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RÉSUMÉ

Les doctrines de la justification et de la rédemption sont inestimables et pourtant, beaucoup aujourd'hui ne savent pas les apprécier à leur juste valeur: ils ne se rendent pas compte de leurs implications pour la vie chrétienne.

1. Justifiés gratuitement par sa grâce
Après avoir examiné les implications grammaticales de l'expression «étant justifiés», il est rappelé comment la notion de justification a été comprise par Barth, C. K. Barrett, Leon Morris et Emil Brunner.

Lorsqu'on prêche la justification, on bute sur l'obstacle suivant: bien des gens ne reconnaissent pas leur besoin. Et même si nous les convainquons de leur besoin, ils ne veulent pas de la justification. Il est difficile de se soumettre à Dieu pour emprunter le chemin qu'il a tracé. Que l'on pense à ce propos à l'exemple de Luther. Paul souligne que nous ne pouvons apporter aucune contribution personnelle à cet acte du Dieu tout puissant. La justification est un «don», elle ne se mérite pas.

On peut comparer cela à l'amour que nous portons à nos enfants, gratuitement, même lorsqu'ils sont en révolte.

2. La rédemption qui est venue par Jésus-Christ

Le mot «rédemption» désigne une délivrance au moyen du paiement d'une rançon. De l'usage de ce terme, on peut retirer quatre enseignements:

i. Dieu est intervenu en Jésus-Christ pour nous délivrer de notre condition désespérée d'esclaves du péché: la puissance qui nous asservit doit être brisée.

ii. D'après l'apôtre Pierre, le prix qui a été payé est «le précieux sang de Christ». Le contexte suggère que le mot précieux a ici la nuance de coûteux. N'avons-nous pas tendance, parfois, à oublier la valeur de la rédemption par le sang de Christ?

iii. Ceux qui ont été rachetés sont maintenant esclaves de Jésus-Christ: «Vous ne vous appartenez plus, car vous avez été rachetés à grand prix». Qu'en est-il de nous?

iv. «La croix est le signe de la défaite du diable» (Brunner). Le diable, comme l'a dit Luther, «est tombé dans le piège que Dieu lui tendait» (cf. Col 1.13; Ac 26.18). Cette vérité peut s'illustrer à l'aide de trois images: celle d'un captif enchaîné attendant la délivrance, celle du fils prodigue loin de la maison paternelle, et celle de la conquête d'une épouse.

Les chrétiens doivent aujourd'hui lutter contre des forces démoniaques. La société qui nous entoure est mue par des puissances qui rendent les hommes et les femmes esclaves. La puissance qui jaillit de la rédemption accomplie par Jésus-Christ est-elle suffisante pour briser ces chaînes? L'Église n'est-elle pas en danger de se laisser prendre au piège par des forces qui lui feront virtuellement attribuer une grandeur divine à de simples choses?

Le message de la rédemption demeure une nécessité aujourd'hui.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Mit den Lehren von der Rechtfertigung und der Erlösung stehen uns zwei Schätze zur Verfügung, die heutzutage bedauerlicherweise von vielen weder richtig verstanden noch angemessen gewürdigt werden. Vor allem die Bedeutung dieser Lehren für das Leben als Christ wird dabei nicht erkannt.

1. *Wir werden ohne Verdienst gerecht aus seiner Gnade*
'Wir werden gerecht . . . ' Ich gehe zuerst auf die Implikationen der grammatikalischen Konstruktion ein. Was bedeutet es, gerecht zu werden (vgl. in diesem Zusammenhang Karl Barth, C. K. Barrett, Leon Morris und Emil Brunner)? Wenn wir Rechtfertigung predigen, besteht das größte Problem darin, daß den Leuten nicht klar ist, daß sie der Rechtfertigung bedürfen. Und selbst wenn wir sie davon überzeugen können, haben sie noch immer kein Interesse an der Rechtfertigung. Sich Gottes Wegen zu unterwerfen ist nicht einfach, wie u. a. das Beispiel Martin Luthers verdeutlicht. Paulus betont, daß wir nichts zu der Gerech-Erklärung durch den allmächtigen Gott beitragen. Sie ist ein unverdientes Geschenk (δωρεαν). Dem vergleichbar ist, daß wir unsere Kinder bedingungslos lieben, und zwar selbst dann, wenn sie widerspenstig sind.

2. *Die Erlösung, die durch Christus Jesus geschehen ist*
Erlösung bedeutet "Errettung durch Freikauf" (vgl. Morris, Cranfield und Barrett). An dieser Stelle wollen wir auf vier Aspekte der Erlösung eingehen:

(1.) *Gott hat durch Christus eingegriffen, um uns aus unserer hilflosen Situation der Versklavung an die Sünde zu erretten: die Macht, die uns bindet, mußte gebrochen werden.*

(2.) *Die Schuld ist beglichen, wie Petrus deutlich macht, wenn er davon spricht, daß wir mit dem teuren Blut Christi erlöst worden sind. Vergessen wir aber nicht manchmal den Wert der Erlösung durch das Blut Christi?*

(3.) *Diejenigen, die erlöst worden sind, sind nun Sklaven Jesu Christi. 'Euer Leib gehört nicht Euch selbst. Ihr seid teuer erkauft'. Sind wir uns dessen bewußt?*

(4.) *'Das Kreuz ist das Zeichen für die Niederlage des Teufels' (Brunner). Der Teufel 'ging Gott in die Falle', wie Luther betonte.*

Christen sind dazu berufen, gegen dämonische Mächte zu kämpfen; denn die moderne Gesellschaft ist in der Gewalt von Mächten, die Mann wie Frau zu Sklaven machen. Haben wir als Folge der von Christus erwirkten Erlösung genügend Macht, um diese Ketten zu sprengen? Oder steht die Kirche in der Gefahr, von diesen Mächten, die bloßen Dingen einen nahezu 'göttlichen Status' beimessen, umgarnt zu werden? An diesen Fragen wird deutlich, wie dringend wir der Botschaft von der Erlösung bedürfen.

Some years ago I knew a very ordinary and uneducated man who had been astonishingly successful as a scrap merchant and had become extremely wealthy. His home was furnished lavishly and was littered (and I mean littered), with very expensive ornaments. Moreover, because he had been told they were a good investment for his money, he had bought and hung on the walls of his drawing room

several extremely valuable paintings—they must have been worth hundreds of thousands of pounds. When he showed them to me, however, it was painfully obvious that he had absolutely no awareness of their beauty as art. His sole interest in them was their monetary worth and how much they had appreciated in value since he bought them. Worse still, beside them he had very bad paintings of race

horses—because gambling on horses had become the passion of his life.

We come this morning to two great aspects of the Cross of Christ. The first describes what took place on the Cross as ‘justification’ and the second describes it as ‘redemption’. Here we have priceless treasures, worth infinitely more than the most costly of any earthly treasures. How few, it seems to me at times, have learned to appreciate the meaning and glory of these two aspects of the work of Christ. How many of God’s people are like the scrap merchant, possessing priceless treasure but with little if any understanding either of its implications for their Christian living or of its eternal value.

1. Being justified freely by his grace

‘Being justified . . .’ is a present participle and grammatically we would expect it to go with ‘all’ in the previous verse, ‘all have sinned’. However, there is a problem with that since while Paul undoubtedly means that all have sinned he doesn’t mean that all are justified. John Murray takes it that v. 23 is parenthetical, therefore ‘being justified’ refers to ‘all who believe’ in v. 22.

