



The Character of God

eNewsletter

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THE CHANGING OF THE GUARD

By Marilyn Campbell

Some of you have been blessed to hear Elder Demetrius Leach or others speak on the subject of the Watches and the changing of the guard. I have only recently been introduced to this subject and do not claim to have thoroughly processed it yet. But several things have happened recently which seem to relate to this topic; therefore, I thought I would pass this information on what I now know (or think I know) to you, in order that we can process it together.



What Is the Changing of the Guard?

When Gideon and his band of three hundred men went up against the Midianites, they had very specific directions from the Lord to strike at the time of the *changing of the guard* between the evening and the midnight watches. The Midianites were less alert then—more engaged in changing the watch than

in watching, thus were more vulnerable to attack. And, it should be noted, Gideon and his men gained a decisive military victory with non-military means on this occasion. They had not a sword among them. The victory was the Lord's. This was "the sword of the Lord and of Gideon." The experience of Gideon and his band, some say, serves as a type of events to transpire with regard to the final crisis. Now, hold that thought for a moment while I update you on the Watches.

What Are the Watches?

The Watches provide the only means to measure time, as it pertains to Christ's second coming, this side of the antitypical Day of Atonement. The Watches tell us where we are in God's great timepiece. We know we can't determine the exact date and hour of our Lord's return—"But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only" (Matthew 24:36).



Time is not a criterion for us today, but condition of the hearts of His people will determine when Jesus will return. But we still would kinda like to know—maybe not the exact day and hour but when we're getting warm? That is the function of the Watches.

We have inspired testimony supporting the legitimacy of the Watches:

"I saw that **watch after watch** was in the past. Because of this, should there be a lack of vigilance? Oh, no! There is the greater necessity of unceasing watchfulness, for now the moments are fewer than before the passing of the **first watch**. . . . If we watched with unabated vigilance then, how much more need of double watchfulness in the **second**

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watch. The passing of the second watch has brought us to the third, and now it is inexcusable to abate our watchfulness. The **third watch** calls for threefold earnestness. . . . God's unwillingness to have His people perish has been the reason for so long delay. . . ." (Mar. 56. Also 2T192-4).

Further, angels are designated as "watchers" in Daniel 4:13. Therefore, we feel we have sufficient inspired authorization to inquire in this area.

It is generally understood that October 22, 1844 was the beginning of the first, forty-year Generation. (Israel's forty-year stay in the wilderness is the antecedent for concluding that each generation is forty years.) Each Generation is divided into four ten-year Watches: The evening watch, the midnight watch, the cockcrowing watch, the morning watch. (See Mark 13:35.) Four Generations equals one Cycle.

Therefore, the Generations are as follows:

First Generation:

- 1844 – 1854 First Watch
- 1854 – 1864 Second Watch
- 1864 – 1874 Third Watch
- 1874 – 1884 Fourth Watch

The first Generation beyond the antitypical Day of Atonement passed, and the Lord didn't return in the first Watch. Neither did He return in the

second Watch. If anything is going to happen, it is most likely to be in the first ten years (the first or evening Watch). If He fails to return in the first Watch, then He will certainly return (we think) in the second. Less likely by far are the third and fourth Watches. Thus passed the first Generation. Sister White began writing about the Laodicean condition in the church among God's people.

Then suddenly God took a hand in promoting His truth and educating His people so that the condition of their hearts would enable Him to return and claim them as His own. In the first Watch of the *second Generation* He sent the 1888 message of righteousness by faith to bless His people. This would enable Him to return—and surely, we thought, He would return in the first Watch.

Second Generation:

- 1884 – 1894 First Watch
- 1894 – 1904 Second Watch
- 1904 – 1914 Third Watch
- 1914 – 1924 Fourth Watch

Still He could not get enough of His people into a righteous condition—reflecting

His character—to allow Him to return. The Holy Spirit, which had begun to pour out of His great heart of love, was recalled. The people didn't want Him. Thus passed the second Generation.



A Watching, Bible reading Christian

Nothing significant happened in the next two Generations: The first is listed as:

Third Generation:

- 1924 – 1934 First Watch
- 1934 – 1944 Second Watch
- 1944 – 1954 Third Watch
- 1954 – 1964 Fourth Watch

. . . and the second as:

Fourth Generation:

- 1964 – 1974 First Watch
- 1974 – 1984 Second Watch
- 1984 – 1994 Third Watch
- 1994 – 2004 Fourth Watch

Although nothing significant happened in these, the last two Generations, Jesus words here come into play. Regarding the fourth Generation, He said,

"Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. Even so, when you see all these things, you know that it is near, right at the door. I tell you the truth, *this generation will certainly not pass away* until all these things have



A Watching and Praying Christian

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happened.” He said, “Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away” (Matthew 24:33-35, NIV).

The first Cycle may be significant in that all who will play a part in the final crisis are on-board at this time.



groom cometh (Matthew 25:1-13).

The angel flew over Egypt to destroy the firstborn at midnight (Exodus 12:29).

Paul and Silas were delivered from a Philippian jail at midnight (Acts 16:25).

The First Watch of the New Cycle

The first Cycle completed in 2004. We have experienced four Watches in each of four Generations. The first Watch of the *fifth* Generation—or the first Watch of the *second Cycle*—began in autumn 2004. That makes autumn 2014 the dividing line between the first (or evening) Watch and the second (or midnight) Watch and the optimum time for some significant movement toward our dream of seeing the Lord return.

It should also be noted in passing that many significant events of Bible history happened at midnight:

Jacob struggled with the Angel of the covenant at midnight (PP 196). He was unarmed and defenseless, and is therefore a type of God’s people in the crisis of the last days.

At midnight the cry went out, Behold the Bride-

At midnight God will deliver His people (EW 285; GC 636).

Passages stating that something significant happened at

The Watches provide the only means to measure time, as it pertains to Christ’s second coming, this side of the antitypical Day of Atonement.

midnight are abundant in God’s word. Many more exist than are offered here. Could there be a connection between events occurring at midnight, for which there is one per night or three hundred sixty-five per year, and the midnight watch of the final crisis? Could our Lord plan to return at literal midnight sometime during the midnight watch?

The “changing of the guard” refers to an event to take place between the evening and the midnight watches that will, in a sense, change everything for the people of God. What will

that incident be?

As we look around to identify the events that could be described as “the changing of the guard,” it is not clear exactly what it is or how to identify it. But here are some events that have been offered to date:

Obama’s re-election.

Obama is neither black nor white, neither Christian nor Muslim. He campaigned on a platform of “change” and didn’t tell us that the change he had in mind was, in my opinion, from bad to worse. He certainly is not through with the job. Could his re-election be what the Bible refers to as the “changing of the guard?”

Some point out that his re-election pertains to the United States only; the changing of the guard will be worldwide. For this reason they do not feel that his re-election qualifies as the “changing of the guard.” Further, Sheriff Joe Arpaio of Arizona, who has been investigating Obama, promises an imminent announcement pertaining to this man that will take him out of the White House and reverse all the so-called legislation that he has passed.

The Pope resigns. Some believe this case more closely ad-

believe this case more closely adheres to principles that could constitute “the changing of the guard.” Most of you know by now that Joseph Ratzinger has resigned, leaving his post, February 28, 2013. This has not occurred for about six hundred years. The world will understand that our works identify our father. You may read more about it

Here: <http://itccs.org/2013/02/16/roman-church-admits-the-popes-guilt-joseph-ratzinger-to-evade-justice-and-hide-out-in-the-vatican-for-his-own-legal-immunity-and-protection/>

Here: <http://www.scribd.com/doc/86619003/Hidden-No-Longer-Genocide-in-Canada-Past-and-Present-by-Kevin-D-Annett-M-A-M-Div>

Here: <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/02/15/us-pope-resignation-immunity-idUSBRE91E0ZI20130215>

Here: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2279463/Was-Pope-pushed-An-abuse-scandal-corruption-dark-intrigue->

[Benedicts-shock-resignation.html#ixzz2LJ9BDD1e](http://www.benedictshockresignation.html#ixzz2LJ9BDD1e)

Or will the changing of the guard be something else, perhaps something that we cannot anticipate at present. Perhaps it will be a combination of many events that will make it clear that God is moving in our world



THE DEATH OF THE WICKED: WHO BENEFITS?

By Kevin Straub

Is it a trick question? Probably. The Bible states clearly that the wages of sin is death. We understand that the character of God is such that He ever and only acts as a Sustainer and Protector and that when He steps out of that role it is *not an arbitrary decision on His part*, but that He is *forced out* of that role by the decisions and will of the free moral agent beings that He has created. It is foreign to His character not to stay in His role, and that is why we call it His “Strange Act.”

It is argued that in the final act of the disposition of the wicked, God Himself acts as the executioner of the sentence against the transgressor, which runs diametrically counter to the express statement of inspiration:

“God does **not** stand toward the sinner as an executioner of the sentence against transgression; but he leaves the rejecters of his mercy to themselves, to reap that which they have sown” (GC 88 37).

The destruction of the wicked, as executed in terms which the Biblical language seems to portray, is a gruesome, wicked course for a god to take, for he either harnesses weapons of mass destruction by willful exertion of his power or worse yet, fabricates them by fiat creation—in this case, the worst imaginable, fire—then



unleashes that weapon by his own hand upon the heads of those who would not serve him.

It gets even worse, as the Biblical language employed by Ellen White depicts a god who, along with his “saints” determines the duration of time that they should suffer so that the proper amount of punishment may be meted out in due recompense for the sin they have committed.¹

In order for such justice to operate, that god has to exercise his sustaining and creative and protecting powers to such degree as would keep the suffering ones alive in the fires until the full penalty is paid. Moreover, he would have to continually regenerate nerves so they could feel the searing agony of fire upon their skin and flesh and lungs. This would make him to be the ultimate, most heinous torturer such as

¹ This is definitely an eye-for-eye retributive arrangement going on, here, isn't it? How is this not contrary to Jesus' teaching in Matthew 5, where He told us that it was given that way in Moses but He was here to tell us that God's way is not like that; God does good for and to His enemies. Those laws were given because of the hardness of men's hearts, who would naturally recompense “many eyes for an eye.” So God had to step in and give laws that would preserve the people and His truth for future generations. These were not laws that they could live by, ultimately. “Wherefore I gave them also statutes [that were] not good, and judgments whereby they should not live...” (Eze. 20:25). Neither will we ever enter into His rest if we live under this paradigm.

as this world has ever known. Not only does this god destroy, he tortures. This is retributive to the ultimate degree. I am not at this time going into the building of the case showing how the final disposition of sin takes place, as that has been shown in other writings and you can request the same for your study. I am exposing the lies of Satan here

I often make the request of anyone who believes the standard paradigm of God's "justice," to tell me, from the Scriptures, what good can possibly be effected through such a scenario? How is satisfaction made and for whom? I bring forward four groups for consideration of this question:

1. The Godhead. Is God satisfied by the death of the wicked? He says, He takes no pleasure (Eze. 18:23; 33:11). God's word does not produce death but only His pleasure:

"So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper [in the thing] whereto I sent it" (Isa. 55:11).

"This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all" (1 John 1:5).

"In him was life; and the life was the light of men" (John 1:4).

2. The Unfallen. Here we have the on-looking universe who have been following the great controversy about God's government and Character with an intensity which we cannot even begin to understand. There were millions of angels who became demons over this. The Captain of the Lord's Host became a man and suffered the brutish existence of fallen man and torture at the hands of His creation in order to end the lies about how God deals with sin and sinners. There has been a huge disruption in the peace and harmony of the universe and all questions are not settled until it is actually over. The Bible tells us that God does not change. So, what God refused to do at the beginning of this controversy, will He now deem as acceptable?

When the Bible says the wages of sin is death, it is *death which arises from sin itself*. Sin itself destroys and there is no need for a god to step in to make sure the job gets done. This is a preposterous conclusion to make, particularly under the terms of the Great Controversy, insight into



which we as a people have prided ourselves. The Controversy which has arisen is over the very Character of God and it will close upon this point.

"By a life of rebellion, Satan and all who unite with him place themselves so out of harmony with God that His very presence is to them a consuming fire. The glory of Him who is love will destroy them.

"At the beginning of the great controversy, the angels did not understand this. *Had Satan and his host then been left to reap the full result of their sin, they would have perished; but it would not have been apparent to heavenly beings that this was the inevitable result of sin. A doubt of God's goodness would have remained in their minds as evil seed, to produce its deadly fruit of sin and woe*" (DA 764).

(There are discussions about the fire and about the glory that destroys, but we'll leave that for another time.)

God did not let the thing take its natural course right at the outset because it would have been misunderstood by the unfallen universe and would have aroused fear. It would have destroyed the peace and harmony of the universe and would have instituted an unrest that would have likely escalated into further rebellion and more instant deaths which would have been attributed to a God jealous for His rule and authority; as One Who would use instant annihilation against any who got out of line. The remaining loyal beings would not be able to serve free from fear. Love gets wiped out in all of this. Oh, God could talk; sure, He could simply *tell* them that they were dying because they were choosing to separate from Himself, which was where they were "plugged in" to the life-giving current. But that would only be words. There had to be a demonstration that *sin does, in fact, kill*. It is likely that the entire universe would have fallen in a domino effect if this would have been how God dealt with sin. Any remaining beings would serve only under a regime of fear, believing that God Himself would kill them if they sought to go their own way and live under a government with self-interest at the core.

