

# OUTLINE STUDIES IN CHRISTIAN DOCTRINES

by

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## CHAPTER SEVEN

### CHRISTOLOGY

#### PART TWO

#### THE WORK OF CHRIST

According to the Scriptures, Jesus Christ has a threefold office work, viz: a prophetic ministry, a priestly ministry, and a kingly ministry. As someone has said: “Christ must be a Prophet to save us from the ignorance of sin; a Priest, to save us from its guilt; and a King, to save us from its power.”

#### TOPIC ONE: CHRIST AS PROPHET

##### I. PREDICTIVE ANNOUNCEMENT

The predictive announcement that Christ should be a prophet is recorded in Deuteronomy 18:18, 19. See Matthew 13:57; 16:14; 21:11; John 1:21; 4:19; 6:14; 7:40; 9:17; and especially Acts 3:22 and 7:37.

##### II. EXTENT

Officially, the prophetic ministry of Christ began at the river Jordan, when He was endued with the Holy Spirit, and ended at the cross of Calvary, when He offered Himself as a sacrifice for sin: Matthew 4:23-25; Luke 4:14-27; Acts 2:22, 23; Hebrews 9:26-28.

##### III. TWOFOLD NATURE OF PROPHET

The primary idea of the prophetic office is that of one who “*brings things to light*,” or “*makes manifest*.” The secondary idea is prediction of the future. The O. T. prophet, then, exercised two functions: first, insight; and second, foresight. The prophet had also, so to speak, “hindsight”; for by revelation of the Spirit he frequently knew things of the past. This was true of Moses, when he penned the panorama of creation: Genesis 1 and 2.

**NOTE:** The original name of the prophet was seer: I Samuel 9:9; II Kings 17:13. A seer is one who sees, i. e., who sees things not beheld by mortal eye.

The word prophet comes from the Greek *pro*, before or forth, and *phemi*, to speak, signifying to speak forth or beforehand. Thus a prophet was one who spoke to the people as the mouthpiece of God: Exodus 4:15, 16.

On the primary idea of the prophetic office, see Exodus 4:10-17.

#### **IV. MANIFOLD CHARACTER OF PROPHETIC MINISTRY**

An O. T. prophet fulfilled his ministry in three ways: by teaching (Matthew 5-7), by predicting (Matthew 24), and by healing (Matthew 8, 9).

Our Lord did all these. Or, more particularly, Christ fulfilled His prophetic office in the following ways:

- 1. By His gracious words:** Matthew 5:2; 7:28, 29; John 6:63; Revelation 1:10, 11.
- 2. By His wondrous deeds:** John 5:36; 10:25; 15:24; Acts 2:22.
- 3. By His matchless example:** John 13:15; I Peter 2:21-23.
- 4. By His unparalleled silence:** Matthew 27:13, 14; I Peter 2:23.
- 5. By His gift of the Spirit:** John 14:26; 15:26; I Peter 1:10, 11; I John 2:20-27.

#### **TOPIC TWO: CHRIST AS PRIEST**

##### **PREDICTIVE ANNOUNCEMENT**

The predictive announcement that Christ should be a priest is recorded in Psalm 110:4. See Hebrews 5:6; 6:20; 7:21.

**NOTE:** Our Lord's priesthood is not in the line of Aaron, but "**after the order of Melchizedec**"; that is, it is exercised not on earth but in heaven; and it is unchanging and eternal.

##### **EXTENT**

Officially, the priestly ministry of Christ began at the cross, when He offered Himself as a sacrifice for sin, and will end at His return, when as King He will sit on the throne of David: Hebrews 8 and 9.

##### **NATURE OF PRIESTLY OFFICE**

A priest is a mediator—one who intercedes with a just God on behalf of guilty sinners: Leviticus 4:16-18.

**NOTE:** Says Dr. Wickes:

“Soon after the deluge, a class of men was set apart and consecrated to this sacred office of mediatorship with God, which is the essential idea of a priest— one to whom the offering of sacrifices is specially committed, that he may intercede with heaven in behalf of the guilty, who themselves have no access into the divine presence. Thus not only must a bloody sacrifice, or sin offering, be made, but made by certain persons who have been clothed with this special authority to act for others. They are appointed mediators between God and man, through whose intercession, by the offering of blood, atonement is made and justification obtained for the transgressor.”

In Israel, by the Law of Moses, the priesthood was lodged in the house of Aaron.

### **THREEFOLD SCOPE OF PRIESTHOOD**

The scope of the Old Testament priesthood was threefold, viz:

- First, to offer sacrifices before the people;
- Second, to go within the veil to make intercession for the people;
- Third, to come forth and bless the people.

Or RECONCILIATION, INTERCESSION and BENEDICTION. As the Great High Priest, our Lord fulfilled these three functions.

- The first, reconciliation, He accomplished at His first coming, when on the cross He offered Himself as a sacrifice for sin.
- The second, intercession, He is accomplishing now in heaven between His first and second advent.
- Third, benediction, He will accomplish at and after His coming return.

Hebrews 9:27, 28; I Peter 1:18-20; 2:24; Romans 8:34; Hebrews 7:25; II Thessalonians 1:10; I Peter 1:4, 5; Revelation 11:15; 20:4.

**NOTE:** The priests had access to the Holy Place of the ancient tabernacle; but the high priest alone, and then but once a year on the great day of atonement, could enter the Holy of Holies: Hebrews 9:6, 7. The formula of benediction, which the high priest used, on emerging from the Holy of Holies, is believed to be recorded in Numbers 6:22-27.

### **THE ATONEMENT OF CHRIST**

#### **I. THE FACT**

By predictions, types, witnessing terms, and explicit statements, the Scriptures clearly set forth the fact of the atonement.

