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## cross, the

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The contribution to civilization rendered by the image of the cross obviously lies not in the mere fact of Jesus' crucifixion by the Roman procurator Pontius Pilate and with the acquiescence of Jewish authorities. Rather, it lies in the degree to which the "cross," as a metonym for Jesus' violent death, became early on in the church a positive organizing center for Christian thought and practice. It did so in three primary ways: (1) its atoning function; (2) its incorporative function (i.e. crucified with Christ); and (3) its ethical function. Christianity's positive focus on Christ's crucifixion is remarkable in view of the fact that the crucifixion of a movement's founding leader would normally be devastating for that movement. Certainly this was the design of those who had Jesus crucified. Even the stories of Jesus' resurrection appearances to disciples reported soon after his death did not, in and of themselves, require a positive valuation of Jesus' death.

### THE CROSS IN 1 CORINTHIANS

Paul's "first" letter to the Corinthians and his letter to the Galatians are the two NT works where the explicit language of "cross" and "crucify" appears most frequently (aside from references in the passion narratives of the four Gospels). Theological language referring to the death of Christ is common throughout the NT but the imagery of crucifixion makes a particular point about the clash between the values of this world and those of God, as a symbol both of the world's disgust for Christ's mission and of God's capacity for turning the ugliness of the cross into a moment of ultimate salvation.

In 1 Corinthians Paul reminds his readers that, when he first came proclaiming the gospel to them (c.50 CE), "I resolved to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ *and this one crucified*" (1 Cor. 2:2). More succinctly still,

Paul summarized his entire ministry as "we proclaim Christ crucified" (1:23). He regarded "the message of the cross" (1:18) as a challenge to all that the world (along with many Christian believers) finds impressive: institutional power, noble birth, philosophical wisdom and knowledge of deep mysteries, rhetorical skill, and mighty displays of divine presence and power (1:18–2:16). Stunned by hearing of the emergence of factions within the Corinthian church, an incredulous Paul asked whether Christ – and not Paul, Cephas, or Apollos – had been "crucified for you?" (1:13). This one act on Christ's part gave Christ the sole claim on ownership and allegiances at Corinth (incidentally, an indictment of the modern phenomenon of denominationalism).

The meaning of "crucified for you" is clear enough, given Paul's later application of Christ's claim to ownership on the sexual body: "Flee sexual immorality. . . . Don't you know that . . . you are not your own? For you were bought with a price; so glorify God in your body" (6:18–20). Similarly, in the context of discussing slavery, Paul repeated: "You were bought with a price; don't become slaves of human beings" (7:23). Consequently, when in 1:30 Paul stated, "Christ Jesus . . . became for us from God . . . redemption," he meant not just "deliverance" generally but a "buying back" from enslavement to sin, with Christ's crucifixion on the cross as the price of release. The "message of the cross," though foolish and ineffectual (weak) by human standards, is the message that "God thought it good . . . to save those who believe" that Christ's shameful death on the cross, perpetrated on him by "the rulers of this age," made restitution for the world's sins (1:21–25; 2:8).

This subversive proclamation embodies God's wisdom and power (1:18, 21, 24–25). It reaches out especially to those whom the world regards as foolish, weak, and ignobly born (1:26–28). Accordingly, Paul chastised well-to-do, socially placed believers at Corinth who, in eating at an idol's temple, thought it more important to parade their knowledge that idols have no real existence than to keep "weak" fellow believers, who lacked such knowledge, from violating their conscience through participation and thereby falling into idolatry (8:1–13). "For the one who

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is weak is destroyed by your knowledge, *the brother because of whom Christ died*" (8:11; cf. Rom. 14:15, 20). He also criticized the behavior of upper-status, affluent members who enjoyed plenty to eat at the celebration of the Lord's Supper while humiliating the "have-nots" who were left hungry (11:17–34). Such self-centered behavior, Paul warned them, was not in keeping with Jesus' self-giving act and the words that he spoke over the bread: "This is my body, which is *for you*" (11:24). Mistreatment of the poor among them was as much a sacrilege against "the body and blood of the Lord" as any direct abuse of the elements of the meal, since Christ's "body" now also consisted of those who partook of the Lord's Supper (10:17; 11:27–34). By the same token, those who have seemingly less spectacular spiritual gifts should not be looked down on but rather given greater honor and attention, since they (like the "less presentable" parts of the human body that we cover with clothes) are valuable parts of Christ's body (12:14–26). "If one member suffers, all the members suffer together" (12:26).

