

## How Do We Benefit From The Atonement Of Christ?

### Section Two of the Philosophy Of Forgiveness In Christianity

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#### Chapter Five

##### God's Act Of Redemption In Christ

People who have no idea of the person of Christ presume that His crucifixion was a result of being betrayed by the Jewish priests whom He had reprimanded for their evil and unrighteous acts. So, they say, Christ died as a martyr to truth and duty only. But even if Christ really died as a martyr to truth and duty, the evidence of Christ's crucifixion in the Bible shows that He did not just die as a martyr, but as the atoning sacrifice as well, as it will be shown clearly later on.

##### 1. Biblical evidence that proves the atoning or redemptive death of Christ

Firstly- Christ's testimony of His death as an atonement, and the evidence that proves it

##### 1.) Christ's testimony:

Christ said about Himself before His crucifixion, "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep" (John 10:11). By "the sheep" He meant true believers, the point of similarity between the two being that the sheep avoid filthy things and obey their shepherd, and believers, likewise, have an aversion to evil and obey God. Christ also announced, "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up [on the cross], that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:14-16).

The children of Israel had murmured against God in the wilderness, so He set the fiery serpents against them and they bit many of them. On seeing that they would surely die like the others, the rest of the people hurried to Moses and said to him, "We have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord and against you; pray the Lord that He take away the serpents from us." So Moses prayed for the people. Then the Lord said to Moses, "Make a fiery serpent, and set it on a pole; and it shall be that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, shall live" (Numbers 21:4-9). This fiery [bronze] serpent was a symbol of Christ in the following respects:

(A) It had no venom like the other serpents, and Christ had no sin like the other people.

(B) It was not itself a serpent but like a serpent. Likewise Christ who, although appearing in the form of man like us, was not in reality one of us, because the fullness of the Godhead (divinity) dwelt in Him physically. He was born of a virgin who (physically) knew no man.

(C) Death came to the children of Israel through a serpent, and it was God's will that their salvation from death should be through a serpent of another kind. The same thing also applies to sin that leads to eternal torment: it entered into mankind through the first Adam, and God so willed that their salvation from it and from its torment be through the second Adam, who is Christ (Romans 5:12-19).

(D) The actual looking at the bronze serpent was the only way that God assigned for healing the people from the bite of the fiery serpents. Likewise looking at Christ spiritually, or rather having true faith in Him, is the only way that God assigned for saving a person from sin and its consequences (John 3:16).

Christ also said, "The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (that is, die on their behalf; Mark 10:45), and "For the Son of Man has come to save that which was lost" (Matthew 18:11). He said when He likened Himself to a grain of wheat, "Unless the grain of wheat falls into the ground, and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much fruit" (John 12:24), referring to the fact that on the basis of His death many will have eternal life, and that His death will be a vicarious one, namely on their behalf.

When He spoke of Himself as the bread that came down from heaven to grant spiritual life to those who eat it spiritually, He said, "I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world" (John 6:51). He informed His disciples that His body would be given and His blood would be shed for them and for many others (Luke 22:19,20). This proves that the death of Christ was not a matter of martyrdom, but was also a propitiation for people's sins.

## 2.) Evidence of the authenticity of Christ's testimony:

The Scriptures recorded Christ's testimony about His vicarious death for us, which leaves no room for doubting it. When looked at intellectually rather than spiritually, this testimony still proves true for the following reasons:

(A) National and political leaders try to whip enthusiasm and courage into their adherents by showing them their strong points and concealing from them news of their physical sickness and weakness, for fear that they may be discouraged and dismayed. Christ, however, declared the news of His death clearly and even repeated it several times, in spite of His knowledge that this would affect His disciples adversely and dishearten them at the beginning of their walk with Him. He must have known for sure that He would die as the atoning sacrifice for their sins.

(B) Christ was neither a charlatan nor a braggart; instead He was absolutely true and humble. It is unthinkable to say that He claimed that his death would be a vicarious one while in fact it was mere martyrdom or an ordinary death.

(C) Christ's declaration of His own death as the atoning sacrifice was not isolated from the teachings His audiences heard Him say about God's love and concern for mankind and His desire to bring them closer to Him. His declaration and teachings were fused together in such a way that one cannot separate them from each other. His declaration of His atonement was not a piece of cloth that was

patched on a garment, but the very fabric of it. That is, it was not foreign to His teaching, but the very essence of it.

Secondly- The testimony of the apostles of Christ's vicarious death and the evidence that proves its validity

1. The testimony of the apostles.

(A) The apostle Peter wrote to the believers, "And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one's work, conduct yourself throughout the time of your sojourning here in fear; knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. He was indeed foreordained before the foundation of the world" (1 Peter 1:17-20). This is nothing unusual, since God knew from the beginning that man would fall into sin, and prepared for his salvation from evil even before He created him.

(B) The apostle John wrote about Christ, saying, "By this we know love, because He (i.e. Christ) laid down His life for us" (1 John 3:16), and "In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent us His Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 4:10).

(C) The apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians about Christ that He "died for our sins according to the Scriptures," and also said about Him, "And He died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for Him who died for them and rose again," and that God "made Him (Christ) who knew no sin to be sin (offering) for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (1 Corinthians 15:3, 2 Corinthians 5:15,21).

He wrote to the Romans, "For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man will someone even dare to die. But God demonstrated His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (5:7,8). He also wrote, "Being justified freely by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth to be a propitiation" (3:24,25). Then He wrote, "For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all" (6:10).

He wrote to the Colossians about Christ, saying, "For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness [of the Godhead] should dwell, and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself... having made peace through the blood of His cross" (1:19,20). He also wrote to them, "And you being dead in your trespasses... having wiped out the handwriting of requirements [i.e. the debt of trespasses] that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross" (Colossians 2:13,14).

He wrote to the Ephesians about Christ, "In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace" (1:7), "that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity" (2:16), that He has "given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma" (5:2), that he has loved the believers and has given Himself for them that He might present it to Himself "a glorious

church, not having spot or wrinkle" (5:27). The word "church" means a group or a community of people that are called together for the same goal. This verse means that God will present true believers perfect to Himself through the precious atonement of Christ on the cross, and His continual spiritual work on their hearts as long as they live on earth.

The apostle wrote to the Hebrews of Christ, saying that "He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone" (2:9). When Christ was on the cross, He represented everyone in their guilt before God on the Day of Judgment. He carried the sins of every one of us from the time we are born till the time we die, which gives every true believer perfect assurance of his being accepted by God on the basis of Christ's atonement. The apostle also said, "Once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself" (Hebrews 9:26). He also said of Him, "After He had offered one sacrifice for sin for ever, sat down at the right hand of God" (Hebrews 10:12), and that "He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered outside the gate" (Hebrews 13:12). Sacrificial offerings were burnt outside the city gate in the sinners' place in the Old Testament. He also said to his disciple Timothy about Christ that He "gave Himself a ransom for all" (1 Timothy 2:6) to redeem us from all iniquity.

2.) The evidence that proves the apostles' testimony:

The testimony of the apostles was recorded by holy inspiration and leaves no room for doubt. When looked at intellectually rather than spiritually, this testimony still proves true for the following reasons:

(A) The testimony of the apostles was not isolated from the advice and instructions they gave to the believers; instead it was fused with both. So it was not a piece of cloth that was patched on a garment, but the very fabric of it. This, of course, proves that Christ's sacrificial death is an indisputable fact.

(B) The apostles were not rich or influential people, who people would believe and whose statements they would affirm even if what they said was not true. Most of them were destitute and could hardly feed themselves on a daily basis.

The apostles differed greatly from one another in terms of age, culture, character and social status: Peter was daring, enthusiastic, poor and old. John was gentle, quiet, rich and young. Paul was a great scholar, a legalist, a stubborn debater who did not accept the opinions of others easily and was also a fatal enemy of Christianity. For such a diverse group of people, to agree on something means that this thing has to be indisputably true.

(C) By their testimony of Christ's sacrificial death for mankind, the apostles proclaimed to the Jews that there was no more benefit in the animal sacrifices that they used to offer to God through their priests, emphasizing to them that they were just symbols of Christ's atonement. This testimony provoked the priests to anger against the apostles and it was the reason they persecuted them, because if the Jews did not offer sacrifices, they would lose their source of income. Also, had Christ not really died as an atonement for mankind, it would not have occurred to the apostles to give such a testimony since it is inconceivable that, as diverse as they were, they would all make up an untrue story, be persecuted for

it, yet continue proclaiming it with their strength and power. Therefore, their testimony of Christ's sacrificial death must have been true.

Thirdly- The testimony of the Old Testament prophets and the evidence that proves its authenticity

(A) Jesus is quoted by David who said, by the spirit of prophecy, 1000 years before Christ's birth, "Those who hate me without a cause [referring to the hatred of the Jews that led them to crucify Him] are more than the hairs of my head... though I have stolen nothing, I still must restore it" (Psalm 69:4). He meant by this that even though Christ did not steal anything (or rather did not usurp any of God's rights) because this was done by mankind alone, yet He Himself restored what they stole and appropriated. Thus He satisfied the requirements of God's judgment and holiness in Himself on their behalf.

(B) In 700 BC, Isaiah the prophet spoke by the spirit of prophecy when he said about Christ: "But He was wounded for our transgressions [not for transgressions He committed], He was bruised for our iniquities [not for iniquities He committed]; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him [namely Christ has undergone on our behalf the punishment we merit so that God's justice toward us is fulfilled and the barrier between us and Him is taken away], and by His stripes [that is the wounds caused by the stripes] we are healed [from the lethal malady of sin]. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:5,6), instead of leaving us to carry our own sin, holding us responsible for it and punishing us for it.

(C) The angel Gabriel said to Daniel the prophet, who lived in 550 BC, in a special vision, "Seventy weeks [i.e. 490 years] are determined for your people [i.e. the Jews] and for your holy city [i.e. Jerusalem], to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins [which happened by their rejection of Christ], to make reconciliation for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness [which lasts forever on the basis of the above-mentioned reconciliation], to seal up vision and prophecy [i.e. to fulfil them and bring them to pass], and to anoint the Most Holy. Know therefore and understand that from the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem [which took place under King Artaxerxes (Nehemiah 2:1-8)] until Messiah the Prince [in His first coming] there shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks [i.e. 49 years plus 434 years equalling 483 years].... And after sixty-two weeks [i.e. 434 years] Messiah shall be cut off [i.e. rejected and killed], but not for Himself [i.e. not because of any iniquity He committed]" (Daniel 9:24-26).

The week here represents one year. God said to the prophet Ezekiel, concerning the times of the prophecies God revealed to him, that He made one day a substitute for one year for him (Ezekiel 4:5). When, however, the week refers to ordinary seven days, the Bible says so explicitly. It says in another place in Daniel, "In those days I, Daniel, was mourning three full weeks," where the original Hebrew has "three day weeks" (Daniel 10:2).

(D) The angel said to Joseph, Virgin Mary's fiance, "And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their

sins" (Matthew 1:21). Now, salvation from sins can be achieved only through propitiation, so Christ is the one who propitiates for our sins.

(E) Zacharias the priest (the father of John the Baptist) foretold the redemption of God in Christ, saying, "Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, for He has visited and redeemed His people" (Luke 1:68). Therefore Christ is the Redeemer who saves mankind from their sins.

(F) Simeon the elder, who carried Christ as a baby, said to God, "Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart [from the world] in peace, according to Your word; for my eyes have seen Your salvation which You have prepared before the face of all peoples" (Luke 2:25-31). This means that this elder felt secure concerning his eternal future because he saw in Christ the salvation which God had prepared to deliver people from sins and its due punishment.

(G) John the Baptist said about Christ, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29), that is, "the scapegoat of redemption" who dies to redeem all mankind.

(H) Caiaphas the high priest said about Jesus by the spirit of prophecy, "it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people and not that the whole nation should perish" (John 11:49-52), that is to say: to redeem and bring all the scattered children of God throughout the whole world into one nation for God.

The evidence that proves the authenticity of the Old Testament testimony

This testimony is recorded by holy inspiration and leaves no room for doubt. But even if it is looked at intellectually, it becomes clear to us that it must be true for the following reasons:

(A) The Torah, in which most of these verses occur, was written hundreds of years before the coming of Christ and it still exists today among all the Jews in its original language, and among Christians and non-Christians in translation. There were copies of it in the Temple, the synagogues and the religious schools during Christ's earthly ministry. The priests and the Levites revered these copies highly, read them every day and followed them to the minutest detail. It follows then that it is unthinkable that some Christians wrote down the above-mentioned prophecies in some copies of the Torah. If such a crime had been committed, it would have been discovered immediately. The Jews would have burned the copies that were falsified straight away, and they would have put to death those who falsified them.

(B) This testimony was given by people who had no connection or relationship of any kind; they include friends and enemies, angels and men, elders and youth, those who lived in Persia hundreds of years before the birth of Christ and those who lived in Jerusalem hundreds of years after the birth of Christ. And in spite of these essential differences they were one in their testimony of Christ: that He died to atone for sin. No doubt that they were led in this testimony by one Spirit, the Spirit of God, without whom they would not have agreed on it unanimously.

(C) Great historians have proved the accuracy of the timing the prophecy of Daniel determined for the coming of Christ to atone for sins. Some of these

historians are: Yahin, Hingsberg, Sais, Anold and Cooper. They all have agreed that Artaxerxes' decree of the renovation of Jerusalem was issued in 455 BC. Now if we subtract 69 yearly weeks (483 years) from this number the rest will be 28 years after the birth of Christ according to the Roman calendar. But we should add one more year to this (the difference between the old and the new calendars) that is needed to adjust the dates, which makes it 29 years AD. This is the year of the crucifixion of our Lord, since old historians have determined that Christ was born in 4 BC according to what was discovered later when the Julian calendar, which was used at those days, was compared with our Gregorian calendar. Now if we add 29 to 4 we come up with 33, which is the age of Christ when He was crucified.

## 2. Intellectual evidence that proves the atoning death of Christ

### 1.) Christ's voluntary acceptance of death:

Christ could have avoided crucifixion if He wanted to. He could go back to His heavenly home where He was always welcome, which He also had left wilfully and could return to because it was His and under His authority (John 16:28), or He could rally an army of angels to destroy all the Jews in a moment of time (Matthew 26:53). He could go away from them by any other means as He had done more than once at the beginning of His ministry among them (Luke 4:30; John 8:59) when He knew that the hour of His departure from the world had not yet come (John 7:6), or stop rebuking the high priests who were driven to kill Him as a result of His rebuke.