#### **A. Types.**

The typology of the Old Testament is full of the atonement. We may instance a few of the more striking types:

1. **Coat of skins**, Genesis 3:21.
2. **Abel's lamb**, Genesis 4:4.
3. **The offering of Isaac**, Genesis 22.
4. **The Passover lamb**, Exodus 12.
5. **The Levitical sacrificial system**, Leviticus chaps. 1-7.
6. **The brazen serpent**, Numbers 21; see John 3:14; 12:32.
7. **The slain Lamb**, Isaiah 53:7. See John 1:29; Revelation 13-8-

## **B. Predictions.**

The Old Testament abounds in predictions concerning the Messiah, His character and career. Indeed, there are said to be 333 specific striking O. T. pictures of the sacrificial death of Christ.

1. **The seed of the woman**, Genesis 3:15.
2. **The sin offering**, Psalm 22.
3. **The substitutional Saviour**, Isaiah 53.
4. **The cut-off Messiah**, Daniel 9:26.
5. **The smitten Shepherd**, Zechariah 13:6, 7.

## **C. Witnessing Terms.**

There are five Scriptural witnessing terms of the Atonement. They are:

### **1. Atonement.**

The word atonement occurs only once in the A. V. of the New Testament, viz: Romans 5:11. The Greek noun here is *katallage* which means reconciliation (see below). The root of the Hebrew word for atonement is *kaphar*, which literally signifies to *cover*, i. e., forgive sin. See Exodus 30:10.

Psalm 32:1 gives us both the figurative and spiritual meaning of atonement.

**NOTE:** The lid of the ark, called the mercy seat, is in Hebrew the *kapporeth*, signifying the place of the covering (i. e., of sin). The way some teachers divide the word atonement, viz., at-one-ment, is of curious interest; but at best it is a mere verbal trick, and no Scriptural warrant can justly be claimed for it.

### **2. Reconciliation.**

Reconciliation is the translation of the Greek noun *katallage*, which literally signifies an exchange, i. e., of equivalent value in money-changing, or an adjustment, i. e., of a difference.

The enmity between God and man has been destroyed and amity has been restored. “The word is used in the N. T., “ says Thayer, “of the restoration of the favor of God to sinners that repent and put their trust into the expiatory death of Christ”: Romans 5:11; 11:15; II Corinthians 5:18, 19.

### **3. Propitiation.**

Propitiation is the translation of the Greek nouns *hilasmos* and *hilasterion*, literally signifying an appeasing, a placating, an expiation. Propitiation comes from the Latin and means that which renders one propitious or favorably disposed towards another.

Thus, the death of Christ is the ground whereby God is rendered propitious or favorably disposed towards the sinner. Christ, in other words, is the propitiation for sin: Romans 3:25; I John 2:2; 4:10. See Hebrews 2:17.

**NOTE:** Propitiation or propitiatory is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew *kapporeth*, or mercy seat, the lid of the Ark of the Covenant.

### **4. Redemption.**

Redemption is the translation of the Greek nouns *lutrosis* and *apolutrosis*, signifying a releasing, or liberation from captivity, slavery, or death by the payment of a price, called a ransom. Thus, Christ is the ransom, who delivers us from sin and death. Redemption is from the Latin and signifies a buying back: Luke 1:68; 2:38; Romans 3:24; I Corinthians 1:30; Ephesians 1:7, 14; 4:30; Colossians 1:14; Hebrews 9:12, 15.

**NOTE:** The medieval schoolmen taught that Christ was the ransom-price which God paid to Satan to release sinners. But this is pressing the figure of speech too far. See I Peter 1:18-20.

### **5. Substitution.**

Substitution is not a Biblical word but it is a Scriptural idea. It means that one person or thing is put in, or takes, the place of another person or thing. Thus, Christ took the place of sinners and died, thus suffering the penalty of sin, which they deserved.

This is the significance of the scapegoat, Leviticus 16. This is also the meaning of Isaiah 53:6. And it is the clear teaching of the New Testament: Matthew 20:28; Mark 10:45; II Corinthians 5:21; Galatians 2:20; I Peter 3:18.

**NOTE:** There are two Greek prepositions which express the substitutional or vicarious idea, viz: *kuper*—in behalf of, and *anti*—instead of. Some regard them as equivalents: Matthew 20:28; Galatians 2:20. The English preposition for is ambiguous; it means both in behalf of, and instead of.

#### **D. Explicit Statements.**

The New Testament abounds in explicit statements concerning the atonement.

If it be carefully read and all the passages bearing on this subject marked, and these classified, something like the following will be the result:

**1. The center and heart of the atonement of Christ is declared to be:**

- a. *His death*, Romans 5:10; Philippians 2:8; Hebrews 2:9-14; 9:16; Revelation 5:6, 9, 12.
- b. *His cross*, I Corinthians 1:23; Galatians 3:1; 6:12; Ephesians 2:16; Colossians 1:20.
- c. *His blood*, Matthew 26:28; Mark 14:24; Luke 22:20; Ephesians 1:7; 2:13; Colossians 1:14; I John 1:7; Hebrews 9:12, 15; Revelation 1:5; 5:9.

**2. The atonement bears a relation to God:**

- a. *It is grounded in His love*, John 3:16.
- b. *It manifests His righteousness*, Romans 3:25; II Corinthians 5:21.
- c. *It measures the extent of His sacrifice*, John 3:16; Romans 8:32; II Corinthians 5:21; I John 4:10.
- d. *It is the basis of our reconciliation*, Romans 5:11; II Corinthians 5:18, 19.

**3. The atonement bears a relation to the law.**

- a. *Christ was born under the law*, Galatians 4:4, 5.
- b. *Christ bore its curse*, Galatians 3:13; Philippians 2:8.
- c. *Christ fulfilled its righteousness*, Romans 5:18, 19; 8:3, 4; 10:4.

**4. The sacrifice of Christ was necessary:** Luke 24:26; Galatians 2:21; 3:21; Hebrews 2:10.

**5. The sacrifice of Christ was voluntary:** John 10:17, 18; Galatians 2:20; Ephesians 5:2; Hebrews 9:14; 10:7-9.

**6. The atonement of Christ was the only sacrifice for sin:** Acts 4:12; Romans 3:20-28; Hebrews 1:3; 9:22; 10:10, 12, 14, 26; I Peter 3:18.

