
Soteriology

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Soteriology

The atonement

Introduction

The word 'atonement' is of Anglo-Saxon origin and means "a making at one" (Morris, 1980, p. 147). It points to a process of bringing those who are estranged into a unity. Its theological use is to denote the work of Christ in dealing with the problem that has been posed by the sin of man, and bringing sinners into a right relationship with God.

Sin is serious and man is unable to deal with it (I Kings 8:46; Psalm 14:3; Mark 10:18; Romans 3:23). Sin separates from God (Isaiah 59:2; Proverbs 15:29; Colossians 1:21; Hebrews 10:27). Man cannot keep it hidden (Numbers 32:23). The most important evidence of this is the very fact of the atonement. Morris (1980, p. 147) writes, "If the Son of God came to Earth to save men, then men were sinners and their plight serious indeed."

However, although the meaning and effects of the atonement are known, throughout Church history many theories have arisen as to the precise nature of how the atonement was performed, the work and nature of the Godhead, and man's response.

Morris (1994, p. 12) believes that essentially three categories of theories exist - emphasising the bearing of penalty, outpouring of love and victory, respectively. He states, "These are not mutually exclusive, though some have held that the truth is contained in one of them." Indeed, the thrust of Morris (1994) is to demonstrate how various theories have responded to the needs and climate of the time, while developing his own understanding of the atonement relevant for current society and culture.

The Ransom theory

The notion that it was the devil who made the cross necessary was widespread in the early Church (Stott, 1989, p. 113).

Origen of the Alexandrian School, however, introduced a new idea, namely that Satan was deceived in the transaction. Berkhof (1975, p. 166) writes

Origen	Christ offered Himself as a ransom to Satan, and Satan accepted the ransom without realising that he would not be able to retain his hold on Christ because of the latter's divine power and holiness. . . Thus the souls of all men - even of those in hades - were set free from the power of Satan.
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Gregory of Nyssa repeated this idea, and justified the deceit on two grounds - namely that the deceiver received his "due" when deceived in turn, and that Satan benefits by it in the end anyway, as it results in his own salvation (Bromiley, 1978, p. 143). In his *Great Catechism* he used the vivid imagery of a fish hook:

Gregory of Nyssa as with ravenous fish, the hook of the Deity might be gulped down along with the bait of flesh, and thus, life being introduced into the house of death, . . . [the devil] might vanish" (Stott, 1989, p. 113).

Augustine later used an image of a mousetrap, as did Peter Lombard "baited with the blood of Christ". R. W. Dale labelled these "intolerable, monstrous and profane" (Stott, 1989, p. 113-4).

The idea of a ransom paid to Satan was repudiated with scorn and indignation by Gregory of Nazianzus (Berkhof, 1975, p. 167) as well as the idea that God requires a ransom.

Jesus and the apostles certainly did speak of the cross as the means of the devil's overthrow but Stott (1989, p. 113) finds flaws. Firstly, the devil has been credited with more power than he has. Although a robber and a rebel, the view implies he had acquired certain 'rights' over man which even God was bound to. Secondly, the cross was seen as a divine transaction - the ransom-price demanded by the devil for the release of his captives. Thirdly, the concept of God performing a deception is not at all harmonious with the revelation of God given in Scriptures.

Anselm of Canterbury and the satisfaction theory

Athanasius and Ambrose both referred to Christ as having borne that which one themselves deserves to bear, but "the emergence of the view as a full-fledged theory of the way atonement works is usually traced to Anselm, the great eleventh-century Archbishop of Canterbury" in his work *Cur Deus Homo* (Morris, 1994, p. 12-4).

Instead of God owing to the devil, Anselm's thrust was that man owed something to God. Anselm saw sin as an not rendering to God what is His due, namely the submission of one's entire will to His. Hence, to sin is to dishonour Him. To imagine that God could simply forgive us in the same we forgive others, is to have not considered the seriousness of sin.

Anselm continues, "nothing is less tolerable. . . than that the creature should take away from the Creator the honour due to Him, and not repay what he takes away". He thus sees that the sinner must repay God, but moreso it is impossible for God to overlook this, for He "upholds nothing more justly than he doth the honour of his own dignity" (Morris, 1994, p. 14).

However, man is incapable of ever repaying that which is owed. Present obedience and good works can not make satisfaction either, for these are required anyway.

However, Anselm explains that there is a possible solution to the human dilemma. No-one can make the satisfaction but God Himself, but no-one ought to do it but man. Hence, it is necessary, he said, that a God-man should make satisfaction. For this reason, Christ became man - to die. Not as a debt, as He was sinless, but freely for the honour of God. Hence, by his voluntary self-offering, the death of the God-man Christ has made due reparation to the offended honour of God.

Bromiley (1978, p. 179) believes that Anselm suffers from a speculative imagination and that his logic does not always bear the weight placed on it - or states simply a predetermined position, and is not the fruit of engaging in an exercise of pure thought.

Stott (1989, p. 119) commends Anselm's clear perception of the gravity of sin as a willful rebellion against God, the unchanging holiness of God, and the unique

perfections of Christ. However, when God is portrayed in terms reminiscent of a feudal overlord (Anselm having written in a feudal society) who demands honour and punishes dishonour one must question whether this picture adequately expresses the specific honour which is due to God alone. Indeed, Stott (1989, p. 120) continues by stating

Stott We must certainly remain dissatisfied whenever the atonement is presented as a necessary satisfaction of God's 'law' or of God's 'honour' in so far as these are objectified as existing in some way apart from Him.

Peter Abelard and the Moral-influence theory

Born in 1097, Peter Abelard of Brittany advanced a theory where he insisted that it is the love of God which avails (Bromiley, 1978, p. 187). More specifically,

Abelard To the showing of his justice - that is, his love - which, as has been said, justifies us in his sight. In other words, to show forth his love to us, or to convince us how much we ought to love him who spared not even his own Son for us. . . Now it seems to us that we have been justified by the blood of Christ and reconciled to God in this way: through this unique act of grace manifested to us. . . he has more fully bound us to himself by love; with the result that our hearts should be enkindled by such a gift of divine grace, and true charity should not now shrink from enduring anything for him (Morris, 1994, p. 19).

Abelard does not specifically say that the cross does no more than show God's love but often his theory has been expanded in that way. Nevertheless, his view has no objective effect - it does not pay a penalty or win a victory other than symbolically. Rather, the death of Christ shows us the greatness of God's love and moves us to love in return, and by extension, our fellow man. The atonement avails in the effect it has on us, not in anything that has been accomplished outside of us.

Bromiley (1978, p. 187-8) finds this explanation lacking. Does not sin against God entail guilt before Him? Can God's justice be met simply by a rekindling of love in the sinner? Can the righteousness and love of God really be equated in this way? Pecota (1994, p. 338) adds that Abelard fails to take fully into account God's holiness as well as Biblical statements to the effect that Christ's death accomplished a work of propitiation (such as Romans 3:25-26). Morris (1994, p. 21) sees that any view of the cross which does not attribute an accomplishment to the cross to be lacking. In Abelard's case, why should Jesus have died at all? Man needed an act of revelation, but not an act of atonement.

The governmental theory

The governmental theory was conceived by Hugo Grotius, a 17th century Dutch jurist, statesman and theologian. He viewed God as a lawgiver who both enacted and sustained law in the universe. In fact, law is the result of God's will, and He is free to alter or abrogate it (Pecota, 1994, p. 341).

As God's law states "the soul that sins shall die" strict justice requires the eternal death of sinners. Simply forgiving could not uphold the law. The death of Christ, then, was a public example of the depth of sin and the lengths to which God would go to uphold the moral order of the universe. The effects of His death do not directly bear on us as

Christ did not die in our place, but rather on our behalf. The focus was not saving sinners but upholding the law.

This view fails to recognise the substitutionary motif in Christ's death as revealed in Matthew 20:28, 26:28; John 10:14-15; II Corinthians 5:21 and Ephesians 5:25. Further, Pecota (1994, p. 341) states the "theory fails to explain the reason for choosing a sinless person to demonstrate God's desire to uphold the law. Why not put to death the worst of all sinners? Why Christ and not Barabbas?". Finally, this theory does not take into account the depravity of mankind - like Abelard, Grotius assumes a mere example will be sufficient to enable man to perform a law-abiding way of living.

