The *men . . . de* construction ("on the one hand . . . and on the other") in verses 6b-7 contrasts the priests who continually serve in the outer tent with the high priest who has the specific duty to enter the holy place once per year. Blood (*haima*) is mentioned for the first time in this section (9:7), and anticipates 9:18 and 9:22.[65] In Hebrews' theology, it is only by blood that cleansing from sin can occur in both the Old Covenant and New Covenant, and blood (i.e., the pouring out of the victim's life in place of another, see above on Lev 17:11) must therefore play a central role in his explanation of Jeremiah 31. Blood, in this respect, is seen as the medium of cleansing (9:21-22) and thus forgiveness and restoration of the relationship between God and people, and is found throughout Hebrews 9 (7, 12, 13, 14, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, and 25). Johnsson points to the importance of blood in Leviticus 16, and of sin as defilement and ritual impurity that can only be cleansed with blood.[66]

We should recall blood shed on the Day of Atonement blood is largely *substitutionary*. Aaron first sacrificed for himself and his family, then the priests, and then for the sins of the people that had polluted both them and the tabernacle. We saw that the goat ceremony especially demonstrated this in two ways: the first goat died in place of the people to purify them of their many sins committed throughout the year, while the second goat bore their sins, carried them away, and died in the wilderness.[67] In the goat ceremony, we see that the consequences of sin, namely defilement/guilt and God's wrath against sin, are summarily dealt with. That the writer of Hebrews has this ceremony in mind is seen in his reference to the goats in 9:13 and 10:4. That the Day of Atonement is in view is clear, and the vast majority of Hebrews scholarship is in agreement that Yom Kippur forms the main OT backdrop for the writer's discussion of Christ's work throughout Hebrews 9, (cf. 6:19-20; 10:19-20).[68]

Verses 8-10 give the writer's evaluation of the tent (9:8) and the sacrifices (9:9-10). The structure and regulations of the sanctuary have a profound meaning that is now only shown via the Holy Spirit in these present eschatological latter days. The cultic regulations had a symbolic significance that is only now understood.[69] The point is that while there is a sacrificial system (carried out in the outer compartment of the tabernacle), there is no real access to God in the true, heavenly sanctuary (see 8:2).[70] The parenthetical comment of verse 9a ("which is a symbol/figure for the present time") indicates that the first tent (*tēs prōtēs skēnēs*) was a parable (*parabolē*) that "symbolizes the total first covenant order with its daily and annual cultic ritual."[71] External washings and regulations do nothing for the heart/conscience,[72] and thus stand in contrast to the internal work that is at the heart of the New Covenant blessings, promised in Jeremiah and inaugurated by the blood of Christ.

Continuing, such external sacrifices

cannot perfect the worshipper in his or her conscience.[73] Lane notes that *suneidēsis* (conscience) is typically used in the negative sense of a conscience that is plagued by guilt that is an "internal witness that defilement extends to the heart and mind."[74] It is telling, therefore, that the heart and mind are precisely in view when one considers that the New Covenant's better promises specifically address the heart and mind of the people (8:6, 10-11; 10:16). What the Day of Atonement could only do symbolically, Christ has done in the *true* Day of Atonement, the Day of Atonement *par excellence*. The purification via the death (blood) of Christ has brought real cleansing, a purification that is internal, rendering the worshipper perfect in conscience, in contrast to and yet in fulfillment of the external rites of the old.

Hebrews 9:11-14

The writer of Hebrews' theological aim of verses 11-28 is to demonstrate that Christ fulfills the Day of Atonement ritual in his death and self-offering as the new high priest, and that this self-offering both permanently atones for sin as well as inaugurates the promised New Covenant. Whereas 1-10 are largely negative, verses 11-14 are positive and set forth the matters for discussion in 9:15-28. In contrast to the inability of the earthly tabernacle (vv. 1-10), the new eschatological order (vv. 11-14) brings with it the greater and more perfect tabernacle. Thus, the conscience is cleansed from sin and access to God is granted.[75] By means of Christ's entering the holy place in heaven by offering his own blood, he has secured the transformation of the worshipper guaranteed in 8:10-12. Peterson asserts that the writer of Hebrews makes use of the positive promises of the Jeremiah text at this point, in that both cleansing from sin and the promise of obedience are in view in verses 11-14.[76] Forgiveness of sins *and* obedient service are the effects assured to the believer by means of Christ's work.[77]

Verses 11-14 are the core of the writer's argument concerning the superiority of the death of Christ.[78] In 9:11, the writer of Hebrews transitions by noting, "But[79] when Christ appeared as a high priest," which reinforces the idea that the event in mind is specifically the Day of Atonement (9:7). The fundamental distinction between the priests and the high priest was the latter's function on the Day of Atonement. Thus, identifying Jesus as the *high* priest calls to mind the priestly activity outlined in Leviticus 16. Grammatically, though Christ does three things (appears as a high priest, enters the holy place, obtains eternal redemption), the main clause of 9:11-12 is "Christ entered the holy place" (*Christos…eisēlthen…eis ta hagia*) via the heavenly counterpart to the earthly tent (*skēnē*).[80]

It is in this section that the comparisons between the high priest on the Day of Atonement and Christ at the cross reach their zenith. They entered an earthly tabernacle, he the heavenly "holy place" (*ta hagia*) which is synonymous with the right hand of God.[81] They came with blood of unwilling animals, he willingly offers his own blood. Their entrance into the Holy Place was repeated[82] and brief, whereas Christ entered once and for all. The result of their offering was limited and repeated, while his is an eternal redemption. In Christ, the good things have now come.[83] The blood of their offerings cleansed only temporarily and externally, while Christ's cleanses and perfects the inmost disposition of man, his accusing and guilty

conscience. The result is eternal redemption via the non-repeatable sacrifice of Christ, and not by the medium of the blood of goats and calves and ashes of a heifer.[84] Windisch rightly concludes that the unique offering of Christ brought the animal sacrifices to an end.[85]

The *a fortiori* argument of verses 13-14 states that if animal sacrifices can sanctify on some external level, how much more cleansing is there by the blood of Christ? In the Old Covenant sacrificial system, there was an element of cleansing that occurred each Yom Kippur, yet it was merely external, cleansing the flesh only.[86] This is in contrast to the internal cleansing that is assured in the New Covenant (9:14). Christ effects in reality what the cultus could only provide symbolically and in seminal form. The self-offering of Christ procures the internal cleansing of the conscience *from* dead works and *to* obedient service to God. Those who draw near to God through Christ's sacrifice *are* perfected,[87] in direct contrast to 9:9. Once there is an *internal change*, the tabernacle and its rituals are no longer necessary.[88] Such cleansing in 9:14 leads to a change of heart, and generates service to God. The result is worship expressed in a life that acknowledges the name of God (13:15), loves fellow Christian brethren (3:13; 10:24-25), and is pleasing to God by means of obedience (13:16). The effective purgation of the conscience and its orientation to obedient service is the epitome of the New Covenant promises in 8:10-12, and draws attention to the specific matter of covenant (*diathēkē*) taken up in 15-22.

Additionally, the note that Christ was the offering "without blemish" (*amōmon*) in 9:14 further reiterates the cultic context and helps to draw the conclusion that the Day of Atonement is never far from his mind when he thinks of the death of Christ. This adjective is found over twenty times in the LXX of Leviticus alone, and is explicitly applied to the sacrificed bull in Leviticus 4 as well as to the sacrificed goat in Leviticus 4 and 9, both of which are found in Hebrews 9. Additionally, upon observing Hebrews' emphasis on the blamelessness of Christ as sacrifice Thielman avers, "It is difficult to see why the author would place such a stress on Jesus' sinlessness precisely in speaking of his sacrificial death, unless this sacrifice contained a substitutionary element."[89]

Hebrews 9:15-22

Logically and grammatically speaking, verse 15 is the climax of 11-14 and 16-22 are a parenthetical explanation of verse 15.[90] Here the spotlight is not on the Day of Atonement (resumed in 9:23-28), but on the covenant initiatory rite (see Exod 24:3-8). Because of all of these things, he is therefore the mediator of the New Covenant, which reinforces the idea that the bigger picture in Hebrews 9 is covenant inauguration. Further, the death of Christ brought about the release/redemption of the transgressions committed under the first (i.e., Mosaic) covenant. As such, in 9:15-22 the writer of Hebrews focuses on Christ's blood as the basis for the (new) covenant inauguration. Just as blood was shed in the inauguration of the Old Covenant (Exod 24:3-8), so also is there blood shed for the inauguration of the New Covenant. To be sure, there remains substantial debate concerning the translation of *diathēkē* (covenant) in 9:16-17,[91] and it is my understanding that the focus of these verses is more on death as it inaugurates a covenant via the priestly mediator (*diathēkē* = "covenant"), than on death as a prerequisite for an inheritance

(*diathēkē* = "will" or "testament").[92] Yet, the fundamental point of these verses is less debated and are established by 9:15, viz., a death has occurred for redemption.[93] These verses support the necessity of Christ's death for the inauguration of the New Covenant and the realization of its blessings; [94] death makes a covenant operative.[95] This dictum reinforces the point that for Hebrews there must be death if there is to be a new covenantal arrangement, even though Jeremiah did not specify precisely *how* the new arrangement would be enacted.[96] The "how" is left to the Christological development of the writer of Hebrews.

Further, since Christ is mediator (*mesitēs*) of the New Covenant (9:15; cf. 7:22; 8:6; 12:24), there must be blood, since even the Sinai covenant was marked by blood (9:18-22). The New Covenant has a new foundation (the blood of Christ), and is therefore a decidedly *new* work. Vanhoye rightly observes that Christ's blood at once fully atones for sin (under both the Old and New Covenant) as well as inaugurates the New Covenant, and concludes that such is an "astonishing coalescence."[97] Attridge is helpful, asserting that under the Old Covenant sins could not be expiated, and thus Christ's work had a "retrospective" effect.[98] Further, the unique substantival use of the perfect passive participle in 9:15 (*hoi keklēmenoi*) refers to "those that have been called" under *both* Old Covenant and New Covenant. As such, the sins of the true people of God (those called and marked by faith), in both Old and New Covenant, are forgiven in the atonement of Christ. The person and work of Christ consummated the old order and inaugurated the new. "As the priestly mediator of a new covenant, he is able to administer the eschatological blessings that specify the newness of the *diathēkēs kainēs* [new covenant]."[99]

Verse 18 states that the first covenant "was ratified with blood," again marking the importance of blood in the covenant procedure. Verses 19-22 support and explain this statement. After Moses gave every commandment of the Law, he sprinkled the book of the Law as well as the people with blood, thus inaugurating the Old Covenant with blood. The two aspects of blood (medium of purity and covenant inauguration) coalesce in the citation from Exodus 24:8 in Hebrews 9:20. For Hebrews, since the Old Covenant had blood, Jeremiah's New Covenant must have blood as well. That blood has a cleansing function is clear from verses 21-22, and this section concludes with the summary statement that "according to the Law" almost everything is cleansed (*katharizetai*) by means of blood.[100] Dunnill avers, "*defilement* is the fundamental religious problem, which sacrifice confronts by providing *purgation* by means of *blood*."[101]

Verses 15-22 conclude with the maxim that there is no forgiveness without bloodletting (9:22). No one in Judaism could have argued with such a statement. It is the biblical author's theological purpose to affirm this fundamental truth, as well as to argue that it is Christ's blood, and not that of animals, that effects true forgiveness and internal cleansing from the defilement of sin. Far from a mere canceling of the rubric of the cultus, the writer of Hebrews takes pains to show that the Old Covenant cultus has met its end and goal in the New Covenant "cultus."