But when we refer back to the history of Christ we see the following: (A) His disciples attempted to stop Him from going to Jerusalem for fear of the aggression and violence of the Jews (John 11:8-10), yet despite all that He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem (Luke 9:51). (B) The soldiers who came to arrest Him fell on their faces before Him in awe of His majesty, yet He never took advantage of that to control them and join them to Himself. Instead He gave Himself over to them with His own free will (John 18:6). (C) The disciples were not unarmed; they had two swords, and probably many more knives which they used in slaughtering the sheep for the Passover Feast as it was usual, yet Christ never allowed them to use any means of self-defense. Even when Peter lifted his sword and struck the servant of one of the Jewish priests, Christ said to him, "Put your sword into the sheath" (John 18:11). (D) King Herod, who was responsible for judging Christ at a certain time, was glad to see Him and asked Him to perform a miracle for him. Had Christ fulfilled his wish, Herod would have released Him and protected Him from His adversaries. Yet Christ refused even to answer him (Luke 23:8,9). (E) Pilate the governor, who was responsible for the judgment of Christ from beginning to end, gave Him the chance to defend and clear Himself, yet Christ did not answer Him a word and the governor marvelled at Him (Matthew 27:12-14). Every one of these situations proves that Christ intended to give Himself up to be crucified. Of course there would be no need for this unless He wanted to be the atoning sacrifice, as already mentioned.

### 2.) God's approval of the crucifixion of Christ:

If Christ's death was not sacrificial God would have hastened to rescue Him, because He is the only One who lived on this earth without sin. And such a One is not supposed to come under the judgment of death, because death is the wages of and the punishment for sin. Christ, however, stood up to be judged before the most evil of mankind. They spat on Him, struck Him in the face, flogged Him and then nailed Him to the cross of shame between two criminals. While all these things were taking place, heaven remained silent and did not take any action. It neither destroyed the evil and the violent, nor sent its angels to rescue Him from their hands. Did God's moral law fail to accomplish its task? Did the nature and attributes of God change? Or did God leave the world alone under the power of evil and iniquity? Of course not! God does not change, and He has never left the world alone. Likewise, God's moral law will not fail in accomplishing its task. We must admit that God let Christ be crucified as the atoning sacrifice for our sins.

Objection: [Why then did God let the virtuous saints be killed at the hands of the unrighteous sinners?] This objection has nothing to stand on, because even if those saints escaped death, they would die anyway like other people. It was more honourable for them, indeed, to die as martyrs for the truth rather than to die a normal death.

The Scriptures have stated unequivocally that Christ's death, even if it seemed outwardly as an act of the Jews' will, was in fact by God's will. The apostle Peter said to the Jews about Christ after His Ascension to heaven, "Him... you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death" (Acts 2:23). He and the other apostles prayed together, saying, "For truly against Your Holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before to be done" (Acts 4:27,28), which indicates that God meant for the death of Christ to be a sacrificial atonement for us.

3.) Christ's sorrow before the crucifixion:

History attests that the martyred saints met crucifixion and death by fire with joy and gladness. No doubt Christ was more courageous and unbending than they due to His perfect holiness. It was Christ Himself who gave Himself up to be crucified, so He must have met His suffering with more joy and gladness than all of them. Yet if we look at Christ in the Gospels before these pains were inflicted on Him, we see Him in a state that is completely different from that which we expect Him to be in. He began to be sorrowful and deeply distressed and said to His disciples, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful even to death." He prayed fervently and incessantly so that His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground as a result of the intense emotional anguish He went through.

Now why was Christ so exceedingly sorrowful?

The answer: The sufferings of the cross which He expected must have been immeasurably harder than the normal sufferings of crucifixion which martyrs underwent. In other words, these sufferings were those of atonement which we deserved forever for our sins, because these sins are infinite by nature. He was

not sorrowful because of a sin He committed, but because of the sins we all committed.

#### 4.) The spread of darkness over the earth:

As Christ hung on the cross, darkness covered the face of the earth, and continued for three hours without stopping, from noon till three o'clock p.m. This was caused by the descent of a thick, black cloud. The cloud in the Bible symbolizes the presence and the intervention of God in the affairs of mankind (Number 11:25). The black colour symbolizes deep grief or terrible anger. Only sin causes such a deep grief and nothing else causes God to show terrible anger as sin does. There is no doubt that Christ carried the sins of mankind at that time, or, in other words, He atoned for them.

This darkness could not have been a result of an eclipse of the sun, as some claim, for Christ was crucified on the fourteenth day of the lunar month, and no eclipse can happen at that time. Moreover, the longest period of an eclipse of the sun is only a few minutes and it occurs gradually. As to the darkness that came over the earth at the crucifixion of Christ, it came at once and it continued for three whole hours, after which it was lifted at once also.

Many old scholars made a mention of this event; Philpho the astronomer of the 2nd. century AD said, "The darkness that took over at the crucifixion of Christ did not have an precedent in the whole cosmos." Dionysius the Areopagite said when he saw this darkness, "Either the God of nature is suffering now, or He is sympathizing with someone who is suffering" (al-Khareeda al-Nafeesa vol. 1, p.114). The pagan historian Thales and the Christian philosopher Tertullian of the second century have referred to this darkness, as well as the Islamic philosopher aL-Imam al-Hafiz Ibn Kathir of the fourth century in his book al-Bidaya Wal Nihaya, vol. 1, p.182).

#### 5.) God forsaking Christ:

During the first three hours of His crucifixion, Christ said various things. He asked forgiveness for the ones who crucified Him, promised paradise to the penitent thief, and entrusted His mother into the hands of His disciple John. But when night fell during the following three hours, He was horribly silent. Then He cried out, as man, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me!?" At this point someone may ask:

##### (A) Does God forsake His chosen ones at times of trouble and distress?

The answer: Of course not. He rescues and delivers them according to His true promise "Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me" (Psalm 50:51). And even if it was His will that they die as martyrs for the truth, He Himself draws near to them and helps them endure pain so that they pass through it with joy and gladness, as it happened, and is happening, with the martyred saints. Yet God did not treat Christ, as the Son of Man, in this familiar way, but left Him alone, even though Christ was never more exalted in God's sight than at the time when He hung on the cross. It is there that Christ showed utter obedience to the will of God. God would have never left Him unless His death was a sacrificial one.

(B) Supposing that Christ's death was sacrificial, was it still necessary for God to forsake Christ?

The answer: Yes, of course. Since God is not in harmony with sin, due to His holiness, and since Christ agreed to carry our sins on Himself as though they were His own, it was necessary for Christ to share our standing in God's sight, thus feeling the evil and horridness of sin and suffering the pains that come with it. One of these pains is to be deprived of enjoying God Almighty. So even though Christ remained in His own personal position (who was Himself perfect and inseparable from God), He became like the Son of Man in His vicarious position on the cross during the above-mentioned three hours. He took the place of all mankind and carried all their sins and evils, bearing upon Himself the terrible pain that they deserved. Naturally no other being could take their place in such a dire state but Christ Himself, which has been explained in the previous chapter.

(C) Didn't the divinity of Christ leave His humanity when God left Him for a few hours?

The answer: No, it did not. The reason for this is that the divinity (or Godhead) is an inseparable unity that cannot be split apart because there is no composition within it. Hence, the essence of the Father, the Holy Spirit, and the Son is together from eternity to eternity.

When the Bible refers to God forsaking Christ it means that, during the terrible hours of darkness, God made Christ (as the Son of Man who represents sinners) bear all the judgment of the world that it deserved according to the divine justice, without giving any sort of help that would alleviate its intensity for Him. This way Christ's propitiation for the sins of mankind could be lawful and in keeping with God's absolute justice. By saying, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" Christ was not objecting or asking why (Christ was utterly obedient to God and perfectly understood His dealings); He was just expressing the pain of sacrificial suffering that He was passing through, which reached its peak at that moment. Then He felt utterly lonely before the evil and painful torment of sin.

(D) Doesn't the cry of Christ indicate that He was forced and unwilling to be crucified?

The answer: No, because He simply cannot be forced or coerced. This cry rather indicates that, as the Son of Man, He had full trust in God despite the hard circumstances which He was going through. Actually these unbearable circumstances were the cause of His cry. It also proves His personal perfection; because when ordinary people go through suffering they cannot ask God why He has forsaken them, since they deserve to be forsaken by God for their sins.

Christ literally felt forsaken, because He was substituted for the sinners. Yet this experience was only for a short while, because the question "Why have You forsaken Me?" is an expression of an experience that took place on the cross for a limited period of time and then was finished. Besides, His saying later on, "Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit," (Luke 23:46) proves that His relationship with God, even as the Son of Man, was never broken. All that happened was that, after His suffering from all the agonizing pains of crucifixion,

He once more rested in the hands of God in the glory, as the Son of Man, by accomplishing the work of atonement to the end.

Even though Christ suffered incomprehensible pains on the cross, yet inwardly He was joyful and happy to suffer for us. He was, in effect, saying, as the Son of Man, "I delight to do Your will, O my God" (Psalm 40:8). This is not unusual, since the psalm that referred to Christ's saying "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" is not one of despair and frustration but of assurance and hope, because it says, "I will declare Your name to My brethren; in the midst of the congregation I will praise You" (Psalm 22:22). This is evidence of Christ's confidence in God while He was hanging on the cross. He knew He was going to rise from the dead and that He would declare the grace and salvation of God to true believers, then lead them afterward to thank and praise God for them.

#### 6.) His quick death:

After six hours of Christ's crucifixion, the soldiers came and broke the legs of the two thieves that were crucified with Him, so that they may die and be buried before sunset, as was the custom of the Jews. The day following the crucifixion was a Sabbath, which was a holy day on which dead bodies were not supposed to hang on a cross. But when they came to Christ, they did not break His legs because they saw that He had already died (John 19:33). This incident shows us clearly that He died with such unexpected quickness that the governor who sentenced Him to crucifixion did not believe the news till he heard it for himself from the mouth of the centurion who supervised the crucifixion (Mark 15:44,45).

Not breaking Christ's legs was not only determined by the circumstances at the time, but it was foreordained by God from the beginning of time. God had referred to it in an old symbol more than 1500 years before the crucifixion of Christ when He commanded Moses to prohibit the children of Israel from breaking the bones of the Passover lamb (Exodus 12:46). The Passover lamb was a symbol of the atonement of Christ, on the basis of which eternal judgment passes over true believers without condemning them to death, just as the destroying sword in old times passed over the first-born among the children of Israel on the basis of the blood of the lamb. The apostle said, "For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (1 Corinthians 5:7,8). This means that we may keep the feast with pure and holy life that has no trace of sinfulness, because leaven in the Bible symbolizes wickedness that is hidden deep in the soul.

Why then did Christ die that quickly, even though He was the most physically durable, psychologically stable and most resistant to pain among people because of His purity and sanctity?

The answer: Doctors say that when someone is crucified, he dies slowly within about 24 to 28 hours from "a secondary shock". The cause of death is either nervous exhaustion, inflammation of wounds and bleeding, or suspension of the circulation of the blood and heart disturbance. This shows that Christ's death after only six hours (namely 18 hours earlier than the time when the weakest person hanging on a cross is expected to die) can be accounted for only by the severe

pain He was going through. This pain was not only the outward physical pain, but He must also have had to suffer another sort of pain: the pain of the atonement which He took upon Himself for us. The intensity of this pain knows no end and it was enough to finish Christ's physical life in a short time.

Therefore doctors believe that, when Christ was hanging on the cross, He had what is called in physiology "sudden cardiac leakage" {I am not sure of the technical term}, which is commonly called a broken heart. The Bible had referred to this fact beforehand when it said, "Reproach has broken my heart" (Psalm 69:20). Of course Christ was not reproached for something He had done, for He was perfect. This was the reproach of the sin in which we have wallowed, which Christ agreed to take upon Himself in our place on the cross.

Some commentators, however, say that Christ died quickly owing to the strenuous effort He exerted on the night prior to His crucifixion and due to the heavy lashing He received from the soldiers after He had been arrested. This opinion, we believe, is not correct. It is true that those two things mentioned by the commentators cause fatigue, but Christ's loud cry on the cross (Matthew 27:46) indicates that, at that time, He was physically fit and full of vitality in spite of all His sufferings. Then the cause of His quick death was that He bore the hard pains of atonement. From this we see clearly that Christ did not die on the cross like a martyr, because death had no authority over Him whatsoever, but He died willingly for us, as a result of atoning for our sins.

7.) The quaking of the earth and the splitting of the rocks:

It has been already mentioned that the darkness that spread over the earth at the crucifixion of Christ was not normal, and now it is time to say that the earthquake that occurred then was not normal either. Jerusalem is far away from the earthquake belt where rocks often split. Geologists say that Jerusalem lies in an area where the crust of the earth had settled thousands of years before the birth of Christ. Also the tremors that occur there sometimes are caused by earthquakes in far places and do not affect it on any large scale. Yet, when earthquakes happen contrary to natural laws, they represent the awesome divine judgment (Matthew 24:7; Revelation 8:5), which the Romans and the Jews deserved at that time, for their evil had reached its climax. They mistreated the Source of grace and goodness, and showed Him enmity (John 12:31). But why were they not judged immediately?

The answer: Because Christ bore their sin upon Himself on their behalf and on behalf of all humanity, which they represented in the inclination toward evil and the deviation from truth. So the death of Christ was not just martyrdom, but atonement.

The way Adam was delivered from death also symbolizes this fact, for the judgment of God was supposed to have befallen him and his wife when they sinned against God's previous warning to them. Yet the judgment did not befall them then, because God let it fall on the sacrifice that God allowed them to have as a substitute for them both, as already mentioned in chapter three.

Darkness and tremors took place because the Bible says they did. The two incidents are mentioned in the Bible with brevity and with no exaggeration, which writers of novels always fall back upon. The news about them spread among the contemporaries of Christ and none of them objected to it. The Jews who were by the cross beat their chest in remorse as well (Luke 23:48), and the centurion bore witness that the crucified One was truly the "Son of God", which proves that these two incidents actually took place in their presence and that they were all greatly affected by them.

### 3. The suffering of martyrdom and the suffering of atonement

We have seen then that Christ endured two sorts of suffering on the cross: the sufferings of martyrdom and the suffering of atonement. Yet many people think that they are the same, therefore we shall now look at each in turn.

#### Firstly- The suffering of martyrdom

The suffering of martyrdom that Christ endured was not only physical, but also emotional, as it is shown as follows:

##### 1.) Physical suffering:

(A) In Ananias' house, the spirit of hatred and cruelty welled up in one of the servants so much that he struck Christ with all his strength. In Caiaphas' house as well, the servants and the Temple soldiers fell upon Him and vented all their anger on Him. Some punched Him, others slapped Him, while others hit Him with staves.

(B) In the governor's house, the Roman soldiers jumped at the chance this Jew offered them by claiming He was a king. They stripped Him of His clothes, tied His hands, bent Him down, tied Him to a pole and flogged Him with all their might. Their whips consisted of nine leather belts, in each of which were seven balls of unpolished metal. The lashing fell on His back, and sometimes on His head and face. His flesh was lacerated and the metal balls plunged into the wounds, causing blood to gush out from them. Also the nerves were torn and the bones were severely scraped. Christ suffered excruciating pain indeed. Had He been a normal man, He would have died then and there, as many men had done. Afterward they placed a crown of thorns on His head and struck Him with a stick on it, so the thorns dug into His head and blood gushed out profusely, running down His face.

