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# **GREAT NEWS**

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**Studies in the Christian Gospel**



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# **GREAT NEWS**

## **Studies in the Christian Good News for Individuals and Small Groups**

Like many Christians I have often settled on one simple or simplistic way of explaining the gospel. This does not help others to see the meaning of Christ from a different angle, from which it may make more sense to them.

I offer these studies in the hope that they will help us to become more flexible and creative in explaining the gospel to others.

I make no claim that these studies exhaust the wonderful good news of the Christian message. I hope that they will assist others to dig a bit deeper into the goldmine of the Faith of the Church.

Each of these seven studies looks at the Christian gospel from a different perspective and starting point.

There is a short exposition of the Good News from the particular angle, followed by some questions for reflection on your own, and for use in a small group discussion.

May the Lord God Himself bless his wonderful truth to us!

Ralph G. Bowles

August 2021

## **THE GREAT ANNOUNCEMENT**

These seven studies are offered for you to explore some different angles on the Christian good news or gospel. The word 'gospel' in its original setting denoted an important news proclamation – 'great news', a message worthy of hearing due to its gravity and significance.

We have the original and authoritative "good news" proclamation in the writings of the New Testament. The story of Jesus Messiah himself (in the four Gospels), is the foundation. The 'Gospels' tell the basic facts of the gospel message: the life, work, teaching, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus himself. The other books contain authoritative exposition of the meaning of Jesus's glory in the form of teaching letters (occasional and didactic) written by the apostles of Christ to the early congregations of Christ-followers.

### **The Central Truth**

The Christian message proclaims this amazing claim: that in Jesus Christ, God himself came to reconcile humanity with its Creator. The apostle Paul states it in this way: *in Christ, God was reconciling the world to himself* (2 Cor. 5:19). This mediator was the unique God-Man, the One in whom the fullness of the Divine Son dwelt in perfect union with genuine humanity (Col. 1:15-20).

This unique Saviour was able to bring together both God and humanity in himself and through his work. Christ lived and died for us, in the sense that he is our representative, who offered his life for us and in whom we are united and transformed.

Each of the following angles on the great news is founded on this union of God and Human nature in Christ, and our union with Christ, in whom we share in his transforming work by the Spirit. He is our corporate representative. In P.T. Forsyth's words: "He represents before God . . . the New penitent humanity that His influence creates."<sup>1</sup>

### **Seven Angles on The Great News**

The basic elements of the Christian gospel are agreed by most of the Church:

- The nature of Christ as our Saviour Lord, truly Human and fully Divine as the eternal Son of God. The amazing truth of the Incarnation of God in the person of Jesus is the foundation of the gospel.
- The saving work of Christ in his life and death, as Messiah of Israel and as Saviour-King of the world. Jesus is the second Adam, the true Human leader. The message of Jesus Christ and his career fulfilled in a

distinctive way the meaning of the story of Israel, God's ancient First Covenant people.

- The work of the Holy Spirit of God in the lives of Christ-followers and in the Church, to bring his transforming power to operation in human lives. There is one thorough saving work of God, achieved through Christ for us and brought to fulfilment by the Holy Spirit.

Through the centuries since that first generation, many teachers have explained and expounded this apostolic gospel in their own ways. Theologians have worked to explain the gospel in ways that will be understood by people of different cultures and times. Some aspects of the apostolic message will be more readily understood by some cultures and eras than by others. The task of explaining this momentous message must be done repeatedly as the generations move onwards.

The good news - the great news - of Jesus Christ is a rich and world-changing message. It can be looked at from different angles, revealing its beauties differently in turns. These seven studies are an exploration of some ways that the key facets of the gospel can be framed as creative ways of understanding and presenting the Christian faith.

You can use these studies as outlines for presentations of the Christian gospel, and as material for your own spiritual meditation.

“He represents  
before God . . . the  
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P.T. Forsyth

## WHO OR WHAT IS GOD?

*God is the Maker and Preserver of all things, and the loving, involved, Redeemer of His world.*

The Christian faith is about God, but what do we mean by “God”? What kind of being is God? It is possible to talk about “God” and have very different ideas of what kind of being we are talking about. There is confusion and misunderstanding about “God” outside the Church and inside too.

Let’s start by getting a clear idea about the Christian concept of God. The Bible presents us with a clear and majestic picture of the Being and Nature of God. Theology has put the Biblical picture into definitions, such as that found in the Anglican Articles of Religion:

*“There is but one living God, true and eternal, a pure spiritual being, an unchanging unity; of unlimited power, wisdom, and goodness; the Maker and Preserver of all things. In the unity of this God, there are three Persons, one in nature, power and eternity: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.”*

*Article 1*

The Article expounds the Being of God in two parts: the universal, general nature of God and his inner and revealed mysterious Being as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Here are the seven distinct characteristics of the Bible’s presentation of God:

### **1. God is the *One Self-Existent Being*, and all other beings derive their existence from God’s action.**

The Bible teaches that all things existing came into being through the action of God, the self-existent Being (Jn.1:3; Heb. 11:3; Jn. 5:26). The universe – all things that exist - owes its existence to God, who must therefore be self-existent. God is not just another, bigger, being among all other beings: He is Being itself.

We don’t see the natural universe as self-existing. It is finite, changing, and everything in it is dependent on something else. What does not have existence on its own must have a cause. If it begins to exist, it must have a cause.

Ultimately there must be a cause that didn’t have to come into existence itself: a self-existent, primary cause.

This mystery has led philosophers to the conclusion that there must be an infinite source, Being itself. This is what “God” means in the classic religious and philosophical traditions.

Here is a definition of “God”: “By God we mean the one self-existent Being, the Author and Sustainer of all that is, upon whom all things depend and in whom they find their goal.”<sup>ii</sup>

The old question: ‘Who made God?’ doesn’t make sense, because God is one who is uncreated, self-existent. The very existence of the universe is a miracle, an unexplained supernatural event. The very existence of the universe points to the reality of God the Creator. “Evidence for or against the reality of God, if it is there, pervades every moment of the experience of existence, every employment of reason, every act of consciousness, every encounter with the world around us.”<sup>iii</sup>

This does not mean that God is not the same as his natural creation. That idea is pantheism – the belief that all life is divine.

Therefore, there is and can only be One God. We believe that there is but one, living and true God. Polytheism is ruled out.

The most common error about God is that He is a being among others – greater and more powerful, but still a being. The God of the Bible is not another god like Zeus or Thor. God is not a god. These ‘gods’ are imagined as forces or beings *within* Nature.

God is not a person or reality that can be found somewhere locally in the universe.