**7. The atonement of Christ was vicarious:** Matthew 26:28; Romans 5:6; II Corinthians 5:14, 15; Galatians 3:13, 14.

**8. The atonement of Christ was for sin:** John 1:29; Romans 3:25; 5:8; 6:10; 8:3; I Corinthians 15:3; II Corinthians 5:21; Galatians 3:13; Hebrews 9:28; I Peter 2:24; 3:18; Revelation 1:5.

**9. The atonement of Christ was for various classes:**

- a. *For His own people*, Matthew 1: .at; John 10:11; 15:13; Ephesians 5-25; Hebrews 2:13, 14; I John 3:16.
- b. *For the many*, Matthew 20:28; Mark 10:45; Hebrews 9:28.
- c. *For the lost* Matthew 18:11; Mark 2:17; Luke 5:32; 19:10.
- d. *For the whole world*, John 1:29; 3:16; 6:51; 12:47; II Corinthians 5:14, 15; I Timothy 2:6; Hebrews 2:9; I John 2:2.

**10. The atonement of Christ produces many beneficial effects:**

- a. *Thereby Jesus becomes the Saviour of men*, Matthew 1:21.

- b. *Thereby justification is received, Acts 13:39.*
- c. *Thereby cleansing is received, I John 1:7.*
- d. *Thereby sanctification is received, Hebrews 13:12.*
- e. *Thereby healing is received, I Peter 2:24.*
- f. *Thereby universal blessings are received, John 14:13; Ephesians 1:3; Hebrews 9:15.*

## **II. THE NECESSITY**

So far as we can penetrate into the mystery of the atonement, its necessity was fourfold:

### **1. The Holiness of God.**

The holiness of God was outraged by sin and demanded appeasement by punishment.

#### *a. The Law of God.*

The law of God was violated by sin and demanded that the penalty of death be inflicted. Law has been called “the expression of will.” While all law is of God, we may distinguish between Natural and Divine law. Natural Law underlies the physical constitution of the universe. It has been defined as the observed uniform action or tendency of the forces or powers of the physical universe, as gravitation, cohesion, chemical affinity, etc. Natural law implies four things:

- (a) a lawgiver or authoritative will;
- (b) persons and things whereon the law operates;
- (c) a command or expression of this will;
- (d) a power enforcing the command.

On the other hand, Divine Law underlies the moral constitution of the universe. It is twofold, viz: the moral law and the ceremonial law. The Moral Law is a transcript of the character of God, that is, it is His essential nature expressed in perceptive form, as the Decalogue, the ethical teaching of the Sermon on the Mount, and the new commandment of Jesus: John 15:12. The moral law, therefore, is elemental, universal, and permanent.

It implies six things:

- (a) A divine lawgiver or ordaining will;
- (b) subjects, or moral beings upon whom the law terminates;
- (c) commands, or the expression of this will in the moral constitution of the subjects and in the form of written perceptive enactments;
- (d) power enforcing these commands;
- (e) duty, or obligation to obey;
- (f) sanctions, or pains and penalties for disobedience.

Now, it is the moral law which the sinner has transgressed and for which transgression the penalty of death is threatened: Ezekiel 18:4; Romans 6:23.

The Ceremonial Law is the expression in written perceptive form of the will of God for a specific purpose, as the Levitical system of ablutions and the distinction between clean and unclean animals: Leviticus chaps. 11-15. The ceremonial law, accordingly, was local in application and temporary in character. Indeed, in Christ and His gospel, the moral law is fulfilled but the ceremonial law is abrogated. Romans 10:4; Acts 10:9-16; I Timothy 4:1-5.

### 3. The Guilty Conscience.

The guilty and defiled conscience of the sinner can be acquitted and cleansed only through punishment— the punishment of the sinner himself or of his Substitute, the Saviour. Peace and rest cannot come to the condemned heart till it is assured that it's just penalty has been borne by the spotless Lamb of God: Hebrews 10:1-8.

### 4. The Lost Sinner.

In the doctrine of Hamartiology (see Topic 5: The Result of Sin) it has been shown that in consequence of sin man is both helpless and hopeless. **HE IS LOST, "having no hope, and without God in the world":** Ephesians 2:12. For this reason **"the Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost":** Luke 19:10.

**NOTE:** Heathen sacrifices bear witness to the necessity of atonement for sin. They are best explained as a perversion of an original divine revelation. This perversion is seen in the fact that while in heathen sacrifices the victim is offered to appease an offended deity, the truth as set forth in the Scriptures is that **"God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself":** II Corinthians 5:19.

That heathen sacrifices are a perversion of an original divine revelation is further seen in the fact that the idea of substitution is uppermost; that is, the worshiper, conscious of his sinfulness, brings his offering, by whose innocent blood he believes his guilt is expiated.

## III. THE EXTENT

As to the extent of the atonement, a distinction must be made between its sufficiency and its efficiency. In sufficiency the atonement in Christ is universal; that is, potential provision is made for all mankind. But in efficiency the atonement is limited; that is, actual provision is made only for those who accept God's gracious offer of salvation through Christ. Both aspects are presented in I Timothy 4:10: . . . **"we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe."**

**1. Passages bearing on the universality of the atonement:** Hebrews 2:9; I Timothy 2:6; 4:10; Titus 2:11; I John 2:2; II Peter 3:9.