(C) Finally, they threw Him on the cross that had been prepared for Him, then pulled His arms violently on its cross-beams, and hammered a thick nail into each of them with a heavy hammer. The two nails sank into skin, flesh, sinews and bones, till they penetrated the cross-beams of the cross and were secured there. They put one foot of His on top of the other, and with a longer nail they nailed both of them together till the nail penetrated the prop of the cross and was secured in it too. After this, the cross was raised up and dropped in a hole to fix it, which must have caused Christ a great deal of pain. There He was left under the scorching heat of the sun till His strength was dried up like a potsherd, and His tongue clung to His jaws due to extreme thirst (Psalm 22:15).

"The cross," Cicero said, "is the basest and most cruel punishment, which was executed only upon the most wicked criminals and the lethal enemies [of the state] to make their torment go longer. Whoever was sentenced to the cross wished he could die quickly- a wish that never was fulfilled. He would labour under his excruciating pains a day or more, until death comes as the end and rescues him." The Jews wanted Christ to suffer this kind of pain; but they were disappointed, for He died after a few hours from His crucifixion.

## 2.) Emotional suffering:

(A) Judas Iscariot betrayed Jesus, even though He had entrusted him with the money that had been given to the disciples and had allowed him to eat from the same dish with Him a few hours earlier. Peter, the bold one among the disciples, denied Him in spite of the many special privileges Christ had granted Him and the big favour of healing his mother-in-law that He had done his family. Peter did not even stop at that; he started to curse, swearing that he did not know Christ. As to the other disciples, they left Him and ran away, even though they were the ones He loved the most and were closest to His heart. He had spent His last three years of life teaching, instructing and taking care of them.

(B) In Gethsemane, the Jews came up to Him with swords and sticks as though He were a burglar or a murderer who killed people. They tied Him up, as they did the slaves and criminals, and led Him with brutality to Annas and then to Caiaphas. They began to spit on Him as if He were the vilest and lowest of men. In biting mockery they covered His glorious face, struck Him, and then ask Him, "Prophecy! Who is it that struck You?!"

After finally deciding to nail Him to the cross, they led Him to Pontius Pilate amid the people's open derision, mockery and taunting. They stood before him and heaped their accusations up against Christ, forgetting, or rather ignoring, that they or their relatives had received much from His gracious hands. In addition to all that, He was the purest and holiest Man who ever lived on our earth at all times.

(C) When He stood before Herod, the soldiers mocked and ridiculed Him. They clothed Him with a bright robe to make fun of Him. On bringing Him back to the Praetorium to be further judged by Pilate, the high priests, who held God's Bible in their hands, asked to release Barabbas rather than the Messiah. So they asked Pilate to release that manslayer and to crucify Christ. He complied with them and granted them their wish for fear that he should lose his position, although he held all the authority in the country in his hands. Actually he was appointed to maintain and protect justice from those who wanted to play havoc with it.

(D) In the Praetorium, the Roman soldiers took Him and gathered the whole battalion upon Him. They tied Him up amongst them, and made Him an object of their ridicule. They held a mock coronation celebration for Him in which they took off His ordinary clothes and put on Him a purple garment (perhaps it was a worn out cloak which a noble man had long disposed of and was taken by one of the soldiers). Afterward they made a crown of thorns and thistles and put it on His head. They placed a stick in His hands for a sceptre, to make Him look like a phony king. In utter mockery and degradation they knelt down before Him and

said, "Hail, King of the Jews!!" When they had finished, they took away the stick they had given Him and struck Him hard with it on His head to complete their insult to Him.

(E) When He was hung on the cross, those who passed by blasphemed Him, shaking their heads and looking at Him from top to bottom with all contempt and spite, and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross!" They did not know that He accepted the cross voluntarily to propitiate for their sins and the sins of others, and that the miracle He wanted to give to the world was not to come down from the cross, but to rise from the dead after completing the work of redemption.

Even if He had come down from the cross as they asked Him to, they still would not have believed in Him. They would have said that He had a demon, as they had said earlier about Him when He worked miracles. The real reason behind their disbelief was not their need of proof of Christ's unique prophetic position with God, but the blindness of their insights, which made them see truth as falsehood and falsehood as truth.

Christ endured these physical and emotional pains, which affected Him far more than what we can imagine or bargain for, for the following two reasons: (a) He was in perfect physical health and suffered from no illness or pain, which would have taught patience and endurance. He also was in perfect emotional health, so His feelings were never clouded and His emotions were never hardened and He never experienced the taste of insult and shame. (b) He loved men, but they met His love with hate and enmity. He did good to them, but they met His benevolence with rebellion and disobedience. Because of His absolute perfection, He hurt deeply as a result of this ingratitude. These pains, however, were only the pains of martyrdom that the martyred saints also endured (in varying degrees) with all joy and delight. Therefore, they could not be the cause of the deep sorrow that He showed in the Garden of Gethsemane or the loud cry that He uttered while He was hanging on the cross.

#### Secondly- The suffering of atonement

This is the invisible pain that Christ had to endure on behalf of mankind as a result of their sins and iniquities. The sword of divine justice was about to fall upon them all, but Christ received it out of mercy and pity for them. Thus the prophecy that was said about Him more than 500 years was fulfilled: "'Awake, O sword, against My shepherd, against the Man who is My Companion,' says the Lord of hosts 'Strike the Shepherd and the sheep will be scattered'" (Zechariah 13:7). He was cut down by the sword of punishment instead of the sheep that deserved it. We cannot begin to comprehend the magnitude, the horror or the intensity of this pain. However, let us ponder on the following points, and we can understand a little more:

#### 1.) Christ replaced the sinners in position:

Divine justice considered Christ guilty because He substituted for us on the cross. The Scriptures said, "He was numbered with the transgressors" (Isaiah 53:12). He took upon Himself all our sins, as ugly, despicable and unclean as they are,

as though they were His own. David had seen this fact a long time ago and had spoken as though he were Christ, saying, "O God, You know My foolishness; and My sins are not hidden from You" (Psalm 69:5), although Christ did not do any iniquity or commit any sin. Knowing that a man of noble character is naturally hurt when he is accused of a wrong that someone else did, no doubt then that Christ was deeply hurt inside. As holy and righteous as He is, all our sins were put on Him, thus becoming not only guilty, but as though He were all sinners combined together. He even became as though He were sin itself, which corrupted the whole world and cause God's laws and rights to be violated. The Scriptures referred to this fact when it said about God that "He made Him [that is Christ] who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Corinthians 5:21).

#### 2.) His acceptance of the reproach of sin:

Since Christ was a substitute for sinners, He took upon Himself the reproach of their sins. The shame of sin is the highest sort of shame. The Bible says of it, "Sin is a reproach to any people" (Proverbs 14:34). Christ felt this reproach in a way we cannot imagine, because His feeling for reproach is incomparably finer than that of those who were born and lived in it. With the spirit of prophecy, David saw the reproach that Christ felt when He was hanging on the cross, and said on His behalf, before He ever came to earth, "Reproach has broken My heart, and I am full of heaviness" (Psalm 69:20). It was this reproach that broke Christ's heart, which was brimming with the holiest and finest emotions. It was this reproach that made Him hang His head, which was full of the purest and most noble principles. Therefore He was heavy with sorrow. This heaviness of soul is the worst of all diseases because it kills a man quickly and relentlessly.

#### 3.) His enduring the torment of sin:

Sin not only brings reproach on its doer, but also torment. Now since Christ agreed to represent us, it was self-evident that he had to endure the torment of sin also, which is an incomparable torment. It is hell itself with its psychological anguish and the flames of divine justice. David the prophet saw the effect of this torment on Christ's soul with the spirit of prophecy and said on His behalf, before He ever came into the world, "I am poured out like water, and all My bones are out of joint; My heart is like wax; it has melted within Me. My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and My tongue clings to My jaws" (Psalm 22:14,15).

#### 4.) The curse of sin settled upon Him:

Sin does not bring reproach and torment only; it also brings a curse. The Scripture said, "Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them" (Galatians 3:10). So it was necessary that the Redeemer should not only carry the reproach and torment of sin, but its curse as well. Did Christ accept the curse of sin, together with the sufferings He accepted for us? The answer brings tears to one's eyes, and one's pen to slow down: Yes, He did. The Scripture said, "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us" (Galatians 3:13). So because of agreeing to carry our sins upon Himself out of love and pity for us, He was not only

considered accursed, but a curse as well to remove the curse from us and bring us a blessing instead.

This is only a little of the suffering of atonement. There is no more to be written about it than what has been written already. Only God and Christ know its magnitude and horror, because God knows the requirements of His infinite justice, and Christ was the One who fully met these requirements in His human nature. Supposing that the pains of atonement turned into a physical fire and consumed Christ's body, this would be easier for Him than the pain He had to endure. The reason for this is that these pains continued to rage in His body, soul and spirit, tormenting them, yet not destroying them, all during the hours of darkness in which Christ was crucified.

Some people assume that the atonement was an outward, automatic act, which God had to accomplish before He could forgive us and bring us closer to Him. This act, however, issued from His very nature. For fear that the meaning of atonement should be misunderstood, we say: "But for God's atonement of our sins in Christ, we would not have obtained salvation." Unless God, with His infinite love, could endure our sins, with all their filth and horridness, and agree to bring us closer to Him in spite of our personal shortcomings, we would have never been saved. Therefore, His appearing to us in the person of Christ to do these two services was not an outward act that He had to do in order to accomplish something else that His nature would not do. On the contrary, it was an act issuing from His very nature.

As a result of His strong love for mankind, God did not destroy them because of their sins, but waited for them patiently many years. When the wickedness of a group of them would exceed the bounds, He would send a flood, fire or pestilence upon them to chastise them and bring them to repentance. But when the time He appointed came and the souls of the elect were eager for salvation from sin and its consequences, sure now that they could not obtain it by their own strength, God appeared to us in Christ and bore all our evils and iniquities, instead of returning them upon our heads and inflicting eternal judgment upon us. Now if Christ avoided crucifixion, allowed His disciples to use the sword or summoned the angels to defend Him (which He could easily do), our sins would still be our master, defying God's love and mercy. But now God's love and mercy have completely overcome our sins, so that any of us who truly believes has the privilege of being forgiven forever and ever, as it is made clear in chapter seven.

So then, Christ's sacrificial death was the greatest service He rendered us, for if He lived until today teaching the people, feeding the hungry and raising the dead without atoning for our sins, all these services, as useful and marvellous as they are, would not save us from the condemnation of sin or qualify us to be in the presence of God and in harmony with Him. We would spend our lives in eternal misery!

## **Chapter Six**

### **The Sufficiency and Results of the Atonement of Christ**

#### **1. The sufficiency of God's atonement in Christ**

It was God Himself who redeemed us through Christ, therefore His redemption must be sufficient to meet the requirements of His justice and holiness toward us. Consequently, it must be sufficient to save us from our sins and its destructive consequences. However, because this is so important, let us cite some evidence that confirms the truth, so that doubters may rest assured.

Firstly- Christ's testimony and the evidence of its authenticity

(A) Before He accomplished His redemption of mankind, Christ said, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). He also said, "He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see [eternal] life, but the wrath of God abides on him" (John 3:36), and "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment [because the judgment he deserved was borne by Christ], but has passed from death into life" (John 5:24). The enjoyment of this life on the basis of true faith in Christ is the evidence of the sufficiency of His atonement.

(B) When Christ was on the cross, He said to the thief, who regretted his sins and took refuge with His grace because he had true faith in Him, "Today you will be with Me in Paradise" (Luke 23:43). Now this thief merited eternal torment for his crimes. His mere regret for having done them would not qualify him to be forgiven or to enjoy God, as it is explained in chapter two. It follows then that the statement of Jesus to the thief, "Today you will be with Me in Paradise," is an evidence that the atonement of Christ is sufficient to save from sin and its consequences.

(C) The last statement uttered by Christ on the cross was, "It is finished!" (John 19:30). There is a big difference between ending something and finishing it. When one ends something he may stop short of finishing it, but when one finishes something, then he has completed it. So by saying "It is finished" Christ not only stated that He had ended the act of atonement, but also that He had accomplished His goal successfully, as is necessitated by the original language of the Scripture. The Greek word for "finished" here is "teles" which means not only the termination of a thing, but also carrying out a thing to the full (Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words, W. E. Vine, p. 431, 14).

2.) The evidence of the authenticity of Christ's testimony:

Christ's statements have been recorded by divine inspiration, which removes all doubts as to their authenticity. Besides, Christ did not announce all of them at the beginning of His ministry; instead He uttered some of them while on the verge of death. At such a time people tend to part company with their false claims and appear as they really are. Now since Christ's testimony of His sacrificial death proved to be true, as was made clear previously, and since Christ was not One to brag or boast, then His testimony of the sufficiency of His atonement to meet the requirements of God's justice and holiness and to save us from sin and its consequences must be true as well.

Secondly- The apostles' testimony and the evidence of its authenticity

## 1.) The apostles' testimony:

(A) The apostle Peter said about Christ that He "bore our sins in His own body on the tree" (1 Peter 2:24), as well as "For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit" (1 Peter 3:18).

(B) The apostle John said about Christ, "And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world" (1 John 2:2). He also said that He "loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood" (Revelation 1:5), and that "the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin" (1 John 1:7).

(C) The apostle Paul also said about Him, "Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most High Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption" (Hebrews 9:12). He also said, "For by one offering He has perfected for ever those who are being sanctified" (Hebrews 10:14), "He had by Himself purged our sins" (Hebrews 1:3), "who gave Himself a ransom for us" (1 Timothy 2:6), "He... might taste death for everyone" (Hebrews 2:9) and "who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed" (Titus 2:14).

These verses make it clear that the redemption of Christ is not confined to a certain group of people, or to certain sins, or that it extends for a certain period of time after which people would not get another redemption. Instead, Christ's redemption is for all people, from all sins, and it extends forever. This gives the chance for everybody at all times and in all countries to be saved.

## 2.) The evidence of its authenticity:

The apostles' testimony has been recorded by divine inspiration, which removes all doubt as to its authenticity. In the previous chapter, we have cited evidence of the authenticity of their testimony. Moreover, by proclaiming the sufficiency of Christ's atonement, the apostles made clear to the Jews that there was no need for offering the sacrifices they used to offer, as well as for the existence of the Temple or the priests and the Levites who ministered in it. This declaration exasperated all the Jews and made them persecute the apostles severely led by their religious leaders. For this declaration not only dissolved their sources of income, but also put an end to Judaism, which they deeply cherished. The apostles could not have made up such a thing to get themselves persecuted. They could never have persisted in proclaiming it with such bravery and courage if they knew it was false. Besides, it was impossible for them to agree on fabricating this declaration because they were different in culture, upbringing, age, environment, citizenship and social status. They must have been completely certain before God of the truth they proclaimed the sufficiency of Christ's atonement.