God did not let natural consequence of sin play out immediately at the outset of the rebellion. Satan's government would have to be unmasked so that sin would be seen to be the real

thing that causes death. This is the truth about which God is trying to get people to open their eyes. If we let sin run for 6,000 years and then see that God has to step in and wipe them out Himself, anyway, we are back to “square 1.” It doesn’t matter if we put a million years of delay in there; the end result is the same: it will be understood that God Himself is the One Who will bring about second death by the exercise of His own power. Somehow, the cross and the time elapsed since sin’s inception is seen to give God an excuse to now break His own law and perform a mass execution. Only humans break the law to uphold the law. God does not have to do this.

3. The Redeemed. This is particularly poignant. Here we have our Lord coming to set the record straight on Who God is:

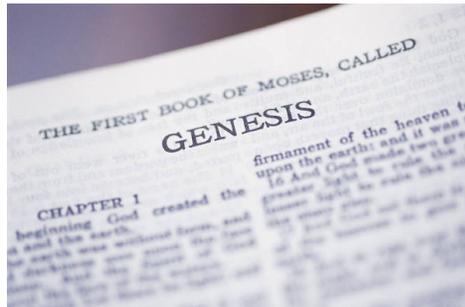
“...he that hath seen me hath seen the Father” (John 14:9).

“I and [my] Father are one” (John 10:30).

“If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works: that ye may know, and believe, that the Father [is] in me, and I in him” (John 10:37, 38).

He preached turning the other cheek, loving one’s enemies, NOT returning blow for blow, and NOT calling down fire on the heads of those who

would not receive us, yet what does He do in the end? In the standard paradigm, He is seen to destroy His enemies in an exacting retribution where they are kept alive in the fires to pay for every sin, fires which He Himself pours down upon them.



The redeemed have gone through a harrowing experience in the final generation, where they have come to such a point in their character development as they would not lift a finger to retaliate against their enemies, being desirous only of vindication of the name/character of the God Whom they serve, against Whom the whole world has arrayed themselves under a tyrannical regime that demands obedience to its laws on pain of death.

4. The Wicked. These are going into eternal death and will be as though they had not been. There is nothing to be gained for their sakes, by torturing them hideously. They are not going to turn from their ways, they are the “finally impenitent.” They are not going to remember what happened to them, for they will never be again. If there is

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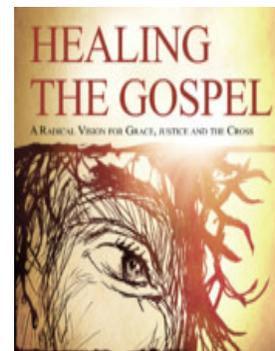


New Book:

Healing the Gospel

By Derek Flood

We all know that Satan has made this world a vast wasteland of deception. But we are privileged to have authors today who are actively “going after” that deception in a big way. We find as time goes by that more and more are rising up to contest these errors, and to teach the blessed truth of God’s character of love (or insights relating thereto). A recent one is Derek Flood, with his new work, *Healing the Gospel*. You may read reviews and read his book by going to these links.



<https://itunes.apple.com/us/podcast/healing-the-gospel-audio-book/id578826548>

<http://spectrummagazine.org/blog/2013/02/19/healing-gospel%E2%80%94review>

You will find an article by Derek Flood on page 12 of this newsletter.

THE AFRICA WORK

by Nathan Onduma and Nicola Straub

The Lord Himself is working on bringing hearts and minds to a knowledge of Himself. This Divine global mission is also alive and active in Kenya as the Word continues to be shared among brethren. On January 26th, a youth seminar was conducted at the home of James Ongiri in Keroka, Kenya. James' passion for the message of God's character of love has moved him to travel abroad and preach the good news abroad or at home. Sabbath meetings commenced with 27 participants including 7 adults, 14 youth and 6 children.

As a key note speaker, Nathan Onduma presented a message entitled "Loud Cry Education" which highlighted how true education, the highest education, is the progressive knowledge of God and His principles of government. True education is to know, understand and experience the "circuit of beneficence", the law of divine, unselfish, *agape* love. Another speaker, John Orina gave the mid-afternoon study on "Personal Responsibility" which centered on issues of custom and tradition in society as compared to the principles of God's government. Later, Nathan led a study on "The

Love of God, Amazing Grace" and "the Knowledge of God in Christ". The sessions were followed by a discussion period and questions, particularly about understanding Biblical Language.

On Sunday, the group enjoyed three sessions. Nathan concluded his study on God's character from the previous day. Next, James Ongiri



A group of the brethren in Africa on a recent Sabbath.

spoke on the "Vanity of Vanities", looking into Ecclesiastes chapters 1, 2 and 11, which stressed that without Christ, life is just vanity and vexation of Spirit (Eccl. 2:17). Finally, John Orina concluded his study by bringing out elements of character that make a man successful; the irrepressible desire for some greater good, the indomitable will, strenuous effort, and untiring perseverance (MYP 25).

In addition to this recent seminar, Nathan and James have continued their work with the book translation of *God Character: the Best News in the Universe*. They are currently working on chapter 15. For February, it was decided to assist this work by providing James with some personal financial support which will enable him to work full time on the translation. We have also found a sponsor to cover next month's expenses. Our hope is to have the book translated and ready for print as quickly as possible, in anticipation of the Kenyan Mission Trip, later this year.

An additional component of the African ministry that was recently embarked upon was to start acquiring some books for sharing with people, such as *Patriarchs and Prophets*, *Prophets and Kings*, *Desire of Ages*, *Acts of the Apostles*, *Great Controversy*, *Steps to Christ*, *Christ Object Lessons*, and *Ministry of Healing*. We were only able to buy a few of each book but have hopes of expanding our literature evangelism efforts. Of course, the publication of the translated book will also be a significant emphasis for this part of the ministry.

If you would like to hear more about or contribute to the work in Kenya, please feel free to contact Nicola Straub at nicola.straub@yahoo.com. Be a part of filling the earth with God's glory, in Africa!

HOW LONG HALT YE BETWEEN TWO OPINIONS?

By Author Unknown

Editor's Comment: I seem to have lost the name of the author of this piece, but because of the point he/she is making here, I decided to publish it anyway. While this is an important point, it is not stressed as it should be. I hope that this publication of it will help reinforce it in all of our minds.

Are we, as Adventists, being prepared for restoration to the glorious garden of Eden? "So I will restore to you the years that the swarming locust has eaten. . . . [A]nd (you shall) praise the name (character) of the Lord your God" (Joel 2:25-26). A people will one day understand the character of God as never before, and the prophet Hosea reveals it. "And it shall be in that day, says the Lord, that you will call Me My Husband and no longer call Me My (slave) Master. For I will take from her mouth (speech) the names (characteristics) of the Baals (Hosea 2:16-17). What Hosea is expressing here is that all along man was worshipping God out of bondage in fear and torment and from the devil's view of God (characteristics of Baal), but one day they would receive a Great Light and understand *agape* love and worship from love and love alone. For perfect love shall cast out fear (1 John 4:18)

How can one know he is worshipping the true God, as Elijah did, when he called forth the people and said, "How long will you falter between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow Him, but if Baal follow Him" (1 Kings 18:21). As the *first* Elijah movement called forth a testing of the bulls' sacrifice to identify the true God, the *last* Elijah movement of true Adventism must present a test and reveal Baal and God in their proper place. The test or trial which Ellen White describes is a great *shaking* in the church of Laodicea. Why? Because John describes Laodicea as lukewarm. All traditions and doctrines must be tested. The work below may help in removing the Baals and drawing one out of lukewarmness and into the warmth of God's love.

Two Views of God

Two views of Christianity will be tested by the following example. God can be compared to an oxygen tank, and all created beings are hooked up by a mask and hose to God's oxygen tank, which is the source of life.

1st View) When one declares he desires not to go to heaven and on the last day faces God in judgment, the Father reveals the sins and then

Camp Meeting Schedule

As we near the close of the work here on earth our opportunities to meet in the fellowship of the Spirit are more and more precious. We hope to enjoy camp meeting with you this year.

For on-going information about each camp meeting please check the **TruthInJesus.org** website or contact the following:

St. Philip, Barbados:

Demetrius Leach, 208-475-4028
demetriusleach1964@gmail.com

St. Maries, Idaho:

Victoria Johnson, 208-318-6430
victoriajohnson@cableone.net

Manchester, Jamaica:

Owen Barnett, 876-280-9994
876-839-8059
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turns off the oxygen tank, and the person perishes.

2nd View) When one declares he desires not to go to heaven and on the last day faces God in judgment, the Father reveals the sins, but this time the person, knowing he's lost, removes the oxygen mask, thus without oxygen to breathe, he perishes. Yet the Father's tank is still ever flowing with oxygen.

Distinguishing Baal's Teaching

Both of these teachings cannot be correct. Therefore, how can we distinguish between the truth of the matter and Baal's teaching or Baal's false view of God?

The word teaches us that God is love. Romans 5:8 says, "But God demonstrates His own love towards us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

The Cross

The cross reveals Jesus' changeless, self-sacrificing love towards sinners. "Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever" (Hebrews 13:8). Since the Father and Son are one and the same in character, we can determine which view above is correct via the cross. Since Jesus became sin and died the second death as a substitute for human's second death, we must review and determine what killed Jesus on the cross. *What kills Jesus on the cross establishes what kills the sinner on the last day.* Everything depends on this. For if the sinner on the last day does not die in a similar manner as Jesus died, then Jesus could never claim to be a true substitute for the

sinners' second death. Harmonizing these events is crucial. If the sins of the world caused Jesus' death—and the Father has no sin in Him and therefore cannot, by principle, break His own commandment and punish and kill His own Son—then He cannot have anything to do with the death of the wicked.

View One represents the Father as *causing* the second death of humans, but in reality, He would then also have had to kill Jesus on the cross. Yet, the lost sinner the last day has made a choice and that was ultimately to separate from the Father's life-giving love (or oxygen tank) in the Son. He, by choice, has removed his own oxygen mask. Is it reasonable to understand that the second death is caused by their own sin and not the Father's killing them? Therefore the second view is correct and in line with the death of Jesus. Sin kills sinners, not God.

All comments are welcome but do remember that Ellen White said all books from Genesis to Revelation are to be studied in the light that streams from Calvary.

Added comments to study:

View One comes from these two texts: "And then the lawless one (wicked) will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming (2 Thess. 2:8). And "now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison. . . .

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The Peru Mission

We have received an **urgent call** from Isaac and Sandy Workman and their family. As some of you know, they have been stationed in Peru the past few years, doing a good work to establish truth there. They have seen the influence of their teaching go out to all of South America, and have proven to be a vital link in the work of preaching the everlasting gospel to the world.

Sandy says, "Isaac and I cannot work for pay in this country; it would be illegal, and as of yet we do not qualify for any form of resident visa they offer. God brought us here by His own hand and has mercifully sustained us here for the last year and a half, thanks to many of you around the world. The wonderful work that is going forward here is evidence of God's leading and power and He has been our comfort and strong tower in some very difficult times. We cannot complain. But at this time we are experiencing some very real necessities and would like each of you to seriously and prayerfully consider the situation. The only thing we desire is God's will so I would like to lay out our situation in detail so each of you can make an intelligent decision based, of course, on God's leading."

She says their needs at present are:

1. \$800 minimum for new visas.
2. A laptop with a Spanish language keyboard

For more information contact Linda Baker, (509) 287-2055,

jlmission@frontier.com

“COME LET US REASON”

Fireside Chats on the Character of God

with Kevin Straub



Permissive Paradigm--Part III

We know now since the peace teachings of Jesus,

“The Way,” that God does not instruct us in the ways of violence. He saves us from them (2 Sam. 22:3; Rom. 12:17-21). Jesus was prophesied as the tender plant of the Lord who “had done no violence (Isa. 53:9). “Yet,” as it is said--“Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put [him] to grief” (v. 10a). Again, we have a seeming dichotomy, no? How to reconcile all of these things is all a study of how God destroys. It cannot be by the use of proactive violence, as men think. Jesus Himself told Peter to put away his sword because violence begets violence (Matt. 26:52).

In the same way that the Old Testament “LORD is a man of war” (Ex. 15:3) so also is the New Testament Christ a man of war. He said He did not come to bring peace but a sword (Matt. 10:34). In Rev. 19:11-14 we see that Jesus, as the Word of God, having blood-soaked gar-

ments, leads the heavenly armies in war. At last, “the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God” (2 Thess. 1:7b, 8a), destroying the wicked by “the brightness of His coming” (2:8).