**2. Passages bearing on the limitation of the atonement:** Ephesians 1:4, 7; II Timothy 1:9, 10. See John 17:9, 20, 24.

**NOTE:** Christ is the Saviour of all men in the sense that:

a. *His atonement acts as a stay in the execution of the sentence against sin*, securing for all men a space for repentance, and the enjoyment of the common blessings of life, forfeited by transgression: II Peter 3:9; Matthew 5:45; Acts 14:17;

b. *His atonement has made objective provision for the salvation of all*, by removing from the divine mind every obstacle to the pardon and restoration of sinners, except their willful opposition to God and refusal to turn to Him: Romans 5:8-10; II Corinthians 5:18-20;

c. *His atonement has procured for all men the powerful incentives to repentance presented in the cross*, together with the combined agency of the Christian Church and the Holy Spirit: Romans 2:4; John 16:8; II Corinthians 5:18-20;

d. *His atonement provides for the removal of the curse from nature*: Isaiah 55:13; Romans 8:21, 22;

e. *His atonement provides for the salvation of infants*: Matthew 18:10; 19:13-15. On the other hand, Christ is the Saviour only of those who believe, because repentance and faith are the conditions of salvation: Acts 2:38.

#### **IV. PHILOSOPHY**

The philosophy of the atonement seeks its rational explanation. It must be frankly admitted that a complete and satisfactory philosophy of the atonement is impossible, for at bottom it is a profound and impenetrable mystery. Indeed, the early church viewed the atonement as a fact more than as a doctrine; that is, as a historic event, not as a speculative problem. It was the central truth of the gospel. Forgiveness was offered freely through the blood of Christ on the simple condition of repentance from sin and faith towards God. It would have been well if this had continued to be the case. But with the scholasticism of the Middle Ages, the speculative element entered into the view of the atonement. It has been estimated that fully fifteen theories, so called, of the atonement have been formulated. Of these, six merit our attention: five, which we believe to be untrue to the Scriptures; and the last one, which we believe to be the true Biblical view.

##### **A. The Socinian, or Example Theory of the Atonement.**

###### **1. Statement.**

“This theory held that subjective sinfulness is the sole barrier between man and God. Not God, but only man, needs to be reconciled. This can be effected by man’s own will, through repentance and reformation. The death of Christ is but the death of a noble martyr. He redeems us, only as His human example of faithfulness to duty has a powerful influence upon our moral improvement. This fact the apostles, either consciously or unconsciously, clothed in the language of the Greek and Jewish sacrifices” (Strong).

**NOTE:** This theory was fully elaborated by Laelius Socinus and Faustus Socinus, of Poland, in the 16th century. Its modern representatives are Unitarians.

## 2. Objections.

a. Philosophically, it is based upon false principles; for example, that will is simply the volitional faculty; that utility is the basis of virtue; that law is the expression of arbitrary will; that penalty is a means of reforming the offender; and that righteousness, in either God or man, is only the manifestation of benevolence.

b. Historically, it is the outgrowth of the Pelagian view of sin, and “logically necessitates a curtailment or surrender of every other characteristic doctrine of Christianity—inspiration, sin, the deity of Christ, justification, regeneration, and eternal retribution” (Strong).

**NOTE:** Pelagianism was the denial of total depravity in man and the affirmation of “ability”—that is, that man by his own efforts, with divine help, is capable of salvation.

The Socinian theory requires the abandonment of:

- The doctrine of inspiration because throughout the Scriptures a vicarious and expiatory sacrifice is presented;
- The doctrine of sin, because sin as objective guilt and subjective defilement is denied;
- The doctrine of Christ’s deity, because if man can save himself, he has no need of an infinite sacrifice by an infinite Saviour;
- The doctrine of justification, because it denies our being declared innocent before the law on account of anything Christ has done;
- The doctrine of regeneration, because it denies the necessity of the birth from above;
- The doctrine of eternal retribution, because “this is no longer appropriate to finite transgression of arbitrary law, and to superficial sinning that does not involve nature” (Strong).

c. Scripturally, it contradicts the fact that sin involves objective guilt as well as subjective defilement; that God’s holiness requires Him to punish sin; that the atonement was vicarious and substitutional; and that such vicarious and substitutional bearing of sin was necessary in order to furnish a ground whereby God might show favor to the guilty.

d. Again, “it furnishes no proper explanation of the sufferings and death of Christ.

The unmartyrlike anguish cannot be accounted for, and the forsaking by the Father cannot be justified upon the hypothesis that Christ died as a mere witness to truth. See Psalm 22. If Christ’s sufferings were not propitiatory, they neither furnish us with a perfect example, nor constitute a manifestation of the love of God” (Strong).

e. Once more, it makes the chief result of Christ’s death what at most can only be a subordinate result; for neither Scripture nor Christian experience finds in Christ’s example the principal motive of His death.

“Mere example is but a new preaching of the law, which repels and condemns. The cross has power to lead men to holiness, only as it first shows a satisfaction made for sins. Accordingly, most of the passages which represent Christ as an example also contain references to His propitiatory work” (Strong). See I Peter 2:21.

f. Finally, it “contradicts the whole tenor of the New Testament in making the life, and not the death, of Christ the most significant and important feature of His work. The constant allusions to the death of Christ as the source of salvation, as well as the symbolism of the ordinances, cannot be explained upon a theory which regards Christ as a mere example, and considers His sufferings as incidents, rather than essentials, of His work” (Strong).

## **B. The Bushnellian, or Moral Influence Theory of the Atonement.**

### **1. Statement.**

“This theory holds, like the Socinian, that there is no principle of the divine nature which is propitiated by Christ’s death; but that this death is a manifestation of the love of God, suffering in and with the sins of His creatures. Christ’s atonement, therefore, is the merely natural consequence of His taking human nature upon Him; and is a suffering, not of penalty in man’s stead, but of the combined woes and griefs which the living of a human life involves. This atonement has effect, not to satisfy divine justice, but so to reveal divine love as to soften human hearts and to lead them to repentance; in other words, Christ’s sufferings were necessary, not in order to remove an obstacle to the pardon of sinners which exists in the mind of God, but in order to convince sinners that there exists no such obstacle” (Strong).

**NOTE:** This theory was held by Horace Bushnell, of New England, and by Robertson, Maurice, Campbell, and Young, of Great Britain, and by Schleiermacher and Ritschl, of Germany.