Thirdly- The testimony of the Old Testament prophets and the evidence of its authenticity:

### 1.) The testimony of the Old Testament prophets:

(A) In 1500 BC the prophet Moses said that before God brought Adam and Eve from the Garden, He had revealed to them that the seed of the woman would bruise the head of the serpent (Genesis 3:15). By this revelation God gave Adam a full promise of redemption in Christ. The Hebrew word for "seed" [zera`] mentioned here occurs in the singular, not the plural, and the only one who could be called the "seed of the woman" is the Lord Jesus Christ, because He was born of a mother without a father. When this Hebrew word occurs in the plural [zera'im], it is translated descendants or plants that have seeds. This is made clear by apostle Paul's argument in Galatians 3:16, where he says, "Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, 'And to seeds,' as of many, but as of one, 'And to your seed,' who is Christ" (Galatians 3:16).

The serpent refers to Satan, because Bible calls him "the serpent of old" (Revelation 20:2), owing to his deception of people and the way he leads them astray. Bruising the head of the serpent means that Christ terminated and destroyed the devil's authority completely. This indicates the sufficiency of Christ's atonement to save true believers from sin and its eternal consequences.

(B) In 1000 BC, David said with the spirit of prophecy that true believers would come [from everywhere] and declare His [Christ's] righteousness to a people who will be born, that He has done this [righteousness] (Psalm 22:31). He also said about those believers that they will see and be glad, and their hearts shall live (Psalm 69:32), which proves the sufficiency of Christ's atonement for their eternal salvation, because there is no room for gladness or eternal life without the sufficiency of Christ's atonement.

(C) In 700 BC, Isaiah the prophet said about Christ, "You make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord (pertaining to the salvation of true believers) shall prosper in His hand. He shall see the travail of His soul, and be satisfied. By His knowledge My righteous Servant shall justify many [true believers], for He shall bear their iniquities" (Isaiah 53:10,11). Each of these passages denotes the sufficiency of Christ's atonement forever. The seed that He shall see is true believers who live forever, and it is they who will satisfy and bring gladness to Christ's soul by receiving His sufficient salvation.

Isaiah calls Christ "the Servant of the Lord", which is a biblical term meaning the one who fulfils all the limitless purposes of God. In His humanity, Christ is referred to with this term, because He carried out His task to the full. This is not unusual, since He is "the Word of God" and in so being He alone can carry it out.

2.) The evidence of its authenticity:

This testimony has been recorded by divine inspiration, which removes all doubts as to its authenticity. Yet, in addition to the evidence of the trustworthiness of those prophets, they lived so far from each other in terms of time that they could not have possibly colluded together to concoct such an idea (contrary to what some people claim). It is impossible, likewise, that one of them copied what another said, because each one of them spoke about a specific aspect of the sufficiency of Christ's atonement that none else shared with him. This proves that

they were led together by the Spirit of God, since He is the One that knows everything about the truth from the beginning. He was able to reveal to each one of the prophets some parts of it that were suitable to his circumstances.

Fourthly- The factual testimony of the sufficiency of Christ's atonement

1.) The torn veil of the Temple:

When Christ said, "It is finished," the veil of the Temple was torn in two from top to bottom (Matthew 27:51). In order to understand clearly what the tearing of the veil of the Temple at that moment means, we need to know the following: There was in the tent of meeting that Moses built, and the Temple that Solomon later built, a chamber called the Holy of Holies. God made this chamber a symbol for heaven, in which He manifested Himself in His glory and splendour. Opposite this chamber, there was another one called the holy place, in which the priests offered worship to God daily. The veil was between these two chambers (2 Chronicles 3:14; Exodus 26:31) and it symbolized the fact that people (priests included) were not qualified to have access to God's presence because of their sins, and that He could not receive them into His presence due to His absolute holiness.

This veil remained between the two chambers from the time of Moses till Christ was taken down from the cross. No one dared to enter, or even look at, the Holy of Holies all that time for fear that he might die immediately. God even commanded Moses that the high priest may not enter beyond the veil at all times, lest he should die (Leviticus 16:2). This veil that hung in its place hundreds of years announced that the door to God is closed for mankind because of their sins, yet it could not remain even for a moment after Christ had said, "It is finished." Instead, it was torn in two immediately from top to bottom. Of course God would not tear it in that moment unless the atonement of Christ met all the requirements of divine justice and holiness. By rending the veil God seemed to be saying to the people, "Christ has atoned for your sins completely; therefore I opened my door wide for you to come in and enjoy being in My presence with no barrier or hindrance."

2.) Not breaking Christ's legs:

It has been already mentioned in chapter seven that the reason for not breaking Christ's legs was that He died before sunset. If the breaking of the legs is looked at as an insult to the crucified one, we see that God did not allow Christ's legs to be broken so as to honour Him. And of course there would be no reason for honouring Him then unless His atonement had met the requirements of divine justice and holiness.

3.) The issue of blood and water from Christ's side:

After Christ's death one of the soldiers stabbed Him in His side with a spear, which caused blood and water to come forth immediately. This issue of blood and water, even though it could be accounted for physiologically, attests to the sufficiency of Christ's atonement. Water, among other things, stands for the divine means of purification and spiritual fulfilment (John 4:10-14; Revelation 22:17). Blood stands for redemption and atonement, because without the

shedding of blood there is no remission (Hebrews 9:22). This truth attracted the apostle John's attention, so that he said about Christ, "This is He who came by water and blood-Jesus Christ; not only by water, but by water and blood... And there are three that bear witness on earth: the Spirit, the water, and the blood; and these three agree [in respect to Christ] as one" (1 John 5:6-8). The Holy Spirit reveals in the world that redemption and eternal life are in Christ, which testifies to the sufficiency of Christ's atonement.

#### 4.) Christ's burial in a new grave:

It may never occur to anyone that Christ's burial in a new grave had something to do with the sufficiency of Christ's atonement. Yet, since nothing happens in life, whether big or small, except it be according to God's will and predestination, we should not let our minds pass over the burial of Christ in a new grave without asking: "Why did God want Christ's body to be buried in such a grave, although He should have been buried together with the two thieves, with whom He was crucified, in the public cemetery, according to the laws of the Roman state at the time?!"

As an answer, we say: If Christ's atonement had not met the requirements of God's justice and holiness, Christ would have been no more and no less than any other man. Consequently, He would have been buried in the public cemetery. So, not being buried in such a cemetery attests to the sufficiency of His atonement to fulfil the requirements of God's justice and holiness. It also indicates the perfection of His purity.

God let mankind crucify Christ, not because He was unable to rescue Him from their hands, but because it was His will to fulfil through Him His atonement for them all. Now, since Christ fulfilled it to the end, there was no need for His pure body to be insulted any longer. Instead, it deserved to be honoured and respected. Yes, He was about to be honoured and glorified by His resurrection from the dead with no corruption, but this did not preclude being honoured during His death. He had to be covered in a costly shroud, and He had to be anointed with the most expensive ointments, and He had to be buried in a brand new grave, surrounded by a garden (John 19:39-41).

#### 5.) Christ's resurrection from the dead:

Had Christ remained buried in His grave, there would have been some room for contesting His absolute perfection, on the grounds that He did not differ from anyone else who was ruled by death and remained in his grave till the Day of Resurrection because of his sins. This would also give room for contesting the sufficiency of His atonement to meet the requirements of God's justice and holiness. But His resurrection from the dead on the third day leaves no room for contesting against this or that.

#### 6.) The resurrection of some saints:

In the wake of Christ's resurrection from the dead, some saints rose from their graves and were seen by many of the inhabitants of Jerusalem (Matthew 27:52). This incident has been recorded by divine inspiration and cannot be rejected as false. It is mentioned in the Bible very matter-of-factly, in a very simple,

unexaggerated style and is not meant to be a personal comment or an interpolation. Only man-made books are prone to such things. Likewise, it cannot be a brain-child of the disciples. If they wanted to honour Christ for His resurrection from the dead, it would not occur to them to honour some other saints who had died before Him, so as to make sure that He would be in the lime-light alone. Moreover, this episode was written and published in the same area where Christ was crucified, and He rose amongst the same people who witnessed His crucifixion and heard of His resurrection, yet none of them objected to it. It must have been a true account of what took place in their presence.

When God let those saints rise again from their graves after the resurrection of Christ, He furnished proof of the sufficiency of Christ's atonement. He declared also that the inexhaustible power of life, which raised Christ from the dead (Hebrews 7:16), is able to raise all the saints who died and who will die, in the same manner in which Christ rose from the dead into eternal glory.

#### 7.) The destruction of the Jewish Temple:

The temple was the greatest object of glory among the Jews. The erection of this temple cost about a billion gold pounds. It was the only place they turned to in times of trouble, to offer sacrifices according to the law God gave to Moses. It was there that they repented and sought mercy and forgiveness for their sins. In addition, the temple was the public witness of their relationship to God, apart from all other nations of antiquity, since the latter worshipped idols. In the past God used to fill that temple with His glory, reveal His will and meet the people in it in the Spirit. This temple, however, was demolished some years after Christ's Ascension into heaven. Titus, the Roman commander, surrounded it and burned it down, thus causing it to sink from its previous glory. Titus was not satisfied by this; he also pulled its foundations from the ground, fulfilling Christ's prophecy that not one of its stones shall be left upon another, that shall not be thrown down (Matthew 24:2).

The Jews tried to rebuild the temple several times in the last two thousand years, but all their attempts were doomed to failure. This shows that their sacrifices were only figures and symbols for the atonement of Christ, and that Christ's atonement is an eternal atonement with everlasting effect.

## 2. The results of the sufficiency of God's atonement in Christ

### Firstly- The external blessings

The external blessings are those that God gives true believers. He sees them enjoying these blessings before Him by virtue of Christ's atonement, regardless of the condition of their souls at any time. These blessings may be summed up as follows:

#### 1.) Forgiveness:

One thousand years before Christ, David sang, "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven" (Psalm 32:1). Six hundred years before Christ, the prophet Jeremiah wondered how God pardons the sinners (Jeremiah 5:7). Yet,

the blessedness of which David spoke only materialized through the sufficiency of the atonement of Christ. The only way God could pardon sinners was revealed through this same atonement. God said through the apostles, "Let it be known to you, brethren, that through this Man [that is, Christ] is preached to you the forgiveness of sins" (Acts 13:38). He also said, "... that they [namely, people] may receive the forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those that are sanctified" (Acts 26:18), also, "... through His [namely Christ's] name, whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins" (Acts 10:43). He also said to those who truly believed, "... your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake" (1 John 2:12).

When God pardons sins, He does not remember them at all, as if they have never been committed. The prophet David yearned for such complete remission and said to God, "Do not remember the sins of my youth" (Psalm 25:7). But this complete forgetting of sins could never be realized except through the sufficiency of Christ's atonement. It is the only thing that fulfilled the requirements of God's justice and holiness, on the basis of which God said to the believers, "I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more" (Jeremiah 31:31-34).

## 2.) Justification:

Justification for the believers means to be cleared of the stigma of sin that has stuck to them, and become righteous before God as though they have never committed any sin at all and did all the righteousness that God wanted. This is not unusual, because just as Christ took our place so that all our sins were imputed against Him, in the same way His immeasurable righteousness was imputed for us.

In the past, the righteous Job and the prophet David searched for such righteousness, but found no way to it. Job wondered, "How, then, can man be righteous before God?" (Job 25:4), and David said to God, "In Your sight no one living is righteous" (Psalm 143:2). Yet, this justification, which these two men regarded as impossible to obtain, became possible through the sufficiency of Christ's atonement. The apostles said, through divine inspiration, to true believers, "... being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Romans 3:24-28). They also said, "But now the righteousness of God is revealed... through faith in Jesus Christ to all and on all who believe" (Romans 3:21-22). Thanks be to Christ, who "was delivered up because of our offences, and was raised because of our justification" (Romans 4:25), for "by Him everyone who believes is justified" (Acts 13: 39).

Now there is a difference between legal and practical righteousness. Legal righteousness is what God imputes on us by virtue of the sufficiency of Christ's atonement when we truly believe in Him. Practical righteousness, however, consists of the good, flawless works which we who believe do by virtue of God's effect on our souls. Legal righteousness is absolutely perfect and cannot be increased or added to by any of us. It is also the only basis for being accepted by God, for we cannot atone for one of our sins by all our good works. Practical righteousness, however, differs in amount from one person to another, because we ourselves work it out. It is according to this righteousness that we get our

additional reward from God, which is along with our enjoyment of being accepted eternally before Him on the basis of the sufficiency of Christ's atonement.

### 3.) Purification:

Hundreds of years before the coming of Christ, righteous Job said about himself that, even if he washed himself with snow water and cleansed his hands with soap, he would still be guilty (Job 9:30). The prophet Jeremiah said about mankind that even if they wash themselves with lye their sins will not be blotted out before God (Jeremiah 2:22). [Lye is a strong alkaline liquor rich in potassium carbonate used in making soap and washing. Soap and lye are used here figuratively to say that sin cannot be removed by any human means.]

The prophet Ezekiel said about mankind that they were not purged and would not be purged (Ezekiel 24:13). The prophet David cried out to God, "Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin" (Psalm 51:2). Yet, this purification they yearned for and regarded as unattainable was realized by virtue of the sufficiency of Christ's atonement. The apostles of Christ said of Him, "He had by Himself purged our sins" (Hebrews 1:3), and that He "loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood" (Revelation 1:5). They said that His blood cleanses from all sins (1 John 1:7). Thus we have been washed, sanctified and even justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and the Spirit of our God (1 Corinthians 6:11).

### 4.) Reconciliation and peace with God:

Righteous Job looked for someone free of sin and at the same time able to fulfil the requirements of God's justice, so that he could reconcile him to God. Yet, he never found this person, so he said in despair, "Nor is there any mediator between us, who may lay his hand on us both. Let Him take His rod away from me, and do not let dread of Him terrify" (Job 9:33,34). The prophet Jeremiah used to say that no man has peace (12:12). Isaiah the prophet asked God to establish peace for him and for others (26:12). Nevertheless, the reconciliation and peace that these virtuous men yearned for and regarded as unattainable have come true by virtue of the sufficiency of Christ's atonement. Driven by divine inspiration, Paul said, "Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:1,2). He also said, "We also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation (Romans 5:11). "Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ" (2 Corinthians 5:18-21). Again he said that God reconciled all things to Himself by Christ, "through the blood of His cross" (Colossians 1:20-22).

### 5.) Salvation from eternal condemnation:

The most pious people used to fear death and weep bitterly if they happened to know that they were about to die (2 Kings 20:3). They dreaded standing before the justice of God (Psalm 143:2) and cringed at the eternal fire which God appointed for judgment (Isaiah 33:14). But by virtue of the sufficiency of Christ's atonement, we no longer dread the judgment; instead we have full confidence that we have the privilege of enjoying God in heaven forever. Christ said that he

who believes in Him will not be condemned before the divine judgment (John 3:18). He who believes in the One who sent Him will have eternal life and shall not come into judgment, but has been translated from death into life. Christ said that whoever believes in the Son will have everlasting life, and the Son will raise him up at the last day (John 6:40). Driven by divine inspiration, the apostle Paul said about the salvation from this condemnation, "... when the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us" (Titus 3:4-5). He also said, "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God" (Ephesians 2:8). Finally, he said of himself, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief" (1 Timothy 1:12-15).