The Penal-substitution theory

A modern evangelical view is the penal-substitution theory which states that Christ bore in our place the full penalty of sin that was due to mankind. He suffered in man's place and His death was vicarious, totally for others (Pecota, 1994, p. 342).

This view takes seriously the Scriptural depictions of God's holiness and righteousness, finding expression in His judicial wrath. It takes seriously the Biblical description of man's depravity and inability to save oneself. It takes literally the statements that Christ died in man's place (Exodus 13:1-16; Leviticus 16:20-22; Isaiah 53:4-12; Mark 10:45; John 3:17; Galatians 3:13 among others).

Conclusion

A brief number of theories of the atonement have been given. There are many more, such as that of Gustav Aulen from this century (although Pecota (1994, p. 339) sees it as a modified ransom theory), but no doubt these will not be the last.

Many of the theories of the atonement that have been developed contain serious flaws - for example, to attribute fraudulent behaviour to God is unworthy of Him. However, what is of permanent value in these theories is that they took seriously the reality and power of the devil and that they proclaimed his decisive defeat at the cross for our liberation (Stott, 1989, p. 114).

With reference to his three categorisations of atonement theories, Morris (1994, p. 114-5) concludes by stating

Morris

Each of the theories has made a particular appeal to people in a particular age. . . Our theories are of value in that they draw attention to particular aspects of Christ's saving work. . . . Each of them draws attention to something that is true, and not only true but valuable. We need the insight that the atonement is a victory over evil, we need the insight that it is the payment of our penalty, and we need the insight that it is the outpouring of love that inspires us to love in return. The atonement is all of these we neglect any of them to our impoverishment.

Depravity

Introduction

Sin is never merely a voluntary act of transgression against God and His righteous requirements. Every such act proceeds from an inner essence that is more firmly entrenched in mankind than the volition itself. The Biblical testimony is that a sinful act is the expression of a sinful heart. David exclaimed that he had been a sinner since birth, sinful since the time of his very conception (Psalm 51:5). The apostle Paul speaks graphically about how sin within him “sprang to life” (Romans 7:9) and went about “seizing the opportunity” (Romans 7:9). Genesis 8:21 demonstrates that mankind is subject to a persistent tendency to evil inclinations.

Milne (1980, p. 1458) explains that sin must always include the perversity of heart, mind, disposition and will. Wright (1968, p. 76) notes that man has lost the power to become, and habitually to remain, righteous. The term used to explain this by medieval theologians was ‘deprivation’, from which ‘depravity’ is obtained.

Precise definition of depravity

Wright (1968, p. 15) laments a perceived lack of careful employment of terminology. To illustrate his point he refers to contexts in which one may understand “total depravity” to mean that “man has lost all semblance of good in any form, and that each individual sinner is as corrupt as he possibly could be”. He continues, later writing that

Wright	[total depravity] was never intended to convey the meaning that man is as bad as he possibly can be, and that every trace of moral rectitude has been lost in fallen man (Wright, 1968, p. 77).
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Badham (nd., p. 36) adds

Badham	It does not mean that the unregenerate are totally insensitive in the matters of conscience, of right or wrong. In Romans 2:15 Paul says that Gentiles have the law written on their hearts, so that “their conscience also bears witness . . .”
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To counteract such misconceptions, Wright proceeds to define “total depravity” as meaning that sin has influenced every part of human nature, so that there is no part of it that may invariably perform righteous acts or think righteous thoughts. That is, the “totality” applies to the field of operation, and not to the actual degree of evil in the individual. Further, such depravity is total because apart from divine aid it is irreversible.

The extent of depravity

As depravity is total, affecting every aspect and area of man’s being, then man is unable to habitually perform that which is good and well pleasing to God. All, like sheep, have gone astray and turned to their own way. There is no-one righteous. (Isaiah 53:6; Romans 3:10-12). The apostle Paul detailed the conflict he found inside

himself in Romans 7:7-25. Although he wanted to do good, evil was always there. He was a prisoner of the law of sin that worked within his body (v. 23). His sinful nature made him a very slave of sin (v. 25) – his depravity was total.

The consequences of sin

God is utterly separate from sin (Job 34:10; Romans 3:23) and requires holiness of His people – (Leviticus 11:44, 45; I Peter 1:16) - and in fact, without holiness no-one shall see God (Hebrews 12:14).

The word of the Lord came to the prophet Ezekiel, “The soul who sins is the one who will die” (Ezekiel 18:4). Romans 3:23 explains that all have sinned. Consequently, all have fallen short of the glory of God. Romans 5:12 adds that death has come to all mankind – because all have sinned.

Further, God will judge every man according to their deeds, and in an unregenerate and unrepentant state one is merely storing up wrath for themselves (Romans 2:5-6). This wrath is a threefold death. Firstly, physical death separates the soul and the body (Genesis 2:17; 3:19; Numbers 16:29). Secondly, spiritual death separates the soul from God while the body is alive (Genesis 2:17; Romans 5:21; Ephesians 2:1, 5) The natural man is outside of communion with the living God. He is unable to act and respond spiritually. He is not able to discern God’s ways or serve Him. Thirdly, eternal death separates man from God completely and forever, and is what man deserves (Matthew 25:46; Revelation 20:11-15). If one comes to physical death, while still in a state of spiritual death, then only eternal death can result.

Free will

It is important to consider the notion of free will, for a possible objection to the doctrine of total depravity is that it conflicts with man’s freedom, especially in light of the Biblical teaching that anyone who sins is a slave to sin (John 8:34). Ryrie (1960, p. 164), for example, implies that *total* depravity (emphasis his) involves a loss of free will.

Such an objection, however, places an emphasis on man’s limitations, neglecting to realise that all created beings are necessarily limited. Wright (1968, p. 78) illustrates that angels act ‘freely’, but under a constant law of righteousness - if they had not been ‘free’, none could have fallen. Nevertheless, the emphasis of Scripture is that man does have a freedom, and this that they may choose Christ. Further, it is inconsistent to define total depravity as not affecting the whole of any part of man – but simultaneously affecting the whole of the will (thus it is lost). Rather, the will has been affected by depravity, but it is still present like any other aspect of man.

Wright (1968, p. 78) states that “free will” is a term that is often hastily generalised. It is a complex issue because the question must be asked whether moral choice is secured in a finite being without granting the possibility of a wrong moral choice, that is, is it actually possible to isolate an act from its historical setting and make it voluntary in the sense of being unrelated to a previous moral condition? When discussing “free will”, it is important to realise that such entails the free expression of an individual at any moment, but that the individual’s nature and history are real and pervasive influences in their choice.

Free will does not contradict depravity in any way. However, man’s choices will be influenced by such depravity.

There is a more serious way in which this objection may be considered, however. Extreme Calvinist writer W. E. Best (1992, p. 11) states, “Those who embrace the theory of man’s free will deny depravity. . .” Such a statement is fallacious, for it may

be proven untrue by the existence of but one person who embraces both man's free will and depravity, such as Wright, or Stern (1992). The real issue is whether it is valid for one to simultaneously adhere to these notions – which is the case, as explained above.

Best, however, makes a distinction between “free agency” and “free will” (Best, 1992, p. 11). To him, free will transcends an agent's ability to act according to their depraved will, and especially assumes an ability in the will of man itself to choose good or evil. This is contradictory to Best's view of God's sovereignty, which is further interrelated with central tenets of Calvinism such as irresistible grace and a limited atonement.

Among Protestants the differences in understanding of the process from a sinful state to full salvation lies primarily in the Reformed and Wesleyan approaches. The view one takes will be related to their doctrine of depravity. Calvinists, such as Best, assert that depravity implies a total inability that necessitates a regenerating work of the Holy Spirit in order to repent and believe. Pecota (1994, p. 355) sees this suggesting a process beginning with election, predestination and then foreknowledge, which contrasts the list Paul specifies in Romans 8:28-30. Further, regeneration must of necessity occur before repentance. Pecota instead sees depravity as implying that, because man continues to bear the image of God even in a fallen state, one is able to respond to God's drawing in repentance and faith – giving an order of foreknowledge, election and then predestination.

The former position is not consistent with Scripture and demonstrates a flawed view of sovereignty. God is a gracious, loving and personal sovereign who experiences no threat to, or diminishing of, His sovereignty if one refuses His gift.