Hebrews 9:23-28

The final section of Hebrews 9 is essential for the present discussion, and further

demonstrates that the writer of Hebrews sees the death of Christ in terms of substitution. This is most clearly seen as he crowns the present discussion with an allusion to Isaiah's fourth Servant Song (Is 53:12) in 9:28. The verb *katharizō* (to cleanse) serves as a catchword that forms a link between verses 15-22 and the final pericope of Hebrews 9, in which there is a return to Day of Atonement imagery. Logically, 9:23 concludes what has come before (*oun*, therefore), and recalls the contents of 9:11-14.[102] The emphasis in these verses is on the definitive character and finality of the work of Christ accomplished in the true tabernacle of heaven.[103] The cleansing occurs in heaven itself (*auton ton ouranon*) where the exalted high priest enters the very presence of God and appears there on behalf of his people (9:24). Verses 25-26 make the point clear that Christ is not like the Levitical high priests who repeatedly offer sacrifices yearly on Yom Kippur. If his offering were like that of the sacrificial system, then Christ would have to be offered continually from the beginning of time. His sacrifice is superior and has been offered at the consummation of the ages to put away sin.

Heb 9:27-28 and Isa 53:12

The final sentence of Hebrews 9 (vv. 27-28) is quite important to the present study, and asserts that Christ offered himself once "to bear the sins of many." Such an allusion to Isaiah 53:12 places the death of Christ firmly in the category of substitution for the writer of Hebrews. Many Hebrews scholars have identified a reference here to Isaiah 53:12.[104] Hebrews 9:28 reads that Christ was offered once "to bear the sins of many" (*eis to pollōn anenegkein hamartias*), compared to Isaiah 53:12 (LXX) where it is said of the Servant of the Lord that "he himself bore the sins of many" (*autos hamartias pollōn anēnegken*). Seifrid is representative when he states that in 9:28, the writer of Hebrews "obviously recalls the substitutionary suffering of the Isaianic Servant (Is 53:4-12)."[105]

In the context of Isaiah 53:12 one finds that the Servant is the substitute for others, in that his undeserved sufferings deliver the people. This point comes to the fore in 53:4-12 (esp. 4-6; 10-12). The Servant does not merely suffer alongside the people, or even as a result of the sins of the people, but instead "suffers *for* them, and because of that, they do not need to experience the results of their sins."[106] As Oswalt points out, the exegesis of Orlinsky and Whybray[107] is a bit nearsighted, and does not satisfy the context of Isaiah 52-53. It is not the point of these verses, as Orlinsky and Whybray argue, to assert that the people had already born their sin in their captivity and defeat, and thus that the Servant described here merely suffers *with* the people as a result of their sins, with no thought of a substitutionary death present. In his remarks on this thesis Childs says of Whybray, "In my judgment, this bland and even superficial understanding of the passage serves as a major indictment of his conclusions."[108] Rather, the divine Servant bears the consequences of the people's sins. The contrast running throughout Isa 53:4-12 is "him" vs. "we." He suffers, but it is "we" who have actually sinned. This contrast of "him" and "we/us/our" is even seen in the syntax of both the MT and LXX, where the placement of the pronouns stress this emphasis on what "he" has done for "us." Oswalt notes this to be true in the MT, and a reading of the LXX makes this clear as well (esp. in 4-6, 7). It is "our sickness and pains" that he bears, and "this man has

been stricken because *we* are sinners."[109] Thus, substitution seems to be in view for Isaiah 53.

That the Servant "carries" and "bears" brings to mind the Levitical cult wherein the animal carries away the sins of the offerer, so that he does not bear them any longer, dying in his place (recall discussion above on Lev 16, 17). This language appears in vv. 4, 11, and 12 and casts the Servant's death in substitutionary terms. Verse 5 states that the Servant was pierced through and crushed for the rebellion and sin of the people. Further, his suffering is seen to be accomplished by God. Childs notes that God is the active agent in the suffering of the servant, and "what occurred was not some unfortunate tragedy . . . but actually formed the center of the divine plan for the redemption of his people and indeed of the world."[110] Further, it is the people's *punishment* that is born by the Servant, which amounts to *penal* substitution given that the Servant bears the consequences of the people's sins, which all knew ultimately to be death (recalling Gen 1-3). As Oswalt summarizes, "In the Servant, he [God] has found a way to gratify his love and satisfy his justice."[111] Further, it is a "double injustice" that the Servant bears the punishment of the people, yet he has done nothing (vv. 7-9). How can this be? The answer lies in the final stanza of the song, verses 10-12, from which the writer of Hebrews cites.

Isaiah writes that God "was pleased to crush him" and "put him to grief," to give up his own life/soul for sin so that God's purposes could be realized. He offers his own life as a guilt-offering, which in this context must be for the sins of others since the poet goes to great lengths to make clear the Servant's innocence. Thus Thielman rightly notes that "Isaiah understood the guilt offering generally as substitutionary and described the Servant's suffering within this framework."[112] The Servant will see the fruit of his suffering (vv. 10b-11), and will have offspring and a long life having accomplished the Lord's task for him. Success and divine blessing is promised both to the Servant as well as his people (v. 11). By his suffering, the many are made righteous (v. 11b). How can this be? Because "he will bear their sins" (*tas hamartias autōn autos* a*noisei*) in verse 11b and in verse 12, "he himself bore the sin of many" (*autos hamartias pollōn anēnegken*).

"What does this mean?" Oswalt asks rhetorically.[113] It means that the Servant's death is redemptive and it finds its "true fulfillment in the realization of what the whole sacrificial system prefigured."[114] Isaiah here leaves little room for doubt when he remarks that the "many are made righteous" (v. 11) because the Servant of Yahweh bears their sins in their place. They receive righteousness and peace, since their sin and guilt has been born by another. As a result of this, the Servant is exalted, being granted "a portion with the great;" he is the victor, dividing the spoils (53:12).[115] This verse essentially summarizes what has come before, and is the climactic end to the Servant Song. The innocent one who dies in the place of others is not defeated; he enjoys the fruits of his vicarious suffering along with the many that have been made righteous because of his substitutionary sacrifice. As a result of all of this, the Servant is exalted "to the highest heaven" (52:13).[116] His suffering was that of a penal substitute. Agreeing with this assessment is Peterson who goes so far as to conclude, "Those who deny the theme of penal substitu-

tion in this chapter appear to be guilty of special pleading."[117] In his comments on Hebrews 9:28 Lane notes at this point that the Isaianic Servant's ministry is vicarious and adds, "The vicariously redemptive quality of Jesus' death was of paramount importance to the argument [of Hebrews 9]."[118] Further, as Williams (along with Oswalt and Peterson) has demonstrated, the most satisfying reading of Isaiah 53 is that of penal substitution, especially given the expressions concerning the bearing of punishment in 53:11-12.[119]

If the above interpretation of Isaiah 53 is correct, and I am correct that the writer of Hebrews draws from this text, seeing its fulfillment in Christ, then what does that say for the question under consideration concerning Hebrews' theology of the death of Christ? There is strong evidence that for Hebrews the death of Christ is not only a *substitutionary* sacrifice, but a *penal substitutionary* sacrifice. Sin is defilement that brings death, be it the deaths of animals that grant symbolic and external cleansing (Lev 16), or the death of the Servant of the Lord that effects true cleansing from sin and righteousness (Is 53). For the writer of Hebrews to refer to the death of Christ in terms of Isaiah 53:12 implies an understanding of the larger context of the fourth Servant Song, especially that of 53:4-12. In keeping with his hermeneutic, the writer of Hebrews sees here (along with other NT authors) that Christ is the Servant who bears the sin and sin's consequences on behalf of many. As Gathercole rightly notes, "Statements about Christ's death *for our sins* . . . mean *taking the consequences of our sins*. The biblical assumption is that death is the consequence of sin, and therefore Christ takes that consequence even though the sin is not his own . . . it is at this point in the logic where substitution and penalty become difficult to prise apart."[120]

Are there such statements as this in Hebrews? Does the writer of Hebrews use the language of Christ's work being "for our sins" or similar? Hebrews 2:9 says that Christ suffered death so that "he might taste death on behalf of all" (*hyper pantos geusētai thanatou*); 2:17 asserts that Christ's offering as high priest (his own blood) was for the sins of the people (*hina . . . tas hamartias tou laou*); 6:20 states that he "entered the holy place as a forerunner on our behalf" (*prodromos hyper hēmōn eisēlthen*), doing so by his death for human sin; 7:27 (cf. 9:7 for the similar idea) says that Christ, unlike the earthly priests, offered up himself "for the sins of the people" (*hyper . . . tou laou*); 9:24 says that after this death for people's sins, Christ appears now in the presence of God on our behalf (*hyper hēmōn*); in 9:28 recall that Christ "bears the sins of many" (*eis to pollōn anenegkein hamartias*); and in the summary statement of 10:12 we find the important statement that Christ's willing self-offering (via Ps. 40; which is reminiscent of the willing suffering of the Isaianic Servant alluded to in 9:28) was "a sacrifice for the sins [of the people]" (*houtos de mian hyper hamartiōn prosenegkas thysian*).[121] In these passages one sees that for Hebrews Christ died for our sins, which I would assert is the language of substitution and the bearing of the consequence/penalty of the sins of his people.[122]

It appears that there is good reason for asserting a substitution theology in Hebrews, but is there more evidence concerning God's wrath and its being averted due to Christ's work? Are both elements (substitution and wrath) found in Hebrews? From the data recounted above, it appears that substitution is

clearly in view for the writer of Hebrews. I have put forth the thesis that by his usage of Leviticus 16:1-34 and 17:11 (as well as Is 53) the writer of Hebrews sees Christ as fulfilling these sacrifices, and doing so in such a manner that substitution becomes an accurate description of the author's theology. I also averred that such a substitutionary sacrifice serves to avert the righteous wrath of God. To be sure, this is not the only idea present in Hebrews. One can see the *Christus Victor* concept in several passages such as 2:14 and 12:2. Yet, what is the center? What is the main idea? There is further evidence that needs to be considered in order to articulate more fully the writer's theology of the atonement.

Wrath of God in Hebrews

What of Gathercole's statement that substitution and penalty are "difficult to prise apart"? Is there wrath for the sins of humanity in Hebrews? Does the writer of Hebrews speak of the wrath of God against sin? In fact he does. To be sure, one could argue that this judgment may be in this age or the one to come, but this does not negate the point that for the writer of Hebrews, human sin incurs God's wrath. Consistently, the point seems to be that sin (*hamartia* and related terms) incurs the judgment and wrath of God. To my own surprise, quite little on this topic has been discussed when speaking of Hebrews and the atonement. Yet if, for the writer of Hebrews, God is wrathful against human sin and rebellion, and wrath is averted due to the death of Christ (argued here as a substitute), then would it not lead to the conclusion that one finds in Hebrews not simply substitution, but *penal* substitution? Despite the fact that the idea of God's wrath plays little role in most discussions of Hebrews and the atonement, I want to argue that it should, since the concept of God's wrath is not simply an idea that is merely in the background of Hebrews. Quite the contrary, it has a substantial role. In short, *wrath and judgment are seen in Hebrews to be against the very thing for which Christ's death affects cleansing, viz., the sins of people*.

First, from beginning to end, the writer of Hebrews paints a picture of God who has sent his son in human flesh to cleanse his people from their sins. How does God feel about sin? Heb 1:9 says that the Son "hates lawlessness" (*emisēsas anomian*). If Christ is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of God's nature (1:3a), then surely 1:9 means that God the Father too "hates lawlessness,"[123] there being no division within the Godhead concerning hatred for lawbreaking.[124]

Second, this is seen in the first warning passage of 2:1-4. Regardless of how one views the warning passages regarding the possibility of a true believer losing their salvation, the points made here should be agreeable to all, viz., that for Hebrews, human sin brings a penalty from God in the form of his wrath expressed in judgment. In 2:2 it is said that every transgression under the Mosaic administration received a just penalty. Yet given the new revelation of the Son, the penalty for transgression (neglecting the word of salvation spoken in the Son) is not *less*, but *more*. Using the argument from lesser to greater, we see that if transgressions received penalties under the Old Covenant, *greater* penalties are to be expected in the present administration. The idea of penalty for sin denotes wrath for sin, and the one who commanded (and often personally exacted) such recompense is God himself. There is "no escape"

(*ekpheuxometha*)[125] which in this text has an eschatological ring to it referring to eschatological deliverance from the judgment of God (6:2; 9:27).[126] In the present time of the speaking of the Son, there is greater privilege as well as greater peril. What kind of judgment is not explicitly stated here, but in the overall context of Hebrews (see below), it is cast in terms of "wrath" and "fiery judgment."