### Secondly- The internal blessings

We knew already from chapter two that we not only need forgiveness, but also a spiritual life that qualifies us to be harmonious with God in His exalted qualities. If we get this forgiveness without a spiritual life, we escape the eternal condemnation but we remain unable to live in harmony with God. This inability is misery itself. Therefore, the results of Christ's atonement do not stop at the external blessings mentioned above, but also extend to internal blessings that qualify the soul for the desired harmony with God in His character. These blessings are:

#### 1.) Spiritual birth from God:

The following points aim at introducing this birth, its importance and indispensability.

##### (A) The inability of human methods of self-reformation:

It became clear for us in chapter two that religious acts such as fasting, prayer and genuine repentance are incapable of absolving sinners from the punishment for their sin, and qualifying them to be harmonious with God in His lofty moral character. Moreover, the attempts of social reformers at destroying sin have all failed. One group of them said that poverty, ignorance, emptiness and the revolution of the youth are the factors that lead to committing sin. A poor man, they said, would be led into it in order to get something to eat; an ignorant man for his lack of estimation of its consequences; an unemployed man for being unable to remain jobless; and the youth for their recklessness and impetuosity. Therefore, they took pains to provide the necessary means for the poor, knowledge for the unlearned, jobs for the idle and discipline for the youth. Nonetheless, all these methods, as experience has proven, are not beneficial in turning people away from sin, because, needless to say, many wealthy, educated and busy folk together with many who are well beyond their youth, still commit iniquities and atrocities just like anyone else.

Another group claimed that physical punishment is apt to turn the wicked away from their wickedness; so they recommended punishment, either by imprisonment, whipping or hard labour. Nonetheless, all these methods also, as experience has proven, are useless. They caused the wicked to work on new

ways of hiding the evidence of their crimes and commit them without attracting the attention of anyone. Yet, granting that they would give up this wicked life for any reason, still the inclination to commit them remains in their souls. They simply remain as wicked as before!

A third group maintained that religion has a great impact on people when they receive religious instruction from their early childhood. So they enforced the teaching of religion in schools and commanded children to commit to memory many religious texts, especially those that speak of God's greatness and how necessary it is to obey Him. But does not a religious man who has been instructed since his early childhood in religion commit the same sins any other man does?

(B) The reasons these methods failed at self-reformation:

(1) The inclination toward sin is not incidental to mankind, due to their circumstances or the social state in which people live. If it were, then it could be removed by these methods. But it springs from their nature itself, which does not change at all, no matter what people do to assume new characters. Nature is stronger than nurture! Although tamed and trained to do the tricks that are expected of them, ferocious animals often attack their trainers and kill them. The same applies to the human soul; it can be refined, and men seem to be much more refined now than when they were back in the jungle. Yet, they are possessed of the same nature. The civilized man may sometimes rise above sin under the influence of religious or social factors, but such an abstinence is merely an artificial one because it goes against one's nature and tendencies. True abstinence, however, is the natural one. It is like the steam rising in the air due to its lighter weight. This rising above sin cannot be natural unless one gets a new nature that is characterized by it. Man cannot have this nature on his own or through the efforts of other people, because of his innate deficiency. Only God can offer it to those who are ready to have it, because He is the Creator of everything, whether material or spiritual.

(2) Men of God, like Job and Jeremiah, realized how unable people are to reform themselves, so that Job asked, "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?" Then he answered himself, "No one!" (Job 14:4). That is, no one amongst men. Jeremiah asked, "Can the Ethiopian (namely a negro) change his skin or the leopard its spots?" [The answer is: Of course not!] Then may you also do good who are accustomed to do evil" (13:23). The apostle Paul said about human nature, "O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?" (Romans 7:24). Many philosophers and scholars have come to realize this. Plato said, "There is no gradual advance from wickedness to goodness," for a wicked man cannot progress of his own accord to become good. Aristotle said, "I am completely unable to rectify human souls and make them become good." Wilson said, "Science has failed at accomplishing the primary reformation and providing people with an earthly paradise. True, it profited them in the material realm and freed them from superstitions and rescued them from the clutches of diseases, but it failed to change human nature and rid it from its innate vices, such as malice and malevolence." He also said, "Ethics has failed at eradicating the

inclination toward evil from the soul, and supplanting it with the inclination toward goodness." Beetcher said, "Put whatever you like on a zebra. Put a bit of gold in its mouth, and a saddle of raw silk on its back. Would that change its [wild] nature?! Adorn it with all the adornments you want, would that do away with its wildness? Thus is human nature; it cannot be changed, regardless the efforts reformers and religious people may make." Seneca said, "Men are engulfed in a sense of their own weakness and inability in relation to moral development; they hate their vices, yet they are drawn to them. What they need is a hand to be placed under them to lift them higher," which can be nothing else but the hand of God.

(3) Now as this is the case, men of religious standing and reformers, whose attempts we mentioned in the previous point, are like a group of people who saw a man about to drown. So they started to shout at him, saying, for example, "You have made a mistake by going to the sea. You should not have risked your life so long as you do not know how to swim. Now that matters have reached such an extremity, you must strive and endeavour so that no water should come into your stomach or you would drown." Does this rebuke or advice help any?! Of course not. What should be done then is to first save the man who is about to drown, then rebuke or advise him. This is what Christianity does with the sinner; it does not require him to live a life of holiness and purity to start with, but to come with all his heart to Christ the Redeemer. Then, not only his sins would be forgiven, but he would also receive a spiritual nature from God that should qualify him to rise above his innate sinful nature. This way he can carry out all God's commandments in the best way. This act is called "being born of God".

(C) What is the meaning of "being born of God"?

(1) First, it is not the reformation of the old human nature by fasting, praying, preaching or instruction. Neither is it opening a new page in life through repenting of sin and trying to keep away from it, joining a religious group and practicing some religious or moral activities among them, or studying the holy books and seeking to act on them (even though all these things are good in themselves). Being born of God means getting a spiritual nature that qualifies oneself for being in harmony with God in His exalted character.

(2) The apostles have referred to this spiritual rebirth when they said, "But as many as received Him [that is Christ], to them He gave the right to become the children of God, even to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:12,13). "Not of blood" means not a certain race or stock. "Nor of flesh" means not by self- or human effort. "Nor of the will of man" means not through natural reaction or intercourse, or not by a religious man, so to speak. They also said, "Whoever [truly] believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God" (1 John 5:1), that "God... has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 Peter 1:3). "Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth that we may be a kind of first-fruits of His creatures" (James 1:18). They also said that true believers have been born again "not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever" (1 Peter

1:23), and that God has given them all things that pertain to life and godliness, that through these they may become partakers of the divine [moral] nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust (2 Peter 1:3,4). The Lord Christ had highlighted the indispensability of this rebirth when He said to one of the great Jewish teachers, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again'" (John 3:6-7).

(3) Being born of God is also called "the new creation". The apostle said, "Therefore, if any one is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17). As he also said of himself and the believers, "For we are His workmanship, created [a second time] in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:10).

(4) So then, this rebirth is no stretch of imagination, as some believe; it is an established fact with enough evidence backing it up. Many psychiatrists were interested in studying it, especially in the lives of former drug-addicts or criminals. They were really amazed at what they found and confessed that it exists. When he saw its effect upon such people, Drummond was convinced of its existence and recorded his findings in his books. When the scientist Storbook {I am not sure of the spelling} studied the effects of this birth, he said it had to do with a great change in the soul. Browning found that re-birth does not take place in the soul gradually, but at once. Jowett said, "Being born again is not subject to the laws of psychological treatment, but to another law; the law of God." Savonarola also said, "When one is born of God, a new creative life begins," because he found that those born of God live a lofty spiritual life that no one else but they can live.

(D) The indispensability of the new birth:

(1) Sin has not only caused man's soul to be sick, but caused it to die as well. So, it needs, above all, a spiritual life that Christ Jesus came into the world to give to us. Christ said of Himself, "I have come [not to preach, teach, instruct or work miracles, even though he did all these things] but that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly" (John 10:10).

This life is not simply a moral power, as some people assume, but it is life with all that the word contains. It is the same as the life that flows into a dead man, making him rise up from his death and do what he wanted to do. By means of it a man who is dead in sins and trespasses becomes a spiritual man, who can rise above all sins by the grace of God, as well as being able to harmonize with God in His exalted moral qualities. The apostle Paul, who experienced this in himself, said, "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death" (Romans 8:2).

Just as we acquire from our parents their qualities and characteristics and start our life on earth with them, having also the right to enjoy them and all the goodness they stand for (that is, if they do), we acquire similar things through our spiritual rebirth from God. Only through this do we acquire His moral nature, and

then we can begin our true relationship with Him and are able to enjoy Him in all His glory.

(2) In natural life we can see how it is impossible for an inanimate object to move from a state of lifelessness to a state of life and vitality; and in like manner a man who is dead in sin and trespasses cannot make his spiritual life on his own, try as he might. Whoever wants such life has to turn his heart to God directly, having a true faith in Christ, and God will give it to him. However, those who are content with doing what they call "good works" to cover their sins are exactly like a person trying to stop the stench of a dead body by pouring perfume on it. Perfume has never raised a dead man to life! They are also like a man who makes artificial flowers to the highest degree of perfection but is never able to make the flowers produce their own fragrance.

## 2.) Receiving the Holy Spirit:

(A) The relationship between the coming down of the Holy Spirit and Christ's atonement:

The Holy Spirit, God's Spirit, used to come down upon the prophets of old at certain times to communicate the word of God to them. Yet He did not dwell any of them because sin had not yet been removed from them before God. The evangelist John referred to this fact by saying, "The Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified" (John 7:39). But when Christ was glorified by His resurrection from death and His Ascension to heaven on the basis of the sufficiency of His atonement, the Holy Spirit came down upon His disciples and dwelt in them (Acts 2). This was the fulfilment of His promise to them in Acts 1:4. From that time on the Holy Spirit comes down on the true believers, to whom the apostle said, "... in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise" (Ephesians 1:13). He said to them on another occasion, "You are the temple of God and... the Spirit of God dwells in you" (1 Corinthians 3:16).

(B) Preparing true believers for prayer:

It has been mentioned in chapter two that owing to their deficiency, human beings are unable to lift up acceptable prayers to God of their own accord. However, through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit they become able to. This fact has been referred to by the apostle when he said, "For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered. Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God" (Romans 8:26,27).

(C) Teaching and giving true believers victory over sin:

Christ said to His disciples concerning the Holy Spirit that "He will teach you all things" (John 14:26). The apostle said to the believer about the same, "But the anointing which you have received from Him [that is from God] abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you; but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things..." (1 John 2:27).

This Spirit is the Spirit of God who gives victory over sin. For the believers "by the Spirit... put to death the deeds of the body" (Romans 8:13). He rules over them and binds them to God, transforming their nature into His heavenly one, thus ordering their thought-life and preparing them for walking in God's way at all times. So they walk in His way as the planets run in their orbits regularly owing to the force of attraction between them and other planets and stars.

### 3.) Sonship to God:

There is a difference between the sonship of true believers to God and the sonship of Christ to Him. Believers are considered children of God by grace only from the time they start having true faith in Christ. Christ, however, is the Son of God in truth and love from the beginning of time (2 John 3). He, and none other, is "the only begotten Son" of God (John 1:18).

(A) In the past, the prophet Jeremiah searched for the way through which man could have such a precious privilege, but he learned that it was impossible to attain it by his personal effort. He wondered, "How can I put you [O man] among the children?" (3:19). But this privilege, which Jeremiah considered as unattainable for man because of his deficiency, has become available by virtue of the sufficiency of Christ's atonement and His spiritual work in the hearts of true believers. Thus the apostle could say in retrospect, "And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, 'Abba, Father!'" (Galatians 4:6). [Abba is an Aramaic word meaning "Papa" or "Daddy". It has been recorded in the Bible as it was because it was commonly used at the rise of Christianity, and its meaning was written down in the target language. Therefore, this verse should be read, "... crying out, 'Father!'".] Also it became possible for the apostle to say, "For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, 'Abba, Father!' The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God, and if children, then heirs- heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ" (Romans 8:15-17). To "inherit God" means that He Himself would be the eternal lot of life of true believers, because they do not desire to enjoy the glories of heaven (as precious and priceless as they are), but they desire to enjoy God Himself. He is much greater than these minor glories for them. Therefore, the apostle said in amazement, "Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!" (1 John 3:1). Paul addressed true believers in Christ by saying, "Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God" (Ephesians 2:19).

(B) This adoption is the greatest kindness God granted us, and it was granted on the basis of the sufficiency of Christ's atonement. It is the result of our being born of the Spirit of God, through whom we received His lofty moral nature. No man can even grant such a kindness. Suppose that a man wanted to adopt a bad-natured boy. He would treat him kindly and mercifully, send him to the best schools and institutions, offer him the finest clothes and foods and provide all means of comfort and happiness for him. Yet, no matter how wise and generous he is, he cannot give birth to this boy a second time, nor regenerate in him the

same noble character he himself has. So, even if this boy becomes refined in terms of intellect and appearance, he still keeps his evil personality with which he was born. Notwithstanding, what all men could not accomplish God accomplished in our souls by giving birth to us.

(C) Social reformers who are touched by the destruction wars bring to mankind want to eliminate the differences between the people, so that they may become one homogenous nation, with everybody loving each other. What a noble and magnificent thought! However, can men achieve this without being born again of God? I doubt it very much. This rebirth makes them truly the children of God, and thus become brothers to each other in the Spirit.

4.) Eternal life and true relationship with God:

(A) Eternal life:

Eternal life is not enjoying God after leaving this present world, as people believe; it is the spiritual life God gives true believers as soon as they believe [in Him] in the present age. Christ said, "For God so loved the world that He gave His begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life [now]" (John 3:16), and "he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent me has everlasting life [now]" (John 5:24). The apostle John said, "God has given us [now] eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life" (1 John 5:11,12). The spiritual life which true believers enjoy in the present world will abide in them forever, qualifying them to enjoy a marvellous relationship with God endlessly. All those who do not receive this life in the present age will not have life with God after entering into His presence, because the way people are in the present age is the way they will be in eternity.

(B) The relation with God:

Prophets of old had no way of escaping God's judgment. When God appeared to Moses, the latter cried out, "I am exceedingly afraid and trembling" (Hebrews 12:21). Isaiah said when He appeared to him, "Woe is me for I am undone!" (Isaiah 6:5). But due to the sufficiency of Christ's atonement true believers now have the privilege of approaching God to enjoy Him and His glory. "Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus... let us draw near with a true heart" (Hebrews 10:19-22). "Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:16). Through Christ we have access to the Father (Ephesians 2:18). Because in the past we were far away from Him, but now we are near to Him by virtue of Christ's atonement (Ephesians 2:13).