According to Scripture, man is capable of resisting God's grace. Through Isaiah, God said “All day long I have held out my hands to an obstinate people. . . I called but you did not answer, I spoke but you did not listen” (Isaiah 65:2, 12). Stephen accused his hearers of being “stiff-necked people. . . [who] always resist the Holy Spirit” (Acts 7:51). Pecota (1994, p. 360-1) adds

Pecota . . . if we cannot resist God's grace, then nonbelievers will perish, not because they would not respond but because they could not. God's grace would not be efficacious for them . . . A God whose love yearns for everyone to come to Him but does not irresistibly compel them to come, and whose heart breaks over their refusal, has to be a God of greatness beyond our imagining.

Indeed, there is only one appropriate response to such great love and that is to repent and believe. Thiessen (1979, p. 192) correctly states that man “cannot of his free will regenerate himself, repent, nor exercise saving faith” – but neither are these actions produced within man apart from one's willingness.

The responsible Christian must avoid extreme expressions of both synergism and monergism. Monergism derives from Augustinianism and affirms that to be saved a person cannot and does not do anything whatever to bring it about. Extreme forms of synergism date to Pelagius who denied depravity, but the moderate evangelical expression is based on Arminius and, more importantly and recently, Wesley. Both emphasised an ability to freely choose, even in matters that affect one's eternal destiny. Man is depraved – but the totality refers to its field of operation and not its extent, thus one is not unable to respond (either positively or negatively) to God's grace. An evangelical synergist affirms that God alone saves, but they believe that Biblical universal exhortations to repent and believe make sense only if in fact man is able to accept or reject salvation (Pecota, 1994, p. 361).

Salvation stems entirely from God's grace, but to state that that is so does not require one to diminish their responsibility when confronted with the gospel message.

Conclusion

In the unregenerate state, man is separate from Christ. Sin has effected all of man's person. He is without hope and without God (Ephesians 2:12).

As human beings have sinned, they are responsible for their sins, and are guilty before God. All have done wrong, by their own fault, and are therefore liable to bear the just penalty of such wrongdoing. This is the argument of the early chapters of Romans – Paul divides the human race into three major sections. He shows how each know something of their moral duty, but have deliberately suppressed its knowledge in order to pursue their own sinful course (Stott, 1989, p. 96). As John wrote, "This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil" (John 3:19).

Man must be saved, and this by the name of Jesus (Acts 4:12), through repentance and faith in God. Saving faith is principally divine in origin. Jesus said that no-one could come to Christ unless the Father draws them (John 6:44) but one must count the cost of following Christ (Matthew 8:19-22; Luke 14:26-33), believe on Jesus (Acts 16:31) and confess Him as Lord (Romans 10:9).

Imputation

Introduction

'Imputation' is an important revelation of divine dealings with man. Walvoord (1960, p. 281) defines imputation as "reckoning to the account of another", giving the book of Philemon as a Biblical illustration (v. 18 reading, "Put that on mine account").

Imputation was an important component of the Levitical sacrificial system. On the annual Day of Atonement the high priest was to take two male goats for a sin offering in order to atone for the sins of the Israelite community as a whole (Leviticus 16:5). One goat was to be sacrificed in the usual manner, while on the living goat's head the high priest was to lay both his hands and confess over it (thus, impute to it) all the wickedness and rebellion of the Israelites (v. 21). He was then to drive the goat away into the desert, and it would carry on itself all their sins to a solitary place (v. 22).

In the New Testament, imputation relates specifically to the sin of Adam and the work of Christ, and may be categorised into three theological connections, to follow.

New Testament words

In the New Testament, two words are used. ελογεω (ellogeo) means to charge to one's account (Vine, 1981, p. 252). It occurs twice, in Philemon 18 and in Romans 5:13.

Secondly, and more frequently, λογίζομαι (logizomai) means to reckon, take into account or metaphorically put down to a person's account (Vine, 1981, p. 252, 258). The word occurs 43 times in the New Testament, most frequently from Romans 2:3 to 14:14. It is used of numerical calculations, such as in Luke 22:37; to consider or calculate, such as in II Corinthians 10:11; and to suppose, judge or deem, such as in Romans 2:3. However, more importantly λογίζομαι is used metaphorically, by a reckoning of characteristics or reasons to take into account – precisely that understood by imputation. The Biblical passages that use the word in this sense provide significant data about imputation.

Imputation of Adam's sin to man

According to Paul's argument in Romans 5:12-21 the one sin of Adam was imputed to mankind to the extent that "death reigned" (v. 14). All were condemned in Adam (v. 18) and all have been made sinners (v. 19). It is because of Adam's sin that one is born with a depraved nature and under God's condemnation (Romans 5:12; Ephesians 2:3).

Controversy exists over the extent of the effect of Adam's sin on modern man. At one extreme, Pelagius taught that the only effect of Adam's sin on his posterity is a bad example; each person is created entirely innocent and free from depravity (Thiessen, 1979, p. 186).

Others, such as Thiessen, believe that not only does man receive a depraved nature from Adam's sin but that each man is personally responsible for the sin of Adam. He states, "There was an impersonal and unconscious participation by all of Adam's progeny in this first sinful act" (Badham, nd., p. 38).

In attempting to refute the theories of Arminius Thiessen cites Romans 5:12 as meaning that all are responsible for the sin of Adam. Yet, this is not what the verse teaches, despite Thiessen's use of "according to the Scriptures" (1979, p. 187). Romans 5:12 explains that sin has entered the world through Adam's sin. Further, death has come through sin (as stated in Ezekiel 18:4). The conclusion then, is that death has and will come to all men, because all men have sinned. To equate the sin of each person with the sin of Adam is to infer from the verse more than it actually says, and perhaps to suggest the likelihood that a person may not commit their own sins, the only reason that "all men have sinned" being that they have been held accountable for the sin of Adam.

The doctrine of the depravity of all men is most real. However, although man is conceived with a sinful nature (Psalm 51:5) because of Adam there is no Scriptural reason why man is individually held responsible for Adam's sin itself. Rather, all have sinned (Romans 5:12) and are held accountable for this. All have been made sinners (Romans 5:19) but Zodiates (1992, p. 924) explains that this is a declaration based on the disobedience of man, and not a setting or placing of man in such a position.

Imputation of man's sin to Christ

In contrast to the imputation of Adam's sin to mankind, the sin of man has been imputed to Christ. Walvoord (1960, p. 282) differentiates these as a *real* and a *judicial* imputation.

Christ bore the griefs and carried the sorrows of man. He was wounded for the transgressions of all and carried the iniquity of all (Isaiah 53:4-6). He knew no sin but was made to be sin on mankind's behalf – that humans might become the righteousness of God in Him (II Corinthians 5:21). He bore the sins of man in His own body (I Peter 2:24). God declined to impute sins to man, or count them against man (II Corinthians 5:19), but has imputed them to Christ Himself.

Stott (1989, p. 148-9) makes the important point that such imputation does nothing at all to imply the transference of one person's moral qualities to another. The moral turpitude of sins has not been transferred to Christ, and He has not been made personally sinful or ill-deserving.

The work of Christ has provided a means of atonement for the consequences of man's depravity. He has voluntarily accepted liability for man's sin.

Imputation of God's righteousness to the believer

Thirdly, embodied in the doctrine of justification by faith is the imputation of the righteousness of God to the Christian believer.

The imputation of righteousness is a judicial act by which the believer is declared righteous before a holy God. Although experiential sanctification, conversion and other spiritual manifestations accompany such imputation, it is not in itself an experience but a fact, and a divine pronouncement. Christian believers are declared to be "justified by faith" (Romans 5:1) and Abraham and David are cited as Old Testament examples (Romans 4:1-22).

This imputation must be received through repentance of sin, and by faith towards God. It is not an automatic action, as would be the ramification if man were held responsible for Adam's sin. If Romans 5:19 ("through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners") meant that the guilt of Adam's sin had been credited to every person (in addition to a depraved nature), then the parallel with Jesus ("so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous") would imply

that the righteousness of Christ has been imputed to all men – unconditionally, and universally. There is no distinction between believer and unbeliever, and no need for man to repent, for just as Adam’s sin was imputed to all, so has Christ’s righteousness been imputed to all.

The righteous work of Christ is reckoned to the account of the believer as a gift of righteousness apart from human merit or works (Ephesians 2:8-9). As John Owen states, “we ourselves have done nothing of what is imputed to us, nor Christ anything of what is imputed to Him” (Stott, 1989, p. 148).