Yuri Gagarin went into space and said that he didn’t see God. Of course not, since God is not a local physical entity within space, but the Creator of space and time, a pure spiritual Being. But God is Spiritual Being, who does not occupy a space (Jn. 4:24). “God does not occupy space like a created object.”<sup>iv</sup>

## **2. God is the *Creator* of All that is.**

The natural world *reflects* its Creator, depending upon God for existence (Acts 17:28; Col. 1:17) but is not part of God or divine. God’s energies are active in Nature but Nature is not Divine. This is the idea of Pantheism (that God is everything and in everything) - a very old religious view, and it doesn’t go away.<sup>v</sup>

Article 1 states that God is ‘everlasting, without body, parts or passions’ (meaning ‘eternal, a pure spiritual being, an unchanging unity; of unlimited power, wisdom and goodness.’) Because God is sovereign over his creation, which is not self-existent, he is not under external limits. He is not in competition with another power or reality. He is above the limitations of both time and space (Mt. 19:26).

### **3. God is the *Sustainer of the Creation.***

This doctrine rules out a natural world that is totally separate from God – the error of *Deism*. The creation functions as it does because God is at work in the natural processes. The natural processes of life are made by God.

We don't have to see supernatural events to see God at work preserving and sustaining the natural world. Every breath we take is dependent upon God. All nature is supernatural! (Acts 17:28; Col. 1:15-17). We are moment by moment totally dependent upon God for our existence. "God is recognized as present no less in the orderly progress of life than in startling and unusual events." <sup>vi</sup>

No one can escape encountering God because everything that we see, every breath we take, all moral intuitions we have, our thinking behind our eyes, our rationality, the existence and beauty of the universe – everything bears witness to the reality of God (Rom. 1:20).

### **4. God is the *Source of All Goodness.***

We can see that there are degrees of goodness in the world, but we all know that there is a moral law to which we each ultimately appeal, even if we disagree sometimes on the specifics. When people seek to know the Good, they are already implicitly believing in God, the Source of Goodness.

### **5. God is the *Mind behind the Rationality of the Universe.***

God has infinite wisdom, as the source of all truth (Jn. 1:1). When people search for the truth, they are implicitly searching for God. The rational abilities of humans are derived from God, who has created the world according to Reason and truth.

"Every piece of truth gained, of whatever kind, is so far an entering into the mind of God." <sup>vii</sup> Science is thinking God's thoughts after Him.

### **7. God is the *Personal God Who Loves Us.***

The Article sums up the Christian revelation of God as a story of God's tri-personality - his mysterious threefold personal nature within the unity of Godhead. God is personal, more personal than we are. We get our 'personhood' from our creation in God's image.

Humans are complex persons though individual persons; we should not be surprised to learn that God is complex in his personhood.

The Christian gospel claims that God has not stayed outside his Creation but has come in Person in the eternal Divine Son, incarnate in the man Jesus Christ. God has come to pay the costly price of rescuing a lost world and renewing his creation from the ravages of sin. God is present and active in people and events through his Holy Spirit.



The Christian gospel shows that the great Creator God is full of Love.

We will explore more about how the love of God has manifested in the Lord Jesus Christ, in the following studies.

### **Reflection/Discussion**

1. It has been said that atheists have to sit in God's lap to slap his face. Can you think of ways that even atheists implicitly believe in the existence of the God revealed in the Bible?
2. When the subject of God or the Christian faith next comes up in conversation with a friend or acquaintance from outside the Church, consider asking (politely): 'I'm curious to know what is your definition of God? Can you describe for me what kind of being you have in mind?'
3. Memorize the Anglican Article I. How could you use one or more of these seven attributes of "God" to explain why you are a Christian?

## **THE PERFECT SACRIFICE**

*Christ came to offer his life as a perfect sacrifice of obedience for us, as a representative offering for those who identify with Him.*

The Bible often explains the meaning of the good news of Christ by describing it as a sacrifice for sins:

- *But now he has appeared one time, at the end of the ages, for the removal of sin by the sacrifice of himself (Heb.9:26)*
- *For by one offering he has perfected forever those who are sanctified (Heb.10:14)*
- *This is love: not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. (1 John 4:9-10)*

What does the idea of Christ as an *atoning sacrifice* mean to us? It seems strange to us because in the modern Western world, we don't live in a culture where animal or material sacrifices to the Divine take place. Some react to the apparent barbaric, crude nature of this idea of physical sacrifice.

Some important background is necessary in order to understand the work of Christ as an atoning sacrifice.

Sacrifices in the Biblical First Covenant were very different to pagan rites. Pagan sacrifices were offered to appease or please the god(s), but for Israel, the sacrifices were a sacrament of God's grace.

Leviticus chapters 1 to 7 describe the five main sacrifices or offerings of the Israelite system. These were offerings to cover various aspects of the worshipper's life directed to God, such as offering a portion of the grain to represent the work given by God, dedicated to God and a reparation offering to cover and acknowledge a trespass.

The animal sacrifices were representative of the surrender and dedication of the life of the worshipper to God. "By offering an animal the Israelite worshipper is offering himself to God. This is the gift God really wants." <sup>viii</sup> "In the surrender of the animal's life on the altar to that which is holy, so too is the offerer's life symbolically surrendered. The death of the animal in one's place symbolically represents the surrender of that person's life to God." <sup>ix</sup>

The whole burnt offering, particularly the corporate Day of Atonement sacrifice, expresses this essence of First Covenant worship. The shedding of the life (the blood) of the animal represents the surrender of the life of the worshipper to the Lord. <sup>x</sup>

This idea of the Biblical sacrifice as the offering of a life to God in complete surrender is not so hard for modern people in our different culture to appreciate. We can grasp that God wants us to surrender our whole life to Him and His service. We may be wary of it but can understand that what God wants is our selves. Full surrender of the self to and for the other is a description of Love. The Biblical practice and image of sacrificial offering expresses the full commitment of the worshipper in loving surrender to God.

There is a mystery, however, about this Biblical idea of sacrifice. How can our lives, imperfect as they are be offered satisfactorily for atonement of our sins before a holy God? *For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins* (Heb. 10:4).

This mystery is resolved when Christ's work as a perfect sacrifice for sins was achieved (Rom. 3:25). Christ came to offer his life as a perfect sacrifice of obedience for us, as a representative offering for those who identify with him (Heb. 9:11-14; 10:5-10). <sup>xi</sup>

Let's consider the wonder of Christ's perfect sacrifice for our sins. The offering comes in four levels of glory.