### **2. Objections.**

a. It is open to the same objection as the example theory of the atonement, in that it magnifies a subordinate into the principal effect of Christ’s death. Our Lord’s sufferings do produce a moral effect upon men; but suffering with the sinner is one thing and suffering in his stead quite another.

b. Again, as Dr. Strong points out, like the example theory, it rests upon false philosophical principles: as, “that righteousness is identical with benevolence, instead of conditioning it; that God is subject to an eternal law of love, instead of being Himself the source of all law; that the aim of penalty is the reformation of the offender.”

c. Again, it furnishes no proper reason for Christ’s sufferings. “While it shows that the Saviour necessarily suffers from His contact with human sin and sorrow, it gives no explanation of that constitution of the universe which makes suffering the consequence of sin, not only to the sinner, but also to the innocent being who comes into contact with sin.”

Strong continues: “The holiness of God, which is manifested in this constitution of things and which requires this atonement, is entirely ignored” (Strong).

d. Again, it contradicts the teaching of the Scriptures, like the example theory, in that it asserts that the atonement was necessary, not to satisfy God’s justice, but merely to reveal His love; that Christ’s sufferings were not propitiatory and penal; and that the human conscience does not need to be propitiated by Christ’s sacrifice before it can feel the moral influence of His sufferings.

e. Again, “it can be maintained only by wresting from their obvious meaning those passages of Scripture which speak of Christ as suffering for our sins; which represent His blood as accomplishing something in heaven when presented there by our Intercessor; which declare forgiveness to be a remitting of past offenses upon the ground of Christ’s death; and which describe justification as a pronouncing, not a making, just” (Strong).

f. And again, “this theory confounds God’s method of saving men with men’s experience of being saved. It makes the atonement itself consist of its effect in the believer’s union with Christ and the purifying influence of that union upon the character and life” (Strong).

g. Finally, “the theory confines the influence of the atonement to those who have heard it,—thus excluding patriarchs and heathen. But the Scriptures represent Christ as being the Saviour of all men, in the sense of securing them grace, which, but for His atoning work, could never have been bestowed consistently with the divine holiness” (Strong).

## **C. The Grotian, or Governmental Theory of the Atonement.**

### **1. Statement.**

“The vicarious sufferings of Christ are an atonement for sin as a conditional substitute for penalty, fulfilling, on the forgiveness of sin, the obligation of justice and the office of penalty in moral government” (John Miley, of Drew).

“This theory holds that the atonement is a satisfaction, not to any internal principle of the divine nature, but to the necessities of government. God’s government of the universe cannot be maintained, nor can the divine law preserve its authority over its subjects, unless the pardon of offenders is accompanied by some exhibition of the high estimate which God sets upon His law and the heinous guilt of violating it. Such an exhibition of divine regard for the law is furnished in the sufferings and death of Christ. Christ does not suffer the precise penalty of the law, but God graciously accepts His suffering as a substitute for the penalty. This bearing of substituted suffering on the part of Christ gives the divine law such hold upon the consciences and hearts of men, that God can pardon the guilty upon their repentance, without detriment to the interests of His government” (Strong).

**NOTE:** This theory was originated by Hugo Grotius, the Dutch jurist and theologian (1583-1645). It is commonly known as *Arminianism*. It is held prominently by the Wesleyan and Methodist Churches.

## **1. Objections.**

a. Like the example and moral influence theories, it has the fatal defect of substituting for the principal aim of the atonement a subordinate one, namely, the securing of the interests of God's government.

b. Like the two former theories, it rests upon false philosophical principles: "that utility is the ground of moral obligation; that law is an expression of the will, rather than of the nature, of God; that the aim of penalty is to deter from the commission of offenses; and that righteousness is resolvable into benevolence" (Strong).

c. Again, it "ignores and virtually denies that immanent holiness of God of which law with its threatened penalties, and the human conscience with its demand for punishment, are only finite reflections. There is something back of government, and if the atonement satisfies government, it must be by satisfying that justice of God, of which government is the expression" (Strong).

d. Again, it "makes that to be an exhibition of justice which is not an exercise of justice; the atonement being, according to this theory, not an execution of law, but an exhibition of regard for law, which will make it safe to pardon the violators of law. Such a scenic representation can inspire respect for law, only so long as the essential unreality of it is unsuspected" (Strong).

e. Again, it makes the sufferings of Christ in the garden and on the cross inexplicable "upon the theory that the atonement was a histrionic (that is, a kind of theatrical) exhibition of God's regard for His government, and can be explained only upon the view that Christ actually endured the wrath of God against human sin" (Strong).

f. Again, "the actual power of the atonement over the human conscience and heart is due, not to its exhibiting God's regard for law, but to its exhibiting an actual execution of law, and an actual satisfaction of violated holiness made by Christ in the sinner's stead" (Strong).

g. Finally, "the theory contradicts all those passages of Scripture which represent the atonement as necessary; as propitiating God Himself; as being a revelation of God's righteousness; as being an execution of the penalty of the law; as making salvation a matter of debt to the believer, on the ground of what Christ has done; as actually purging our sins, instead of making that purging possible; as not simply assuring the sinner that God may now pardon him on account of what Christ has done, but that Christ has actually wrought out a complete salvation, and will bestow it upon all who come to Him" (Strong).

## **D. The Irvingian, or Theory of Gradually Extirpated Depravity.**

### **1. Statement.**

"This theory holds that, in His incarnation, Christ took human nature as it was in Adam, not before the Fall, but after the Fall."

“Human nature, therefore, with its inborn corruption and predisposition to evil; that, notwithstanding the possession of this tainted and depraved nature, Christ, through the power of the Holy Spirit, or of His divine nature, not only kept His human nature from manifesting itself in any actual or personal sin, but completely purified it through struggle and suffering, until in His death He completely extirpated its original depravity, and reunited it to God. This subjective purification of human nature in the person of Jesus Christ constitutes His atonement, and men are saved, not by any objective propitiation, but only by becoming through faith partakers of Christ’s new humanity” (Strong).

**NOTE:** This theory was elaborated by Edward Irving, of England (1792-1834), and is held in substance by some German scholars.