Conclusion

Imputation is an important Biblical doctrine and Walvoord (1960, p. 282) believes it “rests at the heart of the doctrine of salvation”. Stott (1989, p. 149) states that when one considers the New Testament application of imputation to the death of Christ one is

Stott obliged to conclude that the cross was a substitutionary sacrifice. Christ died for us. Christ died instead of us. Indeed . . . [the Old Testament] use of sacrificial imagery has the intention of expressing the fact that Jesus died without sin in substitution for our sins.

Imputation and its important ramifications, both negatively and positively, are summarised by Paul in Romans 5:18 thus:

Romans 5:18 Just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life to all men.

Propitiation

Introduction

Propitiation is the turning away of wrath by an offering. Jacob appeased Esau with a present in Genesis 32:20, and King Mesha of Moab offered a sacrifice to Chemosh in II Kings 3:26 thereby turning away wrath from Moab. From an evangelical view, 'propitiation' is concerned with the turning away of divine wrath towards man, through the atoning sacrifice of Christ.

Biblical terminology

In the Old Testament, the principal verb rendered as propitiation is *kapher*. In the New Testament the idea is conveyed by the use of ἰλάσκειν (Hebrews 2:17), ἰλάσθαι (Romans 3:25) and ἰλάσθη (I John 2:2 and 4:10). The ἰλάσκειν word group is that used also in the Septuagint for *kapher* (Hebert, 1950, p. 25; Easton, s.v. 'Propitiation').

Disagreement exists, however, as to whether the original Biblical words above do actually mean an atoning action directed towards God – propitiation – or rather towards the offence – expiation.

According to Morris (1984, p. 888) the word group to which the Greek words belong unquestionably has the significance of averting divine wrath (and hence the appeasement of God). In contrast, C. H. Dodd suggests that the word group denotes expiation and not propitiation denying that "the wrath of God" means anything other than a process of cause and effect whereby disaster inevitably follows sin (Morris, 1984, p. 888).

However, Scripture cannot support expiation as the primary understanding. It is true that the Levitical atoning actions - the basis for Old Testament atonement - had a direct effect on sins. It covered them and 'blotting them out' (Leviticus 4:20-26) - but the idea of the wrath of God is firmly rooted in the Old Testament, with 585 references. Further, the words of the ἰλάσκειν group do not denote simple forgiveness or cancellation of sin, but that forgiveness or cancellation of sin, which includes the turning away of God's wrath (Thayer, 1981, p. 2417), for example, as in Lamentations 3:42-43.

Examples of expiation may be found, but to suggest it is the sole meaning of the original language words presented is disharmonious with Scripture and contemporary pagan usage of the words (Morris, 1950, p. 888; Pecota, 1994, p. 345). Such a view is not founded on a linguistic basis but on predetermined theology. Pecota (1994, p. 346) presents the simple solution,

If one accepts what the Bible says about God's wrath, a possible solution presents itself. We could see the words as having a vertical and a horizontal reference. When the context focuses on the Atonement in relation to God, the words speak of propitiation. But they mean expiation when the focus is on us and our sin.

This solution is reasonable, and II Kings 24:3-4, Psalm 78:38 and Romans 3:25 all provide examples of God's anger or punishment joined with forgiveness or atoning sacrifice. Hence, the historical and literary context determines whether propitiation or expiation is the appropriate meaning for a given passage.

Divine wrath

Paul explains that man's sin receives its due reward, not because of some impersonal retribution but because God's wrath is directed against it (Romans 1:18, 24, 26, 28). The whole of his argument in the opening chapters of Romans is that all men – Gentiles and Jews alike – are sinners. They have come justly under the wrath and the condemnation of God.

Ultimately God Himself initiates the removal of wrath. Of the process of atonement by sacrifice He says, "I have given it to you" (Leviticus 17:11). Psalm 78:38 says, "Time after time He restrained His anger and did not stir up His full wrath". At no point do the Scriptures refer to reconciliation being required of God, rather the enmity between man and God is uniquely a problem relating to man. Sacrifice was given by God to man as a means whereby He would not remember sins committed.

North (1950, p. 213) makes the important point that the only sins for which a sin-offering could make actual atonement were breaches of ritual committed in ignorance. In practice a person may well sincerely offer a sacrifice with the expectation that known sins would thereby be forgiven but this was an assumption with no justifiable basis in the law. Forgiveness was certainly a real concept in the Old Testament, but it was not a *quid pro quid* for sacrifice. Rather it was the free gift of God, dependent only upon repentance and confession (c.f. Psalm 32:5; Psalm 51:1, 16-17; I Samuel 15:22).

When turning to salvation, Paul thinks of Christ's death as *ilasthron* (Romans 3:25) – literally a "mercy seat" (Zodhiates, 1992, p. 923). Christ is thus the antitype of the cover of the Ark of the Covenant (Hebrews 9:5) and is here designated as the actual place where the sinner deposits sin, as well as the means of removing the divine wrath itself. As in the Old Testament, God Himself has provided the means of removing His own wrath. Again, it is a free gift which can not be earned (Ephesians 2:8-9).

The purpose of Christ

The love of the Father is shown in that He "sent His son to be the propitiation for our sins" (I John 4:10). The purpose of Christ's coming was "to make propitiation for the sins of the people" (Hebrews 2:17). His propitiation is adequate for all people (I John 2:2).

It is not right, however, to conceive of God's wrath as having been 'appeased' by Christ's sacrifice as explained by transactional theories of the Atonement. It is God who in Christ reconciled the world to Himself, just as He was behind the redemptive action of the servant in Isaiah 53:10.

Genesis and Exodus provide many biographical descriptions that have as their turning points the building of an altar and an act of sacrifice. Similarly, Israel was delivered from Egypt by a method with a symbolism attached to the Passover. Two discernible concepts arise; redemption and the shedding of blood are connected, and a form of substitution exists. These concepts are given fuller detail in the book of Leviticus and are extensively illustrated in the instructions for the sacrifices and priesthood. Christ's teaching was consistent with such Levitical instructions and the entire New Testament declares that His death was the consummation and fulfilment of such teaching of sacrifice.

An essential distinction must be made between the sacrifices of the Old and New Testaments. Hebrews 10:4 explains that the Levitical priest would repeatedly make sacrifices for sins – first for himself and then for the people. This would occur

repeatedly because “it is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins”. In contrast, Christ has offered one sacrifice for sin that is able to deal with the root problem of indwelling sin (Hebrews 10:11-14) – expiation of guilt was secured, effected by vicarious substitutionary punishment.

It is important to realise that Christ’s atonement is not merely a ‘covering’ of sins whereby they are treated as non-existent and the sinner as if he had not committed them. Sin is serious, and confession must occur for forgiveness (I John 1:8-9). However the regenerate believer has been reconciled and united with Christ as a member of His body, and hence shares in the righteousness of Christ (Galatians 2:20; Colossians 1:21). One is justified, not in the sense of possessing a righteousness of one’s own (Philippians 3:9) but because one belongs to Christ.

Conclusion

Lean Morris (1950, p. 888) expresses the consensus of evangelicals in saying that the consistent Biblical view is that the sin of man has incurred the wrath of God. Only Christ’s atoning offering averts that wrath. From this standpoint, His saving work is properly called propitiation.

“Reconciliation” sets forth the benefit of the death of Christ for the sinner but propitiation indicates both this and the manner whereby sinners are made friends of God. Christ both propitiates and offers Himself as the propitiation. He is the sacrifice and the High Priest who sacrifices Himself (John 1:29, 36; I Corinthians 5:7; Ephesians 5:2; Hebrews 10:14; I Peter 1:19; Revelation 5:6, 8).

Just as the covering of the Ark in the Tabernacle was the place where God’s forgiving mercy was shown, so now the cross of Christ is the place where His saving mercy has been manifested.

Reconciliation

Introduction

The Greek New Testament uses four words to express the concept of reconciliation - **katallassw**, **apokatallassw**, **diallassw** and **katallage**. These are defined thusly,

Katallassw denotes a changing or exchanging, primarily of money. In the context of persons, it means a changing from enmity to friendship (Thayer, 1981, p. 333; Vine, 1981, p. 262; Zodhiates, 1992, p. 926). Paul uses this word about wives returning to harmony with their husbands in I Corinthians 7:11. This word is also used in Romans 5:10 and II Corinthians 5:18-19.