Making War in Righteousness

I do not want to get off track here and launch into a discussion of how the Father and Son make war in righteousness.

Many of the passages I have raised could in themselves become the launching texts for entire articles. We need to get to our destination in this series of “fireside chats” and show where the commands to kill come in. It is difficult to do this without establishing some kind of background to the



discussion. What I have attempted to build to this point is that there is a definite *language* in the inspired account that depicts God and His Christ as waging war on the enemies of righteousness either directly, indirectly, or—in “*permissive will*”—by *proxy* and when we juxtapose all of it with God’s abhorrence of bloodshed and violence we see that there is a call for a satisfactory harmonization of the Scriptures and for the establishment of a singular principle which undergirds all of these apparent modalities of wrath.

Situation Ethics

God doesn’t have a hybrid character with some light (life) and some darkness (death), depending on the situation, nor does He ever act “out of character.” (Refer again to 1 John 1:5 cf. John 1:4). We have thought that His “strange act” is to go out of character in the exercise of proactive violence but it is rather in giving over to the forces of evil and chaos (ceasing to protect). Included in

these forces are the consequences of men’s own choices to bring about righteousness by violent means. (Sorry, but it would take me at least

two thousand words to further discuss God’s “strange act.” It has been done in other writings.) Even in His instructions to ancient Israel in the use of violence, it was all having to do with men’s own choice to have violence in their thinking and conduct. It did not arise from His own character and style of government.

Let me now break into an explanation of the basis of permissive paradigm, beginning with some thoughts on the kingdoms of this world.

To live without any violence, according to the complete picture of the true character of God, at a general societal, governmental level, is not possible. *It is not according to the Scriptures to promote pacifism as any sort of ideal in the milieu of worldly structures.* This would be absolutely out of the question. I know this may seem like a crazy statement after all that has been said. When I talk about replicating the character and ways of God, *it applies to the believer who is entered into the abiding relationship with the Godhead.* The worldly structures are under the god of this world and exist under—are “ordained” under—permissive paradigm, accommodative will.

Agape Love

As followers of Christ, we should be seeing our way clear to a total commitment to nonviolence and noncoercion. This is not just talking about physical force but all forms of manipulation. Anything that is not of love, not entering into the spirit of *agape*, which is *all-for-the-other-none-for-self, self-sacrificing-love*, is violence. *The principle of sin is self-exaltation* and that principle operates by seeking place for oneself at the top without concern for using or spending others to get there. It is in contrast to *agape*, in that it is an *all-for-self-nothing-for-others*,



other-sacrificing self-interest and if there is built into the formula anything at all for others, it has a mercenary motive behind it and will drop the others “cold” if they are no longer beneficial to self-interest. If it doesn't appear now to act entirely as described here, it is because the Spirit of God is having a wooing influence in the direction of light and love. In the final crisis, it will all manifest clearly as to who knows God and who does not.

Stay with me; I am going somewhere with this.

The Pragmatic Approach

All of the systems of men work on the principles of the world, which operate by arbitrary rewards for compliance and arbitrary punishments for non-compliance. By nature, these systems are inherently violent. They are all manipulative. They are all arbitrary. Their regulations, recompenses and retributions are subject to continual change and are established by the means and to the ends which best suit those with the most power. The pragmatic approach is standard. I know this is a cynical and pessimistic world view, but how else could the world be when it is governed by Leviathan, the king of pride? The terrestrial systems vary in their structuring of power distribution and therefore in their equitability to all men. Invariably, no matter how well they may start out, if they are not based solely on the Word of God, they become decadent and murderous. (In the history of the world peaceable as-

sumptions of power are rare; America is an exception and even here we have enough bloody history to realize that nations, like the swords that establish them, are never actually forged without the employment of fire and steel. America can only be understood to arise as a peaceable “lamb” in relative terms.)



Continuing, the governing powers of

men end up existing solely for themselves at the expense of the rest. Human governance (whether in the world or in that which calls itself the church of Christ as per Isa. 4:1), ultimately exists to perpetuate the authority and office of its leaders and to continually consolidate or centralize power until *all-for-self- and-none-for-others* has come to the full. This is why it is an absolutely untenable system of governance and ultimately comes to nothing: *self-exaltation destroys its opponents and when all live by this principle it is every man against the other.* Satan is manipulating all governments and all institutions in this world to the point where he has all power and they do not yet know that it will cost them everything. Right now, they think they will gain their piece of the pie, but ultimately comes the drying up of the Euphrates and the dark awakening commences. They burn the whore and annihilate each other. Revelation 18 and Ezekiel 9 tell the story.

We are talking about civil governance and authority in the institutions of men, even though these institutions are said to be “ordained of God.” Here, we are looking at sinful structures doomed to second death because they are all of the beast. Notice that Revelation 18:24 tells it in one sentence:

And **in her** [the beast system, Babylon, whose principles are kingly rule, man-over-man, wherein God is removed] was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and **of all that were slain upon the earth** (emphasis added).



person who ever died a violent death is attributable to the world's systems of rule which are according to Satanic principles of self-exaltation at the expense of others. According to John, there are no souls left over which we can say God killed. *All violent death comes about by systems of human authority and exercise of arbitrary force*—full stop. [Even non-violent or accidental

death occurs because of Satan's principles being given to operate in the earth. Nobody escapes it except the final generation. The entire world is given over to a

“general wrath” and the punishment” for sin comes upon all things living and non-living alike,

“which come to their end, whether violent or non-violent (Rom. 5:12, 1:18, 3:10; 8:22).]

So, under the wrath of God comes the devil to us, styled the “god of this world” (2 Cor. 4:4) himself having great wrath (Rev. 12:12), operating in and through the governments of this world. The kings of the Gentiles exercise authority over worldlings but it is not to be so in Christ's church (Luke 22:25, 26); Christ's kingdom is not of this world (John 18:36). Yet God has ordained those Gentile kings; they are “ministers of God” unto which we are to be subject (Rom. 13:1-7). I leave you to ponder these things.

To be continued...

Violent Death

Note that not only God's people are killed, but all the deaths of every

ABOLISHING RETRIBUTION IN THE CHURCH FATHERS

By Derek Flood

I have argued elsewhere that the Church Fathers' understanding of the atonement was rooted in a model of restorative justice, rather than retributive justice.¹ Recently, Garry Williams has written a rebuttal of my article, entitled ‘Penal Substitution and the Church Fathers’ that argues the opposite point.² While both of our respective articles are focused on

the patristic views of the atonement, there is a larger issue at stake which touches on the very core of our faith: At stake here is not simply what the early church believed, but how we are to understand God's justice, what the cross means, and how we are to be ambassadors of the crucified one. Is God's justice ultimately retributive or restorative? Does the cross model God's demand for retribution and violence, or does it model God's act of non-

violent restorative justice? Our answers to these questions—whether we see divine justice as retributive or restorative—will naturally have profound ethical consequences, because the model of justice that we see in God will necessarily shape how we apply ‘justice’ in our world as well. Will we advocate for punitive violence in the name [of] God? Or will we see the way of Christ calling us towards a restorative model of justice?

Advocates of penal substitution explain the cross in terms of the need for the demands of (retributive) justice being ‘fulfilled’ and ‘satisfied’ by the death of Jesus. This is a focus on the fulfillment of retributive justice. In contrast, the Fathers constantly speak in terms of the law

and curse being ‘abolished’ and ‘destroyed’ by Christ. Athanasius writes that because of Christ’s death, ‘death and corruption were destroyed.’³ Gregory of Nazianzus similarly speaks of Christ ‘destroying the whole condemnation of sin.’⁴ Augustine declares that, as a result of the atonement, ‘death was condemned so that it would not reign, and cursed in order that it might perish’ for ‘Christ took on our punishment without guilt so that he might in that way destroy our guilt, and also end our punishment.’⁵ This is a focus on our restoration (restorative justice) through the ‘destruction’ and ‘abolishment’ of retribution. Now, if you can only conceive of justice as retributive then to abolish retribution is to abolish justice. So how did the Fathers understand the fulfillment of justice if not through retributive punishment? Why is it that the Fathers focused so much on this theme of the ‘abolishment’ and ‘destruction’ of curse and death? What implications might this idea of the admonishment of retribution have for us—not only in how we understand God’s action in Christ, but in how [to] enact justice today in our world? With these questions in mind we’ll focus on two Fathers: Athanasius and Augustine.

Athanasius: The Divine Dilemma

In the fourth chapter of *De Incarnatione* Athanasius outlines the problem of the atonement as he sees it—the divine dilemma. Athanasius tells us that God had created humanity for life, but humanity has turned to sin, and as a result had come under the domain of corruption and death. He



writes, ‘they received the condemnation of death which had been previously threatened, and no longer remained as they had been created, but as they had devised, were ruined, and death overcame them and reigned over them.’⁶ Here we can see two ideas commonly held in tension by the Church Fathers: On the one hand is the idea

of God’s righteous judgement, and alongside it is the idea that because of that judgment we are now in Satan’s grip, God’s enemy: ‘death overcame them and reigned over them.’ This imagery of demonic bondage may seem odd to modern readers, but behind it is an ethical dilemma: On the one hand is the idea of human culpability and moral responsibility, ‘Men turning away ... were themselves the cause of the corruption and death.’⁷ And on the other hand we have the dilemma that God’s very work is being

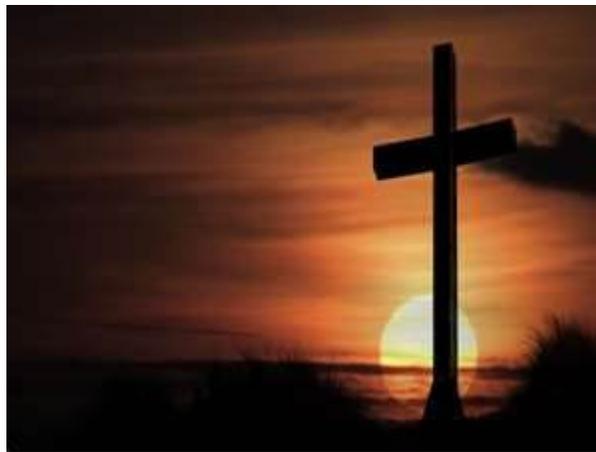
‘undone’ by death and the devil. In other words, while death may be the natural consequence of human sinfulness, this is intolerable to a loving God who has created us for life. Athanasius declares that ‘the work created by God was perishing’.⁸ An event which he describes using two Greek works which he

returns to repeatedly in order to capture the two aspects of this dilemma: ἄτοπος meaning ‘out of place’ in the sense of being *wrong, bad, absurd*, and ἀπρεπής meaning *unseemly, indecent, offensive, disgraceful*.

On the one hand he says it would be wrong (ἄτοπον) for God to simply overlook our sin, and ignore the threat of punishment in his law.⁹ On the other hand however, he says that it

would be *unseemly, indecent, offensive, disgraceful* (ἀπρεπές) for God’s ownwork to be undone, ‘it would have been *especially improper* (ἀπρεπεστάτων) that the handiwork of God in mankind should come to nought, either through their neglect, or through the deceit of demons.’¹⁰

A more modern rendering of ἀπρεπεστάτων (which is the superlative of ἀπρεπές) might be to say that it would have been ‘*obscene*’. In other words, this is a situation that is simply intolerable for a loving God to bear. This Athanasius sees as a matter of God’s goodness and character. It was ‘not right’, Athanasius writes, for God to allow this to happen ‘because this was neither proper nor fitting of the goodness of God.’¹¹ A more literal translation of ‘neither proper nor fitting’ here would be to say that this would have been ‘disgraceful and unworthy’ (ἀπρεπές καὶ ἀνάξιον) of God’s goodness.¹² This captures the emotional impact of the dilemma in



God's heart that Athanasius is painting for us here.

Similarly, ἄτοπος can also be translated as *disgusting, unnatural, foul, monstrous* which again draws out its emotional impact. We have a picture of a good God caught between two bad options—one *monstrous* and the other *obscene*, one *wrong* and the other *disgraceful*. In short, either of these two options is utterly intolerable to God. Something has gone horribly wrong. 'What should God, who is good, have done?' he asks us.¹³ God for Athanasius is not primarily concerned with being right, but with being loving.