- 1. Christ offered his life for us, completed and expressed finally in his own death – it was his whole life dedication to God for others that was effective (Heb. 10:8-9).**

Here is our wonderful Saviour Lord, our brother, who offered for us his life. As the First Covenant worshippers offered their lives through the surrogate

offering of an unblemished animal, so Christ offered his life as a representative offering for us, a holy human life for flawed unholy people. He is our offering.

But how does Christ's life cover our own flawed lives? The answer is found in a deeper level of glory in this offering of Christ.

**2. This offering of Christ on our behalf works effectively for holiness because of who He is and what God is doing and will do in us by the Spirit through Christ.**

Christ as the Messiah represents and transforms ('saves') the people with whom He is united, and represented (Heb. 2:9-18. Jn 17:20-23; Rom. 8:1-14). When Christ came to offer his life as a sacrifice, He offered his own life of obedience and all that He would do in the lives of countless people whom He would be transforming ultimately - renewing into the image of God. We are Messiah's people and he offers us with himself to the Father: *Here am I and the children God has given me* (Heb. 2:13).

St Paul presents this idea in a wonderful image: *Christ loved the church and gave Himself for her in the washing of water by the word. He did this to present the church to Himself in splendour, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but holy and blameless* (Eph. 5:25-27).

This was the vision of the new covenant of ancient promise: *For by one offering he has perfected forever those who are sanctified* (Heb. 10:14; Heb. 10:14-17). We are Christ's offering, as the fruit of his work for us and in us, completed before God in due time.

This can be described as representative solidarity. We are represented in Christ before God because Christ is in us and we are in Christ. "In presenting Himself", says P.T. Forsyth, "He offers implicitly and proleptically the new Humanity His holy work creates." <sup>xii</sup>

**3. There is an even deeper and more wonderful mystery in this perfect sacrifice: in Christ, it is God himself offering a perfect life for us, on our behalf, as one of us: Heb. 1 & 2.**

For most religions that practice sacrifices to God, they are human offerings to the gods or God. But here the great sacrifice is offered by God for us, on our behalf by our human leader, whose offering for us transforms us.

*This is love: not that we loved God but that He loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins* (1 John 4:9-10).

In Christ, it is God himself, incarnate in the Son, who is giving Himself to us and for us. This is love, says St John – God’s love for us, not our love for God.

This is glory enough, but there is a final, fourth level of glory in Christ’s perfect sacrifice for sins.

**4. In Christ’s self-offering we have combined in one action the self-giving of God for us and the full self-giving of humanity to God through our representative, transforming Saviour.**

Sacrifice in the Bible means the self-giving offering of life. In Jesus we see the self-giving of God to humanity *and at the same time* the self-giving of humanity to God, in and through Jesus Christ, our Lord, our Saviour, and our Brother (Heb. 1-2; John 3:16).

“In Jesus the self-giving of God to man and the self-giving of man to God, meet and absorb each other”, noted H. R. McIntosh (Heb.9:14).<sup>xiii</sup>

The Cross is a symbol of this perfect sacrifice. The vertical beam can represent the Divine Self-giving in Christ the Son (coming down from heaven to Earth). The horizontal beam can represent human offering of self to God by Christ our brother, and our offering in him, inspired and empowered by his life in us.

The multiple glories of Christ’s perfect sacrifice should move us to worship. He offered his perfect life for fallible sinners like us. He offered us with him to God as perfected people-to-be through his work. In Christ, God himself was offering his life for us in full commitment of love. In Christ our representative Human leader we offer our lives as humanity in full surrender to God. Truly, what a Perfect Sacrifice!

The message of Christ the Perfect Sacrifice is the most motivating and inspiring news one could even hear. It is the greatest story ever told.

### **Reflection/Discussion**

1. What difference does this Perfect sacrifice make to those who unite with Christ? Listen to the writer to the Hebrews make the application: Heb 10: 19-25.
2. Think about how you could use the perfect sacrifice of Jesus Christ as a way of explaining how much God loves us, and why we should love God.

3. Think about how you could use the symbol of the Cross to explain the Christian faith as a Perfect Sacrifice for us.

## **GOD'S ANSWER TO INJUSTICE**

*God's greatest act of justice was his most wonderful demonstration of grace.*

Most people want justice. We like fairness; we don't want crimes or sins to be allowed to go without correction or compensation or judgment. People often complain when they think God isn't acting justly or fairly! Justice is putting things right – rectifying the situation.

Injustice means that actions have dislocated the moral order: people's rights have been violated; or their well-being harmed. Something wrong has been done; rights of parties have been infringed and harm has been done (victims).

- *Distributive* justice seeks to recompense people for what they have been deprived of.
- *Retributive* justice demands a penalty for offenders. We have an elaborate legal system to manage retribution – which is better than doing it ourselves!
- *Restorative Justice* seeks to put things right, as far as possible – to restore the relationship on the basis of truth.

The Bible talks about the Christian message as being about JUSTICE. Justice words are frequent: righteousness, justification, judgement, rectification, making right. St Paul said that in Christ God demonstrated his justice (Rom. 3:25) <sup>xiv</sup>

The Christian gospel is about God's righteousness – God's justice. The good news is that God's justice is beautiful and transformational. In fact, one key way of understanding Christianity is to see it as God's way of justice.

### **God as Judge**

People often have ambivalent views about God's justice> They want it, but don't want it too. They criticise God for being the Judge yet dispute his judgment. People criticise God for not upholding justice, but at the same time they don't like the idea of God as a Judge.

The Bible does teach that the Lord God is the ultimate and final Judge - the source and anchor for real morality – the Law behind the moral laws.

The Bible tells the story of how people, including the people of God, have failed to honour God or uphold his Law in their behaviour, breaking faith and covenant with God.

There will be a final day of justice, when matters will be settled by God who knows all.

Until then, God's justice is operating through consequences sometimes (Rom. 1:18ff), or through providential interventions, and sometimes through human efforts. God's judgements can wake us up to repent. These have been called severe mercies (Ps. 119:67, 71; 1 Cor. 11:32). *When your judgements come upon the earth, the people of the world learn righteousness.* (Is. 26:9).

St Paul talks about the *wrath of God*, which sounds terrible. But it simply means that God is opposed to anything that spoils his creation and people's lives. God's *wrath* is the attitude and actions of God against that which alienates humanity and creation from Him and disconnects it from Life. (Jn. 3:18-20).<sup>xv</sup>

### **The Problem of Sin**

What does the work of Jesus Christ reveal us about God's justice?