Apokatallassw means to reconcile completely. It is a stronger form of **katallassw**, prefixed with **apo** (*from*). The essential meaning is to change from one condition to another, to remove all enmity and leave no impediment to unity and peace (Thayer, 1981, p. 63; Vine, 1981, p. 261). This word is used in Ephesians 2:16 and Colossians 1:20-21.

Diallassw means to effect an alteration, to exchange and hence to reconcile in cases of mutual hostility yielding to mutual concession (Thayer, 1981, p. 139; Vine, 1981, p. 261). This word is found just once, in Matthew 5:24, concerning being reconciled with a brother before presenting an offering.

Katallage is similar to **katallassw** but emphasises the notion of exchange. It means a change on the part of one party, induced by an action on the part of another (Thayer, 1981, p. 333; Vine, 1981, p. 262; Zodhiates, 1992, p. 926). This is used in Romans 5:11; 11:15; II Corinthians 5:18-19.

It may be seen that reconciliation properly applies not to good relations in general, but to the doing away of an enmity.

There are no equivalent terms in the Hebrew Scriptures. Vine (1981, p. 262) notes that passages containing "reconciliation" in the King James Version (Leviticus 8:15; Ezekiel 45:20, etc.) are more rightly translated "atonement".

By an examination of the contexts of the occurrences of these terms, an understanding of the Biblical concept of "reconciliation" is gained.

The need for reconciliation

The Bible is plain that an enmity exists between man and God (Ephesians 2:13-16). A wall of partition exists (Ephesians 2:14) and man is considered an enemy of God (Romans 5:10). By nature, man is a child of wrath (Ephesians 2:3). If man were to be held responsible for one's sins, then death would follow (Psalm 130:3).

All have sinned and come short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23), and hence man is appointed for death (Romans 6:23), judgement (Hebrews 9:27) and in the natural state is without hope and without God (Ephesians 2:12). Stott (1989, p. 65) asserts that

The Bible everywhere views human death not as a *natural* but as a *penal* event. It is an alien intrusion into God's good world, and not part of his original intention for mankind. . . Throughout Scripture, then, death (both physical and spiritual) is seen as a divine judgment on human disobedience.

However, God desires that all men be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth (I Timothy 2:4). There is no peace between man and God (Colossians 1:20) and this barrier must be removed through reconciliation.

The direction of reconciliation

Not once is God said to be reconciled. The enmity is alone on the part of man. The Biblical authors never use **diallassw** in this context, but always **katallassw**, which does not contain the connotation of mutual concession after mutual hostility. That is, the hostility is not mutual in man's dealings with God but rather is solely directed from man to God. Hence, it is man who alone needs to be reconciled with God.

Morris (1981, p. 1321) makes a case for reconciliation possessing effects man-ward, which is true but concerns solely the removal of God's wrath; at no time need God be reconciled to man.

It is important to note that the removal of God's wrath does not contradict His immutability. He acts in consistency with His righteousness and it is because He does not change that His relative attitude is able to change towards those who do change.

There is also a horizontal aspect to reconciliation for God has reconciled man to one another in His new community as well as to Himself. The focus of Ephesians 2:11-22 is primarily the healing of the breach between Jews and Gentiles. However, the basis for this is the prior mutual reconciliation of both parties to God. Nevertheless, knowing the mutual bitterness and contempt that Jews and Gentiles held for each other, this reconciliation was a miracle of God's grace and power. A single, new, unified humanity has resulted (Stott, 1989, p. 194-195).

However, even this does not complete the reconciliation revealed in the Bible. Colossians 1:15-20 describes the reconciliation that God has achieved as having effect on "all things", further described as "things on Earth or things in heaven". There exists debate as to precisely what Paul referred to here. If the "all things" reconciled are the same as the "all things" created (v. 16-17) then its reconciliation may refer to the "liberation from bondage to decay" described in Romans 8:21. Stott (1989, p. 196) however, sees the "all things" as more probably referring to the principalities and powers of Colossians 2, who have been reconciled in the sense that they have been disarmed, perhaps in conjunction with Philipians 2:9-11.

The means for reconciliation

Paul explains, "For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life" (Romans 5:10). This passage expresses man's hostile attitude to God ("enemies"), and also signifies that until a change of attitude takes place men are under condemnation and exposed to God's wrath. Further, the death of Christ is the means of removal of this condemnation.

This subject receives an unfolding in II Corinthians 5:18-19,

II Corinthians 5:18-19 All these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

God is the author of reconciliation and He has taken the initiative to remove the wall of enmity between Himself and mankind. Christ is the agent of the reconciliation. Finally, man is called to be an ambassador of reconciliation.

Reconciliation is effected by God “not counting their trespasses” and by committing “to us the word of reconciliation”, that is, by the exercise of divine forgiveness and the proclamation of the Gospel message intended to elicit a response of faith on the part of the hearers.

Pecota (1994, p. 347) defines **katallassw** as conveying the notion of “exchanging” or “reconciling” as one might reconcile books in accounting practices. He thus draws the analogy,

In the New Testament the application is primarily to God and us. The reconciling work of Christ restores us to God’s favor because “the books have been balanced”.

Conclusion

God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself. What God has done in the matter of reconciliation He has done in Christ and this is based upon the fact that “He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf; so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him”.

Reconciliation is an act by which men are delivered from a condition of estrangement and restored to fellowship with God. This act is accomplished by the sacrificial death of Christ. On this ground, the command to men is “be reconciled to God” (II Corinthians 5:20-21).

Regeneration

Introduction

The Biblical word for "regeneration" is **paliggenesia** which literally means "born again", being derived from **palin** (again) and **genesij** (birth).

The Scriptures present a serious view of the condition of man. This condition is such that the only way of escaping from it is to undergo an entire spiritual transformation, an entire liberation from one's natural nature into a new life brought about only by God Himself. It is this that is meant by "regeneration".

The need for renewal

The natural condition of man is a fallen state. All have sinned and fallen short of God's glory (Romans 3:23). Indeed, man is born in sin (Psalm 51:5) and the natural inclination of man is towards sin (Romans 7:14-15).

The sinfulness of man is serious and leads to death (Romans 6:23). Man is unable to redeem himself or another (Psalm 49:7-8). This gulf was so great that it led Jesus to say, "Unless one is born again he cannot see the Kingdom of God" (John 3:3). It is entirely impossible that man in the natural state can ever be pleasing to God. A whole new nature must come into being. Without it man cannot even see, let alone enter, God's Kingdom.

A technical note must be made about the phrase in John 3:3 where "**gembq^ a@vqen**" has been translated "born again" in most English Bibles. The words literally mean "born from above" but this concept is still harmonious with **paliggenesia** as the clear need for a new birth is still expressed. Jesus' words provide further insight onto the nature of regeneration as clearly the new birth is from above, that is, from God, and by no other means.

God has not left man alone in this regard, and used the prophets to deliver several oracles in the Old Testament concerning this.

Jeremiah 31:31-34 "The time is coming," declares the Lord, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. . . I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. . . I will be their God, and they will be my people. . . I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more."

Ezekiel 11:19-20 I will give them an undivided heart and put a new spirit in them; I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh. Then they will follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. They will be my people, and I will be their God. (c.f. Ezekiel 36:26-27).

The new covenant that was to come would give the people a new spirit, one with a new heart that gave power to overcome sin and that provided a basis for forgiveness by God. In essence the people would experience a new birth and have a new experience of, and encounter with, God.

The recurring theme expressed in these utterances is "They will be my people, and I will be their God". This expresses the intimate fellowship that regenerated humanity is

capable of having with God, the former gulf being removed (Romans 3:23; Ephesians 2:15-16).

Entry into the Christian life

Repeating Jesus' words, "Unless one is born again he cannot see the Kingdom of God" (John 3:3). The only means of access into the Christian life and for fellowship with God is by experiencing this new birth.

The basis for this new birth is the atoning death of Christ. The Bible records the events of the last supper,

Matthew 26:26-29 While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to His disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body." Then He took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it anew with you in my Father's Kingdom."

With this one action Jesus spoke of His death and connected it immediately to the important passages referred to above. His death would bring about the new covenant that God had promised - the new covenant that would give a new heart and provide forgiveness of sins. Further, His death would make the way for His disciples to be with Him in the Kingdom - the only means of access being that the disciples were to become "born again".