### 1. Objections.

a. It recognizes an important truth in the fact of the new humanity of Christ, of which all believers are partakers by faith; but it denies the fact of an objective atonement, through which alone we can receive this new spiritual humanity.

b. It rests upon false fundamental principles, namely: that law is identical with the natural order of the universe, and as such, is an exhaustive expression of the will and nature of God; that sin is simply a power of moral evil within the soul, instead of also involving an objective guilt and desert of punishment; that penalty is the mere reaction of law against the transgressor, instead of being also the revelation of a personal wrath against sin; that the evil taint of human nature can be extirpated by suffering its natural consequences,—penalty in this way reforming the sinner” (Strong).

c. It contradicts the plain teaching of Scripture, namely: “with regard to Christ’s freedom from all taint of human depravity; misrepresents His life as a growing consciousness of the underlying corruption of His human nature, which culminated at Gethsemane and Calvary; and denies the truth of His own statements when it declares that He must have died on account of His own depravity, even though none were to be saved thereby” (Strong).

d. Again, “it makes the active obedience of Christ and the subjective purification of His human nature to be the chief features of His work, while the Scriptures make His death and passive bearing of penalty the center of all, and ever regard Him as One who is personally pure and who vicariously bears the punishment of the guilty” (Strong).

e. Finally, the theory requires the “surrender of the doctrine of Justification, as a merely declaratory act of God; and requires such a view of the divine holiness, expressed only through the order of nature, as can be maintained only upon principles of pantheism” (Strong).

**NOTE:** The theory rests upon three chief arguments:

First, that Paul teaches it in Romans 8:3: “**God having sent his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh.**”

To this Dr. Farr replies: “If Paul’s language were ‘**in sinful flesh,**’ the theory would be plainly taught, but it is not. His words signify that the flesh of Christ was like the flesh of sin, inasmuch as it was flesh, but unlike, inasmuch as it was not affected with sin.

Paul could not have said ‘**in sinful flesh**’ without making Christ partaker of sin. He could not have said merely ‘in flesh,’ for then the bond between the manhood of Jesus and sin would have been wanting. He says, ‘in likeness of flesh and sin,’ meaning that Christ had a nature like sinful human nature but He had not Himself a sinful nature.”

Second, that it is clearly implied in the susceptibility of Christ to temptation and especially in knowing by experience how to succor those who are tempted, the latter being sinners. Again Dr. Farr replies: “This argument is plausible, but not conclusive. For if it be necessary to have a depraved nature in order to feel the force of temptation, then Adam and the angels must have been created with depraved natures. Also, if it be necessary to have been in the moral nature of sinners who are tempted, in order to succor them, Christ must have had not only a sinful nature but also a habit of sinning to qualify Him for His work.”

Third, that it is implied in a proper view of the atonement, because humanity in its fallen nature was summed up in the humanity of Christ and in that humanity paid the just penalty for all its sin.

Once again Dr. Farr answers: “But the idea that the human nature of Christ was the whole human nature, in any other sense than that in which human nature is entire in any other, is a mere fiction and fancy. If He bore the penalty of sin at all, it was not the penalty of His own personal sin, or sinfulness, but the penalty due to others for their sins. Bearing the penalty of His own sinfulness would not help them, unless it were in turn to bear the penalty of their sinfulness. This is self-evident and if there were anything vicarious in His suffering it presupposes His holiness rather than His sinfulness.”

## **E. The Anselmic, or Commercial Theory of the Atonement.**

### **1. Statement.**

“This holds that sin is a violation of the divine honor or majesty, and, as committed against an infinite being, deserves an infinite punishment; that the majesty of God requires Him to execute punishment, while the love of God pleads for the sparing of the guilty; that this conflict of divine attributes is eternally reconciled by the voluntary sacrifice of the God-man, who bears in the virtue of the dignity of His person the intensively infinite punishment of sin, which must otherwise have been suffered extensively and eternally by sinners; that this suffering of the God-man presents to the divine majesty an exact equivalent for the deserved sufferings of the elect; and that, as the result of this satisfaction of the divine claims, the elect sinners are pardoned and regenerated” (Strong).

**NOTE:** This theory was first held by Anselm, of Canterbury (1033-1100), who propounded it as a substitute for an earlier patristic view that Christ’s death was a ransom paid to Satan, to deliver sinners from his power. Many Scotch theologians hold this view.

## **2. Objections.**

- a. It recognized an all-important truth in the fact that Christ's death satisfied a principle of the nature of Deity, but it errs in representing the majesty of honor as higher than the holiness of God; while it is seriously at fault in admitting a conflict between the divine attributes.
- b. It overlooks entirely the value of the active obedience of Christ, and of His holy life.
- c. It gives "disproportionate weight to those passages of Scripture which represent the atonement under commercial analogies, as the payment of a ransom or debt, to the exclusion of those which describe it as an ethical fact, whose value is to be estimated not quantitatively, but qualitatively" (Strong).
- d. It limits the extent of the atonement to the elect, thus ignoring the teaching of the Scripture that Christ died for all.
- e. It is "defective in holding to a merely external transfer of the merit of Christ's work, while it does not clearly state the internal ground of that transfer, in the union of the believer with Christ" (Strong).

## **F. Substitutional, or Satisfaction Theory of the Atonement.**

This theory, the first suggestions of which are found in the writings of Augustine (4th century), was elaborated by John Calvin (16th century), and is today held by the Reformed and Presbyterian theologies. It is commonly known as Calvinism; sometimes it is called the "Orthodox Theory," or "Ethical Theory." It is, we believe, the true Scriptural view.

### *a. Preliminary Points.*

- (1). The theory holds to a twofold element in Christ's substitution, namely: a vicarious obedience (known theologically as "active obedience") for righteousness, and a vicarious punishment (known theologically as "passive obedience") for sin.

Thus, Christ takes the place of sinners in both penalty and precept, and, as their substitute, endures the punishment which on account of sin they deserve, and in His obedience fulfils the righteousness required of them.