Third, from the outset of the canon, we find that sin brings the penalty of death (Gen 2-3). This principle is at work in Hebrews as well in 2:10-18 where the "fear of death" and the slavery that accompanies it is stricken because of the death of Christ (2:14-15) the "champion."[127] As their "brother" he has died, and in so doing the tyranny and fear of death is vanquished. Sin brings death as God's judgment on it, and the death of Christ on behalf of all (2:9) removes this fearful judgment, replacing it with the hope of the New Jerusalem (12:22-24).

Fourth, the wrath of God against human sin is clearly seen in the negative example of Hebrews 3:7-4:13. The Old Covenant people, after having been given the covenant and its laws, hardened their hearts, tested God, provoked God, and went astray in their hearts not knowing the ways of God (3:7-11). What was God's response? He was angry (*prosōchthisa*) with them, and their sin resulted in his wrath (*orgē*, cf. 4:3). Human sin elicited the wrath of God. They were sentenced to die in the wilderness, outside the land (functioning as a metaphor for God's "rest"). This leads to the second warning passage in Hebrews in 3:12 where the warning is not to *sin* against God like the Old Covenant people in vv. 7-11. It is precisely this issuance of wrath that serves the pastoral purpose of this warning (and all others) in Hebrews. To turn from God to sin and lawlessness is to disbelieve what he has spoken (1:1-2; 3:19; 4:2). Obey the voice of God in Christ the Son or face his wrath is clearly the point of such exhortations. This is repeated in 3:15-19 in the rhetorical questions. God's anger and wrath is demonstrated towards those who do not believe and thus disobey the divine word (see 3:19; 4:2, 3, 6, 11). Such an actual example as this from biblical history demands that such warnings of God's wrath be seen as actual and not hypothetical.[128]

Fifth, God's wrath is seen in the warning of 6:4-8. The sin of those described in verses 4-6 receive for their sin a fiery judgment, as demonstrated in the agricultural image of verse 8.[129] Those described here face the curse of God, and end up being burned up in his judgment for their sin.

Sixth is the judgment mentioned in 9:27. Why is there judgment? From the context of Hebrews, it appears to be eschatological judgment for sin. This is in keeping with what has been demonstrated already, and is in concert with what follows. The individual does not merely die, but is judged, presumably by God. The same noun for judgment (*krisis*) is used only one other time in Hebrews (10:27), where fearful eschatological judgment is clearly in view. See also 10:30 and 13:4 where the verb form (*krinō*, to judge) as well as 12:23 where God is the judge (*kritēs*) of all.

Seventh, after the lengthy section of exposition (7:1-10:18), the writer's exhortations begin again in 10:19, and quickly return to the theme of the wrath of God against human sin. In 10:26-31 this is spelled out in greater detail with even more terrifying language than at any other time up to this point.[130] Again, the issue is human sin (v. 26) that results in God's wrath,[131] described here as "a ter-

rifying expectation of judgment" and God's "fury of a fire which will consume the adversaries" (v. 27). There is no mercy, only death, for one under the Old Covenant. How much worse will it be for those in the New Covenant era who have the added revelation of the Son? (cf. 2:1-4 above). In verse 29, they deserve an even more severe punishment, and can expect only to receive the vengeance of God because of their sin since it is the Lord who is judge (v. 30). The writer of Hebrews summarizes what all readers ought to think in verse 31 when he writes, "It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God." Why is there terror (vv. 26, 31)? Because God demonstrates his hatred for lawlessness and disobedience, i.e., against all those who reject his speaking in the Son.

Eighth, this warning is reiterated in the threat of "destruction" in 10:38-39. The term for "destruction" in verse 39 (*apōleia*) refers to "supernatural destruction"[132] by God as a consequence of not persevering in faith and shrinking back. To "shrink back"(*hypostellō*) is here the opposite of having persevering faith (10:36, 39; 11:1, 6), and this means that God brings destruction. In this context "destruction" is itself the opposite of God's "taking delight" (*eudokeō*)[133] in the individual.

Ninth, we come to the last of Hebrews' warning passages in 12:25-29. These verses issue the final warning of the book, and bring the writer's work to an end (chapter 13 is a collection of exhortations and concluding remarks). It is telling that he ends his argument this way—with another sharp word of warning. This underlines his overarching pastoral concern and calls them, one more time, to a sober warning about the dangers of ignoring what he has argued about Jesus and the New Covenant. This warning focuses on the end-time judgment of the world. As seen before, sin is described here as ignoring the voice of God and turning away from his word and his person. Again using "lesser to greater" argumentation, the Old Covenant people are used again as a foil—a negative example to make the point that where rebellion against God and his word exists (either "long ago" in the Old Covenant or in these "latter days" of the New Covenant), judgment is to be expected. The term "refused" is the same term as in verse 19 (*paraiteomai*). The readers are in the same danger as their historical forebears at Sinai, that of stopping their ears from hearing the voice of God who warns them. The writer of Hebrews sees in the Exodus 19 narrative a connection between the people's asking for God to stop speaking (out of fear) and their soon-to-be-expressed rebellion against God and His servant Moses (Heb 3:7-4:13). They refused Him who spoke to Him, and they were judged and sentenced to die in the wilderness. The final note in 12:29 describes God as a "devouring fire" (cf. Deut 4:24); images of fire have frequently been employed throughout Hebrews in contexts of judgment. Clearly then, DeSilva is correct when he states that such an image is designed "to show the danger of his judgment upon the unjust."[134]

Finally, such a discussion would not be complete without at least a reference to 2:17 and to the dispute over propitiation of wrath vs. expiation of sin. While this is not the place for a lengthy treatment of the verse,[135] or even less a recounting of the Dodd-Morris/Nicole discussions, it is fitting, after considering the data in the preceding pages, to now turn one's attention to the question concerning the

meaning of *hilaskesthai*, typically rendered as "expiation," or "propitiation."[136] The writer of Hebrews does not immediately spell out exactly what he means by the statement "to make propitiation with reference to the sins of the people" or "to make expiation for the sins of the people" (*eis to hilaskesthai tas hamartias*[137] *tou laou*). Yet as Thielman observes, given the Hellenistic Jewish milieu in which Hebrews was written, it is quite likely that the term in question (*hilaskesthai*) "means here what it means in 4 Maccabees 6 and 17—that sacrifice lifted the curse of God against his sinful people."[138] Further, I find much to commend in the statement of Seifrid who writes, "once it is acknowledged that the removal of sin [i.e. cleansing] averts divine wrath, as is the case here, one arrives at the idea of propitiation."[139] Sin must be cleansed, and such purgation and cleansing is achieved by Christ's blood. Once the person's sin is cleansed by the blood of Christ, there is no longer a place or need for divine wrath.[140] Therefore it is possible that both ideas of expiation and propitiation are present.[141]

In contrast to this conclusion, and given the previous discussion of God's anger and judgment against sin, can the assertions of Attridge and Montefiore withstand the exegetical test? Both of these scholars either minimize[142] or even deny[143] God's righteous anger against sin, and yet their treatments of the aforementioned passages are less than satisfying when weighed together. In contrast, Kistemaker is correct when he asserts that it is unwarranted to "ignore the meaning of the concept of propitiation,"[144] and Paul Jewett notes (though not specifically referring to Hebrews) that using the term "expiation" instead of "propitiation" does not, in the end, account for the reality of God's righteous indignation towards sin. He asks, "Why should sins be expiated? What would happen if no expiation were provided? Can anyone deny that, according to the teaching of Scripture, men will die in their sins?"[145] For the present study of Hebrews, these questions are difficult to answer in terms that do not include the element of propitiation, given the numerous references to God's anger against sin.

Therefore, the objection to an emphasis on the aversion of wrath, arguing instead that the accent in Hebrews is only on cleansing from impurity, is difficult to maintain given the data above. The theme of God's punitive wrath against sin runs throughout Hebrews. Further, such an objection, I would suggest, is a false dichotomy.[146] Sin is a transgression of God's commandments and thus brings impurity; sin is disobedience and unbelief; God is the Majesty on High (1:4) in the heavenly place (9:24) and as such is pure and sinless. Blood (death; Lev 17:11) is required for forgiveness (9:22), and the typological sacrifices *always* end up dead in Hebrews. Why? Because sin brings not merely impurity, but wrath expressed in *death*, which is cast in the recurring metaphor of "blood." Cleansing from impurity and guilt caused by sin centers on the believer (he is made pure), while the satisfaction of wrath centers on God (his just wrath is satisfied), and there is therefore no division between the justice and love of God. This is especially true given that it was God himself who inaugurated the sacrificial system and who would later send his own son (2:7) to die "in behalf of all" (2:9), which is to say "instead of all."[147] Therefore, any act of clemency, any acceptable sacrificial offering, and even any warning issued to sinful humanity

are all tangible demonstrations of the love and grace of God. For Hebrews, when the voice of God is rejected (either in the OT prophets or in the Son), divine anger is the result. Further, his wrath is indeed just, given that it is incurred when His Law is transgressed (1:9). For the faithful, sins and lawless deeds are remembered no more (8:12; 10:17) and the believer is no longer impure, having been cleansed by the sacrificial blood (death) of Christ. Christ, in his death, has taken the *consequences* of our sins, which is to say, the penalty of death upon himself.

For Hebrews, then, one is either of faith and part of the covenant faithful (either the Old Covenant or now the New Covenant), or one is under wrath and judgment. The sinner either receives atonement/purification for his sin (which is inextricably tied to persevering faith; 10:36-39) or he receives wrath from God, not having atonement for all one's sins. This is clearly seen when one contrasts the Old Covenant faithful of 11:1-40 with those in 3:7-4:6, and is also seen by comparing those in 3:7ff. with the New Covenant people of God, described as those who are of persevering faith and marked by the better promises of the eternal covenant (8:6, 8-12; 10:16-18; 13:20). The exodus people function as a paradigm: they did not believe, thus did not obey, and as a result received the wrath of God. Thus we concur with Peterson's assessment, "Salvation in Hebrews thus appears to be deliverance from the wrath of God in order to enjoy the life of God in his presence forever (cf. 9:28; 12:25-9).[148]

Conclusion

Based on the above exegetical analysis, one arrives at the logical conclusion that *for the writer of Hebrews, the way to avoid the judgment of God is for all of one's sins to be cleansed by the blood of Christ*. Stated conversely: *to be cleansed from all of one's sins by the blood of Christ means that judgment and wrath will not be incurred*. Against this conclusion one could possibly argue that if the warning passages speak of genuine believers who have fallen away, then their sins were once cleansed, yet they *still* fell under God's wrath.[149] Yet, for this position, the sin for which judgment is incurred is the specific sin of apostasy, and as such is *not* cleansed and forgiven, and is therefore judged. For those who maintain the legitimacy of genuine apostasy, such a counterargument is possible. This is precisely why I have included the word "all" when speaking of one's sins that are forgiven, cleansed, and no longer remembered. Therefore, such a rebuttal is not in conflict with my summation, since for those who maintain such a view of the warning passages, when the sin of true apostasy is committed, then judgment *still* is incurred for that specific sin. Therefore, the statement and principle still stands for Hebrews: if *all* one's sins are cleansed by the blood of Christ, then wrath is averted. The very thing that brings such judgment is what Christ cleanses, viz., sin.