But how are we to understand ‘being justified’ and what did the apostle Paul mean? There are so many eloquent descriptions of ‘justification’ by theologians, for example, by Barth, Brunner, C. K. Barrett, John Murray, Leon Morris, C. E. B. Cranfield, James Denney and many others—theologically trained minds struggling, wrestling with the challenge of describing in simple terms this majestic mystery, this act of God, whereby guilty sinners are declared to be righteous in his sight.

Barth, as we would expect, emphasises the divine declaration:

‘God declares. He declares his righteousness to be the Truth behind and beyond all human righteousness and unrighteousness. He declares that He has espoused our cause, and that we belong to Him. He declares that we His enemies are His beloved children. He declares His decision to erect His justice by the complete renewal of heaven and of

earth. This declaration is *creatio ex nihilo*, creation out of nothing’.²

C. K. Barrett emphasises the eschatological aspect of justification: ‘God’s righteousness is an eschatological quantity . . . it implies the verdict of the last judgement’, and the verb ‘to justify means an anticipation of this verdict’. He goes on to argue that the verb means ‘to make righteous’ but only on the understanding that righteous ‘does not mean “virtuous”, but “right”, “clear”, “acquitted” in God’s court . . . Far from being a legal fiction, this is a creative act in the field of divine-human relations’.³

Leon Morris, who has done much work on justification, insists on the forensic meaning of the word: ‘There should be no doubt that *δικαιώω* means “to declare righteous”, not “to make righteous”. Usage is decisive. It is the ordinary word for “to acquit”, “to declare not guilty”. When the accused is acquitted he is not “made righteous” but declared to be righteous’.⁴ It is because Barrett emphasises the relational meaning of ‘righteous’ he is able to maintain the verb means ‘to make righteous’. On the other hand, because Morris is persuaded that ‘righteous’ is predominantly a forensic term, for him it must mean ‘to declare righteous’. Cranfield makes a helpful distinction between ‘what is signified’ by the action of acquittal and ‘the condition resulting from the action of acquittal’.⁵ His distinction perhaps harmonises the forensic and relational views.

A final quotation from Brunner: ‘Men lack the one thing which alone could make them righteous: the righteousness of God, the splendour, the glory of the divine life. That they are sinners and that they lack this glorious life of God is obviously one and the same thing. They just live “down in the dark”, not in the divine sunshine. This has now been changed. God has done the thing whereby men come to share in what they lack; namely, God’s righteousness. How does this impossible thing happen? It happens through God removing that which separates men from himself, that is, guilt, and acknowledging

those who were no longer his own as his own. He justifies the unrighteous, he grants to them what they do not have, which they have lost to all his eternity: his unconditioned love. He says to them the opposite of what he should have said to them had he wished to judge according to the Law. You are righteous in my sight. He receives them, the apostates, into his fellowship. Why? Because he wishes to. On what basis? Purely in the form of a gift, on the basis of his grace . . . This grace, which indeed costs man nothing, costs God his Son'.⁶

In our teaching and preaching, what is the great barrier which those of us who seek to bring this mighty doctrine home to the hearts of men and women must first overcome? It is the absence of a sense of guilt. Men and women say quite blandly, 'But I have no **need** of justification. I am perfectly happy as I am, thank-you very much'. The complacency which a materialistic, post-modern society engenders within the human heart is a colossal obstacle to surmount. We all have friends, good people, pleasant, friendly, kind citizens, who have absolutely no awareness of their need of God. Because they have no biblical world-view, they have no idea of a Creator God from whom they have turned and against whom they are in outright rebellion and whose laws they constantly violate. Of course that takes us back to the first part of this chapter and the verdict of universal guilt before God.

But just say we communicate to such people something of their **need** of God's mercy on that final day of judgement, and they begin to admit that they have sinned and are falling short of the divine glory—in Brunner's phrase, that 'they live "down in the dark", not in the divine sunshine'. We still have another major obstacle before us in bringing them to that faith in Jesus Christ through which the divine righteousness is conferred. It is that by nature they do not **want** to be justified by God. Saul of Tarsus, we have every reason to believe, knew very well of his **need** of that divine declaration which anticipates the verdict of the day of

judgement. But he didn't **want** it—not if it was going to come through the shame of the Cross on which a Nazarene itinerant teacher had hung in hideous, disgusting nakedness. Paul could hardly conceive of a more repugnant way of receiving the divine acquittal and declaration of acceptance before God. In the same way, men and women do not want God's righteousness any more than Naaman wanted to bathe in the River Jordan to be cleansed of his leprosy.⁷

Isn't that close to the root of the problem we all have? We long to establish our own goodness, our own righteousness. We long to prove to others, and not least to ourselves, that we have reformed and are now being good Christians who are pleasing to God. We are even tempted to try and demonstrate our righteousness to God himself! What fools we are and how all pervasive is our self-deception! When we ultimately not only acknowledge our need of justification and at last with all our hearts long for it, then the final apparently insurmountable hurdle is that we are **unable** to submit to it in God's way, which is the only way!

History furnishes us with a dramatic example of that inability to find God's way of righteousness in the story of Martin Luther. He knew his need. He longed to be accepted by God. Not many have yearned for the divine righteousness with the intensity he did. But he could not see his way to attaining that righteousness. 'Look to the wounds of Christ', Staupitz told him. But when we are blinded by our resolve to establish our own righteousness, we simply cannot see how the wounds of Christ can bring us that divine declaration for which we long!

What a struggle you and I can have before at last we prostrate ourselves before the Lord God and lie in dust and ashes at the foot of the Cross, in submission to the crucified Christ, accepting the divine verdict: 'God justifies the wicked!'⁸ He acquits the guilty! There is nothing to do. Christ has done it all! In him alone is the righteousness of God and the righteousness *from* God set forth!

Paul hastens to say, 'by his grace as a gift' (RSV) or 'freely by his grace' (NIV). He is emphasising that we contribute nothing to this declaration by Almighty God. 'As a gift, δωρεαν'. The same word is used in John 15:25, where the Lord says he has been hated 'without a cause, δωρεαν', which brings out the meaning of the word as something to which we contribute absolutely nothing. 'Grace' of course is unmerited favour, kindness shown to one who is utterly undeserving. It comes to us not only when we do not deserve it, but when we hate God, resent him, are his enemies, struggling and fighting against him.

Some of us have had children who have gone through some very troublesome times. They have seen us, their parents, as little better than gullible nuisances who stand in the way of their progress and who have no understanding of the world with its demands and pressures. One young man recently said to me: 'There are two stages in growing up: the first when *children* are a severe trial to their parents; the second, when *parents* become a severe trial to their children!' We parents have been subjected to our children's tantrums, insults and rebellion. Yet all the time, they have had little or no idea of the hurt and grief they have brought to us. Nevertheless, we have loved them in spite of their aggression towards us. We have longed to take them in our arms to reassure and comfort them. We don't want them to bring us some gift or suddenly to become good sons and daughters before we will acknowledge they are our offspring! In spite of all their rebellion, we love them and love them and love them. May I adapt words of our Lord? 'If you, though you are evil, know how to love your children freely, how much more does your heavenly Father love you freely?' He justifies us freely by his grace.