At the same time, the message of the cross for Paul was not just a social gospel message. It was also a claim to exclusive allegiance to Jesus against all other cults, where partnership or participation (*koinōnia*) in the body and blood of the Lord rendered impossible any other religious attachments (10:14–22). Moreover, Christ's crucifixion made a demand on sexual purity. Having been "bought with a price," namely, the price of the Messiah's horrific death, believers were now owned by Christ ("not your own") and had to "honor God in [their] body" (6:19–20). This was especially so as regards sexual behavior since sexual sin, by its consuming, body-merging character, was uniquely body-defiling (6:18). Just as the Day of Atonement ceremonies purified the tabernacle or temple from the sins of the people to enable God to continue to dwell there (Lev. 16), so too Christ's atoning death washes and sanctifies the body (6:11), thereby making it possible for the body to serve as "a temple of the Holy Spirit that is in you" (6:19a). Consequently, incest (even of an adult sort), adultery, homosexual practice, intercourse with prostitutes, and fornication put the believer at great risk of not inheriting God's kingdom (ch. 5; 6:9, 15; 7:2, 9, 36). These acts in a perverse way involve Christ in immorality, to whom one is joined

by "one Spirit" and of whom one's body is a "member" (6:15–17).

A testimony to the significance of the cross for Paul is that, even when focusing on the subject of the resurrection of the dead in ch. 15, Paul reminds the Corinthians that "the gospel that I proclaimed to you, . . . by which also you are being saved . . . if you hold firmly [to it]" (15:1–2), includes Christ's atoning death. The gospel, Paul states, consists of two primary elements, "Christ died [to atone] *for our sins* in accordance with the Scriptures" and "he was raised on the third day [and remains so] in accordance with the Scriptures" (the references to burial and to resurrection appearances merely confirm the reality of Christ's death and resurrection; 15:3b–8). The muting of the resurrection of Christ in favor of a near-exclusive proclamation of a crucified Christ, both earlier in this letter and during Paul's stay in Corinth, was probably due to the Corinthian penchant for overemphasizing the "already" of Christian experience at the expense of the "not yet." Even so, belief in Christ's atoning death constituted for Paul, at all times and places, one of the two central beliefs requisite for salvation.

## THE CROSS IN GALATIANS

The most concentrated explicit use of the terms "cross" and "crucify" in the NT appears by far in Paul's letter to the Galatians. There Paul lays great stress on the unique atoning function of the cross. He lambasted the Galatian Gentiles for deviating from his original proclamation to them (c. 49–50 CE) in thinking that circumcision could somehow facilitate right status (justification) before God and the Spirit's empowerment: "Who bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was set forth like a written public notice [or: was placarded, posted] *as crucified?*" (3:1). Christ, he declared, had not "died for no purpose" (2:21). Rather, Christ "gave himself [to make amends] for our sins" (1:4), "loved me and handed himself over for me" (2:20), and "redeemed us [literally, 'bought us out,' i.e. paid the price of our release] from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us" (3:13). A change in covenants requires the death of the testator (3:15–16). By "redeem[ing] those [or: buying those out from] under [the jurisdiction of the] law," through

his death, Jesus made possible their reception of the Spirit and so “adoption” as God’s children (4:4–6). He died to effect our “justification” or “righteousness” as an act of “the grace of God” (2:16–17, 21). The “stumbling effect [or: obstacle, offense, scandal] of the cross” is that humans cannot justify themselves before God by anything that they do, including compliance with the law of Moses (5:11; cf. 2:16). The outside agitators who are trying to get the Galatian Gentiles circumcised do so “only in order that they may not be persecuted for [proclaiming] the cross of Christ,” a proclamation that denies to the law of Moses any role in making righteous those under its jurisdiction (2:16–18; 3:21–22; 6:13).