5.) Spiritual unity with Christ and the realization of spiritual truths:

(A) Spiritual unity with Christ:

The Scripture said about true believers that, through their true faith in Christ and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit within them, they became members of the body of Christ, of His flesh and of His bones (Ephesians 5:30), Christ being their head (Colossians 1:18), who lives in them (Galatians 2:20) and becomes their life

(Colossians 3:4). And inasmuch as they are in Him, He also is in them (John 15:4; 17:23). True believers' unity with Christ and Christ's unity with them imparted to them His exalted, lofty attributes so that by His grace they live on earth as He lived, with all holiness and purity.

(B) The realization of spiritual truths:

The wisdom of natural man, as lofty as it can be, cannot grasp the things of God, because they transcend the mind and the human comprehension. However, when man is filled with true faith, a clear comprehension of these things is generated within him by the work of the Holy Spirit in his soul. The apostle Paul said, "For it is God who commanded light to shine out of darkness who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Corinthians 4:6). And he also said, "However, we speak wisdom among those who are mature, yet not the wisdom of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory... [for] no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been given freely to us by God.... But the natural man [owing to sin that controls him] does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him... But he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is rightly judged by no one. For 'Who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct Him?' But we have the mind of Christ" (1 Corinthians 2:6-16).

From the previous chapters we come to these conclusions:

(1) Christ bore the condemnation and reproach of our sin for us, and as a result we were generously showered with God's kindness beyond any limit. Thus the justice of God took its course to the end, as well as the mercy of God. This deed on God's part shows us God's absolute perfection and the harmony of all His attributes. Moved by the Spirit, David foresaw this supreme act, so he shouted out in sheer joy, "Mercy and truth [justice] have met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other" (Psalm 85:10). They had to meet and they had to kiss each other because the attributes of God are all perfect and compatible. But could the justice and mercy of God meet and even kiss each other without the atonement of Christ? Of course not. And since this is the case, the apostle Paul said, "... even so grace [that is love and mercy] might reign through righteousness [that is justice and truth] to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 5:21). In other words, the mercy of God now can cover all true believers and grant them the enjoyment of God's blessings without there being any violation done to the rights of God's justice. Even more so, God by both His justice and mercy grants them these blessings because He has fulfilled all their requirements.

(2) God has been glorified in His atonement for mankind much more than He would be if He cast all of them into hell forever on account of their inability to meet the requirements of His justice and holiness. As an illustration let us think of this story: There was a rich man whose wealth had been stolen. After arresting the thieves they were found to have squandered the whole amount they had

stolen. All the man could do was have them punished for what they did. Yet, he could not have any of his possessions restored. God, however, was able, by means of the atonement, to restore us who were lost. Not only that but He was also able to grant us a much higher life of uprightness than the life Adam had before the Fall. This life was His own moral life. God, so to speak, has scored a great victory and a manifest triumph through the atonement.

## **Chapter Seven**

### **How Do We Benefit From the Atonement of Christ**

#### **1. The importance of faith**

##### Firstly- What is faith?

It is self-evident that readers would wonder, after studying the previous chapter, what is the faith by which we are saved from the punishment and results of sin and by which we can enjoy spiritual life with God for ever. No one can deny men the right to know. The word "faith" has lost its meaning for most people due to its frequent and diverse use. Now it is used for any sort of belief in a given doctrine. But we have to differentiate between mere belief in the One and Only God and the Christian concept of faith in God. Those who only believe in God are called monotheists, but those who have faith in God are called believers. One cannot be called a "believer" simply because he believes in the existence of God. He who truly believes in God hates sin and refuses to yield to it. Yet many who admit the existence of God do sin and do not even bother to consider or heed God. They cannot be believers even if they claim to be. Their belief in God is not genuine but merely nominal. Such belief in God cannot be called faith, since it has no value in the eyes of God, even if people fast, pray and give alms frequently. Since this is the case and since it is faith that qualifies us to enjoy the blessings of God, it is necessary that we all know what true faith is.

##### **1.) The meaning of the word faith:**

Biblically speaking, faith is the confidence and the assurance we have of invisible facts, simply because God attested their existence. It has nothing to do with our own opinions, because our opinions are liable to change; but God's attestation and testimony are unchanging forever. The Bible uses the word faith in this sense in Hebrews 11:1, when it says, "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."

This is the general meaning of faith. If we want to apply this to the salvation of Christ and how we benefit from it, then it is the spiritual act of faith that opens our souls to God and enables us to trust in His salvation through Christ. We receive assurance that our souls are saved and that we also have the blessings of salvation. Yet "faith" in some foreign languages has other shades of meaning, as seen in the following:

(A) In Sanskrit, which is related to the European languages, the word means "a bond". Thus faith in Christ becomes the spiritual bond that binds us with Him.

(B) In Greek, it means the foundation upon which other things stand, or the substance that gives things an identity and makes them real, as well as the title-deed that proves the ownership of a property. Thus faith in Christ is the spiritual foundation upon which the salvation of the soul stands; the essence that substantiates this salvation and gives it an identity. It is the document that ensures the soul of its ownership of salvation and the right they have to enjoy it, as much as an owner enjoys the property that belongs to him both legally and positionally.

(C) In both Arabic and Hebrew, it has the implication of safety. Thus a believer is someone who lives in peace and security with God, as well as being a person who is faithful and true to Him. These two meanings occur in the Bible, not as a definition of faith, but as a result of it (cf. Isaiah 7:9; Deuteronomy 32:20).

## 2.) The scientific and philosophical meaning of faith:

(A) In philosophical terminology, faith for salvation is the response of the "subconscious" to the divine revelation of Christ's salvation, then the peace, security and blessings that it receives through that revelation. These three inner components (response, security and reception) are, of course, approved by the "conscious mind", because faith in Christ is not confidence in imaginary or unknown things; but in real, known things.

(B) In the terminology of natural science, faith for salvation is the soul receiving salvation that God accomplished in Christ, then possessing it together with the blessings, just as the negative receives and possesses the power of the positive. Faith can also be the reaction of the soul to salvation. As a result of this reaction, the soul is saturated with it, in such a way that makes salvation an integral part of the soul together with the blessings that ensue from it.

(C) In the terminology of sophism and spiritual existentialism, faith for salvation is the soul's penetration of the veil that separates it from God and starts it communicating with Him, then it obtains salvation from Him and blessings in such a way that makes it experience and enjoy all these blessings practically. What we mean by the "veil" here is the old human nature that is in complete disharmony with God in terms of His divine moral attributes. So the penetration of the veil is the getting away from the body, together with its evil or goodness, so that the soul becomes subject to God's influence alone. Many philosophers and sophists declared this. The Spanish theosophist, St. John, said, "Faith is the communication of the soul with God, and its union with Him." Kierkegaard, the philosopher of spiritual existentialism, said, "Faith is to mortify the old self or the rebellious, materialistic ego, followed by the resurrection of this self into a new spiritual ego that is completely fused with God." Bergson, the famed French philosopher, said, "Faith is the act of the active soul that responds to God and is in perfect harmony with Him. It is a leap that lifts the soul up to a larger area. It is also the attraction to a better world that makes the soul see only the greatest of things." Another philosopher said, "The beginning of faith is an encounter with God, and the end of it is an encounter with God."

## 3.) The Christian meaning of faith:

Christian faith is: (A) Man's return to a state of childhood, in which innocence and clarity of soul are manifest, and a return to the trusting confidence of children. Therefore, Christ said, "Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of God" (Matthew 18:3). (B) Receiving Christ in the soul. The Bible says, "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name" (John 1:12). By receiving Christ we do not mean accepting the doctrine of salvation that Christ accomplished on the cross, but receiving Christ personally, a spiritual state in the depth of one's soul, as mentioned earlier. (C) Trusting Christ, or rather resting one's soul and mind on Him. The prophet said to God, "O You who save those who trust in You" (Psalm 17:7). Also, "Let all those rejoice who put their trust in You" (Psalm 5:11), and "The Lord redeems the soul of His servants, and none of those who trust in Him shall be condemned" (Psalm 34:22).

#### 4.) The characteristics of true faith:

From what has been said earlier, it becomes clear to us that true faith is not just confessing Christ or merely believing His message as a truth revealed in the Scriptures and proven by experience. Faith that stops at this point is nothing but mental assent. Although it produces a conviction in the soul of the reality of salvation, mental faith (or assent) does not furnish the soul with a way to benefit from it. Mental faith is like the strong belief of a blind man in the beauty of nature. For although this conviction gives him a mental picture, yet it does not furnish him with a means of enjoying in practical terms. The Bible makes it clear that such belief is useless. Jesus said of the demons, "The demons believe- and tremble" (James 2:19). They have no salvation at all. Likewise, prayer, fasting and alms-giving are not evidence of true faith. A man may do the first two things out of religious instinct only, and the third thing out of natural pity, but he remains far away from God.

True faith, then, is an inner act that consumes all the powers of the soul. Because the conscious mind believes in Christ, the will responds to Him. The emotions are moved and the subconscious feels at rest and benefited. The soul is born spiritually and receives a new life that qualifies it to know God and be in harmony with Him, walking according to His will. Professor C. Sampson referred to this, "Faith is not for the intellect alone, but for the whole soul, and, therefore, it satisfies all our needs." He said as well, "The emotions share with the intellect in this faith." Sheller said, "To prove the truth of something is different from the true faith in it. To live an upright life, we do not need only to accept that a certain doctrine has been rightly proved, but first to believe this truth and then live it out by faith." There are many people who do their best to try to prove the existence of God, while their hearts are far from Him.

#### Secondly- The importance of faith

The subject of faith took up a large part of Christ's teaching. He said, "Whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them" (Mark 11:24), "All things are possible to him who believes" (Mark 9:23), "Have faith in God" (Mark 11:22), and "If you have faith as a mustard seed, you

will say to this mountain [or these problems], 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you" (Matthew 17:20). Because of Christ's strong desire to do good to mankind He encouraged men to have faith in Him, that they might get from Him whatever gifts they needed. He was once called upon to heal a little girl, and upon finding that she had already passed away, said to her father, "Do not be afraid; only believe" (Luke 8:50). When the man believed, she was brought back to life. Another man came to Him to complain of his child's illness, saying, "If you can do anything, have compassion on us and help us," for which Christ immediately responded, "If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes." When the man realized that the insufficiency was his faith, he immediately cried out with tears, saying, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!" (Mark 9:20-24).

Faith was of paramount importance to Christ, not only for the performing of miracles, but also for the granting of forgiveness to penitent sinners. He said to the sinful woman, who repented, "Your sins are forgiven... Your faith has saved you. Go in peace" (Luke 7:50). He also forgave the sin of the paralytic, who came carried by his friends, and healed him for the sake of their faith (Mark 2:5).

#### 1.) The reason faith is important:

There are two main reasons for the importance of faith: (A) Faith is necessary to open the door of the soul to God, preparing it to receive all His gifts. It is the spiritual atmosphere that suits the nature of God and the way He intervenes to help people. Only in this atmosphere will the gifts of God flow to men. (B) Faith is to believe. So whoever believes the words of God believes God, and whoever does not believe them, makes God a liar (1 John 5:10). Whoever disbelieves God does not receive any blessing from Him. It is no wonder then that God does not grant salvation except to those who truly have faith.

#### 2.) Faith and its relationship to the intellect:

Some folk assume that Christians believe their doctrines without any examination or reasoning. However, such an assumption is absolutely groundless. It has already been made clear that if there should be salvation from the punishment of sin, it cannot be accomplished except through the atonement of Christ. And if there is to be any harmony with God in terms of His perfect moral attributes, it cannot be attained apart from the spiritual life that God bestows upon us in our inner man. These two matters transcend the intellect but they do not contradict it at all, because they can be understood intellectually and their results can be witnessed practically.

Many scholars and thinkers have understood this: Schiller said, "When we take refuge with faith, we do not take refuge with something that robs the mind of its function, but with what makes the mind function and be even more effective... Faith is not an ordinary act of the intellect; it requires a great deal of will and experience. The only purpose of theoretical philosophy is to turn the intellectual revolution that occurs in the intellect of man into a steadfast faith. Knowledge by itself does not profit anybody as long as it is bereft of faith." Hammarskjöld said, "At first I did not understand Christianity, and I resisted it from time to time. But when I understood it, it became more dear to me than anything else in existence."

I also was able to prove its truth without violating the requirements of intellectual faithfulness."

Although the salvation of Christ surpasses the conscious mind, the subconscious is still aware of it and feels secure. It can even confront the objection of the conscious mind, if it has any, and refute its argument. The spiritual truths that the subconscious experiences are more constant and steadfast than all the arguments of the conscious mind. For, while the conscious mind has progressed and matured greatly, it does not understand many even mundane things that are within its grasp.

## 2. The way to faith and its evidence

First: The way to faith:

True faith may be obtained in a moment or it may take a longer period of time, but at any rate, one must fulfil the following conditions in order to be a true believer:

### 1.) A genuine desire to be saved:

This desire includes a hatred of sin and an awareness of how dangerous and hideous it is, being persuaded that one deserves eternal separation from God because of it. Consequently, not everyone who says to God, "Be merciful to me a sinner," is saved. It is not only a matter of words, but of one's inner state. The sinful woman was only saved after she felt the weight of her sins and took refuge in Christ with all her heart (Luke 7:36-50). Zacchaeus was saved only after he felt that he needed Christ more than money (Luke 19:1-10). The thief entered paradise only after he felt that he merited only destruction, and that he would not be saved apart from Christ (Luke 23:43). Likewise, those who believed at the time of the apostles were able to do so only after they were cut to the heart and had a deep sense of the hideousness of the crime they had committed against Christ. Only then were they able to believe with all their hearts in His remarkable person (Acts 2:37-41).

### 2.) Repentance from sin:

The awareness of the hideousness of sin must be coupled with repentance from it, or at least with a genuine desire to repent. Otherwise this feeling would be useless. Repentance not only means regretting having sinned, but includes turning away from sin and returning to God. God commands all men everywhere to repent, to turn to Him and to do works which demonstrate their repentance (Acts 17:30; 26:20). If it is hard for a man to repent God will rush to his assistance if he is truly willing to turn from sin with all his heart. It is written that He gives repentance (Acts 5:31; 11:18). That is why Jeremiah could cry out to God, saying, "Restore me, and I will return," (31:18). God granted him repentance.

### 3.) Turning one's heart toward Christ:

Regretting sin and repenting of it are important, but they alone do not save one from the condemnation of sin nor from its hidden power over the soul. It is Christ alone who saves from these things. A man should not stop at sorrow for sin and repentance from it, but must go on and turn his heart toward Christ, who loved

him and died for him on the cross as an atonement for his sin. Only then will a man benefit from Him as Peter and Paul did (if he is as religious as they were), or as the sinful woman and the tax-collector did (if he is as irreligious as they were). The salvation of Christ is not restricted to a certain type of person, but it is available to all people without exception. The Scripture said of Christ that He, by the grace of God, tasted death for everyone (Hebrews 2:9), and that He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world (1 John 2:2).

#### 4.) Receiving Christ into one's soul:

Once the seeker of salvation is sure of God's love for him and Christ's death and atonement for him, he must respond to Christ and receive Him by the Spirit as the Saviour and life of his soul. The result will be instant salvation. He can then rejoice and enjoy being secure, because from that moment he has been justified by God. Not only that but he also has become a beloved child who lives in complete peace and joy with God. He cannot come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.