2. The Redemption that came by Christ Jesus

We come then to the second great descriptive word in our text of what happened on

the cross: 'through the *redemption* that came by Christ Jesus'. There is no need to go into the terminology of redemption, save to say that it has been established that the meaning is 'deliverance by payment of a price'. We are indebted to the likes of Leon Morris for his work on this concept. Although Cranfield states that here redemption may mean either 'deliverance through a ransom being paid', or merely 'deliverance' in the sense of 'emancipation', he holds that 'an absolutely confident assertion of either view cannot be justified'. C. K. Barrett, on the other hand, is of the opinion that 'the connection with blood and death suggests it has not lost its original sense of "ransoming", emancipation by the payment of a price'.

[i] Following those who take it that redemption means deliverance through payment of a price or ransom, I want to draw four implications for believers from Paul's statement that 'we are justified . . . through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus'. The first is this: God has intervened through Christ to deliver us from our helpless state of slavery to sin. We have just seen that at first we deny we need God's intervention. Then when we see our need for God, we do not want him—because we are in that state of apostasy which Brunner defines as wanting both to have our freedom and to be 'like God' but without any dependence on God.¹² Yet, even when our pride begins to be subdued and the hardness of our hearts broken, we are still unable to come to him, which is why the power that binds us must be broken so that we can be emancipated.

I recall a young woman called Joy who had only ever entered a church once in her life. But she had a friend who had recently become a Christian and who constantly invited her to attend church. For months, Joy refused—she neither needed, nor wanted God in her life. But though she saw the vibrant faith of her friend she remained obdurate until one day she called her friend and asked if she could attend Church with her the next Sunday. 'What has made you change your mind?' asked her friend. The strange story Joy

told was that she had had the same dream two successive nights: in her dream she had been standing in a church building all alone except for Christ who was there at the front calling her to come to him and find rest. But she couldn't move though she longed to respond and go to him. She woke from her dream deeply distressed that she had been quite unable to respond to his call even though in her dream she had wanted to respond. I should complete the story by telling you that she did go to church with her friend the next Sunday and had only been in the church building for a few minutes, when, before ever the service began, while bowed silently in prayer she responded to Christ's call and was soundly converted. A few months later she became a communicant of that congregation where at the time I was minister.

He breaks the power of cancelled sin and sets the prisoner free!

That then is the first effect of the redemption Christ has secured for us. It truly is a deliverance from the thralldom of our sin which has so totally alienated us from God, separating us from the life and love of God and imprisoning us in its stranglehold. The chains that bind us are broken and we are released to respond and bow before the Lord in adoration and surrender.

[ii] The second implication arising from redemption is the price that has been paid. Peter writes that we have been redeemed from the futility of our former life, not with silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ. The word he uses (τιμιος) can mean either 'highly honoured' or 'costly'. However, since he contrasts the blood of Christ with silver and gold, it must surely be the *costliness* of Christ's blood which he wants to convey, especially as in an earlier verse in the same passage he has spoken of the believers' faith as more precious than gold.¹³ Later in the same letter he speaks of Christ himself as being precious to God and precious to those who believe.¹⁴

I want to ask if we sometimes forget the infinite value of our Saviour and the

incomprehensible cost to God of his Son's blood. Do we become so clinically professional in our handling of theology and the scriptures that the first ardent love we bore for Christ when we entered into the release from the bondage of our sins grows faint and even cold? Do we value him beyond all else and all others? Do we fear to grieve him because we love him so dearly. Is he still 'precious' to us as he was to the big fisherman who still wrote years later of the precious blood that had redeemed him? If not, then what has taken away our love of our Lord? Do we need again to know the power of that redeeming blood which breaks the chains that enslave us? It's all too easy again to become enslaved to those from which things his blood was shed to release us.

[iii] The third implication of Paul's words are that those who are redeemed are now slaves of Jesus Christ. It's an obvious corollary of redemption, isn't it? The Hebrew word used so often in the OT for 'worship' (*abad*) means 'service', service as bond-slaves. The Hebrews were not released from slavery to Pharaoh in order to please themselves. Their release, their redemption at the cost of God's right hand stretched out in emancipating power, was a covenantal act. They were redeemed to belong to God, to bow down and serve him only and exclusively.¹⁵ And Paul draws the same implication from our purchase by the blood of Christ: 'You are not your own; you are bought with a price. Therefore honour God with your body' (1 Cor. 6:19f.)

So how is it working out for us? How is it with our bodies? and with our minds and souls? Do we renew our vows day by day? Do we remember that rightly we are slaves of Jesus Christ? Do we love our Master and affirm that we will be his slaves forever? Or do we feel the pull of this lustful old world and all its enticements and long to shake off the light and easy yoke of Christ? Paul speaks of our 'deceitful lusts' (Eph. 4:22). How they deceive us with their false promises of satisfaction and pleasure if only we will yield ourselves to them. But we are slaves of Christ! Bought at an infinitely costly price! Therefore, glorify Christ in your bodies!

[iv] The fourth implication has been brought to my mind by Brunner: 'The Cross is the Sign of the Devil's defeat, and a continual reminder of Him who conquered him . . . because Satan is a supra-human reality, the work of redemption of Jesus Christ is a real conflict, and redemption is a real victory. The crucifixion of the Son of God . . . is the supreme point at which the abysmal hatred of the devil for God achieved its supreme and most direct manifestation; at the same time, it was the Event which secured his defeat. The devil, as Luther puts it, "fell into God's trap".'¹⁶

Paul makes a direct link between redemption and this deliverance from Satan's power in Colossians 1:13: 'For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness, and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins'.¹⁷ The apostle relates in Acts 26:18 how his great commission from the Risen Christ was to turn men and women from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God. It is clear that the NT sees men and women as held in the powerful grip of a terrible tyrant whose power is that of death. And it is also from the stranglehold of this merciless devil that Christ has redeemed us.

James Philip, writing on this aspect of redemption, suggests three pictures evoked by the twofold deliverance of sinners from the power of sin and the power of Satan.¹⁸ The first is that of a captive languishing in chains in a dark dungeon, longing for his freedom. The Holy Spirit has opened the prisoner's eyes and he now clearly sees what formerly he never saw—the chains that bind him. Until now he has been strangely bewitched with a blindness and deception of hearts that has been all pervasive. But at length redemption is applied and the chains fall off, the dungeon flames with light and he rises and follows the One who has set him free.

The second picture is of the prodigal son far from home, alienated and estranged from his father. Likewise, we sinners had drifted far from God until the Spirit

brought to our hearts that divine restlessness and turned our thoughts to home. So by the Spirit's constraint, we left the swine's husks and in our rags limped back to the father's house, the power of our alienation at last broken.

Philip's third picture is the winning of a bride. Not only does Christ have to break down the barriers of our total indifference to him, even our resentment of his attentions, he must win us from the power of Satan and all his baubles and trash to which we have given our affections. And so the breaking of the devil's hold upon our souls leads at length to our love of our Redeemer and our betrothal to him. It is then that joy comes to the heart. This joy of which Paul speaks in Romans 5:11, 'We also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ', may well be described as nuptial joy:

O the love that sought me! O the blood
that bought me!

O the grace that brought me to the fold!
Wondrous grace that brought me to the
fold!