At the same time Paul emphasizes that the crucifixion of Christ does not transpire only outside of the believer, *extra nos*. The believer is also taken up into Christ’s death and “crucified with Christ” (Gal. 2:19b; cf. Rom. 6:6). How this happens is made clear in 2:19–20. With release from the jurisdiction of the law secured by Christ’s redemptive death (“I through the law died in relation to [the jurisdiction of] the law”), the believer receives the gift of the Spirit of Christ (cf. 3:2, 5, 13–14; 4:5–6), which is another way of saying “Christ lives in me.” Those who have been “immersed into Christ have put on Christ like clothes” (3:27). To have Christ live in oneself means, by definition, that “I no longer live” or, in other words, “I . . . [now] live for God.” The power to so live, effected by the indwelling Christ, is activated by focusing on the Christ “out there,” not on the Spirit of Christ within: “The life that I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and handed himself over for me” (2:20). In other words, the power is activated by regularly directing one’s attention, in gratitude and faith, on the core gospel about Christ’s self-giving death on the cross (cf. Paul’s point about the “renewal of the mind” in 12:2).

One can be said to “have been crucified with Christ” inasmuch as, indwelt by Christ’s Spirit, one no longer lives out of the primary sway of the sinful impulses operating in the flesh, which is where one’s primary identity once lay. Instead, one has joined Christ in being released into a new kind of life, a life “led by the Spirit” such that one is no longer “under [the jurisdiction of] the law” (5:18). Thus “Christ crucified the flesh with its passions and desires” (5:24–25).

Paul views this not merely as an experience of individual reform but, more, as a beginning entrance into a collective, long-awaited, eschatological new humanity (still, of course, awaiting the resurrection of the body). It is a movement from one world of existence to another, from one creation to another. So Paul can exclaim to those who, by pressing the case for circumcision, continue to live in an old-world set of antinomies (Jew/Gentile, partly analogous to slave/free, male–female, 3:28): “Far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom (the) world has been crucified to me and I to (the) world. For neither circumcision is anything, nor a foreskin, but a new creation [is everything]” (6:14–15). Paul understood “co-crucifixion with Christ” as part of God’s larger program to re-create humanity and thence even material creation.

The consequence is that, though “called to freedom,” believers are not to turn this “freedom into a starting-point [or: base of operations, staging ground, opportunity] for the flesh, but through love serve one another as a slave” (5:13). They are to “walk by the Spirit,” be “led by the Spirit,” and “line up with the Spirit,” which will prevent them from “carrying out the desire of the flesh” (5:16, 18, 25). So the cross is not just a warrant for freedom from the law’s jurisdiction. It is also a strong ethical basis for fulfilling “the law of Christ” (6:2) with regard to love of neighbor (5:14), ending communal backbiting (5:15, 26), and restoring those who succumb to temptation (6:1–2), as well as abstaining from other “works of the flesh” (5:19–21; note the front-ending of sexual offenses in the vice list). The cross deprives people both of the right to boast in personal merit and of an excuse to engage in sinful practices.

This incorporative function of Christ’s crucifixion also receives significant attention in Romans 6:1–14. In the course of making the larger point that believers do not have license to continue in sin simply because they are “under grace,” Paul establishes that those who have been “baptized [i.e., immersed, plunged] into Christ Jesus were [also] baptized [i.e. brought under the controlling influence of] his death” (6:3). The death that Christ died was a death “in relation to sin” (6:2, 10). In other words, Christ left behind an existence in the flesh that was susceptible to the corruption of sin and death, for

a resurrection life of Spirit that was impervious even to the temptation to sin (6:4–10; cf. 1 Cor. 15:45). So to be incorporated into Christ's life is at one and the same time to be incorporated into his "death to sin." It is impossible to have one without the other.