#### Second: The evidence of saving faith:

Not everyone who says he is a true believer is one. As a man can deceive others, he can also deceive himself. But the Bible does not leave us in doubt about this. It recorded for us very clearly the evidence of true faith. The most important of these indications are the following:

##### 1.) Love for God and a desire to worship Him:

This is the first thing that marks true faith. Paul described it as "faith working through love" (Galatians 5:6). The apostle John said, "We love Him because He loved us first" (1 John 4:19). Again Paul wrote, "The love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us" (Romans 5:5), and also, "The love of Christ constrains us" (2 Corinthians 5:14).

This love leads the true believer to pour out his heart to God from time to time in adoration and worship, and to express to Him deep thanks and praise under the influence of the Holy Spirit. An illiterate person who is unable to express his opinion in many worldly matters may express deep spiritual emotions that a clever writer would find hard to match.

##### 2.) Prayer:

Besides loving and worshipping God, the true believer will become a man (or woman) of prayer. Worship consists in giving honour and adoration to God for His love, holiness, might and knowledge. Prayer, however, is to ask God for what we need in this life. Worship offers something to God while prayer asks something of Him, whether it is spiritual or material. A worshipper is in a more exalted state than a pray-er, so to speak. A pray-er does not pray to an unknown God out of his own imagination or thoughts, nor to a God in a remote place who cannot be communicated with, which so many people believe. He prays to a real God who is known to him and with whom he can actually communicate in the Spirit. Moreover, prayer is not just a religious habit that one carries out mechanically,

nor a mere obligation that one discharges as a slave discharges his duty to his master. Prayer is a vital work and a part of life that one cannot do without. It is like air for one's lungs and food for one's body. The pray-er finds joy and spiritual pleasure in prayer; because in prayer he communes for hours with God Himself. If need be, one will readily sacrifice some of his engagements and private times of rest for the purpose of spending more time in prayer for himself, for others and, above all, for God's glory and honour (1 Timothy 2:1; Ephesians 6:18).

### 3.) Study of the word of God:

A true believer studies the word of God, not out of a sense duty or to acquaint himself with its contents, but in order to hear God's voice and find food for his soul. With this in mind he applies himself gladly and eagerly to its study and meditation and He becomes devoted to the word of God, the Bible. A living, strong relationship starts to form between the believer and the word, as he understands, knows and keeps on referring to it regularly to be saturated with it and guided by it.

### 4.) Heavenly behaviour:

Because he is influenced by God's word, his sight is not restricted to the visible realm, but sees beyond it to the invisible and eternal realm. He keeps himself in the heavenly places and keeps himself holy, which honours God. He always seeks to do His will. Therefore, he does not use obscene language or act frivolously. He is not reckless, impudent or foolish, nor does he use coarse humour. Instead he speaks graciously and wisely, and goes about his business carefully, leading a disciplined life (Ephesians 5:4,15; Titus 2:7). If he falls into sin for any reason, he cannot bear to stay in it for long, because it contradicts the new spiritual nature he has received from God. Instead, he instantly rises up from it, gives his life back to God is more careful and trusts that God will keep him from all pitfalls and stumbling blocks.

### 5.) A love for everybody:

Because he is influenced by God and is saturated with God's word, he develops many attributes of God's character, the first of which is love. He loves everybody just as God does, even those who mistreat him (Matthew 5:44). He loves all true believers with a pure heart(1 Peter 1:22), regardless of their denomination or social status, because he knows that they and he share the same heavenly Father (1 John 5:2), the same Saviour (Acts 4:12) and the same Holy Spirit dwelling within them both (1 Corinthians 3:16).

Likewise, he exerts all his energy in proclaiming the grace of God to sinners, praying for them or talking with them. He lends a hand to all those in need, not expecting any reward or recompense in return. It is an honour and joy for him to do something for the glory of God, who loved him to the uttermost.

### 6.) A perfect assurance of eternal salvation:

Doubt does not trouble the heart of true believers when it comes to the sufficiency of Christ's atonement. He is persuaded that Christ's atonement has removed the punishment for his sins from his shoulders and made him acceptable to God. He

says with the apostle, "For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God [toward us] which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:38,39). He also says, "For I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him [that is; my soul] until that Day" (2 Timothy 1:12), "For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, [that is; our physical bodies] is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal" (2 Corinthians 5:1). "Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is" (1 John 3:2).

As we study and mull over the doctrines and philosophies of mankind, we cannot find anything in them that gives us an assurance of God's love for us and His acceptance of us eternally in Christ. God gives us this assurance, not on the basis of some emotional promise or eloquent and flashy discourse, but on the basis of His perfect atonement that has fulfilled all the demands of divine justice and holiness. Every true believer can picture, with absolute certainty, the glorious future that lies ahead of him, and which has become his on the basis of Christ's atonement. He can also enter into this glorious future with his heart at rest, and thank God for His love that surpasses all other loves, His goodness that excels all other goodness and His unsearchable wisdom. The apostle Paul said, "...giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saint in the light. He has delivered us from the power of darkness and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins" (Colossians 1:12-14). He also said, "And raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 2:6,7).

## **Chapter Eight**

### **The Atonement of Christ in the Philosophical and Scientific View**

#### **1. The opinions of true Christian philosophers and scientists**

The atonement of Christ was not only studied by Christian theologians, but also by many true Christian philosophers and scientists. These persons knew how important it is from the Bible and experienced its blessed results in their own souls. We cite in the following some of the opinions of these philosophers and scientists:

1.) Clement of Alexandria wrote, "Let us consider the blood of Jesus and know its value that surpasses all values. It is not like the blood of the martyrs who die in defense of the truth (although the blood of these people is precious and dear in our eyes); it is the blood of divine love, known before the foundation of the world, which was meant for atonement of our sins."

2.) Jerome wrote, "The purpose of atonement is to fulfil the requirements of divine justice for us. By His death, Christ fulfilled these requirements and atoned for our sins forever."

3.) Clemes {I am not sure of the spelling and I don not know who he was} wrote, "Christ suffered the pain of sin for us, thus saving us from it forever."

4.) Ignatius of Loyola wrote, "We believe that Christ died for us concerning the law; because He did not die in terms of the Godhead, for the Godhead is not apt to die."

5.) Papias wrote, "The Logos who created us did not leave us alone, but came into our world and saved us from our sins." [Logos is a Greek word meaning: The master-mind of the cosmos. This word was adopted into Christianity for the divine Person of the Son, or the word, who expresses and reveals God, and who also created the world and manages it (John 1:3; Colossians 1:16).]

6.) Origen wrote, "God is just, and in so being does not justify sinners unless the requirements of justice are fulfilled. But no one can do this but Him, since He is the only One who knows the requirements of His justice. Therefore, He was pleased to dwell in Christ to accomplish this purpose, in order that that He might justify every sinner who truly believes in Him."

7.) Athanasius wrote, "The Word, that is Christ, came into the world, not to destroy mankind, but to save them from their sins. He did this by bearing on Himself the condemnation they deserve for these sins."

8.) Anselm, communing with Christ, said, "What have you done, Jesus, You more fairer than the sons of men, so that You should die the death of sinners and criminals?! You have not done any sin at all, so that You should be punished on its account. You accepted death because of my sins and those of other men."

9.) Saint Augustine of Hippo wrote, "Sin is ours, and its punishment should have fallen upon us; yet Christ carried that punishment instead of us, thus setting us free from it forever."

10.) Saint Bernard of Clairvaux wrote, "Christ has fulfilled the demands of divine justice for us, so that we can receive forgiveness and remission [of our sins] and become eligible before God. The end of my philosophy is to confess Jesus Christ, and Him crucified, because the cross is the point of exchange between us and God in mutual love that lasts for ever."

11.) Peter Lombard wrote, "Christ offered Himself up to God as an atonement for our sins, so that whosoever truly believes in Him may not come into condemnation."

12.) Thomas Aquinas wrote, "No one can satisfy the demands of God's justice, save God Himself. Therefore, He dwelt in Christ to carry out this great mission... Christ's atonement removed the sin that separated us from God, and now we have the privilege of approaching and enjoying God."

13.) Doctor Kelly Crane (I do not know who he is!) "The reason I espouse Christianity is that Christ died as the atoning sacrifice for our sins. Some years ago I realized that I was a sinful man and that I could not be justified before God by any sort of good deed, so I often became sad and grieved. Yet, when I was sure that Christ had died for me, carrying the punishment I merited for my sins, my soul found rest and I was filled with joy and peace."

14.) Saint Francis of Assisi prayed, "My Lord Jesus Christ, I beseech You to grant me two gifts before I die: the first is to feel within me the sufferings You went through on the cross for me, so that I may hate sin whatever it is; the second is to feel within me the wonderful love that was set ablaze for a person such as I am, so that I may love You as You loved me."

15.) President John Carts wrote, "The crucified Christ heals the wounded heart and comforts the tormented conscience, because He removes from the believer the condemnation of sin and qualifies him to come near to God and enjoy Him."

16.) Forsyth wrote, "The torments Christ suffered on the cross were of the severest kind, because they are the same torments that we deserve in hell for ever for our sins. So let us set this truth before us so that it should have a practical effect in our lives."

17.) Taylor wrote, "God created us and He cannot forsake us. It was axiomatic for Him to condescend to save us from the sin, into which we had fallen. And this is what Christ did on the cross."

18.) John Scott wrote, "The Word [Christ] is the only mediator between God and us. He alone can reconcile us to God. He did this when He fulfilled in Himself on the cross the requirements of God's justice on our behalf."

19.) Robert Brownies wrote, "The fact is that God appeared in Christ for the salvation and deliverance of humanity from its misery and the problems that face us concerning God's attitude toward our sins and our failure to be in harmony with Him. As well, He explained to us the symbols of the Torah and fulfilled all its prophecies. But for this fact, we would doubt the perfection and love of God, and the symbols and prophecies of the Old Testament would be altogether meaningless."

In quoting these opinions we did not mean to depend on them as an argument to prove that Christ died as the atoning sacrifice for our sins. Our only authority in this matter, as in all others, is the inspired word of God. This word has been proven trustworthy by intellectual, historical and experiential evidence. We only quote these opinions to show that, when a man searches in the depth of his soul, he realizes that he is a sinner, unable to atone for his own sins and unable to live in harmony with a holy God. He, then, has to conclude that God alone can accomplish this atonement, and to give us the spiritual life necessary for a life lived in harmony with God.

2. The opinions of nominal Christian philosophers and scientists and the answers to them

Nominal Christian philosophers and scientists differ from true Christian philosophers and scientists in that they do not understand Christianity as the Bible reveals it. They understand according to their own personal thoughts, consequently their opinions are diverse and contradictory. In the following we cite these opinions, together with their answers:

1.) [Christ's salvation does not solely depend on His death on the cross, as it is said, but on His exalted teachings that stated what sin is, and now it depends on us to avoid it in all its forms.]

The answer: Although Christ revealed sin in His sublime teachings in a way that we could not imagine, our mere knowledge of this does not give the power to be saved or remove the consequences of our fall. On the contrary, it increases our feeling of the need for a divine life that lifts us above our personal failings, so that we can be in harmony with God in His moral perfection. It also increases our feeling of the need for a great atonement, which fulfils the demands of God's justice on our behalf, so that our consciences may be rested and assured of His relationship with us. This is not unusual, since a guilty person is not saved from punishment by knowing that he deserves it, but neither is he automatically qualified by such knowledge for behaving guiltlessly.

2.) [Christ manifested on the cross His great love for us, so that we should love each other as He loved us, thus we can be saved from selfishness, which is the cause of all sins.]

The answer: Although Christ's death, out of love for us, was a great example that calls us to love each other, it is unthinkable that He died just for this reason. The ordinary life He lived among us was enough for teaching us this precious lesson. Besides, salvation from selfishness and its diverse consequences cannot be accomplished through emulating Christ (because our inborn inability keeps us from doing so). This salvation can only be accomplished through receiving a spiritual life that is capable of lifting us up to the degree of harmony with God in His exalted moral character. God does not give this life until the enmity that we put between us and Him is removed, and only through atoning for our sins can this enmity be removed.

3.) [Christ accepted the cross to show us His love so that we should love Him in return. And out of love for him we should hate sin.]

The answer: It is unthinkable that this is the only reason Christ suffering the terrible anguish of the cross. He only suffered it when He saw that we were supposed to go through these pains. He wanted to rescue us. A good father, for example, would not sacrifice his life for his children unless he sees that they are in danger of death and wants to release them from its clutches. But if they were not in danger of death, he would not sacrifice his life for them just to show them how much he loves them. Besides, love for God and the ability to rise above sin are produced by our basic knowledge of Christ's love for us. It only comes as a result of being born again of God. Nominal Christians do know that Christ loves them, yet they cannot love Him or rise above their innate sinfulness, because they have not been born again and empowered by God.

4.) [Christ accepted the cross to teach us that the way to heaven is through sacrificing every costly and precious thing.]

The answer: Christ would not have endured the sufferings of the cross just to be an example for us that shows how to sacrifice, because He had already taught us this valuable lesson through His words and lifestyle while on earth. Besides,

sacrificing every costly and precious thing in the present age cannot be just a matter of imitation. It has to come as a result of a spiritual life that is characterized by rising above self and all its demands. Only God can give this life. However, He cannot give it to us until our sins are completely atoned for, as it is mentioned earlier.

5.) [Christ accepted the cross to show how God hates sin and the torment sinners deserve, so that we should repent of it.]

The answer: Repentance of sin, as mentioned in chapter two, is not enough for obtaining forgiveness and a spiritual life that lifts us above our own deficiency. It is also absurd that Christ would go through the pains of the cross just to be an example of the torment a sinner deserves. He had already proved that through His teachings and words.

6.) [Christ's atonement, which covered our sins, lies in the life of absolute righteousness He lived on earth, which He ended by offering Himself as a martyr for the truth. This is the life that pleased God, so He forgave all mankind.]

The answer: True, Christ lived a life of absolute righteousness, which pleased God much more than we can imagine. Yet we should not miss the fact that if Christ died as a martyr for the truth, God would be pleased with Him alone, and would therefore glorify Him alone. In that case all of us would remain in sin, unable to please God and therefore we cannot escape His punishment. However, if Christ's death was sacrificial and vicarious, as the Bible states, God would forgive our sins and therefore put us into a right relationship with Himself.

7.) [Christ did not fulfil the requirements of God's justice on the cross for us, because these requirements are infinite. He only won God's compassionate affections for us so that He may forgive our sins. Hence, His suffering was not a substitutionary punishment, but a recompense for the legal punishment.]

The answer: If Christ accomplished the atonement without God there would be room for objection, but it was not so. The Bible says that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself (2 Corinthians 5:19). Besides, due to His perfection and the harmony of His attributes, God does not condone any of the requirements of His justice.

8.) [Christ accepted the cross as Socrates accepted the poison, to immortalize Himself and to establish His principles in the souls of men.]