In sum, the concept of divine judgment due to sin can be said to underlie much if not the whole of the Epistle to the Hebrews. It seems as though everywhere the reader turns, he is not far from an explicit or implicit reminder of the idea that God is the one who judges sin, and his judgment is consistently a frightening thing. Further, the writer of Hebrews looks both backwards and forwards in history to make this point.[150] God judged the sinful acts of people in the past, and will do so in the future as well. Further, since he is the judge of all (12:23), and

vengeance belongs to him (10:30), then it is fearful to note that nothing at all is hidden from his sight (4:13). Morris is worth quoting in full,

> Because God is so great and His standards so high, and because we shall one day stand before Him, we do well to give heed to the situation in which our sin has placed us. The sinner facing the prospect of judgment before such a Judge is in no good case. This Epistle leaves us in no doubt but that those who are saved are saved from a sore and genuine peril. Christ's saving work is not a piece of emotional pageantry rescuing men from nothing in particular.[151]

In sum, when all of the pieces are put together, I humbly suggest that what emerges from Hebrews is the picture of Christ Jesus, the New Covenant mediator, whose blood inaugurated the promised eternal New Covenant and cleansed his people from the impurity of their sins, granting divine forgiveness, and thereby placating the all-consuming fire of the righteous wrath of God.

ENDNOTES

[1]See for example the collection of essays in *Christianity, Patriarchy and Abuse: A Feminist Critique* (ed. J. C. Brown and C. R. Bohn; New York: Pilgrims, 1989).

[2]See for example *The Nature of the Atonement: Four Views* (ed. James Beilby and Paul R. Eddy; Downers Grove: Intervarsity, 2006).

[3]See for example: *The Glory of the Atonement* (ed. Charles E. Hill and Frank A. James III; Downers Grove: Intervarsity, 2004); *Where Wrath and Mercy Meet* (ed. David Peterson; Carlisle: Paternoster, 2001); *Atonement Today: A Symposium at St. John's College Nottingham* (ed. John Goldingay; London: SPCK, 1995); and Paul S. Fiddes, *Past Event and Present Salvation: The Christian Idea of Atonement* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1989).

[4]David Peterson, "Atonement in the New Testament," in *Where Wrath and Mercy Meet*, 47.

[5]Allen P. Ross, *Holiness to the Lord* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 314.

[6]Gordon Wenham, "The Theology of Old Testament Sacrifice," in *Sacrifice in the Bible* (ed. Roger T. Beckwith and Martin J. Selman; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995), 75-87.

[7]Ibid., 82.

[8]Ibid.

[9]Thomas R. Schreiner, "Penal Substitution View," in *The Nature of the Atonement*, 78.

[10]Derek Tidball, *Discovering Leviticus* (Leicester, England: Intervarsity, 1996), 125.

[11]Derek Tidball, *The Message of Leviticus* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity, 2005), 189.

[12]Frank S. Thielman, "The Atonement," in *Central Themes in Biblical Theology: Mapping Unity in Diversity*, (ed. Scott J. Hafemann and Paul R. House; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 105.

[13]Wenham, "Old Testament Sacrifice," 80.

[14]Gordon Wenham, *Leviticus* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 26.

[15]Tidball, *Message of Leviticus, 192*.

[16]Emile Nicole, "Atonement in the Pentateuch: 'It is the Blood That Makes Atonement for One's Life,'" in *The Glory of the Atonement*, 44-46.

[17]Wenham, *Leviticus*, 233.

[18]Ibid., 233.

[19]Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology: Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 163.

[20]David Peterson, "Atonement in the Old

Testament," 14.

[21]Tidball, *Message of Leviticus, 193; emphasis added.*

[22]That the high priest uses both hands in the ceremony should not be interpreted as radically different than those cases in which a single hand was used (contra Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16* [Anchor Bible; New York: Doubleday, 1991], 151-52; 1041-42). What seems to be in view is that the animal becomes an acceptable substitute for the contrite worshipper.

[23]Wenham is quite helpful here. See his "Old Testament Sacrifice," 79. For the verb *sāmak* see also Isa 59:16; Ezek 24:2; 30:6; Amos 5:19.

[24]E. R. Leach, *Culture and Communication* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1976), 89. I owe this citation to Wenham, "Old Testament Sacrifice," 79. See also Gen 22:13.

[25]Peterson, "Atonement," 15.

[26]Wenham, "Old Testament Sacrifice," 82.

[27]See Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 253-61; 1032-34; 1079-84.

[28]Nobuyoshi Kiuchi, *The Purification Offering in the Priestly Literature* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1987), esp. 87-109.

[29]Jay Sklar, *Sin, Impurity, Sacrifice, Atonement* (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Phoenix, 2005).

[30]Tidball, *Message of Leviticus*, 194-95. See also Nicole, "Atonement," 48-49.

[31]Tidball, *Message of Leviticus*, 195.

[32]Ibid., 195; cf. 196-97.

[33]Walter C. Kaiser, Jr. "Leviticus," in *New Interpreter's Bible* (vol. 1; Nashville: Abingdon, 1994), 1111.

[34]Wenham, *Leviticus*, 236.

[35]Paul Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (NIGCT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 473.

[36]Sklar, *Sin, Impurity, Sacrifice, Atonement*, 181.

[37]Nicole, "Atonement" 49.

[38]Thielman, "The Atonement," 107.

[39]Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 1082-83.

[40]Jacob Milgrom, "Prolegomenon to Leviticus 17:11," *JBL* 90 (1971): 149-56.

[41]Schreiner, "Penal Substitution," 85 n.56.

[42]Nicole, "Atonement" 48.

[43]For a similar line of thinking, see ibid., 49.

[44]Leon Morris, *The Atonement: Its Meaning and Significance* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity, 1983), 80, 81.

[45]Nicole, "Atonement," 48.

[46]Ibid., 44, 45, 50. Also recall the remarks to this effect of Wenham, Peterson, Tidball, Ross, et al.

[47]See Barry C. Joslin, *Hebrews, Christ, and the Law: the Theology of the Mosaic Law in Hebrews 7:1-10:18*, (Carlisle: Paternoster, forthcoming 2008), esp. ch. 5.

[48]Graham Hughes, *Hebrews and Hermeneutics: The Epistle to the Hebrews as a New Testament Example of Biblical Interpretation* (Cambridge: University Press, 1979). Hughes essentially argues that there is continuity across the covenants due to the fact that it is the same voice of God that speaks in both.

[49]Otfried Hofius, "Biblische Theologie im Lichte des Hebräerbriefes," in *New Directions in Biblical Theology*, (ed. Sigfred Pederson; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1994], 112-13, 124.

[50]What is not in view is a quasi-Platonic understanding of forms and particulars. This was once the consensus in Hebrews scholarship, but has been soundly overturned in more recent decades. It is not a matter of higher and lower outlines and shadows, but the eschatological "then" and "now." A Jewish apocalyptic understanding is in play here, not Philonic-Platonic dualism. See L. D. Hurst, "How 'Platonic' Are Heb. 8:5 and 9:23f.?" *JTS* 34 (1983): 163. For further information, see C. K. Barrett, "The Eschatology of the Epistle to the Hebrews," in *The Background of the New Testament and Its Eschatology* (ed. W. D. Davies and D. Daube; Cambridge: University Press, 1956), 363-93; Richard P. C. Hanson, *Allegory and Event* (London: SCM Press, 1959); R. Williamson, *Philo and the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1970); L. D. Hurst, "Eschatology and 'Platonism' in the Epistle to the Hebrews" *SBL Seminar Papers* 23 (1984): 41-74; idem, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: Its Background of Thought* (Cambridge: University Press, 1990).

[51]On the content of the Law's shadow, see Joslin, *Hebrews, Christ, and the Law,* chapter 6.

[52]Peterson, "Atonement," 51.

[53]See esp. F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (rev. ed.; NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990) on 9:12. See also Mark Seifrid, "Death of Christ," in *Dictionary of Later New Testament and Its Developments* (ed. R. P. Martin and Peter H. Davids; Downers Grove: Intervarsity, 1997), 274-75; P. E. Hughes, "The Blood of Jesus and His Heavenly Priesthood in Hebrews Part II: The High-Priestly Sacrifice of Christ," *BibSac* 130 (1973): 210-11.

[54]See Barry Joslin, "Can Hebrews Be Structured? An Assessment of Eight Approaches," *Currents in Biblical Research* 6, no. 1 (forthcoming, October 2007); George H. Guthrie, *The Structure of Hebrews: A Text-Linguistic Analysis* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 85.

[55]G. B. Caird, "The Exegetical Method of the Epistle to the Hebrews," *CJT* 5 (1959): 44-51; R. Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 163-64; R. T. France, "The Writer of Hebrews as a Biblical Expositor" *TynBull* 47 (1996): 245-76; J. Walters, "The Rhetorical Arrangement of Hebrews," *AsTJ* 51 (1996): 59-70. Likewise, in his discussion of Hebrews 9 Young asserts, "Our author has clearly never lost sight of his original discussion of the covenant" (Norman Young, "The Gospel According to Hebrews 9," *NTS* 27 [1980-81]: 198-210). See also James P. Scullion, "A Traditio-Historical Study of the Day of Atonement," (Ph.D. diss., The Catholic University of America, 1991), 221, *passim*.

[56]Leon Morris affirms such an assertion as well. See Morris, *The Atonement*, 28-31.

[57]France, "Biblical Expositor," 265.

[58]Paul Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 471.

[59]See Scullion, "A Traditio-Historical Study," 200-53.

[60]Vanhoye agrees. See Albert Vanhoye, *Old Testament Priests and the New Priest According to the New Testament* (trans. J. Bernard Orchard; Petersham, MA: St. Bede's Publications, 1986), 201.

[61]Guthrie, *The Structure of Hebrews*, 86.

[62]David Peterson, *Hebrews and Perfection: An Examination of the Concept of Perfection in the 'Epistle to the Hebrews'* (New York: Cambridge University, 1982), 132; Harold Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989), 231; William L. Lane, *Hebrews* (WBC 47; 2 vols.; Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1991), 2:217.

[63]Riggenbach notes that 9:2-5 stresses the significance between the inner and outer tents of the tabernacle, and such emphasis sets up the distinctions in 6-10 (Eduard Riggenbach, *Die Brief and die Hebräer* [Leipzig: Deichert, 1922], 238-39).

[64]Vanhoye, *Old Testament Priests*, 184-85; J. Dunnill, *Covenant and Sacrifice in the Letter to the Hebrews* (Cambridge: University Press, 1992), 139-41.

[65]Lane, *Hebrews*, 2:223.

[66]On the importance of blood in Heb 9, see W. G. Johnsson, "Defilement and Purgation in the Book of Hebrews," (Ph.D. diss., Vanderbilt University, 1973), 152-61, 306-39.

[67]So important was the death of the scapegoat that the rabbinic writings aver that a practice developed wherein the one who led the goat away (Lev 16: 21-22) made certain that the scapegoat was dead. We are told in the Mishna that the goat would be tied to a rock and then pushed over a cliff to ensure its death. This was symbolic of the sin being carried away and destroyed, never to be seen again (that is, until the next Day of Atonement).

[68]One exception is Davidson who, in his discussion of 6:19-20 (as well as the larger context of Heb 9) puts forward the argument that the sanctuary inauguration of Num 7 is primarily in view and not the Day of Atonement (Richard Davidson, "Christ's Entry 'Within the Veil' in Hebrews 6:19-20: The Old Testament Background," *AUSS* 39, no. 2 [2001]: 175-90). See Norman Young's response to Davidson's argument, "The Day of Dedication or the Day of Atonement? The Old Testament Background to Hebrews 6:19-20 Revisited," *AUSS* 40, no. 1 (2002): 61-68. See also idem, "Gospel According," 198-210.

[69]There is no element of gnosticism here. Contra Otto Michel, *Der Brief an die Hebräer* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1966), 306.