In this way the death and resurrection of Christ became a reality, at least as a down-payment (cf. 2 Cor. 1:22), in the life of every individual believer (though Paul in Rom. 6 refers resurrection to the future and talks instead of "newness of life" and of living "as if alive from the dead," 6:4–5, 8, 11, 13; cf. 7:6). Those who have the Spirit of Christ in them and who live in conformity to that Spirit (cf. 7:6; 8:9–14) have, to some extent, left behind the old Adamic existence, where sin exercised its lordship over the flesh, for a new human existence inaugurated by Christ's death and resurrection, where the "law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" functions as the new internal regulating principle (5:15–21; 8:1) and where sin no longer "exercises lordship" because one is now "under grace" (6:14–15). So believers can be said to have had their "old human" "co-crucified" (6:6), "buried with him [i.e. Christ] through baptism into his death" (6:4), and "grown together [or: of a shared nature, fused] with the likeness of his death [i.e. with a body or humanity crucified like Christ's]" (6:5). All of this is simply a metaphorical way of talking about "the body of sin" being "put out of work" and believers no longer "serving sin" (6:6) because they "live according to the Spirit" and not "according to the flesh" and "by the Spirit put to death the deeds of the body" (8:13).

#### ATONEMENT AS AMENDS-MAKING AND RESTITUTION

There is often confusion about what precisely atonement is according to the NT witness. As Galatians shows, atonement is not to be equated with justification by faith. Being justified by faith is a benefit of the atonement. Those who put their faith in *what Christ has done for them* are justified. The atonement itself is the "what Christ has done for them" that makes possible the act of "not counting their trespasses against them" (2 Cor. 5:19), the forgiveness of sins (cf. Col. 1:14; Eph. 1:7; Matt. 26:28; Acts 13:38–39;

Heb. 9:22; 10:18), and so a righteous status before God or justification by faith (Gal. 2:16–17, 21; 3:24; Rom. 3:24, 26, 28, 30; 4:2, 5, 25; 5:1, 9, 16, 18, 19; 8:30, 33; 1 Cor. 6:11; Phil. 3:9; cf. Titus 3:11). "Being justified as a gift" occurs "*through the redemption [or: buying back] that is in Christ Jesus,*" which, in turn, Paul defines as the act by which "God sets [Christ] before himself *as an amends-making offering (hilastērion) by means of his blood [i.e. death]*" (Rom. 3:24–25). (Note that the debate over whether to translate *hilastērion* as "expiation," with sin as the object, or as "propitiation," with God as the object, misses the point that amends in Scripture is made both *for sin and to God.*) Justification by faith (which is legal terminology) is effected by something; that something is God's own loving offering of Christ's amends-making death (cf. *hilasmos* in 1 John 2:2; 4:10).

The same applies to reconciliation with God (which is relational terminology). Just as believers in Christ are "justified *by means of his blood,*" so too they are "reconciled to God *through the death of his Son*" (Rom. 5:9). "Through him [God] reconcil[e]d all things to himself, having made peace *through the blood of the cross . . . reconciled in the body of his flesh through death*" (Col. 1:20, 22). In each case it is the means by which people are reconciled to God that refers to atonement proper. When Paul discusses reconciliation in 2 Corinthians 5:18–20 he specifies that what this means is: "The one who had not known sin he [God] made [to be] sin for us" (5:21). Paul refers here to the *transfer or conveyance of sins* from the sinner to Christ, which is simply another way of speaking of an exchange of life (Christ's for that of others) or *substitutionary restitution*. We noted above that Paul in Galatians 3:13 could speak of Christ redeeming us from the law's curse "by becoming a curse for us." In Romans he puts atonement in these terms: "God, by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and concerning sin [i.e. as a sin offering] condemned sin in the flesh" (8:3). As noted above, for Paul, at least, the transfer or conveyance of sins to Christ also entails a transfer or conveyance of the sinner into union with Christ; in short, a "double transfer." *Sin-transfer* to Christ, a bottomless fount for the redemption of the world, becomes effective for any particular individual only when it is accompanied by *self-transfer* into Christ.