One solution that Athanasius deems insufficient is simple repentance. He writes, 'If, therefore, there had been only sin and not its consequence of corruption, repentance would have been very well.'¹⁴ Notice that he does not say that punishment was needed. If that was the only issue then repentance would have been fine, he tells us. But transgression is not the real problem. The real problem is the sickness of our soul which requires real healing. Repentance changes our behavior, but it does not change our 'nature,' he argues.¹⁵ In other words, it does not address the issue of corruption—that we wither and die. What we truly need is vivification, new life, rebirth. What was needed is not punishment because punishment does not renew, it does not make

whole. No, what was needed, Athanasius tells us, was for God to 'bring what was corruptible back again to incorruption'.¹⁶ In a word: it's about *recreation* (ἀνακτίσαι).¹⁷ The dilemma is not how we can make an angry God loving through appeasement, but how a loving God can

make us good again. It is at this point that we come to God's solution of the divine dilemma. Here we see a dual pattern: 'And *two things* occurred simultaneously in a miraculous manner: the death of all was *fulfilled* in the Lord's body, and also death and corruption were *destroyed* because of the word who was in it.'¹⁸

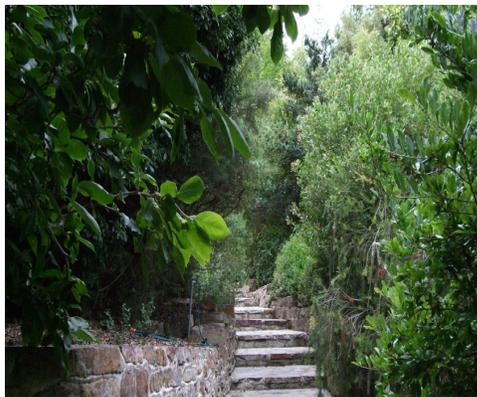
The first of these 'two things' is the legal payment of debt via penal death, and second, we have the destruction and overthrow of death via the resurrection. Here we need to keep in mind the narrative context of the divine dilemma that Athanasius has set up: It would be *wrong* (ἄτοπον) for God to not keep his obligation to His law, but it would be *disgraceful and unworthy* (ἀπρεπές καὶ ἀνάξιον) for a good and loving God to allow His own creation to be undone. So in a brilliant single move God fulfills the legal obligation, and at the same time 'destroys'

the entire system of death and corruption. This is a theme that we see throughout the Church Fathers: the cross of Christ becomes the great reversal that catches the Accuser in his own trap. It is the 'fishhook' that snares Satan, or as Augustine calls it, the 'devil's mousetrap'. In the picture Athanasius paints, God is obliged to the demands of retributive justice, like a father reluctantly obliged to turn over his child to debtors prison.

It is portrayed as a tragedy, not something the Father needs in order to be 'satisfied' or appeased. The focus—in Athanasius, as in the majority of the Church Fathers—is in showing how God out-smarts and turns the tables on the devil. Implicit here is a move away from the system of retribution, and towards a system of grace, enemy love, and restoration. This is the divine narrative that Athanasius lays out for us

of grace overcoming the system of death. For Athanasius the obligation to punish is a horrible dilemma that God needs to find a way through. To read Athanasius as a treatise for retribution is a bit like seeing a Broadway showing of *Les Misérables*, and cheering for Javert. It completely misses the central plotline of grace triumphing over death and curse that the Church Fathers delighted in.

Note also that while advocates of penal substitution like Williams may



wish to claim that ‘death was abolished by the debt being paid’ for Athanasius.¹⁹ In fact, what Athanasius actually says is that death is abolished because the indwelling of the Word, which remained incorruptible, overpowered death through the resurrection: ‘Because of the word who was dwelling in it, it might remain incorruptible, and so corruption might cease from all men by the grace of the resurrection.’²⁰ Because of the indwelling life of God, death is conquered and ended. Christ thus fulfills humanity’s legal obligation to death, and at the same time, turns the tables and annihilates death itself. Death is abolished by the resurrection, not by punishment. We are not released from the debt of law by Christ’s substitutionary death, but by the bringing of life and incorruption.

The re-creation of humanity into the image of God—which for Athanasius is the pivotal moment of the atonement—comes through Christ’s abolishing and destroying death by his divine life indwelling us, i.e., *by the incarnation* (hence the title of his entire work!). Thus he writes, ‘Through the coming of the Word into it, it was no longer corruptible according to its nature, but *because of the Word who was dwelling in it*, became immune from corruption.’²¹ Death and corruption are overcome and vanquished by God’s *life* indwelling in ours, not by his death. The mechanism of the atonement here is not appeasement. Indeed appeasement plays no



role whatsoever since God is already acting in love towards humanity. Rather, the mechanism that is truly the focus of Athanasius’ understanding of the atonement is *recreation through incarnation*.

The abolition of death: A trajectory of restoration triumphing over retribution

Now, Williams concedes that the law of retribution is abolished, but wants to argue that this means ‘death is abolished by being fulfilled’ through retributive punishment.²² In other words, he is actually not agreeing at all, nor is he using ‘abolished’ in any normal sense of the word. What he is instead saying is something akin to a bill collector who declares ‘Sir, we have reviewed your account, and are willing to cancel your debt... provided you pay it in full!’ In support of his position, Williams quotes Athanasius’ statement that ‘it would have been absurd for the law to be



dissolved (λυθῆναι) before it was fulfilled (πληρωθῆναι from πληρῶ meaning ‘completed’).²³ The verb translated as ‘dissolved’ here is λῶω, and is translated two other times as ‘abolished’, in both cases referring specifically to the law as well: He states that Christ died so that ‘the law concerning corruption in men might be *abolished* (λυθῆναι)—since its power was concluded (πληρωθεισης from

πληρῶω) in the Lord’s body and it would never again have influence over men who are like him’²⁴ and that ‘The corruption of men would not be abolished (λυθειν) in any other way except by everyone dying.’²⁵ In each case Williams reads λῶω as meaning ‘released’ in the sense of being fulfilled, rather than ‘abolished’ in the sense of being destroyed and made void.

Athanasius consistently uses the word λῶω to refer to God’s law, and Williams’ reading is

indeed a plausible translation of this word here in that context. The leap Williams

makes is in concluding that we should understand the idea of the ‘abolishment’ of death in Athanasius in this same way. So long as we only read the text in English this argument might seem to hold up. However, if we look at the Greek we find that Athanasius uses a number of other Greek words which make this reading completely untenable when referring to the abolishment and destruction of death and corruption:

For example, while Williams claims that ‘death was abolished by the debt being paid’,²⁶ Athanasius in contrast states in this same section (chapters 8 and 9) that Christ ‘immediately *abolished* (ἠφάνισε) death’²⁷, and again that ‘the corruption of death, which formally had power over them has been *destroyed* (ἠφάνισται)’²⁸. Later, he speaks of how Christ ‘*rid us* of death (ἠφάνισε) and renewed us’²⁹ and declares that ‘corruption has ceased and been *destroyed* (ἠφανιζομένης) by the grace

of the resurrection³⁰ In each case the verb—variously translated here as ‘abolished,’ ‘destroyed’ and ‘get rid of’—is the same: ἀφανίζω which literally means ‘to cause to disappear’ i.e., to erase, annihilate, destroy. This is the word Jesus uses when he says ‘Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin *destroy*’ (Mt 6:19). Elsewhere in the New Testament, ἀφανίζω is variously translated as ‘disfigure’ (Mt 6:16), ‘vanish’ (Jas 4:14), and ‘cease to exist’ (Acts 13:41).³¹

It is hard to imagine how this word could possibly mean that death is ‘fulfilled’ as Williams supposes, nor does it fit with Athanasius’ understanding of death personified as the enemy of God. As if to remove all doubt, Athanasius uses an intensified form of this word: ἔξαφανίζω (ἔξ + αφανίζω) which Lampe defines as ‘cause to disappear *utterly*; destroy, obliterate’.³² Thus Athanasius declares that the power of death was ‘*completely annihilated* (ἔξαφανισήν),³³ that Christ ‘accepted death imposed by men in order to *destroy it completely* (ἔξαφανισήν),³⁴ and that death is utterly annihilated ‘as straw is *destroyed* (ἔξαφανιζων) by fire.’³⁵

There is simply no room here for an interpretation that death is *fulfilled*. Rather death is an *enemy* that is destroyed, wiped out, and utterly abolished. Therefore Athanasius writes that ‘every mechanization of the enemy against men has ceased’³⁶ and repeatedly refers to death being trampled underfoot: ‘it is by the sign of the cross and faith that death is *crushed*’ (καταπατεῖται from καταπατέω meaning ‘to trample’).³⁷

He continues, ‘it is none other than Christ himself who has shown triumphs and victories over death who has been rendered powerless ... death has been destroyed (καταργηθῆσθαι) and overcome.’³⁸

Here, in the above passage, Athanasius uses yet another word to describe the destruction of death: καταργέω which the BDAG defines generally as ‘make ineffective, powerless, idle’. This word is frequently used in Paul’s epistles to mean ‘invalidate’ or ‘nullify’ (cf. Ro 3:31; Ro 4:14; Gal 3:17; Eph 2:15, etc.). As it is used in Hebrews 2:14, it means ‘destroy, break the power of, reduce to nothing’.³⁹ This is particularly significant because Athanasius quotes this very passage two times



in *De Incarnatione*. The Word became incarnate, he says, in order ‘through coming into it “to *destroy* (καταργήσῃ) him who held the power of death, that is the devil, and to deliver all those who through fear of death had been all their lifetime subject to bondage.”’⁴⁰ Elsewhere he likewise writes that Christ ‘accepted and endured on the cross that inflicted by others, especially by enemies, which they thought to be fearful, ignominious, and horrible, in order that when it had been

destroyed he might be believed to be life, and that the power of death be *completely annihilated* (καταργηθῆναι).⁴¹

From all this it really becomes abundantly clear that Athanasius is making a very different point from the one that Williams wants to make. That is, Williams correctly reads death as being penal—as the consequence of retributive justice—but that penal death is not fulfilled, maintained, or upheld in Athanasius’ thought, rather it is ‘destroyed,’ ‘abolished,’ and ‘completely annihilated’. This is anything but an apology for the merits of retribution. It is a dramatic protest against the death-trap of retributive justice with a poetic twist that shows how God beats the devil at his own game.

We can sum up Athanasius’ argument as follows: Athanasius sees God as being morally obliged to fulfill the demands of retributive justice. It would be wrong (ἄτοπος), he tells us, for God to ignore this. However, he recognizes that this would have a completely intolerable result of the destruction of God’s beloved work. It would be disgraceful (ἀπρεπές) and unworthy (ἀνάξιον) of a good and loving God to allow this. God’s way out of this intolerable dilemma is to turn the tables by taking the punishment himself, releasing us (λύω) from it by fulfilling its legal demand, and in doing this at the same time, like a Trojan horse, utterly destroying (ἀφανίζω, ἔξαφανίζω, καταργέω) death and corruption. What saves us therefore is not punishment (this simply fulfills a legal obligation of the law).

Rather, we are restored to life by the Word indwelling our humanity with his divine life. The main narrative thrust here is the annihilation of death, the overthrow of [the] devil's bondage by Christ. This is a theme that Athanasius goes on and on about, for page after page, painting this victory in bright vivid colors. This overwhelming narrative focus leads us to ask why Athanasius places so much importance on stressing the annihilation and overthrow of death? If, as Williams wants to argue, Athanasius' goal was truly to defend the legitimacy of retribution, this focus of death's annihilation and despoiling would be very odd, given that the devil personifies the very system of retribution. The implication here is ultimately the *ending* of the dominion of retribution and curse itself, not its fulfillment.

Nevertheless, one could still claim that in a sense Athanasius does portray Christ bearing punishment in order to fulfill the demands of retributive justice. Athanasius begins in the shared assumption of his own culture: accepting the legitimacy of retribution. But if this is penal substitution, then it is a penal substitution that completely undoes the entire penal system. It is a treatise focused on illustrating how intolerable the consequences of that system are to a loving God, and showing how God therefore finds a way out of that awful retributive system—how God finds a legal escape clause out of the death trap of retribution, and more importantly finds a way to restore us to life.

Out of his own culture—steeped in the violent and brutal assumptions

of retributive justice—*De Incarnatione* is a bold step away from that dead-end system. It marks the first steps in the beginnings of a trajectory moving away from retribution and towards the superior way of restorative justice.

In one sense it is—as all works are—a product of its time. Athanasius begins with the assumptions of retributive justice, just as he begins with his culture's assumption that God could never suffer. One could read him today and take this as an endorsement of those cultural assumptions, just as one could also read much of the New Testament and see it as an endorsement of slavery. In both cases however it is crucial to recognize the cultural context they both are speaking out of,



and further to note the direction they are moving in. Just as I hope we can all by now recognize that the New Testament is in fact moving away from slavery and setting the beginnings of a trajectory that rightfully led to the abolition of slavery, I would propose that Athanasius and the other Church Fathers likewise set a course towards the abolition of retributive justice in their understanding of the atonement, replacing it with the superior way of restorative justice revealed in the Christ-event.

The legacy of retributive justice

Let us take a moment to consider the history of retributive justice in our world and indeed in the church: For centuries the assumption of punitive justice has saturated nearly every segment of our Western society—shaping how we have approached child rearing, education, mental health, and of course our criminal justice system. It was common in the past, for instance, to think it was good to beat children at home and at school, to beat one's servants and workers, and to beat and torture criminals and the mentally ill. The belief behind all this was that punitive violence was 'good for you'. Beating someone was thought to 'build character' and 'purge the soul'. What we have come to understand as a society, however, is that punitive violence in fact hardens and breaks people—it destroys the human soul.