### (2). Two Kinds of Substitution.

There are two kinds of substitution, namely: unconditional, which grants full and absolute deliverance to those for whom substitution is made; and conditional, which grants deliverance to those for whom substitution is made only on the terms agreed upon between the one who makes the substitution and the one who accepts it. Christ's substitution was conditional, dependent upon the repentance and faith of sinners.

### (3). Two Kinds of Satisfaction.

“The satisfaction of Christ means all He has done to satisfy the demands of the holiness and law of God in the place of and in behalf of sinners.” There are two kinds of satisfaction, namely: pecuniary, a money payment, which can be made by anyone, and penal, blood payment, which can be made only by the guilty. Christ’s satisfaction was penal; the atonement was in His blood.

### (4). Three Kinds of Penal Satisfaction.

There are three kinds of penal (that is, vicariously penal) satisfaction.

- First, identical. Christ’s death was not identical because the death of one could not be the same as the death of many: Mark 10:45.
- Second, equal. Christ’s satisfaction was not equal, because the death of the entire race of finite beings would not be equal to the death of the Infinite Being, Jesus Christ.
- Third, equivalent. Christ’s satisfaction was equivalent, because one infinite factor, Jesus Christ, is inconceivably greater than all the finite factors making up the race of Adam.

Illustration: a gold eagle (\$10) weighs less than 500 pennies, but has double the value.

#### b. *The Two Questions Stated.*

There are two questions which conduct us into the heart of the atonement. And the answers to these questions give us its true philosophy.

- First: What did the atonement accomplish? Or, what was the object of Christ’s death?
- Second: What were the means used? Or, how could Christ justly die?

The answer to the former question views the atonement in its relation to God. The answer to the latter question views the atonement in its relation to man.

Again, the answer to the first question is an unfolding of the meaning of Romans 3:25, 26. The answer to the second question is an unfolding of the meaning of II Corinthians 5:21.

#### c. *The First Question Considered.*

What did the atonement accomplish? Or, what was the object of Christ’s death? Briefly, the answer is threefold:

- (1). It satisfied the outraged holiness of God: Psalm 22; Isaiah 53; Romans 3:25, 26; 4:25; 8:3; Galatians 1:4; 3:13; Hebrews 9:15; I John 2:2; 4:10.
- (2). It avenged the violated law of God: Gen 2:17; Ezekiel 18:4, 20; Romans 6:23.
- (3). It exhibited the love of God, thereby furnishing man a motive for repentance from sin and faith towards Christ: John 3:16; 15:13; Romans 5:8; I Peter 2:21; I John 4:9, 10.

In viewing this aspect of the atonement Dr. Strong declares: “Its necessity is grounded in the holiness of God, of which conscience in man is a finite reflection. There is an ethical principle in the divine nature, which demands that sin shall be punished. Aside from its results, sin is essentially ill-deserving.

“As we who are made in God’s image mark our growth in purity by the increasing quickness with which we detect impurity, and the increasing hatred which we feel toward it, so infinite purity is a consuming fire to all iniquity. As there is an ethical demand in our natures that not only others’ wickedness, but our own wickedness, be visited with punishment, and a keen conscience that cannot rest till it has made satisfaction to justice for its misdeeds, so there is an ethical demand of God’s nature that penalty follows sin.”

The same writer continues: “Punishment is the constitutional reaction of God’s being against moral evil—the self-assertion of infinite holiness against its antagonist and would-be destroyer. In God this demand is devoid of all passion, and is consistent with infinite benevolence. It is a demand that cannot be evaded, since the holiness from which it springs is unchanging. The atonement is, therefore, a satisfaction of the ethical demand of the divine nature, by the substitution of Christ’s penal sufferings for the punishment of the guilty. This substitution is unknown to mere law, and above and beyond the powers of law. It is an operation of grace. Grace, however, does not violate or suspend law, but takes it up into itself and fulfils it.

“The righteousness of law is maintained, in that the source of all law, the Judge and Punisher, Himself voluntarily submits to bear the penalty, and bears it in the human nature that has sinned. Thus the atonement answers the ethical demand of the divine nature that sin be punished if the offender is to go free. The interests of the divine government are secured as a first subordinate result of this satisfaction to God Himself, of whose nature the government is an expression: while, as a second subordinate result, provision is made for the needs of human nature—on the one hand the need of objective satisfaction to the ethical demand of punishment for sin, and on the other hand the need of a manifestation of divine love and mercy that will affect the heart and move it to repentance.”

**NOTE:** on Romans 3:25, 26. These verses expand the subject of the epistle—the revelation of the “**righteousness of God**,” righteousness being that which God both provides and accepts. This righteousness is mentioned in 1:17, and in 1:18-3:20 it is shown to be the only means whereby both Jew and Gentile can be saved.

The commentator Meyer points out that in verse 25 the phrase “**in His blood**” is to be taken with the verb “**set forth**.” The purpose of this setting forth in Christ’s blood he says is “for the display of God’s judicial and punitive righteousness, which received its satisfaction in the death of Christ as a propitiatory offering, and was thereby practically demonstrated and exhibited.”

On the expression “**for the remission** (literally, *passing over*) **of sins that are past**,” Meyer’s comment is: “because He (God) had allowed the pre-Christian sins to go without punishment, whereby His righteousness had been lost sight of and obscured, and had come to need an exhibition to men.”

“Omittance,” he says, “is not acquaintance; the passing over or passing by is intermediate between pardon and punishment. **‘Through the forbearance of God’** expresses the motive of the *‘passing over or passing by.’* Before Christ’s sacrifice, God’s administration was a scandal—it needed vindication. The atonement is God’s answer to the charge of freeing the guilty.”

On verse 26 Meyer says that it presents the final purpose of God’s act as set forth in verse 25, namely, “God’s being just and His appearing just in consequence of this.” On the whole passage Strong’s comment is that it shows:

- (1) That Christ’s death is a propitiatory sacrifice;
- (2) That its first and main effect is upon God;
- (3) That the particular attribute of God which demands the atonement is His justice, or holiness;
- (4) That the satisfaction of this holiness is the necessary condition of God’s justifying the believer.

d. *The Second Question Considered.*

With respect to the atonement, what were the means used: or how could Christ justly die?