There is a strong background here in OT sacrifices. The book of Hebrews (specifically 6:19–10:31) is the most explicit work in the NT as regards use of sacrificial imagery for Jesus' death, building an argument about Jesus as "a high priest forever according to the order [i.e. on the pattern or model] of Melchizedek" (5:10; 6:20–7:22). His "priesthood" is said to be superior to the Levitical priesthood at many points. First, he is sinless and thus does not need to offer sacrifice "first for his own sins" (4:15; 7:26–27; 9:7, 14). Second, he offers "not the blood of goats and calves but . . . his own blood" as a "sacrifice for sins" (9:12; 10:26). Third and most importantly, his blood does not merely purify the outer body but actually "takes away sins" (9:7–10, 13; 10:1–4, 11). "Putting aside sin through the sacrifice of himself" (9:26), he offered himself "once for the purpose of bearing the sins of the many" (9:28; cf. Isa. 53:12). "Having obtained eternal redemption" "from the transgressions under the first covenant" (9:12, 15), he inaugurated a new covenant through blood "for without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness" (9:18, 22). He created a people "made holy" by "the blood of the covenant" that consisted of "the offering of the body of Jesus Christ" (10:10, 29). Fourth, he does not need to offer sacrifices regularly since his sacrifice of himself is efficacious "once [for all time]" (7:27; 9:26; 10:11–14). Fifth, after making sacrifice he entered the "true tent" in heaven, not a shadow and copy of the real one (8:1–5; 9:11–12, 24). Sixth, since he never dies, he "always lives to make intercession" (7:23–25).

According to the Synoptic Gospels, Jesus himself, at his last supper, understood his coming death in atoning, sacrificial terms (Mark 14:25 par.; cf. 1 Cor. 11:25). By referring to his death as "my blood of the covenant" he drew a parallel with "the blood of the covenant" at Sinai that ratified and inaugurated the Mosaic covenant (Exod. 24:8, viewed as atoning by Targums *Pseudo-Jonathan* and *Onkelos*). By further describing this blood as "poured out [or: shed] for many," he clearly echoed the words of Isaiah 53:12 regarding the Suffering Servant: "he *poured out* his life to death and . . . bore the sin of *many*, and made intercession *for* the transgressors." Matthew appropriately glosses the saying over the cup with the words "for the forgiveness of sins" (Matt. 26:28). Allusions to

the atonement made by the Isaianic Suffering Servant lie behind many NT atonement texts (esp. Heb. 9:28), including all the references to Christ dying "for us" or "for our sins," but most clearly in 1 Pet. 2:24, which refers to Christ as the one "who himself bore our sins" [a conflation of LXX Isa 53:4 and 53:12] in his body on the tree . . . 'by' whose 'wound' you 'were healed' [LXX Isa 53:5]."

The context for the Last Supper as a Passover meal also connects Jesus' death to the slaughter of the Passover lamb, whose blood placed on the doorpost averted destruction for those within. This symbol is invested with atoning significance in early Christian literature, perhaps by a conjoining with the reference to the Suffering Servant as a quiet "sheep led to the slaughter or a lamb before its shearer" (Isa. 53:7; cf. Acts 8:32). In John's Gospel, John the Baptist is made to cry out, "Look, the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (1:29; cf. 1:36; 19:36). Paul declares that "Christ our Passover was sacrificed" (1 Cor. 5:7). The Book of Revelation presents Christ in the symbol of a lamb that was "slaughtered and . . . [that] bought for God, by your blood, [saints] from every . . . nation" (Rev. 5:9), blood that washed white the robes of the saints (7:14) and conquered Satan (12:11).

Cultic-sacrificial imagery poses problems for a modern culture that no longer sacrifices. However, sacrifice is only a metaphor for an underlying concept. The same applies to the terminology of "redemption" or "ransom," which is commercial imagery for buying back (Mark 10:45 par.; Gal. 3:13; 4:5; 1 Cor. 1:30; 6:20; 7:3; Rom. 3:24; Col. 1:14; Eph. 1:7, 14; 1 Tim. 2:6; Titus 2:14; Heb. 9:12, 15; 1 Pet. 1:18; Rev. 5:9). Behind both sets of metaphors is the underlying concept of *making amends or restitution* for wrong done.