[70]B. F. Westcott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1950), 252. Attridge, *Hebrews*, 240; Hugh Montefiore, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, BNTC (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1964), 149; David DeSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Epistle "to the Hebrews"* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 300; Craig Koester, *Hebrews* (Anchor Bible 36a; New York: Doubleday, 2001), 397; Ceslas Spicq, *L'Épître aux Hébreux* (Paris: Gabalda, 1953), 2:253-54; Peterson, *Perfection*, 133; Barnabas Lindars, (*Theology of the Letter to the Hebrews* [Cambridge: University Press, 1991], 87); Dunnill, *Covenant and Sacrifice*, 233-34; Johnsson, "Defilement and Purgation," 281.

[71]Lane, *Hebrews*, 2:224.

[72]Bruce, *Hebrews*, 206.

[73]"Conscience" must take into account the OT view of man in general, and

of the "heart" in particular. See Christian Maurer's article in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (ed. G. Kittel; trans. G. W. Bromiley; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 7:908-19. Cf. C. A. Pierce, *Conscience in the New Testament* (Chicago: Allenson, 1955), 21-59. Pierce notes that the starting point for Hebrews' view of the conscience is the fact that man cannot worship God with a guilty conscience (100).

[74]Lane, *Hebrews*, 2:225.

[75]See also Young, "Gospel According," 202-05, 210.

[76]David Peterson, "The Prophecy of the New Covenant in the Argument of Hebrews," *RTR* 38 (1979): 76-77; idem, *Perfection*, 129.

[77]On the importance of *both* forgiveness of sins and law on the heart, see Joslin, *Hebrews, Christ, and the Law*, chapter 6.

[78]Lane, *Hebrews*, 2:235.

[79]The *de* ("now," "but") should be given full adversative force. There is a distinct temporal contrast between two stages of redemptive history.

[80]On the varied interpretations of this verse and especially the meaning of *skēnē* (tabernacle, tent), see Albert Vanhoye, "Par la tente plus grande et plus parfait . . . (Heb 9,11)," *Bib* 46 (1965): 1-28. See also P. E. Hughes, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 283-90. The issues surround the grammatical usage of *dia* ("through," "by means of"), as well as the meaning of *skēnē* ("tent," "tabernacle") and decisions for each are related. Interpretations of *skēnē* in v. 11 include Christ's resurrected body, Christ's incarnate body, the church, a cosmic passageway, or heaven itself (George H. Guthrie, *Hebrews* [NIVAC; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998], 310; see also Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 446-48, 450). A close examination of the text of 11-12 indicates that the destination is the very presence of God (*ta hagia*, "the holy place") that is reached by Christ's passage, which refers to the "true tent" that God pitched (8:2). Such an interpretation presumes a local (and not instrumental) sense of *dia* in 9:11, and an instrumental sense in 9:12. This is the view taken here. See ibid., 450-51; Jean Héring, *L'Épître aux Hébreux* (Neuchâtel: Delachaux & Niestlé, 1954), 84; Spicq, *L'Épître aux Hébreux*, 2:256; Michel, *Der Brief*, 310-11; Helmut Koester, "'Outside the Camp': Hebrews 13:9-14," *HTR* 55 (1962): 309-10; and Lane, *Hebrews*, 2:236-38. This understanding relinquishes the highly metaphorical interpretations of *skēnē* (see Paul Andriessen, "Das grössere und vollkommenere Zelt (Heb 9:1)," *BZ* 15 [1971]: 86). Contra James Swetnam, "Greater and More Perfect Tent: A Contribution to the Discussion of Hebrews 9:11," *Bib* 47 (1966): 91-106.

[81]Shinya Nomoto, "Herkunft und Struktur der Hohenpriestervorstellung im Hebräerbrief," *NovT* 10 (1968): 17. Similarly Otfried Hofius *Der Vorhang vor dem Thron Gottes* (Tübingen, Mohr, 1972) 65-66; and Andriessen, "Das grössere," 84-85.

[82]Spicq, *L'Épître aux Hébreux*, 2:256-58. On the chiasm in 9:11-12, see Hofius, *Vorhang*, 66.

[83]The phrase *tōn agathōn* is comprehensive, referring to the New Covenant promises as well as to the fulfillment of what the Old Covenant cultus foreshadowed. Purgation from sin, access to God, and the better promises are in view and flow from the atoning work of Christ (P. E. Hughes, *Hebrews*, 327).

[84]See Numbers 19 and the account of the red heifer. The inclusion of the account of the red heifer ("a primitive purificatory ritual," see Attridge, *Hebrews*, 249) demonstrate that what the writer of Hebrews has in mind is offerings for sin. None of the animal sacrifices could finally and fully atone for sin since all were external (9:10).

[85] See Hans Windisch, *Der Hebräerbrief* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1931), 87.

[86]Bruce states that "flesh" here refers to the "physical element of the human make-up . . . in contrast to one's inner being, or conscience" (Bruce, *Hebrews*, 215 n. 87). Cf. James W. Thompson, *The Beginnings of Christian Philosophy: The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Washington, DC: Catholic Biblical Association, 1982), 108-09.

[87]Peterson, *Perfection*, 129 n 17. On the cleansing here Spicq avers, "C'est une *sanctification*, et si complète qu'elle est synoyme de perfection" (Spicq, *L'Épître aux Hébreux*, 2:282).

[88]F. F. Bruce astutely observes that the real barrier between God and the people was not an external cultus. The cultus only represented symbolically the barrier within the conscience of the individual. The tabernacle and its restrictions were in place due to the *internal* impurities of the people. "It is only

when the conscience is purified that one is set free to approach God without reservation and offer him acceptable service and worship" (Bruce, *Hebrews*, 209). The good things to come/have come, among other things, involve removal of sin and a change of nature, to a clean conscience which produces service to God. This is the fulfillment of Jeremiah 31:33-34.

[89]Thielman, "The Atonement," 120. He cites 4:15; 7:27; 9:14.

[90]Lane, *Hebrews*, 2:234. Attridge rightly avers that 9:15 is the thesis underlying the whole of 15-22 (Attridge, *Hebrews*, 254).

[91]A simple comparison of mainline translations should alert the attentive reader to the presence of this issue (cp. NASB, NIV, ESV, RSV, KJV etc.) Within current Hebrews scholarship, there is still considerable debate over the matter of the translation of *diathēkē* in 9:16-17 as "will/testament" (and thus a play on the term's secular meaning), or "covenant," as it is uniformly translated in vv. 15 and 18. There is no consensus in either scholarship or translation, and those who maintain either "will/testament" or "covenant" each typically conclude that the passage is confusing if taken the other way. Though not an unimportant matter, neither view affects the present study to any significant degree given that the overall point of 9:15-22 is not obscured: they are argumentative support for the necessity of Christ's death if the New Covenant is to be inaugurated and its blessings realized, and covenant requires death. For references and discussion, see Koester, *Hebrews*, 417-18, 424-26; Attridge, *Hebrews*, 255-56; Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 462-64; DeSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude*, 308-09; P. E. Hughes, *Hebrews*, 368; Montefiore, *Hebrews*, 156-57; Moffatt, *Hebrews*, 127-28; F. F. Bruce, *Hebrews*, 221-22; Lindars, *Theology*, 95-96; Dunnill, *Covenant and Sacrifice*, 250-51; Vanhoye, *Old Testament Priests*, 203; G. Vos, "Hebrews, the Epistle of the *Diathēkē*," *PTR* 13 (1915): 587-632; and J. Swetnam, "Suggested Interpretation of Hebrews 9:15-18," *CBQ* 27 (1965): 373-90. Each of these maintains, for various reasons and with varying levels of certainty, that diathēkē in Heb 9:16-17 should be rendered as "testament."

Though the translation of *diathēkē* as "testament/will" has enjoyed significant support, others maintain that the term should be consistently rendered as "covenant" throughout 9:15-18. For example, see Westcott, *Hebrews*, 265; Lane, *Hebrews*, 2:231, 242-43; Guthrie, *Hebrews*, 313; Alexander Nairne, *The Epistle of Priesthood* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1913), 140, 364-66; K. M. Campbell, "Covenant or Testament? Heb. 9:16, 17 Reconsidered," *EvQ* 44 (1972): 106-11; G. D. Kilpatrick, "Diatheke in Hebrews," *ZNW* 68 (1977): 263-65; Johnsson, "Defilement and Purgation," 308-18; John J. Hughes, "Hebrews 9:15ff and Galatians 3:15ff: A Study in Covenant Practice and Procedure," *NTS* 21 (1979): 27-96; and Scott Hahn, "A Broken Covenant and the Curse of Death: A Study of Hebrews 9:15-22," *CBQ* 66 (2004): 416-36. Hahn and J. Hughes soundly demonstrate on lexical, syntactical, semantic, and contextual levels why "testament" is inconsistent in these verses. They also argue that the "testament" rendering has no real basis in Greco-Roman legal practice. In sum, though for much of the twentieth century there was a near consensus that *diathēkē* ought be rendered "testament" or "will" in 9:16-17, the more recent efforts of J. J. Hughes, Lane, and Hahn make a compelling case for a consistent translation of *diathēkē* as "covenant."

[92]J. Hughes, "Hebrews 9:15ff," 38-39.

[93]Young, "Gospel According," 205. Young notes that this is the controlling point for these verses, though he states, wrongly in my view, that *diathēkē* in vv. 16-17 ought be rendered "testament" or "will."

[94]The promise here refers to eternal salvation and the assurance of the New Covenant blessings. See Cody, *Heavenly Sanctuary*, 136; G. Guthrie, *Hebrews*, 309-10.

[95]The thesis for 9:15 (supported by 16-22) is: "any covenant requires a death" (Attridge, *Hebrews*, 253; see also Dunnill, *Covenant and Sacrifice*, 250; Cody, *Heavenly Sanctuary*, 183-84). For further references see Leonhard Goppelt, *Typos: The Typological Interpretation of the Old Testament in the New* (trans. D. H. Madvig; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 168; and Hahn, "A Broken Covenant," 431.

[96]Morris likewise makes this point. See Morris, *The Atonement*, 30, 37.

[97]Vanhoye, *Old Testament Priests*, 204; see also Attridge, *Hebrews*, 253.

[98]Attridge, *Hebrews*, 255. Though it is not as though the idea of forgive-

ness is new to the New Covenant.

[99]Lane, *Hebrews*, 2:242.

[100]See Johnsson, "Defilement and Purgation," 152-61; 306-39; Gräßer, *An die Hebräer*, 2:149-51; and Dunnill, *Covenant and Sacrifice*, 100-03. See also 9:14 and the blood of Christ which cleanses (*katharizō*) the conscience.

[101]Dunnill, *Covenant and Sacrifice*, 121, emphasis his. Such purgation also puts one in right stead with God (see below).

[102]Harold Attridge, "Use of Antithesis in Hebrews 8-10," *HTR* 79 (1986): 7; Lane, *Hebrews*, 2:247.

[103]Koester, *Hebrews*, 427; Johnsson, "Defilement and Purgation," 336. On the interpretation of the heavenly things being in need of cleansing, see David J. MacLeod's helpful article, "The Cleansing of the True Tabernacle," *BibSac* 152 (1995): 60-71.

[104]For example, see Peterson, "Atonement," 52; idem, *Perfection*, 94; Attridge, *Hebrews*, 266; P. E. Hughes, *Hebrews*, 388; Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 486-87; Bruce, *Hebrews*, 232; Lane, *Hebrews*, 2:250; DeSilva, *Perseverance* 315. Cf. J. R. Schaefer, "The Relationship Between Priestly and Servant Messianism in the Epistle to the Hebrews," *CBQ* 30 (1968): 259-85; Seifrid, "Death of Christ," 275.

[105]Seifrid, "Death of Christ," 275.

[106]John N. Oswalt, *Isaiah 40-66* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 385-89.

[107]R. N. Whybray, *Thanksgiving for a Liberated Prophet*, JSOT Supp 4 (Sheffield: JSOT, 1978), 79-105; 134-40; Harry M. Orlinsky, "The So-Called 'Servant of the Lord' and 'Suffering Servant' in Second Isaiah," in *Studies in the Second Part of the Book of Isaiah* (ed. Orlinsky and Snaith; Leiden: Brill, 1967), 1-133. For Oswalt's compelling response to their allegations, see his *Isaiah 40-66*, 385ff.