Briefly, the answer is threefold:

- (1). He took our flesh: John 1:14; Romans 8:3; Galatians 4:4; Hebrews 2:14-18.
- (2). He assumed our guilt: II Corinthians 5:21; Galatians 3:13.
- (3). He bore our penalty: Isaiah 53:4, 5; Matthew 20:28; II Corinthians 5:21; Galatians 2:20; 3:13; I Peter 2:24.

The consequences of Adam’s sin, both to himself and to his posterity, are:

- (1). Depravity, or corruption of human nature.
- (2). Guilt, or obligation to make satisfaction for sin to the holiness and the law of God.
- (3). Penalty, or actual endurance of loss or suffering as punishment for sin.

If Christ had entered the world in the natural way, He would have had depravity; but through His virgin birth He escaped it: Luke 1:35; II Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 7:26. However, together with His partaking of our common humanity Christ assumed guilt with its consequent penalty.

The guilt which our Lord assumed was not of course the guilt of personal sin. It could not be.

This is proved by the transfiguration. The transfiguration marks the close to a sinless life, a life having taken on humanity immaculately conceived, and having passed through the course of human existence without the least taint of sin.

God’s voice, “**This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased,**” assures us of Christ’s absolute sinlessness. “**The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all,**” Isaiah 53:6, but it was our iniquity, not His that was laid upon Him.

It was not in His birth, but in His death on the cross that the assumption of our guilt took place.

In attempting to explain how Christ could justly suffer, the innocent for the guilty, we must keep in mind that it is not the act of the cross which is to be justified primarily, but God who is to be justified by the act of the cross (Romans 3:25, 26). Moreover, the solution does not lie in making human comparisons (such as, the innocent for the guilty) but in seeing Infinity voluntarily bearing the guilt of the finite. This was done “**through the obedience of one**” (Romans 5:17-19).

The cross is in God’s eternal plan (both before and after time) and is a necessary and adequate expression of a God of holiness, justice, righteousness, love, and mercy.

The ground of His substitutional death is His voluntary reception of our guilt, and God’s act in laying it upon Him. The death was just in that it was voluntarily assumed: “I lay it down of myself,” John 10:18. It was vicarious in that it was voluntarily assumed by a perfect, righteous One. It was complete and acceptable in that God raised Him (the Sacrifice) from the dead. The suffering of Christ, according to Dr. Strong, “was the enduring of the reaction of the divine holiness against sin and so was a bearing of penalty (Isaiah 53:6; Galatians 3:13); but it was also the voluntary execution of a plan that antedated creation (Philippians 2:6, 7), and Christ’s sacrifice in time showed what had been in the heart of God from eternity (Hebrews 9:14; Revelation 13:8).”

**NOTE:** on II Corinthians 5:21. This verse gives us the scriptural support for the view that Christ assumed our guilt and so justly bore our penalty. Notice these three points:

(1). Our Lord had no depravity. “**Him who knew no sin**”; this expression teaches us Christ’s sinlessness.

(2). Our Lord incurred our guilt. “**He was made to be sin for us.**” Since Christ had no depravity of nature, sin here must mean guilt, that is, obligation to suffer for sin. Indeed, Meyer calls attention to a parallel of meaning between “sin” here and “righteousness” a little later in the verse. He says that if righteousness means holiness, then sin must mean depravity; but if righteousness means justification, then sin must mean condemnation. Of course, the latter is the true meaning; that is, Christ was constituted a condemned person in order that the believer might in Him be constituted a justified person.

(3). Our Lord bore our penalty. “**He was made to be [a sin offering] for us.**” The term sin here must carry the double meaning of guilt and penalty: Hebrews 10:18.

### **TOPIC THREE: CHRIST AS KING**

**NOTE:** The third topic under the work of Christ, namely His Kingship, belongs more properly to Eschatology, and in particular to the study of the Millennium. Accordingly, its treatment will be presented there.

## QUESTIONS FOR STUDY

1. What was the extent of Christ's prophetic ministry?
2. What was the twofold nature of the prophetic office?
3. In what five ways did Christ fulfil His prophetic ministry?
4. What is the extent of Christ's priestly ministry?
5. State clearly the idea of the priestly office.
6. What was the threefold scope of the Old Testament priesthood?
7. Trace the parallelism between the three steps in the work of the atonement in the Old Testament and in the ministry of Christ.
8. Mention five types of the atonement in the Old Testament. Give references for all and discuss one of the types.
9. Mention five predictions of the atonement in the Old Testament. Give references and discuss one of the predictions.
10. Mention five New Testament witnessing terms of the atonement. Give references for all and discuss one of the terms.
11. Show the fourfold necessity of the atonement.
12. What is the extent of the atonement?
13. What is the Socinian, or Example Theory of the atonement? What facts, Scriptural and otherwise, refute it?
14. What is the Bushnellian, or Moral Influence Theory of the atonement? What facts, Scriptural and otherwise, refute it?
15. What is the Grotian, or Governmental Theory of the atonement? What facts, Scriptural or otherwise, refute it?
16. What is the Irvingian, or Theory of Gradually Extirpated Depravity? What facts, Scriptural or otherwise, refute it?
17. What is the Anselmic, or Commercial Theory of the atonement? What facts, Scriptural or otherwise, refute it?
18. What, briefly, is the Satisfaction Theory of the atonement? (a) What are the two kinds of substitution? (b) What are the two kinds of satisfaction? (c) What are the three kinds of penal satisfaction?
19. What two questions conduct into the heart of the atonement?
20. What is the threefold answer to the first question?
21. Give a brief exposition of Romans 3:25, 26.
22. What is the threefold answer to the second question?
23. Give a brief exposition of II Corinthians 5:21.

~ end of chapter 7 ~

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