Christians are called today, as much as they have ever been, to do battle with demonic forces. Who can deny that modern society is held in a vice-like grip by powers which make slaves of men and women. Colin Gunton has defined this modern battlefield of spiritual warfare in the following terms: 'Theologically, we must see the origins of the bondage in the idolatrous worship of that which is not God. When we give any part of the created world the value of God, we thus far come into the power of a reality which, because it is not divine, operates demonically'.¹⁹ And again, 'The demonic is what happens when what is in itself good is corrupted into its opposite'.²⁰ We have the expression of something very near to what Gunton is describing in the UK in our National Lottery. The British Prime Minister, John Major, whose government introduced the national lottery, called it 'a bit of fun'. But when one watches the programmes reviewing the changed lifestyles of lottery winners, and when one evaluates the portrayal of the effects of

winning a vast fortune, one sees vividly illustrated that ‘the demonic is the claim of something finite to infinity or to divine greatness’.²¹

Is there power enough in the redemption accomplished by Christ to break these chains which, along with so many evils of our modern materialistic society, hold so many in such powerful bondage? Or is the church herself in danger of being ensnared by forces which claim virtual ‘divine greatness’ for mere things which one day will all be burned up? Instead of holding forth the Redeemer in all his power, is our proclamation blunted and weakened by our own compromise with the demonic forces of our generation? Not that we are any different from those whom the apostle has described as ‘exchanging the glory of the immortal God for images’ and serving ‘created things rather than the Creator’ (Rom. 1:23, 25). Rather that we are too easily enticed into thinking and acting as worldly people and not as those whose eyes are on the City whose architect and builder is God.

The need for the message of redemption is as great today as it has ever been. But the messengers, you and I, must be those who are living in the rich blessing of the Redeemer and his deliverance from that idolatry which falsely gives to some aspect of creation the value of the divine. It comes down at the end of the day to the very personal questions, ‘Who or what has the love of our hearts? Whom do we adore? What binds us and holds us?’ Only when the answer to such questions is a humble acknowledgement of the daily Lordship of Christ in our lives will our message ring out with authenticity and conviction. So God help us all to an honesty with him and a surrender to him which is his gift to those whom he has redeemed by his own blood.

Notes

- 1 John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Marshall, Morgan & Scott, London 1967) 113f. Leon Morris suggests, ‘The meaning appears to be that all who are justified are

justified in this way . . . The use of the participle rather than the indicative links this closely with the foregoing: “being justified” in the way that follows is evidence that all are sinners and come short of God’s glory’. *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988) Note 113, 177.

- 2 Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans* (London: OUP, 1933) 101f.
- 3 C. K. Barrett, *The Epistle to the Romans*, Harper, New York, 1957, 75f.
- 4 Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988) 145, Note 175.
- 5 C. E. B. Cranfield, *Romans, A Shorter Commentary* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1985) 21.
- 6 Emil Brunner, *The Letter to the Romans* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1959) 29f.
- 7 2 Kings 5:10 ff.
- 8 Rom. 4:5.
- 9 Leon Morris, *The Apostolic Meaning of the Cross* (Tyndale Press, 1955) ch. 1.
- 10 *Op. cit.*, 71.
- 11 *Op. cit.*, 76. Also holding that redemption here means deliverance by payment of a ransom price are, F. F. Bruce, *Romans*, Tyndale NT Commentaries (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994) 98; James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, Word Bible Commentary (Dallas: Word Books, 1988) 169; D. M. Lloyd-Jones, *Atonement and Justification*, Banner of Truth (Edinburgh: 1970) 60; John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans* (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1967) 115f.; Sanday & Headlam, *Romans*, (ICC, T&T Clark, 1895) 86 *in loc.*, *et al.*
- 12 Emil Brunner, *Dogmatics*, Vol. 2 (London: Lutterworth, 1966) 92f.
- 13 1 Peter 1:7, 18f.
- 14 1 Peter 2:4, 7.
- 15 See the First and Second Commandments, Ex. 20:3–4.
- 16 *Op. cit.*, 145. For a critique of Gustav Aulén’s *Christus Victor*, see Colin Gunton, *The Actuality of the Atonement* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988), ch. 2, 53ff.
- 17 See also, Jn. 12:31f., 2 Cor. 4:4; Eph. 1:21, 2:1f., 3:10; Phil. 2:10; 1 Jn. 3:8, etc.
- 18 James Philip, *The Death of Christ* (Aberdeen: Didasko Press, 1985) 46ff.
- 19 Colin Gunton, *The Actuality of the Atonement* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988) 70.
- 20 *Op. cit.*, 71.
- 21 Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology* (London: Nisbet, 1968) Vol. III, 109, quoted by Gunton

- **Cross of Christ 4**
- **Satisfaction for Sin Romans 3:25–26**
- **La satisfaction pour le péché (Romains 3.25–26)**
- **Sühne (Römer 3, 25–26)**

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RÉSUMÉ

«Dieu l'a présenté comme un sacrifice expiatoire par la foi en son sang. Il l'a fait pour démontrer sa justice . . . en sorte d'être juste tout en justifiant ceux qui ont la foi en Jésus». Voilà une affirmation qui suscite bien des problèmes! En outre, l'idée d'un sacrifice humain est choquante pour l'homme moderne.

1. «Dieu l'a présenté»

Le verbe grec utilisé ici a deux sens, celui de projeter ou faire des plans, et celui de présenter. Les avis des exégètes sont partagés. La croix apparaît comme une déclaration divine. Pourtant, combien peu nombreux sont les prédicateurs qui semblent consumés par la passion de présenter Jésus-Christ crucifié et ressuscité.

2. «Comme un sacrifice expiatoire»

Le terme grec employé ici signifie «propitiation». John Owen dégage quatre éléments essentiels à ce propos: une offense doit être effacée, une personne offensée doit être apaisée, celui qui a commis l'offense doit être pardonné, un moyen d'expiation doit être trouvé. Le deuxième élément pose problème à beaucoup. On a parfois présenté le sens du mot propitiation de manière malheureuse, mais le fond du problème réside dans le refus de l'enseignement biblique au sujet de la colère divine, et cela est dû à l'absence d'une vision du monde biblique.

Avec H. Blocher et C. S. Lewis, il faut insister sur le caractère mauvais du péché. Dans les Églises aujourd'hui, on rationalise le péché et on l'excuse. Si le

péché ne met pas Dieu en colère, on n'a pas besoin de propitiation. De nombreuses traductions modernes évitent le terme pour la raison que les gens ne le comprennent plus. Mais nous devons plutôt enseigner le sens de ce terme.

La colère dirigée contre le mal n'exclut pas l'amour pour celui qui l'a commis. Ceux qui prêchent l'enfer devraient le faire dans les larmes.

3. «Par la foi en son sang»

La propitiation renvoie au jour de l'expiation. Les auteurs du Nouveau Testament utilisent le mot «sang» pour parler de la mort de Christ. Pourquoi? À cause de l'unité intrinsèque de la Bible, entre l'Ancien et le Nouveau Testament. Une solide connaissance de l'enseignement de l'Ancien Testament sur les sacrifices peut enrichir le culte du peuple de Dieu.

La notion de justification répond au problème de la transgression de la loi divine, la notion de rédemption répond à celui de notre esclavage du péché et de Satan. Mais la notion de sacrifice répond au besoin que nos péchés soient effacés.

4. «Il l'a fait pour démontrer sa justice . . . en sorte d'être juste tout en justifiant ceux qui ont la foi en Jésus».