The root problem of injustice in God's world is alienation from God, which will ultimately mean the loss of the ultimate blessing of knowing God, and enjoying any of his gifts, including life itself.

The Bible premise is that our ultimate issue of ethics is our attitude to our Creator, our loyalty and love for God, and following his laws. St. Paul spends a good deal of his argument in Romans presenting our failure to keep God's ways and our inability to put it right ourselves (Rom. 1:18-3:20).

Our broken relationship with God is the ultimate source of our other human failures of morality and justice (Rom. 1:18ff): even the best of us.

### **The Consequences of Broken Relationship with God**

God's final judgement is fair and merciful. People who disobey God's laws, and reject Him, are confronted ultimately with their choice, and they get what they have chosen, the loss of God and life itself.

The ultimate consequence or judgement on sin is death, which is the loss of relationship with God and the blessings that go with it, including the sustenance of physical existence. Life in the Bible is union with God and the blessings that belong with it. When sin reigns, we lose first the relationship with God, and in due course the blessing of physical life itself.

The ultimate judgement-penalty that God can pass on rebellious sinners is the loss of His Presence and favour, which issues in their destruction. *God-forsakenness* is the worst judgement. This is what 'hell' is, the final judgement: God calls people to account, then He withdraws his Presence (forsakes them); and withdraws his gift of life (existence itself) – an absolute end (2 Thess. 1:7-10).

The good news is that God does not want people to perish without His presence and life. Christ came to deal with our broken relationship with God – to bring righteousness/justice/rectification (Rom. 3:21-31).

## **God's Surprising and Daring Response to Human Failure.**

God's plan in Jesus Christ manifested a different kind of justice: *Restorative Justice*. This is the kind of justice where the overriding concern is for the restoration of relationships and the mutual recognition and acknowledgement of what has happened. It happens when the victim or offended party reaches out to be reconciled with the offender.

The broken relationship between humans and God needs to be repaired in a just way. Sin brings consequences, which cannot be ignored or dismissed if there is to be true reconciliation.

How did God in Christ bring about this justice, this restoring righteousness, or rectification? *Christ died for our sins*, says St Paul (1 Cor. 15:3). This phrase expresses this righteousness through Christ, which has two steps.

### **1. In Christ, God himself has endured the penalty on human sin - God-forsakenness - experienced in Himself.**

Christ as God Incarnate was the Judge who bore his own judgement, for us (Jn. 3:16; 1 Pet. 2:24; Rom. 6:5-11). Christ suffered the judgement of God on human sin, which means that God endured and bore his own judgement, for us, from our side.

In Christ, God identified with the human problem of sin and its alienation. He paid the cost of resolving our sins. <sup>xvi</sup>

Christ as the God-Man entered into the consequences of sin: weakness, suffering, temptation and rejection (Heb. 5:5-10; Heb. 2:9-18).

Christ as Man entered into God's judgement on human sin, experiencing the darkness of alienation from God, a dereliction of intense pain, which we are too deadened to feel (Mt. 27:46). "God was in Christ reconciling the world by the sacrifice and satisfaction of Himself". <sup>xvii</sup> "The wrath of God falls upon God Himself, by God's own choice, out of God's own love." <sup>xviii</sup>

The most amazing truth about God the Judge is that He has submitted to His own judgement in our place in the person of Jesus Christ his Son. God's Son endured *God-forsakenness* for us - the ultimate divine judgement. Sin brings consequences, which cannot be ignored or dismissed if there is to be true reconciliation.

As our representative Human, Jesus entered into the judgement on Sin, the consequences of human sin. He *died* in the judgement of God.

Submitting to the judgment of God upon sinful humanity, Christ experienced sin as God does, while he also experienced its effects (alienation from God) as humans should. "He felt sin with God and sin's judgement with men." <sup>xix</sup>

Christ as God Incarnate was the Judge who bore his own judgement, for us (Jn. 3:16; 1 Pet. 2:24; Rom. 6:5-11). "God was in Christ reconciling the world by the sacrifice and satisfaction of Himself." <sup>xx</sup>

Remarkably God Himself in Christ endured his own judgement, to exhaust it. He fulfilled the will of God in dying for sins (Heb. 10:5ff). In doing this as God and Man he fulfilled the conditions of the covenant.

The medieval theologian Anselm summed up this wondrous reconciliation: "Salvation cannot be effected without satisfaction, which none but God can make and none but man ought to make, so it is necessary for the God-Man to make it." <sup>xxi</sup>

## **2. In Jesus Christ, God created a new Humanity and inner, transformed change of nature towards Him.**

The gospel is about the restorative justice of God, who doesn't give us what we deserve but found a way to give us more than we deserve, in mercy (Rom. 3:21-26).

True reconciliation can only be achieved where there is acknowledgement of the serious failures involved. The problem here is that sinful people are the last to recognise the gravity of sin, because sin itself hardens, distorts and blinds us. Paradoxically, only a sinless person can see sin for what it really is! As our human Saviour, Christ acknowledged and embraced the penalty and seriousness of sin's judgment falling upon the human race. Submitting to the judgment of God upon sinful humanity, Christ experienced sin as God does, while he also experienced its effects (alienation from God) as humans should. Christ as the God-Man brought to fruition the only real correction that can rectify a sin-wrecked situation: a restoration of righteousness, and the renewal of many in him, a new humanity (2 Cor. 5:17).

Christ's identification with sin and bearing its judgment releases our confession and repentance. We are in Him and He is in us. The closer we get to the Lord Jesus, the better we understand repentance. In Jesus Christ we find the justice or judgement of God on sin and the provision of God for grace. We learn from the cross how serious sin is, and how wonderfully gracious God is. It is even seen as the supreme proof of the love of God! (Jn. 3:16; 1 Jn1:7; 1 Pet. 2:24).

This is what the Bible means when it says that "Christ died for our sins".

God's greatest act of judgement or justice is His most wonderful demonstration of grace.

### **Reflection/Discussion**

1. "What God did about human sin is extremely surprising." (Stephen Sykes). Why is God's action in Christ so surprising?



2. Think about how you would explain the restorative justice of God, operating in Jesus Christ.
3. What is the justice or righteousness that Jesus achieved in his life, death and resurrection?

## **THE GOOD NEWS OF NATURE'S RENEWAL**

*The work of Christ is cosmic in its scope and outcome.*

Many are concerned about the future of our Earth as a place for humans to live, and about the effect we are having on our environment. Alarm about the climate on Earth and human impact on it has become a part of modern belief. A large percentage of people believe that we are imperilling our existence and much of our environment.

The message of Christianity is good news for our planet and the whole natural realm. God the Creator will renew our world in Christ. The Creator of the universe has our world in his hands.