The concept is well grounded in the OT. Contrary to what some have argued (Jacob Milgrom, among others), the translation "effect purgation" for the verb *kipper*, despite the etymological derivation of "to cover" or "to rub off, wipe" is often too weak for the context of certain passages. In nearly all cases "make restitution or amends" works equally well or better. This is in keeping with the LXX translation of *kipper* by *exhilaskomai* (LS): "propitiate [God/gods], atone for [wrongdoing], make atonement [to God/gods for wrongdoing]"; cf. *hilaskomai*: "appease, conciliate [God/gods, humans]".

While it is true that *kipper* does not have God explicitly mentioned as the object, it is everywhere implicit. Even when atonement is made for parts of the sanctuary or for ritual uncleanness, the sense is always “to make restitution or amends (to God)” for the contamination of the place where God resides, thereby averting God’s wrath for sin (in the form of a plague, etc.).

The element of conciliation, usually by restitution, in the verb *kipper* is clear from the following examples. (1) In the law regarding the census, the payment of a half shekel tax is said to “*make restitution/amends* for your lives,” which in turn parallels the expression “giving a ransom for your lives” (Exod. 30:15–16). In other words, atonement is effected by a price paid to satisfy God and thereby avert God’s wrath and spare one’s life. The meaning of “purifying” as in ritual cleansing is too weak. (2) When “the whole congregation of the Israelites rebelled against Moses and against Aaron” after Korah’s rebellion, God told Moses to step aside “so that I may consume them.” Moses instructed Aaron to take his censer, put incense on it, “and carry it quickly to the congregation and *make restitution* for them. For wrath has gone out from Yahweh; the plague has begun.” Aaron did as he was told: “He put on the incense and *made restitution* for the people . . . and the plague was stopped” (Num. 16:44–48). (3) At Shittim, the Israelites began to cohabit with Moabite women and worship their gods at the cult center in Peor. “Yahweh’s anger was kindled against Israel. Yahweh said to Moses, ‘Take all the chiefs of the people, and impale them in the sun before Yahweh, in order that the fierce anger of Yahweh may turn away from Israel.’” When Phinehas pierced an Israelite man and his Midianite wife “the plague was stopped.” God declared that Phinehas’ zeal “turned back my wrath from the Israelites.” Phinehas was accordingly granted a perpetual priesthood because he “*made restitution* for the Israelites” (Num. 25:1–13). (4) During the reign of David there was a three-year famine in Israel brought on by Saul’s earlier attempt to wipe out the Gibeonites, non-Israelite residents of Amorite stock. In order to remove the “bloodguilt,” David asked the Gibeonites, “What shall I do for you? With what shall I *make restitution* . . . ?” They answered, “Let seven of [Saul’s] sons be handed over to us, and we will impale them before Yahweh at Gibeon.” David

handed them over, they were impaled “on the mountain before Yahweh,” and God ended the famine (2 Sam. 21:1–6, 9, 14). Of note here is the similarity between impaling and being crucified or “hanging on a piece of wood” (Gal. 3:13 citing Deut. 21:23).

Both Isaiah 53:4–12 and 4 Maccabees clearly depict the suffering and death of the martyr as a transfer of punishment, that is, as a *quid pro quo* exchange of life. In the former the Servant of Yahweh “has borne our illnesses and carried our pains . . . He was wounded for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities. The chastisement for our well-being was upon him and by his wound we were healed . . . Yahweh has let the iniquity of us all strike him [or: has laid on him the iniquity of us all] . . . You make his life a guilt offering . . . He shall bear their iniquities . . . He bore the sin of many.” According to 4 Maccabees 6:28, the priest Eleazar, who was being martyred for his faithful observance of the law in the days of the Seleucid tyrant Antiochus IV, prayed to God: “Be merciful to your people, and let our punishment suffice for them. Make my blood their purification, and take my life in exchange for theirs.” According to 4 Maccabees 17:21–22, the martyrdoms of Eleazar and the woman and her seven sons saved Israel, “they having become, as it were, a ransom [i.e. a life in exchange for a life (*antipsychon*)] of the sin of our nation. And through the blood of those devout ones and their amends-making (*hilastērion*) death [or: the amends-making offering of their death (*tou hilastēriou tou thanatou*)], divine Providence brought Israel safely through.”