On connaît la réponse d'Anselme à la question: «Pourquoi Dieu s'est-il fait homme?» Calvin avait la même conception de la satisfaction pour le péché. John Stott a répondu à des objections modernes soulevées contre cette doctrine.

Il faut souligner le sens relationnel du terme «justice».

Qu'est-ce que cela signifie pour notre vie aujourd'hui, dans notre Europe postmoderne? Prenons l'exemple des attentes de ceux qui entrent aujourd'hui dans le mariage. La vision du monde biblique a disparu. Le Dieu qui, tout en

étant juste, justifie ceux qui ont foi en Jésus a été oublié.

En Romains 3, Paul conclut que le Dieu juste, en apportant par son Fils une justice de Dieu, accomplit et entérine la loi qu'il a lui-même donnée.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Römer 3,25f.: 'Den hat Gott für den Glauben hingestellt als Sühne in seinem Blut zum Erweis seiner Gerechtigkeit . . . daß er selbst gerecht ist und gerecht macht den, der da ist aus dem Glauben an Jesus'. Diese Aussage enthält eine Reihe von Problemen, auf die wir im vorliegenden Artikel eingehen wollen. Außerdem werden wir uns mit Einwänden beschäftigen, die gegen die Darbringung eines menschlichen Opfers vorgebracht worden sind.

*1. Gott hat ihn hingestellt
Das Verb προσέθετο hat zwei Bedeutungen, nämlich 'beabsichtigen, sich vornehmen' und 'bekanntmachen, öffentlich präsentieren' (vgl. Morris, Cranfield und Calvin). Das Kreuz war ein göttliches Statement, doch wie wenig Prediger haben heutzutage noch die Leidenschaft, Christus als den Gekreuzigten und Auferstandenen bekanntzumachen.*

*2. Als Sühne
Der Begriff ἱλαστήριον ('Versöhnung') umfaßt, wie John Owen aufgezeigt hat, vier wesentliche Elemente: (1.) die Straftat, die gesühnt werden muß; (2.) die Person, an der die Straftat begangen wurde und mit der man sich aussöhnen muß; (3.) den Straftäter und (4.) das Mittel der Sühne. Die Bedeutung der Versöhnung ist manchmal auf unbedachte Weise vermittelt worden, doch grundsätzlich stehen wir dem Problem gegenüber, daß Leute aus einem mangelnden Verständnis der biblischen Weltanschauung heraus die Lehre vom Zorn Gottes ablehnen. Der Artikel geht in diesem Zusammenhang auf die Sicht von Denney ein und erwähnt Henri Blochers*

und C. S. Lewis' Gedanken zur Sündhaftigkeit der Sünde.

Wir tendieren heutzutage oftmals dazu, unsere Sünden zu verdrängen oder zu entschuldigen, doch ohne den persönlichen Zorn Gottes gegen jegliche Sünde gäbe es keine Notwendigkeit für Versöhnung. Manche modernen Übersetzungen vermeiden den Begriff, da die Leute nicht mehr verstehen, was er bedeutet. Doch gerade deshalb ist es so wichtig, daß wir ihnen die Bedeutung des Begriffes erläutern.

*3. Für den Glauben in seinem Blut
Die neutestamentlichen Autoren verwenden den Ausdruck 'Blut' als Kürzel für den Tod Christi. Wir gehen dem Grund für die Verwendung dieses Wortes nach, der mit der Einheit der Bibel, und zwar des Alten und Neuen Testaments, zu tun hat. Ein solides Verständnis der alttestamentlichen Lehre vom Opfer kann den Gottesdienst des Gottesvolkes vertiefen und bereichern.*

Die Lehre von der Rechtfertigung zielt auf Vergehen gegen das Gesetz Gottes, während das Konzept der Erlösung unsere Versklavung an die Sünde und den Satan im Blick hat. Die Opferterminologie jedoch macht deutlich, daß wir es nötig haben, daß unsere Sünde weggewaschen wird.

*4. Zum Erweis seiner Gerechtigkeit . . .
daß er selbst gerecht ist und gerecht macht den, der da ist aus dem Glauben an Jesus
An dieser Stelle beschäftigen wir uns mit den Aussagen Anselms in Cur Deus Homo und gehen auf Calvin ein, der ein ähnliches Verständnis von der Sühne hatte. Außerdem soll John Stott zu Wort kommen, der sich mit modernen Einwänden gegen diese Lehre*

auseinandergesetzt hat. Es ist darüber hinaus wichtig, die relationale Komponente von Gerechtigkeit zu betonen.

Doch was bedeutet dies für unsere Situation in einem postmodernen Europa? Wir wollen dies am Beispiel des modernen Verständnisses von der Ehe veranschaulichen, bei dem ebenfalls die biblische Weltanschauung keine Rolle

mehr spielt. Den, der selbst gerecht ist und gerecht macht den, der da ist aus dem Glauben an Jesus, hat man vergessen.

Paulus zieht in Römer 3 die Schlußfolgerung, daß der Gott der Gerechtigkeit das Gesetz, das er selbst erlassen hat, erfüllt und bestätigt, indem er durch seinen Sohn eine Gerechtigkeit bereitstellt, die von Gott kommt.

We come this morning to Romans 3:25f: 'God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice . . . so as to be just and the justifier of those who have faith in Jesus'. Here is a statement which bristles with problems and has engendered perhaps as much discussion and controversy as any in the NT. J. S. Whale wrote in 1960, 'In our modern world, sacrifice has become a mere figure of speech. Parents sacrifice themselves for their children; a politician may sacrifice a career for a principle . . . But modern man finds the very idea [of human sacrifice] revolting'. However, I am not at all sure that is an accurate statement. There is something deeply innate in human nature which recognises in certain kinds of sacrifice something noble, almost godlike. Even though the word is predominantly used metaphorically in the 20th century, sacrifice, especially when it is motivated by the love of a man for his friends, strikes a deep cord within the human breast. We need not, therefore, be apologetic for, far less ashamed of, the kind of Gospel statement such as that in our text for today.

1. God presented him

The first verb of our text poses a small problem. The verb, translated by NIV as 'presented' ('put forward', RSV), προσέθετο, has two meanings: (i) to purpose, to set before the mind, and it is used in this sense in both of its other two occurrences in the NT (1:13; Eph. 1:9); (ii) to set forth, to present. Leon Morris prefers the second meaning, as translated by NIV and RSV, along with Barrett, Bruce, Michel, Nygren and others. Cranfield opts for the

first meaning, as translated by NEB ('God designed him'). Calvin states that for those who prefer the first meaning it harmonises well with John 3:16. But he continues, 'If we embrace this meaning, it will still remain true, that God has set him forth in due time, whom he had appointed as a Mediator'. Following Calvin therefore that, even if one prefers the sense of 'to purpose', the meaning of 'to set forth' or 'to present' cannot be far away, I want to comment briefly on the 'setting forth' of Christ as a sacrifice of atonement.

In the death of Christ, God was demonstrating his righteousness. On the Cross he was making a public statement, a public declaration. And what a public declaration it was and still is! Little did the soldiers and bypassers think that Jesus of Nazareth, hanging there in shame and agony, was a divine declaration that would sound down the centuries, echoing across continents and round the entire world for time and for eternity.