After Jesus healed a paralysed man at Bethesda Pool in Jerusalem, and was criticized for doing this on the Sabbath the day of rest, he made an intriguing statement: *My Father is still working, and I am working also* (Jn. 5:17).

God the Creator is still working on His creation. It is a good creation, but not yet perfected. God has more to do with his natural world and ourselves in it.

Notice the order in God's plan to renew the world. In Jesus Christ, God begins with the root problem of a disordered world - alienation between God and humanity, then the challenge of reconciliation among people must be tackled, followed by better justice and care for the world, and finally in God's renewing work, a new heaven and a new earth.

There are seven main Biblical claims for the Gospel as the renewal of Nature.

### **1. God created the universe: Nature as God's Creation.**

This is our fundamental conviction - that our universe is not a random accident, but has been caused to be and kept in being by the underlying and overruling action of God, whose existence and purposes for Nature will be fulfilled eventually

This means that we will only understand Nature properly when we see it in relation to its Creator (Gen.1).

This also means that God is the Lord of the Creation and its future is ultimately in his hands.

## **2. Humans are image-bearers of God – members, rulers and keepers of creation.**

The Bible teaches what everyone can see, that humans, while apparently small and weak, have incredible ability to understand and rule over our Natural world (Ps. 8:3-8).

This is our calling under God – to be representatives and rulers over our Natural environment. This means that the well-being and future of our planet is inextricably connected to the destiny and behaviour of humanity.

## **3. Nature/Creation has been subjected to frustration through the disobedience of humanity.**

Modern people are very aware of how humans have often spoiled the natural environment, through bad actions or inadvertently (human injustice and abuse of nature; (Gen. 3-11). The situation has been improving through environmental awareness and action. Our stewardship of Nature is vital to our world.

The Bible adds a deeper dimension to this human wounding of Nature by diagnosing the root problem as a spiritual fracture between Humanity and God the Creator, which has spread out to infect moral life on many levels, and has fractured even aspects of natural life (Rom. 8:18ff).

Behind the problems we encounter in our natural and human environment there are other spiritual forces at work in our natural and human environment (Matt. 13:28; Job 9:13; 26:12-13; 2 Cor. 4:4; Rev. 12:9).

The Christian answer to the problem of disordered human life on Earth goes deeper than most people think. God has enacted a renewal plan that goes to the root of the problem, starting first with the fractured spiritual realm and then moving to heal humanity and finally to renew Creation.

## **4. Jesus came as the Divine-Human Lord of Creation.**

One of the most remarkable, attested facts about Jesus of Nazareth was his power to do miracles. Thousands came to him after hearing and seeing his power (Mk 4:39-41).

Some of these miracles were 'Nature' Miracles. They were the power of God the Creator at work inside his Natural world. CS Lewis commented:

“In all these miracles alike, the Incarnate God does suddenly and locally something that God has done or will do in general. Each miracle writes for us in small letters something that God has already written, or will write in letters almost too large to be noticed, across the whole canvass of Nature. When Christ stills the storm, He does what God has often done before. In all of them we see the Divine Man focussing for us what the God of Nature has already done on a larger scale.” <sup>xxii</sup>

In Jesus we see what a real Human ruler of Nature should be like. This is an important aspect of Jesus's work: Heb. 1 & 2. He came to fulfil the true calling of human imagers of God.

Some of these miracles were Miracles of the New Creation: signs of the future healing of Nature and the removal of the problem afflicting Creation. Christ reverses death and heals sicknesses, signs of a coming healing and transformation of Nature.

The Resurrection of Jesus himself is the sign and beginning of a New Creation, a conquest of Death (1 Cor. 15:20-28, 58).

**5. Jesus is the victor over Sin and Death: the cross and resurrection of Jesus as his Victory.**

The Christian good news presents Jesus as the New Adam, the new Human who deals with the problem of Sin or broken relationship with God, and opens us a way for a new Humanity to come back to God (Rom. 5:12-21).

St Paul casts this vision of God's coming renewal of the whole Creation through Christ (Rom. 8:18-25).

The healing of Nature is from beyond Nature, but will come through the Creator who came into our world of Nature and humanity to renew us and with us, the whole Natural realm.

**6. Christians are called to be reconcilers of God, people and nature, through justice, witness, love, and prayer (Eph. 6:10-20).**

While we wait for God's final renewal, we must seek to serve our world, to care for God's creation, to seek to do justice and to call others to be reconciled to God.

**7. There will be a final renewal of Nature/Creation/the Cosmos.**

The Bible begins with a picture of God's creation (Gen 1-2) and it finishes with a picture of God's New and Perfected Creation (Rev. 21-22).

This hope that creation will be transformed and renewed calls us to live as people of the New Creation (2 Pet. 3:3-14. Eph. 1:9-10).

With God as Creator of the world, and the Incarnate God the Son as the Saviour and Restorer of the world, I am not pessimistic about the future of Planet Earth. "He's got the whole world in His hands". We must still be responsible stewards of God's realm, physically, but the future of our universe is surely safe in the Creator's purposes.

The Christian gospel reminds us that the whole environmental situation includes the spiritual state of humanity, and the root issue is relationship with God.

## Reflection/Discussion

1. What do the miracles of Jesus mean for our understanding of God's plan for the natural world?
2. If the healing of Nature is ultimately from beyond Nature – from God – what is our human part in caring for Creation?
3. Does our hope of a new heaven and a new earth increase or lessen our concern and care for Nature?

## **GOOD NEWS ABOUT HUMAN TRANSFORMATION**

*The Christian message is God's good news about human transformation.*

The Christian gospel/message is called 'good news' – great news, big news, important news. What is good about the Good News?

It is very good news about human transformation. Christian faith holds that God is working at a project of renovating human nature.

Let's look at Romans chapter eight, in which the apostle Paul gives a magnificent summary of this great transforming work of God. He unfolds six items of good news about human change through God's work in Christ.

### **1. Good news about Freedom from Sin and Death. 8:1-4**

The foundation of all the good news is that God in Christ has set us free from the problem of sin and death – the barrier that separates us from God (8:2).

The Bible asserts that there is a deep, serious spiritual problem that cuts us off from the source of Life – God, and that we need to be healed, cleansed, set free from this burden. We can't remove this problem but God has done so, for us, through Christ, on our behalf as our representative Saviour (Rom. 8:3).

Jesus offered an offering for the guilt of our sins in his death on the cross. Jesus' righteousness now covers us like a new garment. He offered his life for us as a perfect human life and we are offered to God in Him.