Paul emphasises in Galatians 5:11-18 that circumcision and uncircumcision are meaningless; what matters is whether one is a new creation. He explains this further in Ephesians 2, describing the difference the new birth makes. Firstly, man was dead because of the sins in which one lived, existing to gratify the cravings and lusts of the sinful nature. By this nature, one was an object of the wrath of God. However, due to God's great love and mercy, He has made man alive with Christ. He has raised man to be seated with Him in the heavenly realms. He has provided salvation.

Requirements of regenerated Christians

With God's gracious gift comes a responsibility on the part of the Christian. A new nature has been given and one must live accordingly. Paul explains, and even insists, in the latter half of Ephesians 4 that Christians no longer live as the unregenerate do. Their understanding is darkened and they are separated from the life of God. They continue to pursue the lusts of their sinful nature.

However, the Christian is called to cast away their old self, which was corrupt. One must instead put on the new self, which was created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

Consequently, one must abandon falsehood, anger, stealing, and all other wrongs that grieve the Holy Spirit. Such actions are inconsistent with the new nature that God has given.

Other effects and consequences of the new birth are described in I John 2:29; 3:9; 4:7; 5:1, 4, 18. The abiding results given in these passages are doing righteousness, not committing sin, loving one another, believing that Jesus is the Christ, and overcoming the world. These results indicate that in spiritual matters man is not altogether passive.

He is passive in the new birth where God acts on him, but the result of such an act is far-reaching - he repents, believes in Christ and henceforth walks in a newness of life.

It is important to note that the new birth does not affect man's personality, in that the person is the same. However, he is differently controlled. Before the new birth, one is controlled by sin, and sin makes man a rebel against God. After the new birth the Spirit controls man, and directs him toward God.

The regenerate Christian walks after the Spirit, lives in the Spirit, is led by the Spirit and is commanded to be filled with the Spirit (Romans 8:4, 9, 14; Ephesians 5:18). One is not perfect and must still grow and progress (1 Peter 2:2), but in every faculty one is directed towards God.

The ensuing state

God's new birth does not apply solely to mankind. Jesus promised,

Truly I say to you, that you who have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne. . . everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life. (Matthew 19:28-29).

Those who are Christ's are to receive rewards and eternal life, the latter being the primary purpose of the new birth as described above. However, Jesus refers to another application of the new birth - in particular, a future time known as "the regeneration".

The time is coming when this Earth will exist no more (Revelation 21:1) and all will be made new. At this time God has proclaimed,

Revelation 21:3-4 Now the dwelling of God is with men, and He will live with them. They will be His people, and God Himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away. (Revelation 21:3-4).

At this time, the complete message of the Old Testament prophets will be fulfilled. Those whom God has regenerated will be partakers of His new eternal Kingdom, in the new world to come. All things will be made new and the entire order of creation will experience a regeneration. Finally man and God would live together in intimacy and He will be their God and they will be His people.

Contentious issues

Mark 16:16 and 1 Peter 3:21 closely connect baptism with entry into a state of salvation, and Titus 3:5 contains a reference to the washing of regeneration. 1 Peter 1:23 and James 1:18 mention the Word of God as a means of new birth. Due to these, Gordon (1980, p. 1325) explains that many contend these are the necessary channels by which regeneration comes.

Hyper-calvinist W. E. Best (1992, p. 36) describes several differing interpretations of John 3:5 ("born of water and the Spirit"). Baptismal regenerationists claim the verse means baptism is an essential part of the new birth. Many evangelicals equate water as a symbol for the Word of God and hence deduce that this is an essential part of the new birth. Others equate water with the natural birth and the Spirit with the new birth. Unfortunately Best is so marred by argumentation that it is difficult to discern the

position he supports, although it is clear which positions he does not agree with. However, Best appears to suggest a fourth view, that the water is symbolic of the cleansing of the Spirit, and only one birth is referred to.

In response one must question whether the Word of God is a means of regeneration in this way, when I Corinthians 2:7-16 explains that the natural man is in such a state that he cannot receive the things of God. Further, Gordon (1980, p. 1325) suggests "A divine intervention which makes the natural man receptive to God's Word must be antecedent to hearing the Word in a saving manner."

To view baptism as conveying regenerating grace is contrary to Scripture such as Paul's strictures on the Jewish views concerning circumcision (Romans 2:28f., 4:9-12). Further, the New Testament details incidents of conversion with no accompanying baptism (Acts 10:44-48; 16:14-15).

Baptism bears witness to the spiritual union with Christ in death and resurrection through which new life is conveyed (Romans 6) but does not convey such itself, especially where faith is absent.

The Word of God brings regenerating grace into expression in faith and repentance (Romans 10:17) but the grace itself comes direct by the Spirit to lost sinners (John 16:8).

Conclusion

Paul wrote to Titus,

Titus 3:5-6 [God] saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of His mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Saviour".

The new birth is entirely from God. It originates from His mercy. Its mediator is Christ. It is effective through the Holy Spirit who has been generously given.

Being born again speaks of a radical transformation. Pecota (1994, p. 365) describes it as "the decisive and instantaneous action of the Holy Spirit in which He re-creates the inner nature".

If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come (II Corinthians 5:17). The regenerate man is a new man who seeks, finds and follows God in Christ.

Man can do nothing of Himself to be saved, and nor does he deserve the mercy God has bestowed. Yet, without this new birth, unless a man is born again, they cannot see the Kingdom of God.

Calling

Introduction

The primary New Testament words for "calling" are **kalew** and **klhsij**, and their derivatives.

Kalew equates to the English word "call". It is used with a personal object to call anyone, invite or summon such as in Matthew 20:8 and 25:14.

Several derivatives with varying shades of meaning occur also in the New Testament. **Eiskalew** means to call in, and hence invite, as used in Acts 10:23. **Epikalew** means to call upon as in Matthew 10:25; Acts 7:59; 15:17; Romans 10:12-14. **Metakalew** means to call from one place to another, and hence summon, as in Acts 7:14. **Proskalew** means to call to oneself as in Acts 5:40. Finally, **sunkalew** signifies to call together as in Acts 5:21.

Klhsij is used of a calling, similar to **kalew**. As an adjective, **klhtoj** means to be called or invited. According to Vine (1981, p. 165) it is "always used in the N.T. of that calling the origin, nature and destiny of which are heavenly". Thayer (1981, p. 350) is in agreement.

The soteriological aspect of "calling" is thus primarily represented by **klhsij**. It explains the gracious act of God whereby He invites sinners to accept the salvation offered in Christ.

The divine call

God calls men to His service. **Proskalew** is used in Acts 13:2 and 16:10 to describing the Lord's direction in the lives of Paul and Barnabus. Paul was called by God to be an apostle (Romans 1:1; I Corinthians 1:1).

However, the Scriptures are clear that God makes a wider and more general calling. I Corinthians 7:20 instructs Christians to remain in the condition they were in when called - the condition referring to such as circumcised, uncircumcised, slave, freeman etc., the important thing to note being that Paul believes that all Christians have received a calling.

Paul instructs believers in I Thessalonians 2:12 to walk worthy of God - who has called them into His Kingdom.

Romans 8:30 is explicit that God gives a calling, but further this calling is a prerequisite to justification. Hebrews 9:15 explains that Christ is the mediator of a new covenant and because of this those who have been called may receive the promise of eternal life. Acts 2:39 is similar.

Paul explains further that God has "saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our own works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity" (II Timothy 1:9).

It is God's plan that man be saved and brought into a right relationship with Him (John 3:16). This is the nature of His calling. The call originates solely in God's grace and

purposes, and is a holy calling. In response, Christians must live in accordance with the calling they have received, and which has led to their salvation.

The extent of the call

A significant passage explaining the extent of God's calling is Matthew 22:14, "For many are called but few are chosen" which concludes Jesus' parable of the wedding feast.

The parable speaks of a King who prepared a wedding feast for his son. He made all the arrangements himself and arranged for his servants to hand-deliver invitations to all he had invited. However, as the servants of the King delivered the announcements they met with ill-will. Those who had been invited expressed opposition and refused to accept the invitation.