In my work as Warden of Rutherford House in Edinburgh, I conduct preaching workshops with ministers when maybe ten or a dozen men come together for a couple of days and in turn each preaches a sermon. We then together evaluate the sermon and try to make helpful comments on its exegesis, application and presentation of the message of the text. These men who bravely subject themselves to this painful experience of being chopped to pieces by their colleagues are all evangelicals. But yet again and again I have to ask, 'Where, my brother, was Christ in all of that? Where was the ray of sunlight streaming from the face of the Son of Righteousness? Where was the smile of God as his Son was set forth, presented to us?'

I don't mean that I am always looking for a statement on the love of God. My concern is how few preachers today seem to be consumed by love for the Lord, by a passion to set him forth crucified and risen, to present him as the sacrifice of atonement! They say many true things, and expound many sound biblical principles. But far too many congregations seldom have Christ crucified placarded before them. It is actually easier to reduce the Gospel to mere moralising than to preach the cross. We can avoid the cross and its demands and opt for good behaviour! Paul wrote to the Galatians, 'Before your very eyes Christ was portrayed as crucified' (Gal. 3:1). May all of us, in our studies, our praying and our pastoring of those we teach, strive and work to see preachers being sent out who will set forth Christ as crucified. Why? Because Almighty God himself has set forth his Son. And ours is now the unspeakable privilege of proclaiming the crucified and risen Lord!

2. As a sacrifice of atonement

I don't propose to rehearse the arguments surrounding the noun *ἱλαστήριον*. You will be aware of the literature on this subject and excellent summaries of it can be found in the commentaries on Romans by Cranfield and Morris. Following both of these, along with many of the older commentators, I am taking it that *ἱλαστήριον* means propitiation. The English Puritan, John Owen, has set out for us the four essential elements in any propitiation: 1st, there is an offence to be taken away; 2nd, there is a person offended who needs to be pacified; 3rd, there is an offending person, guilty of the offence; and 4th, there is some means of making atonement for the offence.

The first element causes us no problem—all will readily agree there is an offence to be taken away. The third and fourth elements cause no problem either for most—we are guilty of offences and there is therefore need for some means of making atonement. It is Owen's second element, the person offended who needs to

be pacified, which has been a problem for so many.

We have to admit that there have been many unfortunate statements which have in turn led to many even more unfortunate caricatures of the meaning of 'propitiation' so that some theologians have been less than fair in their denunciation of the concept. It seems to me that the nub of the problem is an unwillingness to accept the Bible's teaching on the wrath of God. And it is at this point we come so near to the heart of the problem we all face today in communicating the truth of the Gospel. It is the lack of a biblical world-view in the mind of the postmodern society in which we live.

What today's postmodern person fails to realise is that each one of us is the personal property of God. He has created us for himself. He placed us in this world with all its resources and delights. He has given us his commands: 'You may . . . You may not . . .' But we are in revolt against him. Our rebellion and sin have put *us* in the wrong—we are the offenders. For his part, God is justly angry with us because of our rebellion—he is the offended one.

Let me quote a Scottish theologian, James Denney:

In Paul's thought, and in the thought of the New Testament generally, sin introduces an alienation, an estrangement, between man and God, which is indubitably two-sided. There is something in God as well as something in man which has to be dealt with before there can be peace. Nay, the something on God's side is so incomparably more serious that in comparison with it, the something on man's side simply passes out of view . . . The serious thing which makes the gospel necessary, and the putting away of which constitutes the gospel, is God's condemnation of the world and its sin, it is God's wrath 'revealed from heaven against all unrighteousness of men' (Rom. 1:16, 18).'⁸

While Denney writes that sin introduces an alienation which is two-sided and that the 'something on God's side is so incomparably more serious' than the something on our side, he would certainly

not want us to pass over lightly the heinousness of sin. We are driven back in the final analysis to the problem of evil. Those who deny the wrath of God are also by implication treating sin lightly as something God will overlook. Henri Blocher comments that the rational schemes which try to explain the *whence and why* 'bring evil back into harmony with the creation, and thus they open the road to the excusing, or justification, of what should excite unmitigated horror and indignation. They plead overtly for *theodicy*; they work covertly for *kakodicy*'.⁹ It is this failure to recognise the exceeding sinfulness of sin which arises from the denial of the divine wrath against sin. Not so Scripture. In an essay on the imprecatory Psalms, C. S. Lewis points out that to the best of his (I would say, exceptionally wide) knowledge of literature, Scripture is unique in its abhorrence of evil and outright hatred of wickedness.¹⁰

Is it not true that so many of us try to rationalise and excuse our particular darling sins? We give them other names: if we lose our tempers we say we were provoked, if we covet we say we are just day-dreaming, if we lust we say it was our body chemistry at work. How many of us do a deal with our secret sins! We have a locked cellar hidden away in the depths of our souls and we guard the key so carefully. All unknown to our nearest and dearest, we unlock that cellar door and privately descend those unlit stairs to visit the sins with which we have done a deal. We guard jealously our darkest secret!

Why then is there so little conviction of sin in our churches? Why do so many of our young people behave behind their parents' backs (and sometimes, alas, quite openly and without any apparent shame, before their parents' faces), as if there were no Ten Commandments, no restraints, no moral parameters at all? Why at the open graveside do the friends and relatives who gather to offer comfort to those bereaved tell them that 'he was a good man and is now at rest', when the truth is he was a thoroughly godless man who now faces the Judge of all the earth? Why is pluralism so rampant, and why do

so many believe that all religions lead to God? Why is the prevailing philosophy—the modern pseudo-Christian creed—that 'somehow or other everything must work out well for everybody... God will never condemn anybody'?¹¹ Surely it is that we have set the love of God against his holiness, and we have set the mercy of God against his judgement. We have presented a false impression of the revelation of God entrusted to us in the Scriptures. And where this thoroughly biblical teaching of 'the wrath of God is ignored, there will also be no understanding of the central conception of the gospel'.¹²

If then, there is no wrath of God, no personal anger of God against sin and the sinner, there is no need for propitiation for there is no 'offended person who needs to be pacified' (Owen's words). Hence so many translations here render *ἱλασθηριον* as 'sacrifice of atonement' (NIV) or as 'an expiation' (RSV, NEB) or as a 'sacrificial death by means of which people's sins could be forgiven' (GNB). I know translators struggle to make difficult biblical concepts accessible to theologically illiterate readers. But after thirty three years in the pastoral ministry, I am convinced that we have to bite this bullet and educate our people in the meanings of theological terms. Modern young people know a highly technical language needed for computers. They are perfectly capable of learning theological language needed to grasp the central truths of the gospel. We insult them, rather than help them, by simplifying these great truths so much that we evacuate them of their real meaning.

However, by no means all translations are endeavouring to make scripture more accessible. Many have been deliberately seeking to avoid any reference to the wrath of God and for my part I fail to understand why, when divine wrath has been the theme of the early part of this letter to the Romans. I suppose scholars like C. H. Dodd attempted to reach a compromise by explaining the wrath of God as a kind of impersonal reaction.¹³ But C. S. Lewis has rightly pointed out the problem with an impersonal wrath: 'You say, "The

live wire does not feel angry with us, but if we blunder against it we get a shock.” What do you suppose has been gained by substituting the image of a live wire for that of angered majesty? You have shut us all up in despair, for the angry can forgive, and electricity cannot’.¹⁴

Those of us who are parents have often been provoked to anger by some of our children’s actions. Our anger has been mingled with grief that they could have acted in the way they have. But that does not mean we have ceased to love them. It is a serious fallacy to imagine that love can know no anger. True, there is a wrong kind of anger when our human judgement is distorted by our passion, which is probably why the Scripture exhorts us to be angry without sinning (Ps. 4:4=Eph. 4:26). But there is a righteous anger and there are times when manifestly it would be wrong not to experience anger.