The distinctive NT witness to Christ’s death is not that his death is something other than amends-making to God. Rather, the unique element is that God is the one who makes amends (implicitly, to himself), through the death of his Son, for the sins of the world. In the NT this action on God’s part is repeatedly and unequivocally attributed to God’s and Christ’s love for the world, not to some divine child-abuse (John 3:16; Gal. 2:20; 2 Cor. 5:14; Rom. 5:5, 8; Eph. 2:4; 5:2, 25; Titus 3:4–7; 1 John 3:16; 4:8–10).

The best contemporary analogy for the atoning effect of Christ’s death is perhaps a monetary illustration: one person pays the debt of another. Some in antiquity even sold themselves into slavery to buy the purchase price of another. Humans must compensate God for

their sins; that is, they must make amends to God for the injury done to God's person. Sacrifice is, in its fundamental essence, a gift to God and the sin offering is simply a special type of compensation to God. In the case of Jesus, one human being makes amends for human iniquity through his own life. The strange twist is that, when all is said and done, it turns out that (much as in the case of Abraham's offering of Isaac) God himself provides the offering. In our own day, we do not accept the transfer of guilt to another in the case of criminal offense. The one who did the crime must do the time. Our analogy is inadequate, though, because we cannot fuse our identities with another person.

#### OTHER APPLICATIONS OF THE CROSS

The theological motif of the crucifixion of Christ is applied in many ways in the NT. Some have already been suggested above and we can only add here briefly a few more. Paul in Romans emphasizes the atoning death of Christ as the basis for security, boasting, and joy (Rom. 5 and 8:17–39), which in turn should lead to an end to squabbles over matters of indifference and issue in a united worship celebration of God's grace (14:1–15:13). In 2 Corinthians and Philippians, Paul images the death of Christ as a model for cruciform existence, both in his own ministry and life and in the life of rank-and-file believers: an end to self-boasting, an acceptance of suffering for the gospel, a celebration of weakness, and a rejection of ministry of self-gain through guile (2 Cor. 4:8–12; 1:5–11; 2:14–17; 4:2; 5:14–15, 18–21; 6:4–10; 8:9; 11:23–12:10; 13:2–4; Phil. 1:21, 29; 2:5–8; 3:7–11, 18).

The significance of the death of Christ extends to example. In Mark (largely followed by Matthew), Jesus is a model of obedience in the "hour" of eschatological crisis, an example for Mark's audience during the "desolation" of the temple. The person who would be Jesus' disciple must likewise "deny himself and take up his cross" and "lose his life" (8:34–37). Mark brings together both Jesus' death as atonement and Jesus' death as example: "For the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many" (10:45). Ironically, though derided on the cross for allegedly not being able to "save himself" (15:29–

31), Jesus showed that by not saving himself he was able not only to save himself (cf. 8:35) but also to save others, through his "blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many" (14:24). Mark contrasts this image of Christ's selfless service in death with the image of the disciples, who argue about who will be the greatest in the coming kingdom, repeatedly respond in fear rather than faith to crisis situations, and fail to understand the necessity of taking up their own cross, being a slave to all, and enduring to the end in the period of persecutions and temptations that precede the coming kingdom (4:1–20, 37–41; 6:37–52; 8:14–21, 31–38; 9:30–37; 10:28–52; 13:9–37; 14:17–72; 15:21–39; 16:8).

Regarding Luke-Acts, scholars dispute whether Luke even held a theology of the atonement. Some argue that he replaced it completely with a theology of the cross as a model of humility and service for Christians who serve as patrons and as a witness to pagans concerning the good character of Christians. Luke clearly omits one of two major atonement sayings in Mark, the ransom statement in Mark 10:45 (cf. Luke 22:24–27, which adds the criticism about self-aggrandizing "benefactors"). Moreover, Luke 22:19b–20, which parallels Mark 14:24 (viz. Jesus' words over the cup at his last supper), does not appear in the best "western" manuscripts of Luke's Gospel. Some scholars believe that this shorter reading is the original one. In addition, the speeches in Acts typically present Jesus' death as little more than an unfortunate act predicted beforehand by Scripture, for which Israel is culpable and which the resurrection of Christ remedied; essentially, you killed the Messiah but God raised him up (2:23–36; 3:14–26; 4:10; 7:52; 10:39–40; 13:27–37; 17:31).