The King continued his plans and sent his servants a second time. The people have had no change of heart and the servants met with open defiance and were even killed. In righteous wrath the King sent his soldiers to punish the murderers. He had taken punitive action but still desired people to celebrate with him and so sent his servants to go to the streets and invite anyone who wished to come. The people were given wedding clothes made for the occasion. Kistemaker (1980, p. 104) explains that

Kistemaker the King invites the people, and he expects them to put on the clothes he provides. By wearing the wedding garment furnished by the King, no one reveals poverty or misery. Every guest can hide his social and economic status behind the clothes received from the King.

However, one guest refused to don the wedding garments offered and was thus conspicuous. He did not meet with the King's approval, who questioned how he had got in without the appropriate attire. The obstinate guest was then cast away.

The meaning of the parable is obvious; Jesus is relating Israel's history and he refers to the prophets sent by God with an urgent message of repentance. Israel treated the prophets shamefully and killed some of them. God expresses rightful wrath at such disobedience. Simultaneously, however, He is benevolent and portrays His mercy and love by extending His message and invitation to sinners. People from all walks of life receive the invitation and respond affirmatively.

However, the garments of the King must be worn. This speaks of the fine linen worn by the righteous in the Book of Revelation. God provides garments of righteousness which symbolise that the wearer has been forgiven, his sins have been covered and he is a member of the household of God through Christ.

The guest who did not have wedding clothes at the banquet was rejecting the sacrificial death and atoning blood of Jesus. Jesus said "No man comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6) and the guest is cast aside after appearing before God.

The calling of God, then, has a wide extent. God takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked; He wants him to live (Ezekiel 18:23; 33:11). He wants nobody to perish, but all to come to repentance (II Peter 3:9). Whoever believes may receive God's promise (John 3:16). The invitation - the calling - is thus universal and is extended to all people. However, only those accept it in faith and repentance are chosen and appointed to eternal life (Acts 13:48).

This parable is a counterpart of Jesus' words "Small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it" (Matthew 7:14).

God therefore has called sinners to be reconciled with Him, but only those who respond to Him on His conditions will receive justification.

It is difficult to consider the notion of a "limited atonement" as harmonious with Scripture. This view teaches that "Christ died only for those whom God has sovereignly elected" (Pecota, 1994, p. 352). Adherents of a limited atonement express that the notion of unlimited atonement must either lead to universalism or call into question the efficacy of Christ's work (if "all" are not saved). However, an unlimited atonement is not universalism; it is qualified. Passages such as Hebrews 2:9 are clear that Christ died for everyone, yet a response is required in order for His death to be effective on a personal level. As Thiessen (1979, p. 242) states,

Thiessen	the atonement is unlimited in the sense that it is available for all; it is limited in that it is effective only for those who believe. It is available for all but efficient only for the elect.
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Many are called, but few are chosen.

The call is serious

God's call is serious and Romans 11:29 declares "For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance." He desires men to come to repentance. He has given His Son to provide atonement for sins. He will not revoke this calling nor turn away any who come to Him (John 6:37).

The Christian is also instructed to consider their calling sombrely and be diligent about it (II Peter 1:10). II Timothy 1:9 refers to the call as a "holy calling" and Ephesians 4:1 implores the believer to walk in a manner worthy of their calling.

Conclusion

The calling originates from the throne and heart of God and expresses His desire for all to be redeemed and to be in a right relationship with Him.

Although not all will respond favourably to this calling, God issues it irrevocably. Although those who receive it have done nothing to merit it, they must live in accordance with its character.

As Paul urged, Christians should press on toward the goal for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus (Philippians 3:14).

Union with Christ

Introduction

The evangelical standpoint on "Union with Christ" is that a spiritual union of the regenerate believer with Christ has occurred.

Adherents of evangelicalism perceive a "Federal" union, where Christ is identified in a general way with mankind as the second Adam. This identity is viewed as a physical fact. However, the evangelical doctrine of "union with Christ" *per se* relates to the spiritual, so-called, "Vital" union. Walvoord (1960, p. 275) defines this so,

Walvoord . . . identification with Christ relates a Christian to the person and work of Christ by divine reckoning, by the human experience of faith, and by the spiritual union of the believer with Christ effected by the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

The basis for this standpoint is various Scriptures that regard Christians as being "in Christ", and analogies provided for the relationship between Christ and the Church.

Federal union

Thiessen (1979, p. 282) explains the federal, or representative, union with Christ thusly,

Thiessen By this legal union Christ, as the second Adam (I Corinthians 15:22), assumes those broken obligations which the first Adam failed to discharge, and fulfills them all in behalf of mankind. The results of this union with Christ are the imputation of our sins to him and of his righteousness to us, and all the forensic benefits involved in them.

This union is an essential soteriological concept, and a necessary prerequisite to a vital union with Christ. Reid (1960, p. 537) uses the phrase "a qualitative metaphysical difference . . . [and] an ethical separation" to describe the non-comparability of God and man. Man is not only of a different essence to God, but is also in conflict with Him. The evangelical view sees that the only unity which man may have with God is through God's action of reconciling man to Himself through Christ.

Vital union

The relationship of being "in Christ" was first announced by Jesus to His disciples in the Upper Room, "you in Me, and I in you" (John 14:20). The wording "I in you" makes clear this relationship was not simply a reflection of a position created by divine reckoning, as with the Federal union above.

Evangelicals label this relationship the "Vital" union with Christ (Thiessen, 1979, p. 282). It is further expressed by Paul who again speaks of believers as being in Christ, in Romans 6:11; 8:1; II Corinthians 5:17; Ephesians 2:13 and Colossians 2:11f. John employs similar terminology in I John 2:6 and 4:13. Often Scripture speaks of Christ as being in the believer (John 14:20; Romans 8:10; Galatians 2:20; Colossians 1:27). Jesus declared that both He and the Father dwell in the believer (John 14:23).

Furthermore, the believer is represented as partaking of Christ (John 6:53; 56f; I Corinthians 10:16f) and of the divine nature (II Peter 1:4), and as being one spirit with the Lord (I Corinthians 6:17).

Important theological truths are related to the doctrine of union with Christ. The believer is identified with Christ in His death (Romans 6:1-11), His burial (Romans 6:4), His resurrection (Colossians 3:1), His ascension (Ephesians 2:6), His reign (II Timothy 2:12) and His glory (Romans 8:17). The evangelical may well say one is co-crucified with Christ, co-resurrected with Christ, and co-seated with Christ in the heavens.

Scriptural figures

Scripture employs various figures to illustrate the believer's union with Christ. In John 15:1-6 the union is manifested by communion, spiritual life and fruit because of the union of branch and vine. The branch is in the vine and the life of the vine is in the branch.

Paul provides the figure of the head and the body in Ephesians 1:22-23; 4:12-16; 5:23-32. Again, an organic union depicts the living union of Christ and the Church. The figure expresses the notion that the identification of the body with the head does not imply equality but instead carries the obligation of recognising the head as the one that directs to the body.

In addition, Paul compares the relationship to the identification of a husband and wife in Ephesians 5:23-32, stated in the declaration that they are "one flesh". Similarly, there is a marriage relation of Christ and the Church.

Other Scriptural figures include the union of a building and its foundation (Ephesians 2:20; Colossians 2:7; I Peter 2:4f) and the union between the shepherd and the sheep (John 10:1-18; Hebrews 13:20; I Peter 2:25).

These figures all contribute to an understanding of the meaning of the evangelical standpoint on union with Christ.

Character, method and results of the union

The above Scriptures and figures clearly describe a relationship between the believer and Christ. The evangelical interpretation is that this union is spiritual (I Corinthians 6:17; Romans 8:9f; Ephesians 3:16f); it is inscrutable (Ephesians 5:32; Colossians 1:27) and it is indissoluble (John 10:28).

Further, the union is vital. Paul writes in Galatians 2:20,

Galatians 2:20 It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and delivered Himself up for me.

and in Colossians 3:3f,

Colossians 3:3 You have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.

The life of Christ is now the life of the believer.

Through the union with Christ, the believer is called to put to death the carnal life, and partake of the life Christ gives (John 6:32-58; Galatians 2:20), through the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit (John 15:1f; 16:7-15; 16:21-23; Romans 8:5-17; Colossians 1:27).

The evangelical denies that the union is mystical, constituting an identity of the believer with Christ in essence where the distinction of the participants is not preserved. Similarly, the evangelical denies that the union is merely moral or sympathetic without any interpenetration of the life of Christ and the believer.