This work of Jesus for us continues in us by the Spirit, as God changes us to ultimately be the holy people God designed us to become.

### **2. Good News About Life Renewed by the power of God's Spirit. 8:4-9**

The Christian good news is that God is setting about making us righteous (8:4).

God brings us back to right relationship and then takes us on to full glorification – full renewal ultimately

The Holy Spirit in us, working with our obedience, enables us to grow in the character of God. . . Our salvation is guaranteed because of the work of God the Holy Spirit within us. *But you are not controlled by your sinful nature. You are controlled by the Spirit if you have the Spirit of God living in you (8:9).*

This is a progressive process. It takes time and we have to work with God's Spirit, who guides us and gives us new desires and challenges us internally.

### **3. Good News about Resurrection Life after Death. 8:10-13**

Just as Christ was raised from death to a new, powerful life by God's Spirit, so we too have this same Spirit in us, and this Spirit will indeed transform our very bodies finally, as the same Spirit is renewing our souls and characters now (8:10-11).

The Christian life is a fellowship with God, and a big part of this relationship is our fellowship, our interaction with God through the Spirit of God who lives in us.

We have a human spirit, just as we have our bodies and our souls – we are body-soul-spirit beings. God's Holy Spirit takes us close residence with our spirit, guiding our minds, and ultimately will renew our bodies.

This is the order of spiritual renewal: spirit, soul (mind), body.

The great evidence of God's Spirit at work in us will be our vigorous and persistent reshaping of our lives and behaviour to conform to God's ways (8:12-13).

### **4. Good News about our Close Relationship with God. 8:14-25**

The Holy Spirit speaks to us deep within our hearts and tells us we are God's children. This inner relationship with God's Spirit brings a strong confidence and assurance our relationship with God.

The inner witness of the Holy Spirit is very important to our assurance and confidence. This inner witness of the Spirit of God with our spirit is a wonderful thing (8:16-17).

*All who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. So you should not be like cowering, fearful slaves. You should behave instead like God's very own children, adopted into his family – calling him 'Father, dear Father (8:14-15).*

Being Christians does not exempt us from suffering and difficulties (8:17). But because we are children tells us that we will receive the inheritance God has prepared for us (8:23-25).

The closer our fellowship with God, the more we long for release from the failures and mess of our lives and this world. We grieve over our weakness. However, there is good news for us weak, struggling disciples.

#### **5. Good News about the Holy Spirit's Help in our Weakness. 8:26-27**

Sometimes our problems are too great for words, but the Holy Spirit within us acts as our intercessor, stimulating prayer, showing us our need and even praying within us.

We often do not know precisely what to pray for in a particular situation. We know general principles of prayer (*your kingdom come*) but not *how* the Kingdom should come in a particular situation.

This is part of the fellowship we have with the Holy Spirit. The secret of prayer is seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit of God to teach us, to show us, how to pray – to pray *in* us.

Try this way of praying. Wait on God and ask the Spirit to show you *what* to pray for.

#### **6. Good News about our Future Hope. 8:28-39**

Many are worried about the future, but the Christian gospel has good news here, with a strong hope for the future. God is working out his plan for the good of the people he has called to love him.

This plan is to make us like Christ – to transform us, to remove all the guilt of sin and all its power and deformities in our natures.

God even brought his own Son into this plan with a costly work for our justification.

The apostle's conclusion is in Romans 8:31-39. When you are in Christ by faith in his sin-bearing work and in union with him as your Lord, there is nothing that can separate you from his love, now and forever.

### **Reflection/Discussion**

1. Which aspect of the great news of Jesus Christ, as Paul outlines it in Romans chapter 8, appeals to you the most?
2. Do you think that the future promises of God are important in our communication of the Christian good news?
3. What place does the Resurrection in Christ in the Christian message?

## **THE GREAT RECONCILIATION**

*The Christian gospel is the message about how God, the Creator of humanity and the universe, has gone about reconciling (bringing back into relationship) – people and Himself.*

Where two parties are alienated from each other, there needs to be (1) an acknowledgement of the problems (contrition); (2) justice or reparation if possible; (3) mutual willingness to move back into relationship; and (4) real personal change (the old problematic behaviour must stop). Many of us know from personal experience how challenging it is to bring two estranged parties together in true reconciliation.

A key word to describe the Christian message is “reconciliation” (2 Cor. 5:16-21). In Jesus Christ and through his work, God has found a way of working on both sides of the broken relationship, to bring reconciliation and a new start.

### **The God-Humanity Relationship**

God is our life. Without God, we have a brief life, with God’s blessings but ultimately, without ongoing relationship with God as the source of our life, our existence comes to an end. Every breath we take depends upon God; we are his creatures.

There has been a broken, distant, relationship between people and their Creator. We call this problem “Sin” – it is the human tendency to reject or ignore God as God and to make ourselves the ‘god’ of our lives. ‘Sin’ leads to problems (‘sins’). Human sins and Divine holiness create a distance between the parties.

God still wants fellowship (relationship) with people and has gone to extraordinary lengths to restore relationship with us. God wants to know us personally, not just as his creations. The whole Bible is the story of God’s covenant or committed relationship He wants with people.

### **The Problem of Sin**

We know that a broken relationship cannot be reconciled if there is no confession or acknowledgement of the problem that the guilty party has brought to the problem. For forgiveness and reconciliation to be given, there usually needs to be sincere repentance and change, even if past offences cannot be undone.

What can God do if the people He wants to be in fellowship with, don’t want to know Him? Here is the paradox of human sin - the more we are in the problem, the less we see it. Sin hardens and blinds us. “The more sinful man is, the less can he confess either his own sin or God’s holiness. No sinful person can properly repent”.<sup>xxiii</sup>

If there is to be reconciliation, it cannot start from our side! We are enemies, estranged, sinners, rebels (Rom. 5:6-10).

This is our problem: Sin (rebellion against God) has distorted our sense of need; the more lost in sin we are, the less we can see it correctly or confess it properly. Sin makes it harder to change, and we cannot make amends because we still fail God. We cannot change ourselves; we usually, naturally, don't want to change.

### **God's Surprising and Daring Plan for Reconciliation**

In Jesus Christ we see God's surprising and daring solution to this problem, His way of righteousness to restore humanity and re-establish covenant relationship between God and Humanity. Let's sum it up:

*God Himself became incarnate in a real human being, Jesus of Nazareth. As the God-Man, He was able to work on both sides of the Divine-Human relationship to bring about the basis for reconciliation.*

The message of reconciliation in Christ answers the four requirements for reconciliation.