Because of these realizations, over the last century there have been major shifts in how we have come to understand justice and its relation to punishment. These changes can be seen not only in the overwhelming consensus of educators, health professionals, and social scientists, but are also reflected in the many laws protecting children, workers, prisoners, the institutionalized, mental patients, and others from corporal punishment and other forms of abuse.

The alternative, of course, is not to 'do nothing', but to actually work towards restoring victims, as well as helping perpetrators develop empathy and responsibility. In other words, (restorative) justice is about

loved us ... should confer his gifts on us with a quite uncalled for generosity, without any good deserts of ours, indeed with our ill deserts our only preparation?⁴⁸ Augustine's whole point here is that grace is amazing precisely because it is not deserved, not bought, not paid for.

Augustine further considers this idea in the following paragraph, stressing that God has not only loved us in our weakness, but loved while we were still God's *enemies*.⁴⁹ This brings us to the paragraph quoted above where he now addresses the question of how we are to understand the idea that we are 'justified by the blood of Christ' in this context of God's enemy love. It is at this point that Augustine challenges the idea that the atonement should be understood in terms of God needing to be reconciled to us—an idea that is foundational for the Reform doctrine of penal substitution. "But what is this justified in his blood (Rom 5:9)? What, I want to know, is the potency of his blood, that believers should be justified in it? Is it really the case that when God the Father was angry with us he saw the death of his Son on our behalf, and was reconciled to us? Does this mean that the Son was already so reconciled to us that he was even prepared to die for us, while the Father was still so angry with us that unless the Son died for us he would not be reconciled to us?⁵⁰ The Latin word translated here throughout as 'reconciled' is *placatus*, from which our English word 'placate' is derived. In other words, at issue here is the idea of appeasement: whether the purpose of the atonement was to make God favorable towards us. As Augustine

notes, this seems to set up a conflict between the Father and the Son. In fact it seems, doesn't it, as if this text contradicts the former one? There the Son dies for us, and the Father is reconciled to us through his death; but here it is as if the Father were the first to love us ... But if it comes to that, I observe that the Father loved us not merely before the Son died for us, but before he founded the world.⁵¹

As Augustine argues here, appeasement (i.e. the idea that God needs to be reconciled to us as the condition for our justification) cannot be the point of the atonement because both the Father and the Son *already* loved us while we were sinners and



God's enemies. How then are we to understand the idea 'that we have been justified in the blood of Christ and reconciled to God through the death of his Son' if not in this way he asks?⁵² 'How that was done', he answers, 'I shall explain here too as best I can'.⁵³ With this, rather than framing his discussion in terms of a legal courtroom as we might expect, Augustine instead proceeds to discuss the atonement in terms of Christ liberating us from Satan's captivity, 'By a kind of divine justice (*quadam iustitia Dei*) the human race was handed over to the power of the devil'.⁵⁴ Like the other Fathers, Augustine's conception of justice is

not a matter of God and man alone, but is framed in terms of humanity's captivity to the devil.

This captures the complex tension that is common among the Fathers: our captivity to sin is on one hand framed as something demonic and opposed to God, and at the same time reflects God's justice. As Augustine put it here, 'the commission of sins subjected man to the devil through the just wrath of God'.⁵⁵ Like Athanasius before him, Augustine here stresses that our being given over to Satan's captivity should be understood as the inevitable result of our sin, rather than as God's active judgement, 'As for the way in which man was handed over to the devil's power, this should not be thought of as if God actually did it or ordered it to be done, but merely that he permitted it, albeit justly'.⁵⁶

Similarly, our justification should likewise be understood in terms of our being *liberated* from the devil's captivity, 'If the commission of sins subjected man to the devil through the just wrath of God, then of course the remission of sins has delivered man from the devil through the kindly reconciliation of God'.⁵⁷ Note here that Augustine—echoing the conclusions of several recent scholarly commentaries on Paul's understanding of *δικαιωσις* in Romans—does not frame the idea of justification in terms of acquittal, but rather in terms of our *deliverance*.⁵⁸ Typical of the Church Fathers, Augustine frames the atonement in the context of the devil accusing humanity. For advocates of penal substitution, the accuser is instead God and justice.

making things right, and its effectiveness has been repeatedly documented—both as an alternative to a punitive approach within the school setting (dealing with at-risk youth, bullying, and violence),⁴² as well as within the criminal justice system.⁴³

Despite the many examples of the effectiveness of restorative justice today, as well as the ample evidence for the severe damage and abuse inherent in the system of retribution, some people—even ironically some Christians—still can't seem to conceive of how there could possibly be justice without punishment. Williams for example writes, 'For Flood the abolition of the law and death involves the abolition of the entire system of retribution leaving its sentence unfulfilled ... Certainly the law is abolished in the sense that it is transcended in God's dealings with men, but its demands are not simply set aside and left unfulfilled.'⁴⁴

The assumption here is that unless one embraces retributive justice—that is, unless one embraces the idea that only way to make things right is by inflicting punitive violence—one simply 'sets aside' justice, leaving it 'unfulfilled'. This, I would suggest, is why Williams misses the narrative of restorative justice in Athanasius: He fails to recognize a clear narrative of restorative justice because he simply cannot conceive of justice without punishment. He sees it as being 'set aside and left unfulfilled' without punishment. However, inflicting more hurt and injury does not actually make anything better. In fact, it makes things worse. Bloodshed and violence are not the

solution; they are the problem that Christ came to set us free from. A restorative model is not about ignoring sin and hurt, rather it is explicitly about actually making things right by healing the sickness of sin and mending the wounds it has inflicted, rather than making them worse through more hurt. Restorative justice does not bypass the problem; it heals it. Retributive justice, in contrast, exacerbates the problem.

If there ever was a master narrative of the New Testament, surely it is the triumph of the way of restorative grace over law and curse. From our own perspective today, with the many examples surrounding us of how restorative justice can offer real alternatives to the failed



system of retribution, this is much easier to conceive of than it must have been for Athanasius in his time. Therefore, faithfully following in this trajectory set by Athanasius and the other Fathers involves our being ambassadors for the way of grace and restorative justice, and not advocates and apologists for retribution.

Augustine: Justification as deliverance

In my previous article, I cited Augustine's criticism of the notion of God's appeasement in the atonement which is the lynchpin of penal substitution. Commenting on the idea that the death of Jesus appeased God's wrath, Augustine asks,

Does this mean then that the Son was already so reconciled to us that he was even prepared to die for us, while the Father was still so angry with us that unless the Son died for us he would not be reconciled to us?⁴⁵

Augustine here is flat out denying something that lies at the heart of penal substitution: that the atonement is fundamentally about appeasing God's wrath. Williams strenuously objects, claiming I have taken Augustine's words out of context, and accusing me of a 'spectacular piece of interpretative gymnastics'.⁴⁶ With that in mind, I would like to demonstrate that Augustine's above statement is precisely in context to the larger point that he is making in this chapter of *de Trinite* which entails an outright rejection of the idea that the atonement acted to appease God's wrath through substitutionary punishment. Instead, as we will see, Augustine argues that the purpose of the atonement was restorative, and rooted in God's enemy love.

Augustine begins the fourth chapter of *de Trinite* by asking the critical question of the atonement: Why did Jesus need to die for us? His response to this is to first stress something I should think we all can agree on: Christ's death for us is first and foremost a 'demonstration of how much value God put on us and how much he loved us'.⁴ He continues, 'And what could be clearer and more wonderful evidence if this than that the son of God ... should first of all endure our ills without any ill deserts of his own; and then once we had been brought in this way to believe how much God

Consequently, they stress the need for the demands of justice to be upheld and fulfilled. The Fathers, in contrast, continually stress that the tyrannical reign of condemnation has been destroyed, annulled, and canceled. Again, this does not simply mean that the retributive system is bypassed or set aside. The Fathers were concerned to show that God acts justly, even when dealing with a tyrant slaveholder like the devil. Augustine therefore states here that ‘the devil would have to be overcome not by God’s power, but by justice.’⁵⁹ Put differently, the system of retribution is not simply bypassed by divine fiat.

‘What then is the divine justice that overpowered the devil?’ Augustine asks, ‘The justice of Jesus Christ—what else? And how was he overpowered?’ His answer is this, He found nothing in him deserving of death and yet he killed him. It is therefore perfectly just that he should let the debtors he held go free, who believe in the one whom he killed without his being in his debt. *This is how we are said to be justified in the blood of Christ. This is how that innocent blood was shed for the forgiveness of our sins.*⁶⁰

Augustine understands our justification in Christ’s blood in the context of *injustice*. Because the death of Christ was *not* the fulfillment of the demands of justice, the devil therefore forfeited all rights over humanity. In this context, it simply makes no sense to speak of Christ’s death in the sense of ‘fulfilling’ the demands of retributive justice, and this is a point which Augustine stresses. Echoing what Williams would likely identify as penal language,

Augustine states ‘In this act of redemption the blood of Christ was given for us as a kind of price’ but then the sentence continues, ‘and when the devil took it, he was not enriched by it but caught and bound by it, so we might be disentangled from his toils’.⁶¹ This is the undoing of the very personification of retribution and death, the binding of the Accuser. ‘This was the justice that overcame the strongman, this the rope that tied him up!’⁶² Augustine does not deny the legitimacy of retributive justice—what he denies is the legitimacy of punishing the innocent. When the devil did this, it was unjust and therefore humanity was emancipated from death and hell. This is not the fulfillment of the demand for punishment, it is God’s overthrow of that very system of retribution.

Penal substitution as miscarriage of justice

With this understanding firmly in place, Augustine now returns to the question he raised at the outset: How does the blood of Christ turn away God’s wrath? If, as he said before, this should not be taken in the sense of appeasing God’s anger, what then? In what way does the blood of Christ avert God’s wrath, which Augustine describes here in terms of a ‘just retribution’ (*iusta vindicta*)?⁶³ Augustine again stresses that the problem is not God’s attitude towards us: ‘Nor for that matter were we really God’s enemies except in the sense that sins are the enemy of justice, and when these sins are forgiven such hostilities come to an end’.⁶⁴ That is to say: Remove the sin, and the just cause of wrath is removed with it. The objective problem that needs to be dealt with is ours, not God’s. As

Augustine stresses, the problem was never with God’s attitude towards us, ‘Yet he certainly loved these enemies, seeing that “he did not spare his own Son, but while we were still enemies handed him over for us all” (Rom 8:32)’.⁶⁵ In other words, Augustine frames the atonement in terms of expiation (the removal of sin subsequently removing the cause of wrath), rather than propitiation (the appeasing of God’s need for retribution through the punishment of the innocent Jesus in place of the guilty) which he clearly rejects, describing this as an act of grave injustice perpetrated by the devil.

Augustine’s legal argument here that the devil unjustly took the life of the innocent Jesus raises an issue with penal substitution that is seldom acknowledged today: even if we accept the legitimacy of retributive justice, (i.e. the idea that it is just to punish the guilty) it simply makes no sense within that framework to claim that justice is fulfilled by punishing the innocent in place of the guilty. The simple fact is, there is no legal system in the entire world that would acknowledge that executing the innocent in place of the guilty is anything but a grave miscarriage of justice. So while Augustine begins with the idea of retributive justice (that sinners are under just judgement) his statement that the devil lost all rights over humanity when he unjustly killed Christ is an outright rejection of the entire logic of penal substitution specifically. That is, Augustine directly rejects the idea that punitive justice can be fulfilled by punishing the innocent in place of the guilty, which is very working mechanism of penal substitution.

It is at this point that we now have the full context with which we can understand Augustine's provocative question, 'Does this mean then that the Son was already so reconciled to us that he was even prepared to die for us, while the Father was still so angry with us that unless the Son died for us he would not be reconciled to us?'⁶⁶ His answer is that God was not angry. On the contrary, God loved us so much that he gave his beloved Son to save us. God's wrath, he tells us, should not be understood in terms of God's attitude towards us (which is love), rather it describes our state of alienation. The solution therefore is not to change God's attitude, but to change us. Heal us of our sin, and there is no reason for wrath. This is expiation (the removal of sin) with the explicit denial of propitiation (wrath being turned aside via appeasement through punishment). It is atonement via restoration not retribution.

Conclusion: Following in the trajectory of restoration

The central disagreement between Williams and myself is the question of whether the gospel is at its heart rooted in restorative or retributive justice. I maintain that the gospel is about overcoming retribution with the superior way of restorative enemy love. This is God's way of justice revealed in Christ, and is to be our way of justice as well. Williams instead insists that the atonement is a vindication and fulfillment of the way of retribution. For Williams punishment is God's way of bringing about justice, and likewise should shape how human authority brings about 'justice' as well through violence done in God's name.⁶⁷

The claim that Church Fathers taught a Reform understanding of penal substitution is simply baseless. Instead, the Fathers clearly taught that the means of the atonement was our *restoration*, i.e. a change in us, not a change in God. That said, we have in the examples of Athanasius and Augustine that many of these Fathers begin with the assumption of the rightness of retributive justice (the idea that the guilty deserve punishment). Similarly, they equally begin with an assumption of the rightness of human slavery. Indeed, the very notion that justice requires that the devil be paid a ransom is rooted in the assumption that slavery is legitimate and just. Therefore, if we wish to claim that retributive justice is divinely mandated based on the views of the Fathers, then we would equally need to accept slavery as divinely mandated as well. This of course puts us in quite a corner, as I doubt that anyone today would wish to claim that slavery is an unchanging divine mandate.