[108]Brevard S. Childs, *Isaiah* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 415. See also his brief critique of Hanson (415-16).

[109]Oswalt, *Isaiah 40-66*, 386.

[110]Childs, *Isaiah*, 415.

[111]Oswalt, *Isaiah 40-66*, 388.

[112]Thielman, "The Atonement," 108.

[113]Oswalt, *Isaiah 40-66*, 404.

[114]Ibid.

[115]How can the Servant, who dies, enjoy the spoils as the victor? Many scholars have posited that he must therefore be resurrected. While this is a logical conclusion, it is not demanded by the text of Is 53.

[116]A thought not unlike the exaltation of Christ to the right hand of God, as seen in Ps. 110:1.

[117]Peterson, "Atonement," 21.

[118]Lane, *Hebrews*, 2:250.

[119]Garry Williams, "The Cross and the Punishment of Sin," in *Where Wrath and Mercy Meet*, 78-81.

[120]Simon Gathercole, "The Cross and Substitutionary Atonement," *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 11, no. 2 (2007), 69 (emphasis in original).

[121]Further, Heb 9:15 states that his death is redemption for *transgressions*.

[122]One other point ought to be mentioned here. Quite often, the absence of any explicit mention of the scapegoat is cited as possible evidence against the interpretation of the data presented here. See for example Morna D. Hooker, *Not Ashamed of the Gospel: New Testament Interpretations of the Death of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 123. It is true enough that there are no explicit references to the scapegoat, but is an explicit reference demanded in order for the idea to be present? If Isaiah sees the Servant's bearing away of sins as a way of referencing the scapegoat, then is there not the possibility of an implicit reference to the scapegoat when NT authors refer to Christ bearing or carrying away the sins of humanity? If I am correct about the goats being two aspect of a single sacrifice (above), then this becomes more of a possibility.

[123]Interestingly, the term here *anomia* (lawlessness) is *a* (no) + *nomos* (law). "Lawlessness" is what God hates, was what brought his wrath onto the Old Covenant people, and is what is forgiven in the New Covenant (see 10:17, *tōn anomiōn autōn ou mē mnēsthēsomai*). Further, it is the "transformed Law" (7:12; *nomou metathesis*) that is internalized on the New Covenant heart and mind (8:10; 10:16-17; ct. Jere 17:1, 9), bringing about a life of obedient service to God (9:14). What God hates in 1:9 is forgiven in 10:17, and what pleases God (lawfulness/obedience) is guaranteed in the New Covenant's "better promises" (8:10; 10:16). As one can see, the construct of the Law of God plays no small role in Hebrews. See Joslin, *Hebrews, Christ, and the Law*.

[124]This is actually quite an interesting text, given that the very thing

the Son explicitly hates is the thing he came to cleanse. This further bolsters the present thesis.

[125]The term *ekpheugō* is often used in context of eschatological judgment such as Luke 21:36; Rom 2:3; 1 Thess 5:3.

[126]Attridge, *Hebrews*, 66.

[127]The language of the "champion" quite likely echoes Isaiah 49:34-36 (Lane, *Hebrews*, 1:63).

[128]So George Guthrie, *Hebrews*, 227; contra Attridge, *Hebrews*, 66.

[129]Attridge, *Hebrews*, 66 n. 38.

[130]I would agree with many that the five warnings build in intensity, with the final and most terrifying note saved for last, concluding the fifth warning, "our God is a consuming fire" (12:29).

[131]Some might be tempted to argue that only apostasy yields this kind of response, since this is akin to the Old Testament's "sinning with a high hand" i.e., a willful disobedience. Yet, does Hebrews subdivide or categorize sin? Christ made purification of sin (1:3), and throughout Hebrews 8-10 the concern of Christ's death is for sin, bearing the consequences. Further, those in the New Covenant are assured that all their sins and lawless deeds are forgiven (8:10-12; 10:15-18). Does the writer of Hebrews make such a distinction between kinds of sins? Is apostasy the "unforgivable sin"? On the basis of Hebrews, at this time I am persuaded to say no.

[132]See *NIDNTT*, 1:462-64; *TDNT* 1:396-97; rightly Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 557.

[133]See *NIDNTT*, 2:818 where the term is said to mean "God's purpose, resolve and choice." This is in contrast to the only other times (2X) in Hebrews where it is used, of Christ the willing sacrifice (10:6, 8), with which God does take delight.

[134]DeSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude*, 477.

[135]For an excellent and persuasive treatment of Heb 2:17, see Simon Kistemaker, "Atonement in Hebrews," in *The Glory of the Atonement*, 163-75; cf. Leon Morris, *Apostolic Preaching of the Cross* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955); 125-60; idem, *The Atonement*, 170-76; Lane, *Hebrews*, 1:65-66; Peterson, "Atonement," 48-49; Seifrid, "Death of Christ," 275-76.

[136]Cf. the NIV, which remains ambiguous with "make atonement." In some ways, such an ambiguity has advantages.

[137]The accusative here should be seen as an accusative of respect. See Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: an Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 203-04; Kistemaker, "Atonement in Hebrews," 166-67; contra F. F. Bruce, *Hebrews*, 78 n. 57.

[138]Thielman, "The Atonement," 120.

[139]Seifrid, "Death of Christ," 275.

[140]Therefore, the lines drawn by Dodd and Morris in the 20th century each had merit, though, as Gathercole has rightly pointed out, it is the conclusions of Morris that have better stood the test of time and theological reflection (Gathercole, "The Cross and Substitutionary Atonement," 70).

[141]This is precisely the point put forward by Kistemaker ("Atonement in Hebrews," 163-67).

[142]Attridge, *Hebrews*, 96 n. 192.

[143] Montefiore, *Hebrews*, 68. Montefiore asserts that propitiation is not even a biblical concept.

[144]Kistemaker, "Atonement in Hebrews," 165.

[145]Paul K. Jewett, "Propitiation," in *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible* (ed. Merrill C. Tenney; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975); 4:904-05. I owe this reference to Kistemaker, "Atonement in Hebrews," 167.

[146]See Seifrid, Kistemaker, et al.

[147]To be sure, the writer of Hebrews does not promote universalism, the doctrine that all will possess the salvation of the Lord regardless of faith or repentance. Quite conversely, Hebrews is patently clear that faith in God saves (11:6, "pleases God"). This is the trans-testamental truth of salvation by faith. As such, all who are of faith will see the new Jerusalem etc. so beautifully outlined in Heb 12:22-24.

[148]Peterson, "Atonement," 49.

[149]My own position is that true believers will not abandon faith and will ultimately persevere. In the doctrinal sections of Hebrews, particularly 7:1-10:18, one finds that New Covenant believers have their sins and lawless deeds remembered no more (*ou mē* + aorist subjunctive) and the transformed Law written on their hearts (7:12; 8:10-12; 10:15-18). Based on this description, it seems difficult to maintain that what is in view is something other than *all* one's sins, both past and present, rather than all sins up to the point of faith, or all sins *except* for the sin

of apostasy. True New Covenant membership is a preeminently theocentric work (note the repeated divine "I will" in the New Covenant passages). Those who are his covenant people are perfected for all time (10:14). Also, there is a change of heart that God produces in which obedience becomes the pattern of life (8:10; 10:16). This pattern is distinctly different from the Old Covenant people (recall 3:7-4:11). Further, and quite significantly, Christ, the High Priest of the New Covenant, is always interceding on behalf of His covenant people (7:25). His ongoing mediation offers assurance that His people will endure to the end. What is implied concerning the effectiveness of his mediation if such mediation does not in some way guarantee the endurance of the one for whom he mediates?

[150]Leon Morris, *The Cross in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 273.

[151]Morris, *Cross in the New Testament*, 274.

The *SBJT* Forum: The Atonement under Fire

Editor's Note: Readers should be aware of the forum's format. D. A. Carson, Thomas R. Schreiner, Bruce A. Ware, and James Hamilton have been asked specific questions to which they have provided written responses. These writers are not responding to one another. The journal's goal for the Forum is to provide significant thinkers' views on topics of interest without requiring lengthy articles from these heavily-committed individuals. Their answers are presented in an order that hopefully makes the forum read as much like a unified presentation as possible.

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SBJT: What are some of the reasons why the doctrine of penal substitution is again coming under attack?

D. A. Carson: A book could usefully be written on this subject. To keep things brief, I shall list a handful of developments that have contributed to this sad state of affairs.[1]

(1) In recent years it has become popular to sketch the Bible's story-line something like this: Ever since the fall, God has been active to reverse the effects of sin. He takes action to limit sin's damage; he calls out a new nation, the Israelites, to mediate his teaching and his grace to others; he promises that one day he will come as the promised Davidic king to overthrow sin and death and all their wretched effects. This is what Jesus does: he conquers death, inaugurates the kingdom of righteousness, and calls his followers to live out that righteousness now in prospect of the consummation still to come.

Much of this description of the Bible's story-line, of course, is true. Yet it is so painfully reductionistic that it introduces a major distortion. It collapses human rebellion, God's wrath, and assorted disasters into one construct, namely, the degradation of human life, while depersonalizing the wrath of God. It thus fails to wrestle with the fact that from the beginning, sin is an offense *against God*. God himself pronounces the sentence of death (Genesis 2-3). This is scarcely surprising, since God is the source of all life, so if his image-bearers spit in his face and insist on going their own way and becoming their own gods, they cut themselves off from their Maker, from the One who gives life. What is there, then, but death? Moreover, when we sin in any way, God himself is invariably the most offended party (Psalm 51). The God the Bible portrays as resolved to intervene and save is also the God portrayed as full of wrath because of our sustained idolatry. As much as he intervenes to save us, he stands over against us as Judge, an offended Judge with fearsome jealousy.

Nor is this a matter of Old Testament theology alone. When Jesus announced the imminence of the dawning of the kingdom, like John the Baptist he cried, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near" (Matt 4:17; cf. Mark 1:15). Repentance is necessary, because the coming of the King promises judgment as well as blessing. The sermon on the mount, which encourages Jesus' disciples to turn the other cheek, repeatedly warns them to flee the condemnation of the gehenna of fire.

The sermon warns the hearers not to follow the broad road that leads to destruction, and pictures Jesus pronouncing final judgment with the words, "I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!" (7:23). The parables are replete with warnings of final judgment; a significant percentage of them demonstrate the essential divisiveness of the dawning of the kingdom. Images of hell—outer darkness, furnace of fire, weeping and gnashing of teeth, undying worms, eternal fire—are too ghastly to contemplate long. After Jesus' resurrection, when Peter preaches on the day of Pentecost, he aims to convince his hearers that Jesus is the promised Messiah, that his death and resurrection are the fulfillment of Scripture, and that God "has made this Jesus, whom you crucified [he tells them], both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36). That is every bit as much threat as promise: the hearers are "cut to the heart" and cry, "What shall we do?" (2:37). That is what elicits Peter's "Repent and believe" (3:38). When Peter preaches to Cornelius and his household, the climax of his moving address is that in fulfillment of Scripture God appointed Jesus "as judge of the living and the dead"—and thus not of Jews only. Those who believe in him receive "forgiveness of sins through his name": transparently, that is what is essential if we are to face the judge and emerge unscathed. When he preaches to the Athenian pagan intellectuals, Paul, as we all know, fills in some of the great truths that constitute the matrix in which alone Jesus makes sense: monotheism, creation, who human beings are, God's aseity and providential sovereignty, the wretchedness and danger of idolatry. Before he is interrupted, however, Paul gets to the place in his argument where he insists that God has set a day "when he will judge the world with justice"—and his appointed judge is Jesus, whose authoritative status is established by his resurrection from the dead. When Felix invites the apostle to speak "about faith in Christ Jesus" (Acts 24:24), Paul, we are told, discourses "on righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come" (24:15): apparently such themes are an irreducible part of faithful gospel preaching. Small wonder, then, that Felix was terrified (24:25). The Letter to the Romans, which many rightly take to be, at very least, a core summary of the apostle's understanding of the gospel, finds Paul insisting that judgment takes place "on the day when God will judge men's secrets through Jesus Christ, *as my gospel declares*" (Rom 2:16). Writing to the Thessalonians, Paul reminds us that Jesus "rescues us from the coming wrath" (1 Thess 1:10). This Jesus will be "revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the *gospel* of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power on the day he comes to be glorified in his holy people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed" (2 Thess 1:7-10). We await "a Savior from [heaven], the Lord Jesus Christ"—and what this Savior saves us from (the context of Phil 3:19-20 shows) is the destiny of destruction. "Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath" (Eph 2:3), for we gratified "the cravings of our sinful nature . . . following its desires and thoughts" (2:3)—but now we have been *saved* by grace through faith, created in Christ Jesus to do good works (Eph 2:8-10). This grace thus saves us both from sins and from their otherwise inevitable

result, the wrath to come. Jesus himself is our peace (Ephesians 2; Acts 10:36). "The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of human beings who suppress the truth by their wickedness" (Rom 1:18). But God presented Christ as a propitiation in his blood" (3:25), and now "we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand" (5:1-2).