One of our great Scottish saints of the 19th century, Robert Murray McCheyne, was told that a colleague had preached a sermon on hell. His comment was, “Then did he preach with tears?” Our churches need to hear again of the sinfulness of sin, of the wrath of God against all ungodliness and wickedness, but they need to hear it preached with godly sorrow and even with tears, for the God who so hates sin is nevertheless the God of love.

3. Through faith in his blood

We are at once reminded that propitiation is by a sacrifice. While *ἰλαστήριον* does not here mean ‘the mercy-seat’ in the Holy of Holies, it reminds us of the Day of Atonement when the blood was sprinkled on the mercy-seat as the high priest entered the presence of God with the golden censer.

It is interesting to note how often the NT writers refer to the death of Christ by using the word ‘blood’. ‘This is my blood of the covenant’ (Mk. 14:24), ‘he who drinks my blood has eternal life . . . my blood is drink indeed’ (Jn. 6:54f), ‘the church of God which he obtained with the blood of his own Son’ (Acts 20:28), ‘we have now been justified by his blood’ (Rom. 5:9), ‘we have redemption through his blood . . . you

have been brought near through the blood of Christ’ (Eph. 1:7; 2:13), ‘we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus’ (Heb. 10:19), ‘the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin’ (1 Jn. 1:7), ‘freed us from our sins by his blood . . . He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood and his name is the Word of God’ (Rev. 1:9; 19:13), and so on. Why use the word ‘blood’ rather than speak of his death?

The answer is obvious, is it not? It is the inherent unity of the Bible and the way in which the NT writers have an inspired awareness that what they are setting down is the fulfilment of all that was foreshadowed in the OT. It brings us back to v. 21, ‘the righteousness to which the Law and Prophets testify’. Christian congregations today need to be taught the OT scriptures. There is a serious lack of knowledge of the contents of the OT in many churches and as a result there is a shallowness of understanding of the meaning and implications of the Gospel. The inevitable result of a shallow understanding is a shallow commitment to Christ. And so believers in our generation are vulnerable to the lies and fallacies of our postmodern culture.

Why else did the Holy Spirit record and preserve for us the elaborate Levitical system of worship but to provide us with a whole theological framework of salvation? I so often hear Christians complaining about the hymns used in their churches. They make comments like this: ‘The worship in our church is flat and lifeless. We need some contemporary hymns to pep it up’. Have you ever heard that? But I would submit that the real need is first for their understanding of Christian truth to be enlarged so that their minds can be inspired to praise God, and second for hymns to be used with real theological content. Simplistic ditties with catchy tunes are no antidote to lifeless singing! Let their preachers take them through the awesome ritual of the worship of the Tent of Meeting—the altar, the laver, the golden censer, the Day of Atonement, the mercy-seat, the high priestly office and garments—and relate all that through the

Letter to the Hebrews to the work of Christ, and then give them hymns to sing which adore the Christ of God and his work. I assure you that if the Spirit has been at work opening their minds to divine truth, then he will also work to open their hearts to praise their God and complaints about flat, lifeless worship will melt away.

Through faith in his blood! Justification focuses on our offences against the law of God; redemption focuses on our slavery to sin and Satan; but the language of sacrifice and the blood of Christ focuses on our uncleanness and our need for the washing away of the dark stains that defile us.

I recall a journey I made by motorcycle when I was a student. It was a night ride in winter with snow on the road and a great deal of dirt and slush around. I arrived home at about 2am, frozen to the marrow and absolutely filthy with mud and grit thrown up at me by other traffic. It was in my eyes, my hair, my face, down my neck, into my shoes—the filth had got everywhere! I recall standing for about half an hour under a hot shower and feeling the numbness gradually leaving me and the grime being washed away. I retired to bed at last warm and clean—so clean. ‘Through faith in his blood’: friends, God’s wrath is turned away, our sins are covered, and we are clean, utterly pure, cleansed of all defilement. Nor is it some fictional cleansing which depends on a mind over matter attitude on our part. God has set forth Christ as a propitiation. He hung there for me and for you!

Bearing shame and scoffing rude, In my
place condemned he stood,
Sealed my pardon with his
blood—Hallelujah! what a Saviour!

4. He did this to demonstrate his justice . . . so as to be just and the justifier of those who have faith in Jesus

An early classical statement of the case for what has become known as ‘satisfaction for sin’ is given by Anselm in *Cur Deus*

Homo. Boso, Anselm’s imaginary interlocutor, asks: ‘What man would not be judged worthy of condemnation if he were to condemn the innocent in order to let the guilty go free? . . . for if he could not save sinners otherwise than by condemning the just, where is his omnipotence? and if he could, but would not, how do we defend his wisdom and justice?’ Anselm answers: ‘God the Father . . . did not compel him to die, nor permit him to be slain, unwilling; but that One himself bore his death by his own free will that he might save mankind’ (1.8). Anselm continues: ‘Each sinner ought to repay the honour of which he has robbed God: and this is the satisfaction which every sinner ought to make to God’ (1.11). Anselm sees the whole universe as having a pre-ordained order and symmetry so that God’s dealing with sin maintains ‘a beauty of order in the same universe’. Unless God exacted due satisfaction ‘when perversity attempts to disturb the regular order of things, there would be caused in that universe, which God should rule, a certain deformity from this violated symmetry of its order, and God would seem to fail in his government’ (1.15). Anselm has already defined sin as ‘not rendering to God what is his due’ (1.11). He now shows that we cannot make satisfaction by obedience or good works since these are required of us anyway. Therefore, ‘man the sinner owes to God, on account of sin, what he cannot repay, and unless he repays it he cannot be saved’ (1.25). He continues: ‘There is no one who can make this satisfaction except God himself . . . But no one ought to make it except man; otherwise man does not make satisfaction’. Therefore, ‘it is necessary that one who is Godman should make it’ (2.6).

Calvin held a similar view of satisfaction for sin: ‘Suppose this man learns, as Scripture teaches, that he was estranged from God through sin, is an heir of wrath, subject to the curse of eternal death . . . the slave of Satan, captive under the yoke of sin, destined finally for a dreadful destruction . . . and at this point Christ interceded as his advocate, took upon himself and suffered the punishment that, from God’s

righteous judgement, threatened all sinners; that he purged with his blood those evils which had rendered sinners hateful to God; and that by this expiation he had made satisfaction and sacrifice duly to God the Father; that as intercessor he has appeased God's wrath; that on this foundation rests the peace of God with men; that by this bond his benevolence is maintained towards them. Will the man then not be the more even moved by these things . . .¹⁵ Again, Christ had 'to undergo the severity of God's vengeance, to appease his wrath and satisfy his just judgement'.¹⁶

We are all aware of the reservations many modern theologians have towards penal substitution and the satisfaction required by God before sin could be expiated.¹⁷ We are grateful to John Stott for his masterly treatment of the subject in his book, *The Cross of Christ*.¹⁸ Stott writes:

The way God chooses to forgive sinners and reconcile them to himself must, first and foremost, be fully consistent with his own character. It is not only that he must overthrow and disarm the devil in order to rescue his captives. It is not even only that he must satisfy his law, his honour, his justice or the moral order: it is that he must satisfy himself.¹⁹

God's righteousness, then, has been demonstrated in that divine action of setting forth his Son as a propitiation, to turn away his just wrath against us hell-deserving sinners, to expiate our sin and to reconcile us to himself, having satisfied his holy nature that sin has been justly forgiven.