Thankfully, there is an alternative to this moral *cul de sac*. I would like to suggest that, not only does this position put us in a severe ethical bind, it also constitutes a profound misreading of the Church Fathers' understanding of the work of Christ. Instead, we need to recognize that the clear narrative thrust of the Church Fathers' understanding of the atonement is to move away from retribution and away from slavery, not to defend and uphold them. The fact that the Fathers framed both of these as the domain of Satan should alert us to this fact. The Fathers' understanding of the atonement is completely misunderstood when it is framed as an

apology for retribution or slavery. On the contrary, their focus was on Christ *ending* the curse (i.e. retribution), and *ending* bondage (i.e.

slavery). Again, I seriously doubt that there is anyone today who would want to argue, based on Scripture and the writings of the Fathers, for the legitimacy of slavery. However, the plain fact is: It is far easier, based on Scripture and the writings of the Fathers, to argue for the abolishment of retribution than it is to make a case for the abolishment of slavery based on these.

In the same way that we have recognized in the New Testament and in the Fathers a trajectory that let towards the eventual abolishment of slavery, my hope is that we would also in our time finally grasp the need to follow the clear trajectory that charts a course towards the abolishment of retribution, replacing it with the superior way of restorative justice modeled by God in Christ that we can see so clearly modeled in the Father's understanding of the atonement.

In saying this however, I do not wish to paint an idealistic and therefore unrealistic picture of the Church Fathers. The sad fact is that, beginning with the so-called Constantinian compromise, the church set itself on a very different trajectory that quickly escalated into horrific violence and bloodshed in the name of God. So while the Father's understanding of the atonement may reflect the New Testament's narrative of restorative justice overcoming retribution, we increasingly see them embracing the way of violence as they align themselves more

and more with the state and its sword.

For example, while we have seen that Augustine's understanding of the atonement was rooted in the New Testament's framework of restorative justice, Augustine at the same time advocated for the violent persecution of the Donatists in the name of (retributive) 'justice'. In a letter entitled *The Correction of the Donatists*, Augustine quotes his fellow Christian opponents as saying that 'the true church is the one that suffers persecution, not the one that inflicts it.'⁶⁸ Augustine however shockingly argues *against* this, instead declaring that 'persecution is just which the church of Christ inflicts upon the wicked.'⁶⁹ Now it's important to keep in mind that Augustine when he speaks of the 'justice' of persecuting of the 'wicked' here is referring to a group who he freely admits from the outset believes 'the same thing that the Catholic Church believes.'⁷⁰ In other words, he is not even addressing so-called heretics, but those whom he regards as sharing the same beliefs as himself. With this justification, Augustine proceeds in his letter to advocate a policy of 'Catholic unity by terror and coercion' in the name of Christ.⁷¹ It is therefore with good reason that biographer Peter Brown calls Augustine 'the first theorist of the Inquisition'.⁷² Augustine got his understanding of the atonement right—indeed, he got many things right, and left us with some of the most beautiful and aching prose of the heart's longing for God that have ever been penned. However, Augustine failed to see how the way of restorative justice modeled by God on the cross should shape our

own lives, and instead used his rhetorical skills in the service of justifying the status quo's way of retribution, violent coercion, and bloodshed.

The moral here is that Augustine was no more of a 'saint' than you or I are. He—along with the other Church Fathers—got many things right, but was also captive to cultural blinders that made him miss the way of Jesus. So in reality, there are in fact two opposite trajectories: one upward trajectory rooted in restorative justice reflected in the Church Father's view of the atonement, and alongside it an opposite downward trajectory in the direction of violence, carried out in the name of retributive justice, which the church all too soon became captive to.

As a society, we have increasingly come to understand the severe harm that comes from retributive justice. Tragically, a good deal of that harm has come from the arm of the church over the centuries in the form of violence carried out in the name of God. One shudders to think of all the people who have been beaten—let alone tortured and killed—in the name of retributive justice, and in the name of Christ. That is a part of our family history as Christians that we need to repent of, not seek to justify. We need to follow in the way of that upward trajectory.

In our time we have seen like never before that the way of restorative justice is a viable way to address societal issues that we previously had thought must be dealt with through punitive means. The way of Jesus is no longer seen as unrealistic

idealism that can only be applied on a personal level. But that does not mean it is an easy way. Following in this upward trajectory is indeed an uphill climb. It can be hard to know how to intelligently apply the way of enemy love in our world. It can cut against the grain of both our instinct and our culture. But if we want to call ourselves followers of Jesus then we need to put ourselves on that uphill road. The Father's understanding of the atonement walked us half way up. It's time we took up our crosses and walked the rest of the way up that hill.

Endnotes

¹ Derek Flood, 'Substitutionary atonement and the Church Fathers: A reply to the authors of *Pierced for Our Transgressions*', *EQ* 82.2 (2010), 142–159. Available online at <http://therebelgod.com/AtonementFathersEQ.pdf>.

² Garry Williams, 'Penal substitutionary atonement and the Church Fathers', *EQ* 83.3 (2011), 195–216. Available online at http://www.ltslondon.org/joc/documents/EQJWChurchFathersarticle_000.pdf.

³ Athanasius, *De Incarnatione*, ch. 2, Robert W. Thompson (Tr.), *Contra Gentes and De Incarnatione* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971) 185.

⁴ Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oration* 40.45, Nonna Verna Harrison (Tr.) *Festal Orations* (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Press, 2008) 141.

⁵ Augustine, *Contra Faustum*, 14.3–4, Roland Teske (Tr.) Boniface Ramsey (Ed.), *The Works of Saint Augustine, 1/20 Answer to Faustus, a Manichean* (Hyde Park, N.Y.: New City Press, 2007) 176–7.

⁶ Athanasius, *De Incarnatione*, ch. 4, 143.

(Concluded on Page 32)

VENGEANCE IS MINE

(Part II)

By Floyd Phillips

(from Romans 12)

I find that the context of these passages has a great deal to contribute, both to properly understanding the true nature of God's kind of vengeance, but also conflicting ideas that must be challenged in the light of the truth as it is seen in Jesus. That is why I am including large portions of context for each of these references where **vengeance is mine** is found. I want to make clear that I am not trying to mask over more difficult passages or lift things out of context to force them to say what I want them to mean.

There are three passages that use this term, **vengeance is mine**. I will start with the ones more readily understandable, and more importantly, the ones closer to the clear testimony of Jesus as found in the New Testament. Then at the end I will review **the song of Moses** from which this phrase originally appeared and was later quoted by the New Testament authors, to consider some of the clues and conflicts found in that previous passage. My thoughts and observations and questions will be interspersed identified by the use of italics for distinguishing clarity. [Phillip's comments now begin in the left column. I think they will be distinguishable set up in this way.]

9 Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good.

10 Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor;

11 not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord;

12 rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer,

13 contributing to the needs of the



saints, practicing hospitality.

14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.

15 Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.

16 Be of the same mind toward one another; do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly. Do not be wise in your own estimation.

17 Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men.

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18 If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men.

I included this part of the context ahead of the reference to vengeance for a very specific reason. Re-read these words and think about them in the context of how Jesus Himself demonstrated all of these things in His own life and example. God does not ask us to do anything He does not consistently do Himself. If He did, then He would be ignoring the principle of reflection which is the core nature of humanity from its very creation. We will always reflect the kind of god we believe in, which is why it is so vital to have the most accurate internal concept of God that we can if we are to be truthful witnesses to the God of heaven, the God described by John as Love itself. It must be from this perspective that we approach our attempt to understand the truth about vengeance.

19 Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, "VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY," says the Lord.

We must not allow the slightest trace of our own version and definitions of either vengeance or wrath to infect our understanding of what is being said here. Wrath, according to Paul in Romans and supported throughout Scripture, is letting go, turning someone over to the natural consequences of their own choices. That is in stark contrast to our usual definition of wrath which is why it is so vitally important that we allow God to define His terms rather than allowing our assumed definitions to confuse our ideas about how God relates to sinners.

To make it even more clear, Paul immediately defines in the following verse the kind of vengeance God is talking about. Remember that Paul is on this side of the revelation of God in Jesus Christ, while Moses was on the other side before the truth about God was made so plain by His Son. That informs me that Paul is more likely to have a better explanation of these things that the one he quoted from centuries before. I will examine the original reference later here.

20 "BUT IF YOUR ENEMY IS HUNGRY, FEED HIM, AND IF HE IS THIRSTY, GIVE HIM A DRINK; FOR IN SO DOING YOU WILL HEAP BURNING COALS ON HIS HEAD."

21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.



This last reference is one I want to also explore later. But I just want to note here that if God commands us to not return evil for evil or to be overcome by evil, then it is a given that He too will always operate in harmony with these same principles.

(from Hebrews 10)

19 ¶ Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus,

20 by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh,

21 and since we have a great priest over the house of God,

22 let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

23 Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful;

24 and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds,

25 not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.

This preamble must be the context in which we view all of the following verses. Remember also that Hebrews is a treatise based on explaining things from an Old Testament view but seeking also to *update* it to an understanding enlightened by the revelation of God in Jesus Christ.

26 For **if we go on sinning willfully** after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins,

27 but a terrifying expectation of judgment and **THE FURY OF A FIRE WHICH WILL CONSUME THE ADVERSARIES.**

This is one of the most misunderstood passages I have come across, and it took me many years of living in fear caused by beliefs that many associate with this passage before God made it clear to me what this is really talking about. What I now see here is a very stern warning to me personally, but a warning very different than what most people might

assume. If, after I have come to a realization of the real truth about the goodness of God and the true nature of His character, I turn away from that knowledge, the insights He has so graciously shared with me, and I turn back to the old way of viewing God as vengeful, desiring to impose punishments and pain and torture on all who spurn His love, then my understanding of Jesus' death as an exhibition of God's goodness will be lost and the only thing left is an even more intense terror of an angry God as proposed by His archenemy. When I reject the truth about God in favor of going back into harmony with the majority belief system of a God needing appeasement, then all joy will be lost, all hope will be destroyed and the only thing I will be left with is pure terror, trepidation and expectation of being punished because I can never live up to the standard of perfection as expressed in the Laws of God.

This is a strong reminder of the liberty into which God is bringing me right now, but also of how fragile that liberty is and how it can only be enjoyed as long as I am willing to cling to the truth as it is in Jesus. If I turn back to the vomit of the old ways of thinking about God, as embraced by so many around me, I can only expect to be plunged into despair and depression, not an increase of hope or peace.

28 Anyone who has set aside the Law of Moses dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses.

29 How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled under foot the Son of

God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace?

This is the very thing I was just referring to above. I am just now beginning to experience the Spirit of grace in my heart. To turn away from that truth that the Spirit has been revealing to me about what God is really like is to insult that Spirit which in reality is destroying my own capacity to repent and be restored and healed by that very Spirit. That is my greatest fear, that I might slip back into the dreadful patterns of thinking about God, judgment, wrath, vengeance and all the other confused and dark notions that suffocated me for most of my life. I want to remain true to the truth as it is being revealed



to me in the life and teachings of Jesus and as reinforced from Scripture by the Spirit of Truth that Jesus sent to lead us into all truth.

30 **For we know Him** who said, "VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY." And again, "THE LORD WILL JUDGE HIS PEOPLE."

31 It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

Because we have such stupidly confused notions about vengeance and even judgment, God just says to leave that all in His hands. We must learn to trust that His kind of

vengeance will produce far better results than the selfish kinds of vengeance that we usually want.

I believe that the pivotal phrase in this verse is to **know Him**. How important it is to really know God, for this is [the] central theme all throughout Scripture that makes the difference between those who come close to God and those who are more interested in just keeping up religious appearances. God's ways are not our ways and God's thoughts are not at all like ours (Isaiah 55:8-9). We must allow God to transform our ideas about Him, away from the sinful beliefs that religion and Satan has instilled into us all our lives in order to see the real truth about this God who does not have to resort to sinful violence to establish His kingdom of righteousness.

Yes, it still is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God. However, this kind of terror will be extremely thrilling (like an intense roller-coaster ride to the adventure addict) for those who have hung onto the hope they have found in the revelations of truth about God as revealed by Jesus, while it will become a self-destroying kind of terror for those who have clung to their distorted opinions about God's passionate love for them.

32 But remember the former days, when, after being enlightened, you endured a great conflict of sufferings,

33 partly by being made a public spectacle through reproaches and tribulations, and partly by becoming sharers with those who were so

treated.

34 For you showed sympathy to the prisoners and accepted joyfully the seizure of your property, knowing that you have for yourselves a better possession and a lasting one.

35 Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward.