#### **1. Confession**

True reconciliation can only be achieved where there is acknowledgement of the serious failures involved. The problem here is that sinful people are the last to recognise the gravity of sin, because sin itself hardens, distorts and blinds us. Paradoxically, only a sinless person can see sin for what it really is.

As our human Saviour, Christ acknowledged and embraced the penalty and seriousness of sin's judgment falling upon the human race.

Christ as the Divine Son and true Human was able to offer God real confession of God's holiness with a grasp of sin's problem that only a sinless person could see. "Christ felt sin with God, and sin's judgement with man."<sup>xxiv</sup>

There is a mystery in Christ identifying with sinners in an act of contrition. How can a sinless person do this? It is when we realise that Christ was representing us and all that his work for us and in us would achieve, that it begins to make sense. "As his trophies we become part of Christ's offering to God, just as the captives in his process were part of the victor's self-preservation to the divinity of Rome."<sup>xxv</sup>

This explains how a sinless person could offer repentance to God. He knew what sin meant to God, and his holiness and offering would bring with it our repentance. Christ's work is offered on behalf of a repentant humanity because his work will create a repentant, new Humanity. "There was



presented to God, in Christ's holiness, also that repentance in us which it alone has power to create." xxvi

## 2. Reparation

Christ the Second Adam offered true holiness to the Lord God in our behalf. He carried this out as the complete surrender of himself to the will of God. This was a restitution offering, a reparation to God on our behalf (Isa. 53:10).

Christ's sacrifice evokes our repentance and powers our obedience through union with Him. His offering to God on our behalf included all that would flow from his work - the holy, transformed people who would follow him and be renewed through Him. Christ brings many children to glory with him and through his saving influence (Heb. 2:13). Christ brings the best and only reparation for human sin - a holy renewed people surrendered to God through him.

Christ as the God-Man brought to fruition the only real correction that would make sin right: a restoration of righteousness, and the renewal of many in him, a new humanity. In Christ we become a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17).

The power of Christ's offering is that his offering included all the transformed lives that would be changed by him down through history (Heb. 2:13; John 17:19).

The medieval theologian Anselm summed up this wondrous reconciliation: "Salvation cannot be effected without satisfaction, which none but God can make and none but man ought to make, so it is necessary for the God-Man to make it." xxvii

God's action in Christ is what we now call *Restorative Justice*, a justice where the victim bears the cost of the failure too so that the broken relationship can be healed.

## 3. Love

A reconciled relationship requires changed character and actions towards the other. In Christ this transformation is created.

God gave himself completely in Christ, and in Christ, humanity gave itself completely to God. "God in Christ for us; we in Christ for God." xxviii

Sin brings consequences, which cannot be ignored or dismissed if there is to be true reconciliation. As our representative Human, Jesus entered into the judgement on Sin, the consequences of human sin. He *died* in the judgement of God.

Submitting to the judgment of God upon sinful humanity, Christ experienced sin as God does, while he also experienced its effects (alienation from God) as humans should. "He felt sin with God and sin's judgement with men." xxix

The Incarnation of the Son of God was a full identification and revelation of God with us, in a truly human being, who shared our life and struggles and suffered with us. As the true Human, Christ offered a holy life of full obedience in full self-giving to God, which we cannot do. This was his sacrifice, his self-offering for humanity.

The Messiah represented a new humanity, embodied and realised in and through him and his work.

Christ creates in us a love for God. The love of God for us in Christ's self-giving has power to bring repentance and acknowledgement of sins to sinners.

"We love because He first loved us." 1 Jn. 4:19.

### **Reflection/Discussion**

1. "The wrath of God falls upon God Himself, by God's own choice, out of God's own love." (Fleming Rutledge). How does this act of God in Christ bring about our reconciliation?
2. How do we find the ability to repent, or turn to God?
3. How does this wonderful reconciliation achieved by Jesus in Himself - for our side and from God's - affect you personally?

## **LIFE IN ALL ITS FULLNESS**

*Jesus promises us abundant life with God and in God.*

What kind of experience does the Christian life offer? What difference does Jesus Christ make in our lives?

The invitation of Jesus is to come to Him for life in all its fullness: *I came so that everyone would have life, and have it to the fullest* (CEV); *have it in abundance* (CSB); *eternal life* (Jn.3:16). What is this abundant life that Jesus offers?

Most people want to get the most out of life, so this way of explaining the Christian gospel should immediately grab our attention.

Let's start with the meaning of life at a basic level. 'Life' in the Bible is meant to be more than just physical existence that all humans enjoy. Being alive as human beings is a gift of God - physical existence, with a soul (mind and personality) and also a *spirit* that can relate to God and the spiritual realm (1 Thess. 5:24).

There is more to this life on offer. Our physical existence is meant to be fulfilled by knowing God with all the blessings that go with that experience.

God has made us to have a sense of eternity in our hearts, a desire to grasp the meaning of everything, a longing for transcendence (Eccl. 3:11).

We can put it in an equation: LIFE = PHYSICAL EXISTENCE + KNOWING GOD.

The Book of Genesis depicts our human life at the beginning in the pictures of the two trees: the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 2:9).

The *tree of the knowledge of good and evil* represents the limits of human freedom - we were not to arrogate to ourselves the decision of right and wrong, but to follow God's laws and ways.

The *tree of life* represents access to the life that God gives. God is the source of life and our continued life depends on our access to God and relationship with God.

Now let's consider the loss of life, the opposite of life, which is 'death'.

### **1. Rupture in relationship with God (Sin) brings death.**

"Death" in the Bible has a number of levels. It is depicted in Genesis as separation from fellowship with God, which brings a limit to human life-spans - mortality ensues (Gen. 3:22-24).

Humans living under the reign of Sin are not naturally, innately immortal. We live, as we all know, under the shadow of eventual physical death.

In due course, those outside of Christ and cut off from God, will come to *the second death* - a final end to existence in the judgement of God - *eternal destruction* (Rev. 20:14. 2 Thess. 1:9).

You can be physically alive but spiritually dead (Jn. 5:24).

### **2. The gift of God is eternal life through Christ - life in all its intended fullness.**

Christ came to bring life as restored fellowship with God and the defeat of physical death (Eph. 2:4-8). As St Paul says, in Christ God has *brought life and immortality to light* (2 Tim. 1:10).

Life can be richly worthwhile without knowing God, since we are enjoying the gifts of God by nature and his goodness. We are made in God's image and can express much of God's will. But it is still impossible to live forever cut off from God the source of Life.