Scripture has little to say directly about how the union with Christ is established, but the evangelical standpoint does note certain things. From Ephesians 1:4 ("He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world") it is concluded that the union has originated in the purpose and plan of God. Paul speaks of having become "united with Him in the likeness of His death" (Romans 6:5) and I Corinthians 6:17 refers to the fact of being joined to Christ, but does not say how one is thus joined.

Nevertheless, the union becomes concrete in the symbolism of the Lord's Supper (Matthew 26:26-28; I Corinthians 11:23-26) and the believer derives many consequences of this union.

In particular, union with Christ provides security - those whom Jesus has given eternal life to shall not perish and nor shall anyone be able to snatch them from His hand (John 10:28). Union with Christ means fruitfulness (John 15:5). Union with Christ means endowment for service - believers are members of Christ with various endowments and offices, directed by Him who is the head (I Corinthians 12:4-30). Finally, union with Christ means fellowship with Christ. The believer is taken into His confidence and made acquainted with His purposes and plans (Ephesians 1:8f).

Conclusion

Christ is identified with the human race in His incarnation, but only true believers are identified with Christ. This identification results in certain aspects of the person and work of Christ being attributed to the believer. This does not extend to possession of the attributes of the Second Person of the Trinity, nor does this erase the personal distinctions between Christ and the believer.

Christian conversion is commitment to Jesus Christ as divine Lord and Saviour, and this commitment means reckoning union with Christ to be a fact and living accordingly (Romans 6:1-14; Colossians 2:10-12, 20ff; 3:1ff).

Grace

Introduction

In the Old Testament the word "grace" is one of two words used to translate the Hebrew word *chen*, the other being "favour" (Snaith, 1950b, p. 100). Here, "grace" means kindness and graciousness in general, with no particular relationship between the parties concerned. Further, it is shown by a superior to an inferior, without obligation to show this. The inferior party has no right to expect any such favour (Snaith, 1950a, p. 80).

In the New Testament the word for "grace" is **xarij** which signifies that which gives pleasure, and stands for both that which gives pleasure, and the pleasure that is given, the kindness shown and the gratitude created in the giving (Snaith, 1950b, p. 100; Thayer, 1981, p. 665-666; Vine, 1981, p. 170). It is this use of the word that is found in Luke 4:22, for example, and in the greetings at the beginnings and ends of the Epistles.

However, the evangelical standpoint sees that the main and characteristic New Testament use of **xarij** is of God's redemptive love that is always active to save sinners and maintain them in a proper relationship with Him.

The connection with the Old Testament use of "grace" is found in the idea that God's favour is entirely free and wholly undeserved and that there is no obligation of any kind that God should be favourable to His people. This is the soteriological meaning of grace and it is so profound that it influences all other aspects of soteriology.

Just as the covering of the Ark in the Tabernacle was the place where God's forgiving mercy was shown, so now the cross of Christ is the place where His saving mercy has been manifested.

Depravity and regeneration

Human depravity and frailty directly reveal God's grace by the work of Christ.

The state of man is one of separation from God through sin (Romans 3:23; 6:23). Evangelicals use the term "depravity" to signify that every part of man has been corrupted by sin in some way. This corruption is such that in the natural state man can never be pleasing to God, prompting Jesus to declare, "Unless one is born again he cannot see the Kingdom of God" (John 3:3). Without a whole new nature one cannot even see, let alone enter, God's Kingdom. At the moment of conversion God grants such a new nature, which is solely a gift of God's grace (Ezekiel 36:26). Evangelicals know this as the "new birth", or "regeneration".

Calling

Without grace, there would be no Biblical record. The first record of Noah after the introduction of his name and genealogy is that "Noah found grace [*chen*] in the eyes of the Lord" (Genesis 6:8). The favour is necessarily independent of any covenant between God and Noah since the Noahic covenant was not yet made. This makes all the more clear that the establishment of the covenant itself was due in the first place to God's favour which was both undeserved and unconditioned.

This particular favour is bestowed upon each of the patriarchs in turn, and by God's grace He led forth from Egypt the people He had redeemed (Exodus 15:13). God's calling of Israel is repeatedly expressed in Deuteronomy as being entirely from grace and irrespective of any merit on Israel's part (Deuteronomy 7:7; 8:14-18; 9:4-6).

The New Testament provides the full revelation of God's plan of grace. The grace formerly manifest in God's dealings with Israel have been made manifest in the life and work of Christ. Paul emphasises that he is very sure that even his own response to the Gospel message was due to God's good pleasure and that he was called through the grace of God (Galatians 1:15).

In a similar fashion, God has called all believers to Himself. The primary Greek word for calling, **klesij**, means to be called or invited, Vine (1981, p. 165) and Thayer (1981, p. 350) adding that it is "always used in the N.T. of that calling the origin, nature and destiny of which are heavenly". "Calling" thus explains the invitation of sinners to accept the salvation offered in Christ, with this invitation arising solely from the grace of God and from His initiative.

Atonement and propitiation

Through pity for sinful men, Christ left His state with God in heaven and voluntarily underwent the hardships and miseries of human life. By His sufferings and death He procured salvation for mankind (Acts 15:11; II Corinthians 8:9; Romans 5:15; Galatians 1:6; Titus 3:7; John 1:14, 17).

Christ bore the full penalty of sin that was due to mankind, and hence made atonement. He suffered in man's place and His death was vicarious, totally for others (Pecota, 1994, p. 342). Christ died in man's place and thus one may be justified freely by God's grace through the redemption that came by Christ (Romans 3:24).

Propitiation is the turning away of wrath by an offering. By the atoning offering of Himself, Christ has turned away the wrath of God which man rightly deserved. John explains that the love of the Father is shown in that Christ was sent to be a propitiation for man (I John 4:10). Christ's death was not deserved in any way by man, and nor was it initiated by man. Atonement and propitiation are entirely a product of God's grace.

Imputation

Two aspects of the theological concept of imputation are expressed in Romans 5:18,

Just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life to all men.

Imputation is the reckoning to the account of another, as illustrated by the book of Philemon. Soteriologically, the one sin of Adam was imputed to mankind to the extent that "death reigned" (Romans 5:12-21). All were condemned through Adam. In contrast, the sin of man has been imputed to Christ by the atoning work He performed. Christ carried the iniquity of all (Isaiah 53:4-6) and was made to be sin on mankind's behalf (II Corinthians 5:21).

A third imputation is expressed in Scripture, that of Christ's righteousness to the believer. Christians are declared to be "justified by faith" and declared righteous before a holy God. This divine pronouncement is solely a work of grace, reckoned to the account of the believer as a gift of righteousness apart from human merit or works (Ephesians 2:8-9). As John Owen states, "we ourselves have done nothing of what is imputed to us, nor Christ anything of what is imputed to Him" (Stott, 1989, p. 148).

Reconciliation

Scripture is plain that an enmity exists between man and God (Ephesians 2:13-16). A wall of partition exists, and man is considered an enemy of God (Romans 5:10). There is no peace between man and God (Colossians 1:20) but God desires all to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth (I Timothy 2:4). Hence, this barrier of enmity must be removed through reconciliation.

Romans 5:10 signifies that until a change of attitude takes place men are under condemnation and exposed to God's wrath. Further, the death of Christ is the means of removal of this condemnation. Paul explains in II Corinthians 5:18-19 that God has taken the initiative to remove the wall of enmity, with Christ being the agent of this reconciliation - "He made Him who knew no sin to be sin our behalf; so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (II Corinthians 5:21). Again God's grace is shown in His dealings with man, unmerited and undeserved.

Union with Christ

The regenerate believer has been united with Christ as a member of His body and shares in the righteousness of Christ (Galatians 2:20; Colossians 1:21). The believer is justified, but not because they in any way possess a righteousness of their own (Philippians 3:9) but solely because one belongs to Christ.

Conclusion

Grace, more than any other idea, binds the two Testaments together into a complete whole for the Bible is the story of the saving work of God - that is, God's grace.

The grace of God is the determining factor in man's turning to God (Acts 2:18; 5:31; 16:14; Hebrews 6:6). Even that faith which is the condition of salvation is due to the grace of God (Ephesians 1:19; Philippians 1:29). Everything from first to last is by grace, whether of redemption (Romans 5:2; I Peter 2:10) or of sanctification (I Thessalonians 5:23f).

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