36 For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised.

Most of us have very little experience in knowing what this feels like. But we will not be able to avoid persecution if we honestly share openly these fresh revelations about God that are coming to light in these last days. Those who oppose this truth about God will feel compelled to act like the kind of God they believe in and will attempt to suppress and persecute all who threaten the traditional dark and even violent views long promoted about Him. But Paul tells all who have tasted of the true goodness of God not to throw away their new-found confidence received from a revelation of God as viewed in the life of Jesus Christ. As we do the will of God – which according to Jesus is to believe in Him as the express revelation of God – we can receive what is promised. And what is it that has been promised, that is extremely good indeed? The very next words tell us the best part of that promise.

37 FOR YET IN A VERY LITTLE WHILE, HE WHO IS COMING WILL COME, AND WILL NOT DELAY.

38 BUT MY RIGHTEOUS ONE SHALL LIVE BY FAITH; AND IF HE SHRINKS BACK, MY

SOUL HAS NO PLEASURE IN HIM.

39 But we are not of those who shrink back to destruction, but of those who have faith to the preserving of the soul.

To shrink back is to turn away from the very truths about God that Jesus came to bring into clear view, not just for this world but to all the watching universe. To shrink back is to slip back into the dark views of God embraced by the majority and perpetrated by Satan, the great



accuser and deceiver.

Notice the following examples of God's kind of vengeance. And ponder the fact that God doesn't demand His followers to live up to a higher standard of rightness than He Himself is willing to perform. God is the epitome of righteousness and therefore we must be very cautious about accusing Him of resorting to violence when His own prophets demonstrate attitudes much better.

(from 2 Kings 6)

2Ki 6:11 Now the heart of the king of Aram was enraged over this thing; and he called his servants and said to

them, "Will you tell me which of us is for the king of Israel?"

12 One of his servants said, "No, my lord, O king; but Elisha, the prophet who is in Israel, tells the king of Israel the words that you speak in your bedroom."

13 ¶ So he said, "Go and see where he is, that I may send and take him." And it was told him, saying, "Behold, he is in Dothan."

14 He sent horses and chariots and a great army there, and they came by night and surrounded the city.

15 Now when the attendant of the man of God had risen early and gone out, behold, an army with horses and chariots was circling the city. And his servant said to him, "Alas, my master! What shall we do?"

16 So he answered, "Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them."

17 Then Elisha prayed and said, "O LORD, I pray, open his eyes that he may see." And the LORD opened the servant's eyes and he saw; and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.

18 When they came down to him, Elisha prayed to the LORD and said, "Strike this people with blindness, I pray." So He struck them with blindness according to the word of Elisha.

19 Then Elisha said to them, "This is not the way, nor is this the city; follow me and I will bring you to the man whom you seek." And he brought them to Samaria.

20 When they had come into Samaria, Elisha said, "O LORD, open the eyes of these men, that they may see." So the LORD opened their eyes and they saw; and behold, they were in the midst of Samaria.

21 Then the king of Israel when he saw them, said to Elisha, "My father, **shall I kill them? Shall I kill them?**"

22 He answered, "**You shall not kill them.** Would you kill those you have taken captive with your sword and with your bow? **Set bread and water before them, that they may eat and drink and go** to their master."

23 So **he prepared a great feast for them**; and when they had eaten and drunk he sent them away, and they went to their master. And the marauding bands of Arameans did not come again into the land of Israel.



"If your enemy is hungry, give him food to eat; And if he is thirsty, give him water to drink; For you will heap burning coals on his head, And the LORD will reward you" (Proverbs 25:21-22).

(from Matthew 5)

38 You have heard that it was said, "AN EYE FOR AN EYE, AND A TOOTH FOR A TOOTH."

39 But I say to you, **do not resist an evil person**; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also.

40 If anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, let him have your coat also.

41 Whoever forces you to go one mile, go with him two.

42 Give to him who asks of you, and do not turn away from him who wants to borrow from you.

43 You have heard that it was

said, "YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR and hate your enemy."

44 "But I say to you, **love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,**

45 **so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven**; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.

46 For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?

47 If you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?

48 Therefore **you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.**

How is it that Christians can teach that these instructions should apply to Christians everywhere, yet at the same time exempt God Himself from following these same principles? If Jesus tells us to love our enemies, why would God not love His enemies as our example? These passages explicitly connect the Father to these instructions, yet most Christians refuse to view God as consistently following the clear principles laid out by His Son who came to represent Him and what He is like.

(from Luke 6)

27 But I say to you who hear,

love your enemies, do good to those who hate you,

28 bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.

29 Whoever hits you on the cheek, offer him the other also; and whoever takes away your coat, do not withhold your shirt from him either.

30 Give to everyone who asks of you, and whoever takes away what is yours, do not demand it back.

31 Treat others the same way you want them to treat you.

32 If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them.

33 If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same.

34 If you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners in order to receive back the same amount.

35 But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and **you will be sons of the Most High**; for He Himself is kind to ungrateful and evil men.

36 Be merciful, just as **your Father is merciful.**

37 ¶ Do not judge, and you will not be judged; and do not condemn, and you will not be condemned; pardon, and you will be pardoned.

38 Give, and it will be given to you. They will pour into your lap a good measure--pressed down, shaken together, and running



over. For by your standard of measure it will be measured to you in return."

39 And He also spoke a parable to them: "A blind man cannot guide a blind man, can he? Will they not both fall into a pit?"

40 "A pupil is not above his teacher; but everyone, after he has been fully trained, will be like his teacher.



I am coming to realize that most Christians have been mentored by other blind Christians and the result has been causing nearly all of Christianity to fall into the pit of Satan in our views of what God is like. We have preferred our traditions about God over the plain teachings of Jesus about God. We have thought that we knew more than our teacher, Jesus. What we desperately need is to be trained by God, not by religion, so that we can become like our only true Teacher of the truth about God.

When we go back to the original passage from which the New Testament writers quoted, we can get mixed messages. I believe this may be partially due to the incomplete picture of God in Moses' own mind, despite the fact that he had far more advanced appreciation of God than anyone else living at that time. Remember that God had to warn Moses that because of less than mature views of God's character that it would be fatal for Moses to see God's face at that time. As long as there are any hidden faulty notions about God still lingering inside our hearts, God has to protect us from His full glory until we are completely safe to live in His unveiled

presence.

The following passage is Moses' last speech to his people just before he went up the mountain to die. So we must keep in mind that all these words are from Moses' perspective

and are his personal views about God that he had arrived at throughout his own lifetime of experience. They likely were not as completely accurate as the revelation of God in the life and teach-

ings of Jesus, but they were extremely more *advanced than anything on earth for thousands of years before Jesus arrived on the scene.*

(from Deuteronomy 32)

1 Give ear, O heavens, and **let me speak**; And let the earth hear **the words of my mouth.**

2 Let my teaching drop as the rain, My speech distill as the dew, As the droplets on the fresh grass And as the showers on the herb.

3 For **I proclaim** the name of the LORD; Ascribe greatness to our God!

I see a clue here that this may be revealing that the following are Moses' own views of how he has come to see God. Let's respect that disclaimer by Moses himself in his own writings. He is saying here that he (I) is proclaiming how he sees the name, or character, of the Lord.

4 The Rock! His work is perfect, For all His ways are just; A God of faithfulness and without injustice, Righteous and upright is He.

5 They have acted corruptly toward Him, They are not His children, because of their defect; But are a perverse and crooked generation.

6 Do you thus repay the LORD, O foolish and unwise people? Is not He your Father who has bought you? He has made you and established you.

Can we honestly claim that these words of Moses are indisputable; that there are people who are not God's children? Many might adhere to that notion, but I find problems reconciling this with the fact that all human beings are in God's image. Yes, many have turned their back

on Him and have chosen the devil as their father, the one they reflect. This was also true of many of the leaders of God's chosen people in the time of Jesus. But Moses did not have the clearest views of God that he later was privileged to have after he gained the perspective of heaven, after his special resurrection by



Michael (another name for Christ at that time). (See Jude 9 about the resurrection of Moses.)

Here is another issue I see in these words by Moses. Is our worth to God and our identity determined by whether we have defects or not? Moses certainly had the most advanced understanding of God of any of his generation and far beyond. But even God told Moses that he was not yet safe enough to see God's face and survive the

experience. I believe that was because Moses still had far too much infection of his thinking with less than mature ideas about the nature of God's character. And as long as we have such dissonance in our hearts about what God is really like, that very dissonance and resistance to truth is a fatal flaw that must be cleansed before it will be safe for us to live in the fiery presence of God's face.

7 ¶ Remember the days of old, Consider the years of all generations. Ask your father, and he will inform you, Your elders, and they will tell you.

8 When the Most High gave the nations their inheritance, When He separated the sons of man, He set the boundaries of the peoples According to the number of the sons of Israel.

9 For the LORD'S portion is His people; Jacob is the allotment of His inheritance.

10 He found him in a desert land, And in the howling waste of a wilderness; He encircled him, He cared for him, He guarded him as the pupil of His eye.

11 Like an eagle that stirs up its nest, That hovers over its young, He spread His wings and caught them, He carried them on His pinions.

12 The LORD alone guided him, And there was no foreign god with him.

Again, is it completely accurate to say that there was no foreign god with Jacob? That may have been true at times, but if we understand the nature of what a god is for people, and even the stories of the gods carried around and fought over by his wife, it is a bit of a stretch to say there were none with him. Moses here is making a generalization

read his words with a view to the broader perspective and discern his passion to defend God's reputation while still not fully appreciating God's fullness as revealed in the life of Jesus.

13 He made him ride on the high places of the earth, And he ate the produce of the field; And He made him suck honey from the rock, And oil from the flinty rock,

14 Curds of cows, and milk of the flock, With fat of lambs, And rams, the breed of Bashan, and goats, With the finest of the



wheat--And of the blood of grapes you drank wine.

15 But Jeshurun [*another name for Israel*] grew fat and kicked--You are grown fat, thick, and sleek-- Then he forsook God who made him, And scorned the Rock of his salvation.

16 They made Him jealous with strange gods; With abominations they provoked Him to anger.

17 They sacrificed to demons who were not God, To gods whom they have not known, New gods who came lately, Whom your fathers did not dread.

18 You neglected the Rock who begot you, And forgot the God who gave you birth.

19 The LORD saw this, and spurned them Because of the provocation of His sons and daughters.

20 Then He said, **I will hide My face from them**, I will see what their end shall be; For they are a perverse generation, Sons in whom is no faithfulness.

21 They have made Me jealous with what is not God; They have provoked Me to anger with their idols. So I will make them jealous with those who are not a people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation,

22 For a fire is kindled in My anger, And burns to the lowest part of Sheol, And consumes the earth with its yield, And sets on fire the foundations of the mountains.

When God says He will hide His face, that is a reference to the biblical definition of wrath as it must be viewed from God's perspective. Any other belief in a vindictive, lashing out kind of wrath has been contaminated by fallen sinful definitions of wrath.

Also, much of this passage seems to be as prophetic of future events as it is recounting history from the time of this speech. That helps to clarify some of the things said in the last words of Moses to the world.

23 I will heap misfortunes on them; I will use My arrows on them.

24 They will be wasted by famine, and consumed by plague and bitter destruction; And the teeth of beasts I will send upon them, With

the venom of crawling things of the dust.

25 Outside the sword will bereave, And inside terror—Both young man and virgin, The nursling with the man of gray hair.

26 'I would have said, "I will cut them to pieces, I will remove the memory of them from men,"

27 Had I not feared the provocation by the enemy, That their adversaries would misjudge, That they would say, "Our hand is triumphant, And the LORD has not done all this."

This section can be easily misunderstood and twisted by anyone who is not mature in their perceptions about what God is like as revealed by Jesus Christ. However, it is very much in line with the Old Testament practice of attributing everything to God no matter what source it came from. From what I have learned, God took the risk [of] being misunderstood by allowing everything to be blamed on Him, both good and bad, rather than to open the door for superstitious people with darkened minds to think there were other deities out there in the supernatural who might be the source of some of their experiences. In that culture, people felt compelled to worship anything and everything supernatural. So it was too much of a risk at that time for God to open to their understanding what we can now see more clearly, the titanic struggle between the supernatural forces of righteousness and darkness.

28 For they are a nation lacking in counsel, And there is no understanding in them.

29 Would that they were wise, that they understood this, That they would discern their future!

30 How could one chase a thousand, And two put ten thousand to flight, Unless their Rock had sold

them, And the LORD had given them up?

31 Indeed their rock is not like our Rock, Even our enemies themselves judge this.

32 For their vine is from the vine of Sodom, And from the fields of Gomorrah; Their grapes are grapes of poison, Their clusters, bitter.

33 Their wine is the venom of serpents, And the deadly poison of cobras.

We can see clearer hints here that the gods we trust in; i.e., our internal picture of what supernatural force(s) dominate our lives and bring us what we want, will determine how we act and treat those around us. Moses is appealing to evidence to determine how God should be viewed or who should even be trusted to be viewed as God.