On the other hand, in the two most important speeches of Paul presented in Acts, his speech at the Pisidian Antioch synagogue and his address to the Ephesian elders at Miletus, Luke has statements that appear to be predicated on an atonement theology: "from all things that were not able to be justified [or: counted righteous] in the law of Moses everyone who believes is being justified in [or: by] this one [i.e. Jesus]" (Acts 13:38–39); "Shepherd the church of God [or, with some mss.: of the Lord], which he obtained through his own blood" (20:28). In addition, the omission of the atonement saying over the cup in 22:19b–20 is not attested by

the older and normally superior “Alexandrian” manuscripts of Luke’s Gospel. There is good reason to suppose that the scribes who produced the “western” manuscripts without 22:19b–20 removed the saying to protect their community from further outbreaks of intense violence against them like the one perpetrated in Lyons (Gaul) in c. 170 CE (viz., for allegedly drinking ritual blood; so Billings).

It is difficult to believe that someone who could cite Jesus’ role as the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53:7–8c (Acts 8:32–33) would not have made any connection with the atonement language of Isaiah 53:4–6, 8d, 10–12. It is also inconceivable that anyone who had any significant association with Paul or at least with Pauline communities, such as the author of Acts probably had, would not have held a theology of atonement. The earliest leaders of the Christian church in Jerusalem and Antioch held a theology of atonement, according to Paul’s own attestation in the early 50s (1 Cor. 15:3, 11; note also Paul’s use of traditional atonement formulas). Perhaps by the end of the 1st century, when being maligned by pagan authorities became more of a concern than being persecuted by Jewish quarters, the author of Luke–Acts perceived a need to mute atonement theology a bit in order to make Christian doctrine less susceptible to pagan slander and/or more appealing to the sensibilities of well-to-do Christians like Theophilus. In its place, Luke emphasized the more palatable image of Jesus as a noble martyr who, like Stephen in his own martyrdom, lovingly entrusted his spirit to God (Luke 23:34–46; Acts 7:54–60).

In 1 Peter we find a similar emphasis on Christ’s death as a model for how to endure unjust suffering in a manner that will serve as a positive witness to the world (1:6–7; 2:18–3:1; 3:9–18; 4:12–19; 5:9–11). However, here the author clearly continued to maintain the idea that Jesus’ “precious blood” like that of an unblemished lamb “ransomed” believers (1:18–19) and that Jesus “bore our sins in his body on the cross” (2:24) and “suffered for sins once for all” (3:18).

In John’s Gospel the atoning death of Christ is central to high Christology, inasmuch as Jesus through such a death is made the indispensable source of life for those chosen by God (17:2). In the final and ultimate act of obedience glorifying God, Jesus is simultaneously glorified as God’s

Son. In addition to being “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (1:29, 36), Jesus is Jacob’s Ladder, the one outstretched on the cross who by virtue of that death becomes the link between heaven and earth (1:51). He is the Bronze Serpent who, when “lifted up” on the cross, gives eternal life to all who look on (= believe in) him (3:14–16). He is the Bread from Heaven that is “given for the life of the world,” life-sustaining food provided by his flesh on the cross (6:51). He is the one who dies not only for the nation of Israel but also for the Gentiles (11:50–52). He is the grain of wheat that must fall to the ground and die before it can bear fruit; he must be “lifted up” to draw all people to himself (12:24, 32). When the spear is put through his side, out flows water and blood, a symbol of the fact that the death of Jesus is required for washing and sanctifying human vessels to receive the Spirit (19:34). In 1 John the atoning significance of Christ’s death underscores the importance of human existence that takes sin and life in the flesh seriously (not in docetic fashion) and manifests concrete love for other believers in imitation of God’s concrete love for us in the cross (2:2; 3:4–6, 16; 4:7–21; 5:6–8).

SEE ALSO: Atonement, Theories of; Paul, Saint; Theology of the Cross

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