The best life without God will fall way short of the ultimate goal of knowing God, the greatest blessing. The great gospel statement in John 3:16 expresses well this real, eternal life that Christ offers: *For God loved the world in this way: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life.*

### 3. What is this life with God like? What difference does Christ make?

Here are some blessings that the Abundant *Life in Christ* brings, in summary form.

1. **FORGIVENESS OF SINS:** the problem of Sin is dealt with by Christ's offering of His life for us and his work for us. (Eph. 2:4-8).

This means a free and unhindered access to God, and a peace for our conscience. Forgiveness from God is central and life-transforming.

2. **FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD:** this is the relationship we have with God through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Love for God and God's love for us; a sense of God's presence with us, his guidance and encouragement (Rom. 8:14-16).

3. **RENEWAL THROUGH THE HOLY SPIRIT:** we have God in our lives, changing us and renewing us into His likeness by the Spirit (Rom. 6:17-23).

4. **BLESSINGS FROM GOD:** God's gifts will accompany us along life's way, even in the difficulties: answers to prayer, guidance, encouragement, deliverances.

One grace or gift after another, says St John (Jn. 1:16-17). Glories that go beyond what we can imagine, says St Paul (1 Cor. 2:9). The Lord God is no mean giver of blessings. The New Testament is filled with testimonies and promises.

5. **PARTNERSHIP IN GOD'S MISSION:** we become channels of God's love and servants of his mission to help the world (Mt. 28:16-20). We are saved to serve and God has a mission in the world, to bless and heal.

6. **LIFE WITH GOD FOREVER:** through resurrection in Christ, we will receive immortality with God, and an ongoing life in God's blessing (1 Cor. 15; Rom. 8:5-10; Rev. 21 & 22).

The offer of Christ is *LIFE* – knowing God now and with all the blessings that go with it, and a future more glorious than we can imagine.

If you don't want this gift, then God will not force it on you. You will finish the life that God gave you and meet God for a final accounting and an end to your existence.

Why not open up to the possibility of what you might be missing?

Why not open your heart and mind to the gift of abundant life in Christ?

## **Reflection/Discussion**

1. Explain in your own words what life in Christ – eternal life – offers to people?
2. Which of the many blessings of the abundant life in Christ Jesus means the most to you?
3. Looking back over these seven angles on the Christian gospel (different ways of explaining the message), which one helps you the most?

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<sup>i</sup> P.T. Forsyth, *The Work of Christ*, p. 193.

<sup>ii</sup> E.J. Bicknell, *The Thirty-Nine Articles* (3<sup>rd</sup> edition, revised by H.J. Carpenter), (Longmans, 1963), p.22.

<sup>iii</sup> David Bentley Hart, *The Experience of God: Being, Consciousness, Bliss*, (Yale Univ Press, 2013).

<sup>iv</sup> E.J. Bicknell, *The Thirty Nine Articles*, p. 28.

<sup>v</sup> Pantheism. C.S. Lewis describes the old, familiar pull of Pantheism:

*“Pantheism is congenial to our minds not because it is the final stage in a slow process of enlightenment, but because it is almost as old as we are. It may even be the most primitive of all religions . . . It is immemorial in India. The Greeks rose above it only at their peak, in the thought of Plato and Aristotle; their successors relapsed into the great Pantheistic system of the Stoics. Modern Europe escaped it only while she remained predominantly Christian; with Giordano Bruno and Spinoza it returned. With Hegel it became almost the agreed philosophy of highly educated people, while the more popular Pantheism of Wordsworth, Carlyle and Emerson conveyed the same doctrine to those on a slightly lower cultural level. So far from being the final religious refinement, Pantheism is in fact the permanent natural bent of the human mind; the permanent ordinary level below which man sometimes sinks, under the influence of priestcraft and superstition, but above which his own unaided efforts can never raise him for very long. Platonism and Judaism, and Christianity (which has incorporated both) have proved the only things capable of resisting it. It is the attitude into which the human mind automatically falls when left to itself. No wonder we find it congenial. If ‘religion’ means simply what man says about God, and not what God says about man, then Pantheism almost is religion. And ‘religion’ in that sense has, in the long run, only one really formidable opponent – namely Christianity.” C.S. Lewis, *Miracles*, p.100-103.*

<sup>vi</sup> E.J. Bicknell, p. 32.

<sup>vii</sup> E.J. Bicknell, p. 30.

<sup>viii</sup> Peter Leithart, *A House for My Name: A Survey of the Old Testament*, (Canon Press, Moscow, Idaho, 2000), p.87.

<sup>ix</sup> John Hartley, *Leviticus, Word Biblical Commentary 4*, (Thomas Nelson, 1992), p.20.

<sup>x</sup> I do not think that in the Biblical animal sacrifices the death of the animal meant that the animal was being vicariously punished in place of the worshipper. The laying on of hands indicates this identification, not a transfer of guilt.

<sup>xi</sup> Christ as our representative sacrifice offers for us, on our behalf. Paul’s language is careful. Christ died for us - on *behalf* of us, not *instead* of us (1 Thess. 5:10; 2 Cor. 5:14).

<sup>xii</sup> P. T. Forsyth, *The Work of Christ*, p. 192.

<sup>xiii</sup> H.R. Macintosh, *The Christian Experience of Forgiveness*, (Nisbet & Sons, London, 1954), p. 221.

<sup>xiv</sup> Revised English Bible.

<sup>xv</sup> Fleming Rutledge, *The Crucifixion*, (Eerdmans 2015), p.323.

<sup>xvi</sup> This can be seen in the incident described in Genesis 15:9-21.

<sup>xvii</sup> P.T. Forsyth

<sup>xviii</sup> Fleming Rutledge, *The Crucifixion*, p. 143.

<sup>xix</sup> P.T. Forsyth

<sup>xx</sup> P.T. Forsyth

<sup>xxi</sup> Anselm, *Cur Deus Homo*, 2.6.

<sup>xxii</sup> C.S. Lewis, *Miracles*, (Geoffrey Bles, 1947), p. 162.

<sup>xxiii</sup> P.T. Forsyth

<sup>xxiv</sup> P.T. Forsyth

<sup>xxv</sup> P.T. Forsyth, *The Work of Christ*, p. 195.

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<sup>xxvi</sup> P.T. Forsyth, *The Work of Christ*, p. 193.

<sup>xxvii</sup> Anselm, *Cur Deus Homo*, 2.6.

<sup>xxviii</sup> H.R. Macintosh's pithy summary of the Christian gospel, in *The Christian Experience of Forgiveness*, p. 223.

<sup>xxix</sup> P.T. Forsyth

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