34 Is it not laid up in store with Me, up in treasures?



The question arises here is it that is in store? sealed up God's treasures? Is it the poison of serpents mentioned above? Or is it possibly the truth about the nature of vengeance as viewed from God's perspective mentioned immediately following? I believe it is the latter, given references to this by New Testament authors and how they try to help us see more advanced truth about God's kind of vengeance in their context.

35 **Vengeance is Mine**, and retribution, In due time their foot will slip; For the day of their calamity is near, And the impending things are

hastening upon them.'

36 For the LORD will vindicate His people, And will have compassion on His servants, When He sees that their strength is gone, And there is none remaining, bond or free.

37 And He will say, 'Where are their gods, The rock in which they sought refuge?

38 Who ate the fat of their sacrifices, And drank the wine of their drink offering? Let them rise up and help you, Let them be your hiding place!

Notice that up to this point Moses – speaking on God's behalf here – seems to vindicate God as being like the more advanced views of God shared by New Testament writers. There we see more clearly that wrath is defined as God's releasing people to the natural consequences of their bad choices. Likewise, the true biblical definition of justice is to make things right again, restoring situations and people back to their healthy and balanced state. What is being pointed out here is also the futility of trusting ourselves to any other kind of god. This is in contrast to the imitation gods we so easily gravitate toward with glowing but empty promises, while only the true God can bring real life to us.

39 See now that I, I am He, And there is no god besides Me; It is I who put to death and give life. I have wounded and it is I who heal, And there is no one who can deliver from My hand.

40 Indeed, I lift up My hand to heaven, And say, as I live forever,

41 If I sharpen My flashing sword, And My hand takes hold on justice, I will render vengeance on My adversaries, And I

will repay those who hate Me.
42 'I will make My arrows drunk with blood, And My sword will devour flesh, With the blood of the slain and the captives, From the long-haired leaders of the enemy.'

43 "Rejoice, O nations, with His people; For He will avenge the blood of His servants, And will render vengeance on His adversaries, And will atone for His land and His people."

This is the kind of speaking that gives comfort to people who long for a violent God to defend them, to avenge them and to inflict pain and suffering on their opponents. It is possible that Moses himself shared some of that sentiment which would explain why it was woven into his descriptions of God here. But, again, if we do not make the testimony of God's own Son of greatest authority over any and all other testimonies, we are sure to come up with faulty conclusions and less than healthy opinions about the nature of God's true character of perfect love.

44 ¶ Then Moses came and spoke all the words of this song in the

hearing of the people, he, with Joshua the son of Nun.

45 When Moses had finished speaking all these words to all Israel,

46 he said to them, "Take to your heart all the words with which I am warning you today, which you shall command your sons to observe carefully, even all the words of this law.

47 "For it is not an idle word for you; indeed it is your life. And by this word you will prolong your days in the land, which you are about to cross the Jordan to possess."

This was the song of Moses, and it has had great credibility for centuries to improve the reputation of God in the eyes of billions of people. But there is a new version of this song about God that we must learn for ourselves, a more advanced view of God that we must not neglect to learn, so that we can move on to a deeper level of intimacy in knowing the Father. This new song is the song of the Lamb, Jesus, the Lamb of God who takes away all the sins (distrust and malfunction) of the

whole world. Those who are saved at last will be seen coming from both directions. Many have only known the song of Moses, but there are to be many who come to know and experience the far greater, more accurate and more compelling version of God's song written by the Lamb. This is what we are privileged to learn and sing in these last days. It is a mistake to turn back to rely on an old song when Jesus wants us to learn His new song; a song of experiential truth about what God is really like.

"And I saw what appeared to be a sea of glass mixed with fire, and those who had conquered the beast and its image and the number of its name, standing beside the sea of glass with harps of God in their hands. And **they sing the song of Moses**, the servant of God, and **the song of the Lamb**: 'Great and amazing are your deeds, Lord God the Almighty! Just and true are your ways, King of the nations!'"

(Revelation 15:2-3, NRSV)

Conclusion: DEATH OF THE WICKED: WHO BENEFITS?

(From Page 6)

nothing redemptive in the act of their destruction, to what end could it possibly serve this group?

Let us reason together. The destruction of the wicked is assured and there will at last be a unified pulse of happiness and harmony throughout all of the universe forever, but it won't be brought about by God finally cutting down the sinners and devils in one grand day of capital

punishment. It will be by His finally letting them go, giving them up to their chosen end. There will be mental agonies such as humanity has never experienced either as individuals or in any collective groupings; yes, there will be genuine weeping, gnashing of teeth, and probably even lots of physical pain, but the second death comes about only once they have given themselves to admit the righteousness of God and realize that the terms of life are such that one must be

connected to the Source of it and they have no intent to have any god but themselves. This conundrum presents itself at last in its full implication and they agree to abide by it and go away. These thoughts are developed elsewhere. (Inquire for teaching.)



"The fierce anger of the Lord will not turn back until He has performed and until He has accomplished the intent of His heart; in the latter days you will understand it" (Jeremiah 30:24).

Conclusion: HOW LONG HALT YE BETWEEN TWO OPINIONS?

(From Page 9)

“They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from heaven and devoured them (the wicked)” (Rev 20:7, 9). For study, compare brightness as light and light as life in Habakkuk 3:4, John 8:12.

The Power of the Cross

The cross has a power that explains how the Father relates to sinners. “Says the prophet, ‘O Israel, thou has destroyed thyself. . . . for thou has fallen by thine iniquity’ Hosea 13:9; 14:1. Their sufferings are often

represented as a punishment visited upon them by the direct decree of God. It is thus that the great deceiver [Satan] seeks to conceal his own work. . . . God does not stand toward the sinner as an executioner of the sentence against transgression; but He leaves the rejecters of His mercy to themselves, to reap that which they have sown” (GC 35-36).

Conclusion: ABOLISHING RETRIBUTION IN THE CHURCH FATHERS

(From Page 22)

¹⁰ Athanasius, *De Incarnatione*, ch. 6, 149.

¹¹ Athanasius, *De Incarnatione*, ch. 6, 149.

¹² Greek at 6.31, 148.

¹³ Athanasius, *De Incarnatione*, ch. 6, 149.

¹⁴ Athanasius, *De Incarnatione*, ch. 7, 151.

¹⁵ ‘Repentance gives no exemption from the consequences of nature, but merely loosens sins.’ Athanasius, *De Incarnatione*, ch. 7, 151.

¹⁶ Athanasius, *De Incarnatione*, ch. 7, 151.

¹⁷ Greek at 7.21, 150.

¹⁸ Athanasius, *De Incarnatione*, ch. 20, 185.

¹⁹ Williams, ‘Fathers’, 208.

⁴⁰ Athanasius, *De Incarnatione*, ch. 20, 185. Greek at 20.38, 184.

⁴¹ Athanasius, *De Incarnatione*, ch. 24, 193. Greek at 24.22, 192.

⁴² For an overview of research on the effec-

setting see the list of studies and articles at:

<http://www.restorativejustice.org/other/schools/outcome-evaluation>.

²⁰ Athanasius, *De Incarnatione*, ch. 9, 155.

²¹ Athanasius, *De Incarnatione*, ch. 20, 184–5.

²² Williams, ‘Fathers’, 208.

²³ Athanasius, *De Incarnatione*, ch. 8, 151. Greek at 8.9, 150. Quoted in Williams, ‘Fathers’, 207.

²⁴ Athanasius, *De Incarnatione*, ch. 8, 153. Greek at 8.29–30, 152.

²⁵ Athanasius, *De Incarnatione*, ch. 9, 153. Greek at 9.1, 152.

²⁶ Williams, ‘Fathers’, 208.

²⁷ Athanasius, *De Incarnatione*, ch. 9, 155. Greek at 9.9, 154.

²⁸ Athanasius, *De Incarnatione*, ch. 9, 155. Greek at 9.25, 154.

²⁹ Athanasius, *De Incarnatione*, ch. 16, 173. Greek at 9.25, 154.

³⁰ Athanasius, *De Incarnatione*, ch. 21, 185. Greek at 21.4, 184.

³¹ *Louv Nida* 20.46; 79.17; 24.27; 13.98.

³² G.W.H. Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961), s.v. Ἐξαρπνίζω.

³³ Athanasius, *De Incarnatione*, ch. 24, 193. Greek at 24.11, 192.

³⁴ Athanasius, *De Incarnatione*, ch. 22, 189. Greek at 22.15, 188.

³⁵ Athanasius, *De Incarnatione*, ch. 8, 153. Greek at 8.35, 152.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ Athanasius, *De Incarnatione*, ch. 29, 205. Greek at 29.2, 202.

³⁸ *Ibid.* Greek at 29.35, 152.

³⁹ For this reading, see the footnote to Heb 2:14 in the NET.

⁴³ For restorative justice within the criminal justice system see Lawrence W Sherman and Heather Strang, *Restorative justice: The Evidence* (London: The Smith Institute, 2007), available online at http://www.iirp.edu/pdf/RJ_full_report.pdf. As an introduction to the issues involved, the work of Howard Zehr has powerfully drawn attention to the failure of retributive justice to either address the needs of victims or deter crime, while at the same time demonstrating that the opposite holds true with restorative justice. Howard Zehr, *Changing Lenses: A New Focus for Crime and Justice* (Herald Press: Scottsdale, PA, 2005).

tiveness of restorative practices in the school
⁴⁴ Williams, 'Fathers', 207.

⁴⁵ Augustine, *On the Trinity*, 13.5.19, Edmund Hill (Tr.), *Works of Augustine* (Hyde Park, N.Y. : New City Press, 1991), 359.

⁴⁶ Williams, 'Fathers', 213.

⁴⁷ Augustine, *Trinity*, 13.4.13, 353.

⁴⁸ *Trinity*, 13.4.13, 353–4.

⁴⁹ *Trinity*, 13.4.14, 354.

⁵⁰ *Trinity*, 13.4.15, 354–5.

⁵¹ *Trinity*, 13.4.15, 355.

⁵² Note that Augustine says here that *we* have been reconciled to God (*reconciliati sumus Deo*) and not that God was reconciled to us.

⁵³ *Trinity*, 13.4.15, 355.

⁵⁴ *Trinity*, 13.4.16, 355.

⁵⁵ *Trinity*, 13.4.16, 356.

⁵⁷ *Trinity*, 13.4.16, 356.

⁵⁸ For example Douglas Campbell argues for a consistent interpretation of *δικαιωω* as God's act of 'liberation' in a 'forensic nonretributive' sense, *The Deliverance of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009) 658–663. See also Robert Jewett, *Romans: A Commentary* (Hermania; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007).

⁵⁹ *Trinity*, 13.4.17, 356.

⁶⁰ *Trinity*, 13.4.18, 357. Emphasis added.

⁶¹ *Trinity*, 13.5.19, 359.

⁶² *Trinity*, 13.5.19, 358.

⁶³ *Trinity*, 13.5.21, 360.

⁶⁴ *Trinity*, 13.5.21, 360.

⁶⁵ *Trinity*, 13.5.21, 360.

⁶⁶ *Trinity*, 13.5.19, 359.

⁶⁷ Discussing the moral implications of penal substitution in another paper, Williams has argued for the use of vengeance by 'the ruling authorities' in God's name arguing that they have been given God's 'limited' sanction to 'to implement this final justice' by the sword (Williams, 'Penal Substitution: A Response to Recent Criticisms' *JETS*, 50.1 [Mar, 2007] 71–86 at 73). Online at

http://www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/50/50-1/JETS_50-1_071-086_Williams.pdf

⁶⁸ Augustine, *The Correction of the Donatists* (Letter 185), Roland Teske (Tr.), *Works of Augustine*, II/3 (Hyde Park, N.Y. : New City Press, 1990), ch. 10, 185.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, ch. 11, 185.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, ch. 1, 180.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, ch. 28, 196.

THE LAST WORD

By Marilyn Campbell

Perhaps one of the most difficult subjects to talk about is the need for money to support gospel work. This is particularly true during those periods of greatest need when one has the responsibility of informing the constituency.

Today the message of God's character of love has made great advances, but more is needed. Many have made it their business to give on a regular basis to the work. Others have given when they are informed of a special need, and we thank you

for all these gifts. Many are working without compensation, making bricks without straw, because they believe whole-heartedly that their efforts and those of other like-minded believers will one day pay off, when they see their Savior coming in the clouds of glory, attributable in some small way to their efforts.

The urgent needs today are for the Peru Mission and the Africa Mission. Those needs are explained elsewhere in this newsletter.

I hope you will go to those articles,

read them, take them to heart, and respond with a donation. Contact information is contained in the respective articles.

We are God's warriors today, working on the front lines, to bring about reformation and revival and to bring our Savior in the clouds of heaven to take us home. It will be an honor to look into His smiling face and to hear Him say, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant. Enter into the joy of they Lord."

While the need today is so urgent and so clear, if we will remember His work, surely He will remember us, when He makes up His jewels.