Time and space fail to allow reflection on how the sacrifice of Christ in the Letter to the Hebrews is what alone enables us to escape the terror of those who fall into the hands of the living God, who is a consuming fire, or on how the Apocalypse presents the Lamb as the slaughtered sacrifice, even while warning of the danger of falling under the wrath of the Lamb.

This nexus of themes—God, sin, wrath, death, judgment—is what stands behind the simple words of, say, 1 Cor 15:3: as a matter of first importance, Paul tells us, "Christ died for our sins." Parallel texts instantly leap to mind: "[Christ] was delivered over to death for our sins, and was raised to life for our justification" (Rom 4:25). "Christ died for the ungodly" (Rom 5:6). The Lord Jesus Christ "gave himself for our sins, to rescue us from the present evil age" (Gal 1:4). "Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God" (1 Pet 3:18). Or, as Paul puts it in 1 Cor 15:2, "By this gospel you are *saved*." To be saved from our sins is to be saved not only from their chaining power but from their consequences—and the consequences are profoundly bound up with God's solemn sentence, with God's holy wrath. Once you see this, you cannot fail to see that whatever else the cross does, it must rightly set aside God's sentence, it must rightly set aside God's wrath, or it achieves nothing.

(2) Some popular slogans that have been deployed to belittle the doctrine of penal substitution betray painful misconceptions of what the Bible says about our Triune God. The best known of these appalling slogans, of course, is that penal substitution is a form of "cosmic child abuse." This conjures up a wretched picture of a vengeful God taking it out on his Son, who had no choice in the matter. Instead of invoking the Triune God of the Bible, this image implicitly pictures interactions between two separable Gods, the Father and the Son. But this is a painful caricature of what the Bible actually says. In fact, I do not know of any serious treatment of the doctrine of penal substitution, undertaken by orthodox believers, that does not carefully avoid falling into such traps.

Consider Rom 5:8: "But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners Christ died for us." This verse is coherent *only* if Christ himself is God. The cross is not Christ's idea alone, conjured up to satisfy his bad-tempered Father. The Triune God, our Creator and our Judge, could have, in perfect justice, consigned us all to the pit. Instead, the Father so loved us as to send his Son, *himself God*, to bear our sins in his own body on the tree. Moreover, the Bible speaks of this mission not only in its bearing on us lost sinners, but also in its reflection of inner-Trinitarian commitments: by this mission the Father determines that all will honor the Son, even as they honor the Father (see John 5:16-30): where does this insistence fit into crass language about cosmic child abuse?

(3) In recent years there has been a

lot of chatter about various "models" of the atonement that have appeared in the history of the church: the penal substitution model, the *Christus Victor* model, the exemplary model, and so forth. The impression is frequently given that today's Christians are free to pick and choose among these so-called "models." But for any Christian committed to the final authority of Scripture, this approach is *methodologically* flawed. It allows historical theology to trump Scripture. Surely the right question to ask is this: Which, if any, of these so-called "models" is exegetically warranted by the Bible itself? For instance, are there passages in which biblical writers insist that Christ in his death triumphed over the powers of darkness? Are there passages in which Christ's self-sacrifice becomes a moral model for his followers? Are there passages in which Christ's death is said to be a propitiation for our sins, i.e., a sacrifice that turns away the wrath of God? If the answer is "Yes" to these three options—and there are still more options I have not mentioned here—then choosing only one of them is being unfaithful to Scripture, for it is too limiting. Christians are not at liberty to pick and choose which of the Bible's teachings are to be treasured.

(4) There is another question that must be asked when people talk about "models" of the atonement. Assuming we can show that several of them are warranted by Scripture itself, the question to ask is this: How, then, do these "models" cohere? Are they merely discrete pearls on a string? Or is there logic and intelligibility to them, established by Scripture itself?

One recent work that loves to emphasize the *Christus Victor* "model"—Christ by his death is victor over sin and death—somewhat begrudgingly concedes that penal substitution is found in a few texts, not least Rom 8:3. But this work expends no effort to show how these two views of the atonement should be integrated. In other words, the work in question denigrates penal substitution as a sort of minor voice, puffs the preferred "model" of *Christus Victor*, and attempts no integration. But I think it can be shown (though it would take a very long chapter to do it) that if one begins with the centrality of penal substitution, which is, as we have seen, grounded on a deep understanding of how sin is an offense against God, it is very easy to see how all the other so-called "models" of the atonement are related to it. The *way* Christ triumphs over sin and death is by becoming a curse for us, by satisfying the just demands of his heavenly Father, thereby silencing the accuser, and rising in triumph in resurrection splendor because sin has done its worst and been defeated by the One who bore its penalty. Moreover, in the light of such immeasurable love, there are inevitably exemplary moral commitments that Christ's followers must undertake. In other words, it is easy to show how various biblical emphases regarding the atonement cohere if one *begins* with penal substitution. It is very difficult to establish the coherence if one begins anywhere else.

(5) At least some of the current work on the atonement that is proving so scathing of penal substitution reflects discouraging ignorance of earlier theological study and reflection. Few interact any more with standard works by J. I. Packer, John Stott, and others—let alone classic works produced by earlier generations. But a new generation is rising, forcing readers to take note that historic Christian confessionalism will not roll over and play dead. I heartily commend the recent book

by Steve Jeffery, Mike Ovey, and Andrew Sach, *Pierced for Our Transgressions: Rediscovering the Glory of Penal Substitution* (InterVarsity, 2007)

[1] This essay is also available in digital form at http://www.thegospelcoalition.org.

SBJT: How should we respond to some criticisms of the doctrine of penal substitution today?

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Thomas R. Schreiner: The apostle Paul proclaimed the scandal of the cross, and nowhere is that scandal more evident than in the opposition we see to penal substitution today. Joel Green and Mark Baker *say* that penal substitution is part of the message of the cross, but they nowhere commend the doctrine in their book and instead they consistently criticize it.[1] Some allege that penal substitution cannot be biblical since a loving Jesus appeases an angry Father. But no credible or scholarly defender of penal substitution (PS henceforth) teaches such a theology. In popular circles and in some illustrations the doctrine is occasionally explained in such a way, and in such cases an important strand of the biblical evidence is left out. The scriptures do teach, after all, that God's wrath and judgment is directed against sin (Rom 1:18; 2:5), and that Christ took our sin upon himself and bore the Father's wrath (Rom 3:25-26). But the scriptures also teach that the Father himself sent the Son to die for sinners because of his great love for us (Rom 5:8).

We must beware of one dimensional and simplistic portrayals of God. It is all too easy to think that if God's wrath is appeased in Christ's death, then God's love cannot be part of what occurs. The scriptures, however, portray a more complex picture. God, out of his great love for sinners, sent his Son to propitiate his anger against sin. In doing so is God guilty of divine child-abuse, so that he requires his Son to suffer? What human Father would do such a thing? Once again, however, we are in great danger of reductionism, and all too easily fall into the mistake of creating a God in our image. Further, we must recall that the Son is not forced or compelled by the Father to die for the sins of the world. He gladly does the will of the Father, as the Gospel of John teaches repeatedly. He gave his life on his own authority and by virtue of his own will (John 10:18). As Paul says, "Christ loved me and gave himself for me" (Gal 2:20). It scarcely does justice to the biblical evidence to suggest that he was forced by the Father to suffer! Moreover, it is certainly a strange and completely unbiblical Trinitarianism that would somehow suggest that the Father sadistically and gleefully sent his Son to suffer. Clearly, the point of the biblical witness is that the Father's love is so stupendous that he would even send his own Son to suffer for our sake and our salvation.

These distorted presentations of PS raise an important issue. If we read the scriptures suspiciously, we can distort its teaching and present it in a negative light. As believers, however, we are to read the scriptures humbly and with receptive hearts, so that we let the scriptures shape and form our worldview. We realize that we are prone to reductionism and partial explanations, and so we must pay heed to the entirety of the biblical witness. Some of those who disparage PS, however, seem to be prejudiced against it from the outset. I have seen the doctrine described as "grotesque" and "primitive" and "vengeful." Such responses indicate either a very inadequate grasp of scripture, or hearts

that are resisting God's self-revelation.

Sometimes it is said that those of us who support PS ignore other dimensions of the atonement, for Christ is also presented as our example in his suffering, and the scriptures also teach that he defeated the devil and demonic powers. Those of us who support PS need to be reminded that the atonement is not exhausted by a single theme. Still, I have never read a single defender of PS who thinks that the atonement is only about PS. What we do argue, however, is that the PS is the heart of the atonement—that it is fundamental to what happened in our salvation. We can see this clearly when we think of Christ functioning as an example on the cross or his defeat over demonic powers.

First, let's think about Christ functioning as an example for us. Peter clearly teaches us that we are to follow Christ's example in 1 Pet 2:21-25. Still, it should be evident that imitating Christ cannot be the central theme when we think of the atonement. For we know from the scriptures that we have all failed to do God's will in many ways, that we have all sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Rom 3:23), and that no one can be right before God by doing what the law says (Rom 3:19-20). If we mainly look to Christ's example when we think of the cross, we will be miserable indeed, for we all fail to follow his example. Indeed, if we must follow his example to be right with God, then none of us will ever be right with God. To paraphrase the Apostle Paul, "If righteousness comes from following Christ's example, then Christ died for nothing" (Gal 2:21). Yes, we are to follow Christ's example, but we need someone to die in our place and pay the penalty that we owed, so that we can be right with God and receive forgiveness of sins. Salvation is not gained by following Christ's moral life; it is a gift received on the basis of Christ's atoning death. Even in 1 Pet 2:21-25, where Christ is highlighted as an example, Peter highlights the uniqueness of Christ's sacrifice. "He himself bore our own sins in his body on the tree" (1 Pet 2:24).

Second, it is also gloriously true that Christ in his death triumphed over Satan and demons, and this truth has led more and more scholars to think that *Christus Victor* is the major theme of the atonement. But why is it that Satan and demons rule over human beings? Clearly, the scriptures teach that they reign over us because of our sin. We are not merely victims of demonic powers. We have given ourselves willingly and gladly to sin. The power of demons is broken when we receive forgiveness of sins, when Christ pays the penalty to the Father that we owed but could never pay. The book of Hebrews makes it clear that Christ destroyed the power of the devil (Heb 2:14) through his sacrifice on the cross as our great High Priest (Heb 7:1-10:18). Hence, the foundation of Christ's victory over spiritual powers is his death on our behalf. We are freed from Satan's dominion when we are forgiven of our sins by virtue of Christ suffering the penalty we deserved, once again demonstrating that at the heart of the atonement is penal substitution.

[1] Joel B. Green & Mark D. Baker, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross: Atonement in New Testament & Contemporary Contexts* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2000).