It is at this point that something of the importance of insisting on the relational meaning of 'righteousness' becomes apparent. While we have seen that 'righteousness' is used in this passage in a forensic sense, the relational meaning must be maintained because as it is used in the OT, righteousness is a covenantal word and as such is essentially about relationships.²⁰ The righteous God is the covenant God. The righteousness he sets

forth is a covenantal righteousness. The covenant is concerned with that relationship he himself has initiated with his people. So that in the Cross of Christ we see the covenant God in action, the righteous God acting righteously, bringing into a right relationship with himself those who have faith in Jesus.

What for us is the meaning of this for life today in postmodern Europe? The objection is sometimes made against the Pauline concept of divine justice that it is inappropriate for the postmodern view of autonomy and freedom. Ever since the Renaissance, we have been focusing increasingly on human individuality and our growing emphasis does not readily co-exist with Paul's teaching as set out in Romans 3. Take one example of the way men and women think today. Our grandparents (and possibly our parents) viewed their marriage vows as a binding obligation and understood their duty to be fidelity to those vows 'for better or worse, richer or poorer, joy or sorrow, in sickness and in health'. Not so the Romeos and Juliets of the closing decade of this century. Their expectation of marriage is to find their own fulfilment, and if they do not, then they consider they should be free to look elsewhere. The whole basis of marriage (more commonly, of co-habitation) has radically changed with our post-modern view of human freedom. We have become more egotistical, more self-centred, more determined to put our personal needs and demands before those of our marriage partners. Anselm's order and symmetry of the divine creation has long since disappeared, and with it a biblical view of sin. In its place, we have legitimised and authorised the tyrannical rule of self!

The Biblical teaching of divine satisfaction, the holy love of God with its tension between his compassion and his 'fierce anger', has been lost. There is little or no conception of 'the compassionate and gracious God' who 'does not leave the guilty unpunished'.²¹ Almost unknown is the God in whom 'love and faithfulness meet together; righteousness and peace

kiss each other'.²² Today's generation knows little or nothing of a God in whom there is both 'kindness *and* sternness'.²³ The one who is both just *and* the justifier of those who have faith in Jesus has been forgotten.

Paul is fully aware of this unity and wholeness of all that God has made. His conclusion in Romans 3 is that the God of righteousness in providing through his Son a righteousness from God is fulfilling and upholding the law he himself has made. Nor is the creation neglected; eagerly it is longing for the promised redemption of the children of God.²⁴

So we have then the mystery of the cross, the wonder of our salvation, unfolded to us by the Scriptures in a 'kaleidoscope of images which together constitute the NT characterisation of Jesus as sacrifice'.²⁵ The language of the law court, of the slave market, of the Levitical cultus, is all richly expressed and given to us by the Holy Spirit that we might understand dimly something of the meaning of those hours of darkness when our Saviour languished in bloody agony on the cross. This is the message we are exhorted to study, to incorporate into our thinking, living and loving, which we are to commit to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.²⁶ I close with the words of hymn which comes to us from the 6th century:

Sing my tongue, how glorious battle
glorious victory became;
And above the Cross, His trophy, tell the
triumph and the fame:
Tell how He, the earth's Redeemer, by His
death for man o'ercame.

Thirty years fulfilled among us—perfect
life in low estate—
Born for this, and self-surrendered, to His
passion dedicate,
On the Cross the Lamb is lifted, for His
people immolate.

His the nails, the spear, the spitting, reed
and vinegar and gall;
From his patient body piercèd blood and
water streaming fall:

Earth and sea and stars and mankind by
that stream are cleansed all.

Faithful Cross, above all other, one and
only noble Tree,
None in foliage, none in blossom, none in
fruit compares with thee:
Sweet the wood and sweet the iron, and
thy Load how sweet is He

Unto God be laud and honour: to the
Father, to the Son,
To the mighty Spirit, glory—ever Three
and ever One:
Power and glory in the highest while
eternal ages run.

Notes

- 1 J. S. Whale, *Victor and Victim, Christian Doctrine of Redemption* (CUP, 1960) 42.
- 2 Colin Gunton makes this point in, *The Actuality of Atonement* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988) 116ff.
- 3 Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988) 179f.
- 4 C. E. B. Cranfield, *Romans*, (ICC, Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1975) 208ff.
- 5 Calvin, *Comm. in loc.*
- 6 E.g., Calvin: 'God, without having regard to Christ, is always angry with us . . . God does not indeed hate in us his own workmanship, that is, as we are formed men; but he hates our uncleanness, which has extinguished the light of his image. When the washing of Christ cleanses this away, he then loves and embraces us as his own pure workmanship'. *Comm. in loc.* See also *Institutes*, 2, 15, 6; 16, 1–3.
- 7 Quoted by D. M. Lloyd-Jones, *Atonement and Justification* (Banner of Truth, 1970) 70.
- 8 James Denney, *2 Corinthians, Expositor's Bible* (London: Hodder, 1907) 211f.
- 9 *Universalism and the Doctrine of Hell*, ed. Nigel Cameron, (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1992) ch. 10, Everlasting Punishment and the Problem of Evil, Henri Blocher, 285. See also, Henri Blocher, *Evil and the Cross*, (Leicester: IVP, 1992).
- 10 C. S. Lewis, *Reflections of the Psalms* (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1958) ch. 3, The Cursings.
- 11 Emil Brunner, *The Mediator* (London: Lutterworth, 1934) 489, footnote.
- 12 *Idem*, 152.

- 13 C. H. Dodd, *The Epistle to the Romans* (London: Hodder, 1932), 21ff. See also his discussion of propitiation in, *πλασκεσθαι*, its cognates, derivatives and synonyms in the Septuagint, in *JTS* 32 (1931), 352–60 (reprinted in his *Bible and the Greeks*).
- 14 C. S. Lewis, *Letters to Malcolm*, quoted by J. Philip in *The Death of Christ* (Aberdeen: Didasko, 1986) 23f.
- 15 Calvin, *Institutes*, 2.16.2.
- 16 *Op. cit.*, 2.16.10. For a post-Calvin, 17th C. reformed statement on ‘Satisfaction’, see Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, ET, Reformed & Presbyterian (1994) Vol. 2, 418ff.
- 17 For a full discussion and critique see Colin Gunton, *The Actuality of Atonement* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988) ch. 4, 83113.
- 18 John R. W. Stott, *The Cross of Christ*, (Leicester: IVP, 1986) ch. 5, 111–132.
- 19 *Op. cit.*, 129.
- 20 See Alister E. McGrath, *Iustitia Dei* (CUP, 1986) Vol. 1, 1–36; and *Justification by Faith* (Basingstoke: Marshall Pickering, 1988) 24.
- 21 Exodus 34:6f.
- 22 Psalm 85:10.
- 23 Romans 11:22.
- 24 Romans 8:19, 22.
- 25 Colin Gunton’s phrase, *Idem*, 126, footnote 2.
- 26 2 Tim. 2:2, 15.

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