SBJT: In light of the centrality given by N. T. Wright and others to the *Christus Victor* aspect of the atonement, why do you think that the penal substitutionary aspect is itself central and that it is foundational to *Christus Victor*?

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Bruce A. Ware: Arguably, the three most explicit texts in the New Testament expressing the truth that Christ has conquered Satan and all of the powers of darkness are Col 2:15; Heb 2:14-15; and 1 John 3:8. These texts teach, respectively, that Christ has "disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them," that Christ took on our human flesh that "through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil," and that "the reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil" (all Scripture quotations from the ESV). These passages, along with a host of others—including importantly the gospels themselves that portray Christ in conflict with the devil from his temptation in the wilderness to the Satan-inspired conspiracy of Judas and the Pharisees to put Jesus to death—all underscore the important theme that Christ, by his death and resurrection, conquered the very one who had the power of death, bringing this victory over Satan to Christ's followers and, in a broader sense, to the whole of the cosmos.

The question before us, then, is not whether the Bible teaches the *Christus Victor* theme, i.e., that Christ has conquered Satan and the powers of darkness. Indeed Scripture teaches this clearly, and its truth, spanning from Gen 3:15 all the way through Rev 20:10, is a major part of the broader biblical teaching of the efficacy of Christ's atoning death and victorious resurrection. Rather, the question before us is this: Is *Christus Victor* the central and most significant element among the aspects of the atonement, or should the penal substitutionary aspect of the atonement itself be seen as central, accounting for and giving rise, then, to *Christus Victor*? In considering this question, I suggest that each of the three passages mentioned above, each in its own context, indicates that penal substitution stands as the foundation for *Christus Victor* such that the victory of Christ over Satan comes through and not apart from Christ's paying the penalty for the sin of others by which (alone) Satan's hold on them is destroyed. In short, it seems clear from these texts that penal substitution grounds and accounts for *Christus Victor*. Consider briefly each of these texts.

The context of Col 2:15, where Christ is said to have disarmed the rulers and authorities, is one in which Christ's payment for the penalty of sin is first established before moving next to Christ's victory over Satan. In Col 2:13-14 we are told that in Christ we have been forgiven of all our trespasses in that by the very death of Christ on the cross, he cancelled the record of debt that stood against us and set it aside, nailing it to the cross. The thrust in vv. 13-14, then, is on expiation: the liability we owe before a holy God to suffer the penalty for trespassing his law is now removed ("forgiven" in 2:13; "cancelled" and "set aside" in 2:14) as Christ took upon himself our record of debt and nailed it to the cross. The substitutionary death Christ died, in which he cancelled out the debt of sinners, then, is the backdrop for the next glorious truth found in 2:15, where he disarmed the rulers and authorities, putting them to shame and triumphing over them. The death by which Satan is disarmed and put to shame, then, is a death that cancels our sin. These are not accidentally linked concepts but theologically and necessarily linked. The only way in which Satan could be defeated is as sin, which gave him the basis for his hold over sinners, was itself

paid for and forgiven. Christ's forgiveness through penal substitution, then, is the means by which Christ conquered Satan's power.

Hebrews 2 likewise links Christ's destruction of Satan who had the power of death (2:14) with Christ's faithful priestly role in which he offered a propitiatory sacrifice of the sins of the people (2:17). The common truth that links both effects is the incarnation: Christ shared in "flesh and blood" (2:14), or variously, he was "made like his brothers" (2:17) in order to accomplish these dual effects, to "destroy the one who has the power of death" (2:14) and to "become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people" (2:17). At the very least, it is clear that the *Christus Victor* theme does not stand alone; rather it is deliberately linked to the theme of penal and propitiatory sacrifice. And when one asks, next, whether one has priority over the other, it would seem that the whole of the Book of Hebrews suggests the answer. Clearly, the once for all sacrifice of Christ inaugurating the new covenant is presented in Hebrews as providing the payment for sin that was foreshadowed but never actually accomplished (10:4) through the animal sacrifices of the old covenant. Hebrews's stress on the sacrifice of Christ for the sins of the people clearly is the dominant note sounded in the book, and so it stands to reason that it (i.e., penal substitution) grounds the other important, yet dependent, truth that in this death for sin, he conquered the one who had the power of sin. Indeed, victory over Satan occurs only as the basis for his power (sin) is itself removed through penal and propitiatory sacrifice.

Finally, 1 John 3:4-10 shows that the Son of God's appearing "to destroy the works of the devil" (3:8b) happens only as the very sins that are his "works" (3:8a) are themselves taken away through the sacrifice of Christ (3:5). Similarly to Hebrews 2, we have in 1 John 3:5 and 8 a dual purpose given for why Christ appeared: He appeared "to take away sins" (3:5) and he appeared "to destroy the works of the devil" (3:8). Both are true, but does one have priority over the other? Is one basic, so that as it occurs, the second reality follows? Indeed the argument of 1 John 3:4-10 would suggest that only as Christ appears "to take away sin" does he, in so doing, take away the very sinful works that mark the devil "from the beginning" (3:8a) and by which appearing, then, Christ destroys "the works of the devil" (3:8b). *Christus Victor*, then, occurs only as the very works that Satan carries out are themselves destroyed. What works are these? They are works of sin (3:8a). So, as Christ comes to take away sin (3:5), he destroys the sins that are the works of the devil (3:8b). Penal substitution, then, forms the basis by which *Christus Victor* is accomplished and secured.

Perhaps an analogy may assist in clarifying the point of Scripture's teaching here. Under a just system of laws of the state and judicial practice, a prisoner is locked in jail and his freedom curtailed precisely because he has been convicted of some crime whose penalty involves his incarceration. Notice, then, that his *guilt* forms the basis for his *bondage*. Only because he has been proven guilty of breaking the law does the state have the right to put him behind bars. Furthermore, if a prisoner can prove his actual innocence, such that the charge of guilt can be removed—e.g., if some forensic or DNA evidence was forthcoming after

his incarceration demonstrating his innocence—then the state would be obligated to free him from his bonds and release him from prison. Is it not clear, then, that the *power* of the state to withhold from people their freedom and put them in bondage comes from the *guilt* those very people have incurred and the accompanying just punishment directed at them as a result? Remove the *guilt* and you remove the just basis for *bondage*.

Similarly, Satan's power over sinners is tied specifically and exclusively to their guilt through sin. His hold on them is owing to their rebellion from God in sin and his subsequent jurisdiction over their lives as a result of that sin. But remove the guilt through Christ's payment for their sin and you remove the basis for Satan's hold on them! So it is through Christ's death, that as he took upon himself the sin of others and paid the full penalty for their sin, the rightful hold that Satan had upon them is necessarily broken as the basis for this bondage is removed. Remove the guilt and you remove the bondage; accomplish penal substitution and you accomplish *Christus Victor*. Therefore, as glorious as the truth of *Christus Victor* is—and indeed, it is magnificently glorious—the truth that makes possible and necessary Christ's conquering of Satan and his power is the more central and foundational truth that Christ paid the penalty for our sins through his penal and propitiatory sacrifice such that the basis for Satan's hold on sinners is thus removed. Penal substitution grounds *Christus Victor*. Praise be to our Savior for this gracious forgiveness of our sin and guilt that accomplishes also this glorious deliverance from Satan's dominion and bondage (Col 1:13-14).

SBJT: Many people today say they have a problem with viewing the cross in terms of penal substitution, but what do you think the real problem is?

James Hamilton: "Mercy and truth have met together. Righteousness and peace have kissed each other" (Ps 85:10). The problem with penal substitutionary atonement isn't the idea that God could be wrathful. Anyone who believes the Bible—and reads it—will see that. Nor is it that penal substitution is dependant upon an outdated, unbiblical cultural framework that has been imposed on the text of Scripture. God gave the sacrificial system. He spoke of atonement being made and his wrath being appeased. He revealed all this. Penal substitutionary atonement is in the Bible—seamlessly woven through. But if these things aren't the problem with penal substation, what is?

The problem with penal substitution is that we have not sufficiently realized this doctrine. We have not yet considered the depths of our own sin. We have not yet considered the holiness and majesty of God. We have not seen the enormity of the fury of his righteous indignation. We have not yet considered what torments we deserve. We have not yet considered the worth of Christ. We have not sufficiently pondered the fact that for us and for our salvation the Pure One was defiled, the First Born forsaken, the One who knew no sin was made sin, the Righteous One was put forward as a sacrifice of propitiation, all so that we might be cleansed, that we might be adopted, that we might have his righteousness, that we might be forgiven. He was broken that we might be healed, slain that we might live. You may be reading this and thinking to yourself, "I have thought through all these things before." Yet there remain depths that cannot be

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sounded.

We think we know all this. We act as though we have it in our back pockets. We assume it. But go to most churches and the infinite wealth of these riches of the gospel of Jesus Christ will not be sung in the songs and preached in the sermons. It is not because there are no songs that sing these truths, nor is there a shortage of relevant passages from the Bible that could be preached. That is not where the problem lies. The problem lies with us. We are the problem with penal substitution.

Going to some of these churches can only lead to the conclusion that we think that other things are better to sing about in worship and that other things are more relevant for the sermon. Listening to some of these preachers certainly leads to the conclusion that what the Bible teaches doesn't matter very much. If it mattered, they would preach it. But it doesn't matter, and the fact that it comes in a book is problematic, since they have no time to read and they can't be bothered with things like genre, or context, or the progress of redemptive history, or the grand story the Bible tells, or, for that matter, the ineffable glory of God, the righteousness of his justice, his commitment to his name, and the awful unmixed wrath of the full fury of his holiness that is being stored up against those who do not honor him as God and give thanks to him.

All this is irrelevant. And since all this is irrelevant, it matters little that Jesus was and is fully God and fully man, that the Father granted him to have life in himself, that only one of infinite worth could satisfy the infinite, just wrath of the Father against our sin.

None of this counts for very much—at least, that's the impression you'll get by going to many churches. What they care about is having more people in the pews, and if those people aren't interested in all that God stuff, and if they have no desire to study an old boring book like the Bible, they've come to the right place. What these churches seem to care about involves more campuses, more hype, more technology, more humor, more of all the stuff you might see on TV—minus the violence, nudity, and profanity. That's the problem with penal substitution.

In order to care about it you have to care about God. You have to believe in the authority of the Bible, so that if it tells you that God is wrathful against sin, you conclude that wrath is not beneath God. So that if it tells you that God put forward his Son to propitiate his own wrath, you marvel that this expression of the almighty wrath of God is simultaneously a display of mercy. Wonder of wonders. Salvation comes through judgment. God shows himself just, and he has devised a way to be justly merciful. A mercy so great it leaves us stammering about unsearchable ways, untraceable paths, depths of wisdom and knowledge, about all things being from him and through him. And in the end, we exclaim, "Glory to him, forever! Amen."

If you come to care about all this, it will be because you know that your biggest problem is that one day you have to stand before God and account for yourself. In fact, you will know that this is everyone's biggest problem. This, of course, will reorder your reckoning of relevance.

You might begin to think that the Bible has relevant things to say after all. You might begin to think that reading is important since God has been pleased to reveal himself in written texts. You might begin to think that since God has revealed himself in these texts, they're

actually worth preaching. You might begin to think that since God has revealed himself in the words and statements made in this old book, it's actually not boring, its genres are worth learning about, and understanding context and redemptive history really does matter.

And if you begin to think all this, don't be surprised if you start preaching and teaching quite a lot about penal substitutionary atonement. It's all through the Bible, and if you methodically work your way through the whole thing (all of it is, after all, inspired)—avoiding the temptation to skip from hobby horse to hobby horse—you will come up against it.

The set of concerns the Bible will give to you—concern for God's glory and holiness, concern for people's souls as they show boldness against God when they sin, concern for God's own faithfulness to what he has said he will do, concern for people to be duly astonished at the free mercy of God in the gospel—all this will make the phrase "penal substitutionary atonement" a set of precious words. Not for the words themselves, but because you love the gospel. And you will have ceased to be the problem with penal substitution.