The answer: (A) Even if we allow that Socrates accepted the poison to make himself immortal, we cannot say the same about Christ's acceptance of the cross. Christ was totally separate from such longings for earthly grandeur and prestige. He never performed a miracle to please men or to gain their admiration (Luke 23:8,9). It was out of compassion for the sick, the needy and those in pain that He did so, and He did not want praise or reward from anybody. He did not seek immortality, either; because He carried, even in His physical body, the signs of immortality owing to His absolute perfection. In addition, He was not forced to be crucified as Socrates was forced to drink the poison, but He went forward willingly as can be understood clearly from John 10:17,18.

(B) The establishment of Christ's principles in us cannot be accomplished by our own efforts under the effect of His crucifixion. Many people are affected by Christ's crucifixion but they do not act on any of His commandments. We can only begin to act on His words when we receive the spiritual life that God gives us freely as we give ourselves to Him unreservedly. Furthermore, the establishment of these principles in us does not save us from punishment of sin, because we cannot be saved except by fulfilling the demands of God's justice and holiness concerning us. And there is no way these demands can be met except through the atonement of Christ, as already mentioned.

From what has been said, it is evident that those who maintained the previous opinions did not understand anything about atonement or the need for it. All they knew of the pains of the cross was that they were pains of martyrdom for the truth. No doubt these pains touch some people and turn them away from evil and wrongdoing, just as the sacrifice, which devoted leaders offer, does. For example, whenever Gandhi saw his followers veering away from his teaching, he would grieve so much and keep away from food for a long time, causing them to regret what they had done and return to the trail he had blazed for them. Plato referred in the past to the effect a sacrifice has on people in his *Politics* (vol. 4, p. 74). Here is a summary of what he wrote: "A perfect man who accepts the severest sort of injustice without having done any wrong, and bears whipping and beating to death, is able to bring a life of righteousness to mankind." The righteousness that Plato envisaged, however, was not a relationship with God in terms of His perfect moral attributes, but only giving up terrible crimes. Even the most evil of men do this when a relative of theirs dies, or when they are plagued by a calamity. A harmonious relationship with God in terms of His attributes can only be achieved through His own work in the hearts of true believers. Christ suffered the cross for a much higher reason: to pay for our sin and provide us with a spiritual life that qualifies us to be in right relationship with God in all His holiness and perfection forevermore.

### 3. Religious objections and the answers to them

1.) [Why did the Son, or the Word, take exclusive possession of the work of atonement? Does not this indicate that He loves humanity more than the Father and the Holy Spirit do?]

The answer: (A) "The Son of God" or "the Word of God" reveals God and fulfils His counsels; He is the One who created the universe with all that is in it: "All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made" (John 1:3), "By Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are in earth," and "All things were created through Him and for Him" (Colossians 1:16). The creator of the universe cares for it and for everything in it. The Son, or the Word, was the One who appeared to the prophets in the Old Testament to reveal the will of God or the Godhead to them, regarding His love for men and His desire to bring them closer to Himself and giving them all the blessings they need. Evidently, He was meant to be incarnated and through Himself to demonstrate the love of God and His work of salvation for us from sin and its consequences.

(B) "The Father's" and "the Holy Spirit's" love for us is not less than that of Christ; because they are one with Christ in essence as well as in all attributes, qualities and acts. Each hypostasis (member of the Trinity) shows the work of the Trinity that befits His personhood. For example, although "the Son" accomplished the atonement on the cross, this work is ascribed to God in His three divine persons. The Scriptures said that God, or rather the Godhead, was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them (2 Corinthians 5:19-21). And even though the Son gave His life, He did not do that independently from the other two divine persons, because they are one in essence. Therefore, the Bible states that the Son was given by God (John 3:16), and He offered Himself up through the Holy Spirit (Hebrews 9:14). To prove that both the Father and Holy Spirit love us just as much as the Son does, the Bible says that the Father Himself loves us (John 17:23), that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of love (2 Timothy 1:7) and that God, in His triune being, is Love (1 John 4:8).

2.) [God certainly cannot be crucified and does not die. How then could He have redeemed us?]

The answer: (A) The Scriptures say that God, or the Godhead, dwelt unreservedly in Christ. The Bible says, "In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily" (Colossians 2:9). Because of this we can work out that some of Christ's works pertained to His humanity and others His divinity. For example, when He sailed off one time with His disciples, He slept in the boat. Of course this sleep relates to His manhood because the Godhead does not sleep. When He rebuked the winds, however, and there was a great calm (Matthew 8:24,26) the Godhead was at work, because it is God who commands nature and it submits to Him. So, every work that Christ did was done by God, and everything Christ went through God went through. It is true that God cannot be crucified and did not die, but by allowing the manhood of Christ, in which the Godhead dwelt, to be crucified (although He could have saved Christ physically from the cross if He had wanted to), God let Himself suffer the pain of the cross, and consequently He became the One who redeemed us.

(B) To illustrate this truth a little more let us imagine that a king put on ordinary clothes and went out in the streets like any ordinary man, to be closer to his subjects, to acquaint himself with their problems and to offer them any help they needed. And while he was doing this noble task, some evil men assaulted and insulted him. Now this insult was not geared toward a common, ordinary man but toward the king himself. By analogy, we can say, yet with a necessary difference, that even though the pains of the cross afflicted the visible manhood, they are in fact considered as having afflicted the invisible God in a way that only He knows. That is why the Bible says Christ's blood that was shed on the cross was "the blood of God" (Acts 20:28); equally God says of Himself that He is our Saviour (Titus 1:3).

3.) [Is it permissible to ascribe pain to God?]

The answer: (A) If God were just an idea, an energy or a being that has no character or attributes, as some philosophers believe, we could have ascribed to Him neither pain nor joy in any sense. However, He is a true Being that enjoys all

the attributes of perfection and, at the same time, He has a full communication with us. Therefore, inasmuch as He rejoices over the good deeds of the believers in a way that befits His absolute spirituality, He also grieves over the evils that others do and the resulting misery they get, also in a way that befits His spirituality (Genesis 6:6; Psalms 78:40; Isaiah 63:10). Now if God can grieve, He also can suffer pain; because if He does not He would be devoid of feeling and recognition, which is impossible.

God's sufferings for our sins should not have remained secret, so He showed them to us clearly and plainly. The only means to show them clearly was "the Word" or "the Son of God" because He is the Revealer as already mentioned. God showed His love for us in His Son, and in Him also He demonstrated the pain He felt for ages past because of our sins. In other words, He embodied the redemption that was in Himself, although we did not know anything or recognize this. So, we can say for certain that, but for God's infinite love, He would not feel pain for us and He would not pay for our sins. It is noteworthy, however, that God's suffering for these sins does not lessen His glory. On the contrary, it increases His glory in our eyes. Equally, it does not lessen His perfection. On the contrary, it shows His perfection in its noblest senses. This suffering confirms to us that God is not a stranger or that He did not care, but that, in fact, He is near to us, has pity and sympathy for us and that He does care about us.

God's power to be influenced or affected was not dependent upon our appearance in the world. It has been existent as a principle in the Godhead from the very beginning, because God exists in His divine persons who are affected by each other. Therefore, when God suffered pain somehow because of the evil we did, He did not react as we do. Instead He only showed His displeasure with this evil, since displeasure with evil is one of the aspects of God's perfection.

4.) [Is it fair of God to dwell in the man Jesus Christ and compel Him to endure the bitter sufferings of the cross so as to atone for mankind through Him?]

The answer: God did not compel Christ to be crucified against His will, as the animals in the past were driven to slaughter to atone for us in the Old Testament. What happened is that God had made provisions for the atonement before the world began. And at the suitable time, He used the manhood of Christ and went in it to the cross to bear the sins of mankind and take responsibility for them Himself. Humanly speaking, Christ understood this fact completely and fully agreed with God, who dwelt in Him, in relation to it. He obeyed Him completely in order to achieve it. It cannot be said, then, that God treated Christ unjustly in terms of His humanity.

In addition, God appreciated Christ's obedience in terms of His humanity and rewarded Him for it with a supreme reward: "Therefore God has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2:9-11). So there is no room at all for this objection.

5-[If Christ was in full agreement with God regarding the redemption, why did He ask God in the garden of Gethsemane to spare Him the cross at first? By saying to the Father "... nevertheless, not My will, but Yours, be done," did not He indicate that He accepted the pains of the cross unwillingly? Does His sorrow at the time not contradict the claim that He suffered to redeem us willingly and joyfully?]

The answer: (A) Because of His absolute perfection, Christ asked God that the cup of the cross should be removed away from Him, if it were possible. Humanly speaking, He felt pain as any of us would. Besides, His purity did not allow that our sins should be transferred to Him, and His high status would not allow Him to bow down in order to bear the judgment and punishment of these sins. Also His great glory could not allow their curse and reproach and His tender feelings shunned their bitter taste. But because God could only be glorified, and men could only be saved, He accepted the suffering readily to fulfil God's perfect plan.

God responded to Christ's attitude by sending Him an angel to strengthen Him physically, although He did not remove the "cup" from Him (Luke 22:43). So Christ was able to rise up in strength and meet the terrible sufferings of the cross with unparalleled heroism.

(B) By giving the matter back to the Father, Christ did not indicate that He accepted the cross unwillingly; but instead it proves that He made His human will together with its human demands the same as the Father's will, despite the pain of bearing the eternal punishment of sin for all mankind. Such a great deed was impossible for anyone else and such a prominent victory could not have been attained by anyone but Christ.

(C) As to Christ's sorrow, there was no contradiction between it and the spiritual joy He had. This joy was not like the feeling of happiness and joyfulness; it was a sense of satisfaction that was caused by His obedience to God and His love for all men. Therefore, He was not free from pain and sorrow, but from resentment and murmuring. Experience teaches us the same thing. For example, good parents, who bear their troubles and pains to serve their children, and faithful soldiers, who bear numerous hardships to defend their countries, feel a sense of joy and gladness deep down inside themselves despite all the pains they suffer. So, there is no room for objecting that Christ was joyful when He offered Himself up as an atonement.

God has referred to this by some sacrifices that represented Christ in the Old Testament. The ceremony of the whole burnt offering, which was voluntarily offered to God just for His honour and glory and regardless of sin, indicated joy (Leviticus 1). The ceremony of the sin sacrifice, however, which was offered by the sinner as an atonement for himself, indicated sorrow (Leviticus 4). So it was foretold that Christ's joy on fulfilling God's plan and His own sorrow on bearing the punishment and the horror of sin were fused together.

6.) [If Christ fulfilled the redemption in His body out of obedience to God's command, then only God deserves love and honour.]

The answer: If Christ fulfilled the redemption just out of obedience to God's command, He would not have carried it out willingly and joyfully, and God would not have sacrificed anything. Then neither would deserve love and honour. Also if God forced Christ to endure the pain of the cross so that men would love Him, He would not deserve love, but hatred, and Christ would deserve pity and compassion. Further, if Christ carried out the redemption apart from God, He alone would deserve love (because we do not love someone for what another did). Yet, in that case He would have usurped God's glory by alone receiving honour and love from men. However, the truth is that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself (2 Corinthians 5:19), and that Christ, even as the Son of Man, was completely happy with this state. So, there is no room for objection.

7.) [Assuming that Christ died as an atonement, it is unthinkable that He atoned only for the sins of true believers; He must have atoned for the sins of all mankind. Consequently, there is no need for believing in Him personally.]

The answer: (A) Christ's atonement is twofold: Firstly, it has to do with God taking into account the fulfilment of His justice and holiness. On this basis salvation is offered to everyone without exception. The Bible says, "For God so loved the [whole] world that he gave His only begotten Son." Secondly, it has to do with mankind regarding their readiness to accept Christ and truly believe in Him. The Bible says, "...that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

(B) As for the second part of the objection, we all know that even though gifts, for example, are given freely, they cannot be enjoyed unless they are accepted. The same applies to salvation: for even though Christ paid its price Himself and gave it to men as a free gift, none of them can enjoy it unless they accept it. This acceptance of Christ's salvation is the true faith in Christ.

#### 4. The mental and philosophical objections and the answers to them

1.) [It is unthinkable that Christ took our place, because He was born of a woman without the mediation of a man. Even if it is permissible to be a substitute, He could only take the place of men because He was a man.]

The answer: Christ's virgin birth was necessary because of His eternal existence and His need for a human body. Besides, differentiating between men and women is a relative matter that applies only to the present time, because both sexes are human in God's sight (1 Corinthians 11:11). So there is no room for objection.

(A) When Christ called Himself "the Son of Man" He did not use the word "man" in a sexual sense, but in a generic way to mean mankind in general. (Note: The Greek uses *anthropos* in this expression, which refers to males and females alike to distinguish them from animals, plants and objects.) This expression actually depicts Christ as the representative (the Son) of humanity.

(B) Although Eve was a separate being from Adam she was originally a part of him. Therefore, the Bible ascribes sin to Adam alone when it says, "In Adam all die" (1 Corinthians 15:22).

(C) Christ did not differentiate between male and female in terms of relationship with Him. He said, "Whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother" (Matthew 12:50), which removes all possibilities for objection.

2.) [If God wanted to reconcile us to Himself through Christ, why did He not do that between Himself and Christ, without there being any human role in crucifying Him?]

The answer: God's goal was not only to pay for our sins, but also to reveal to us the extent of our evil nature toward Him and our unworthiness of any love or compassion from Him, so that we may appreciate His propitiation properly. Therefore, He allowed us to treat Him in the worst way possible before revealing the extent of His love and compassion for us. He showed our evil nature for what it is by comparing it to His goodness. Moreover, if God atoned for our sins apart from the cross, we would not recognize the extent of His surpassing love, which we do not deserve. We would not know even a little of the pain He had to endure.

Now if we refer back to history we can see that the honest Jews and Gentiles were greatly moved and touched by the crucifixion of Christ. They were so moved that they drew near to Him and believed in Him with all their hearts. They loved and honoured Him to a degree that would not have been reached had He offered Himself as an atonement far away from them. In this way Christ's words were fulfilled: "And I, if I am lifted up from earth, will draw all peoples to Myself" (John 12:32).

3.) [If God loves everyone, why did He let Christ come as a Jew, not from another nation? In doing so He showed Himself biased to a certain nation.]

The answer: If Christ did not come from the Jewish nation He would come from another one, and it would again be said of Him that He took sides. In the beginning God appeared to a heathen named Abraham, for there were no other people then. Abraham believed God and God called him. Abraham obeyed and His faith in God was recompensed with a promise from God that all the nations of the earth would be blessed in his seed (Genesis 12:3). So God did not side with a certain race or a certain person. When Ishmael and Isaac were born to Abraham, God bestowed upon the children of Ishmael earthly blessings and upon the children of Isaac He bestowed spiritual blessings. To the latter He sent the prophets from time to time to show them the will of God in terms of His redemption, so that they might be prepared for Christ when He came to them. A look at the Jewish history shows us that the godly Jews expected the coming of Christ into the world (Luke 2:25,26), and as soon as they saw Him they welcomed Him (John 1:47-49). Now if Christ had come from another nation that had not received prophecies concerning His coming, He would not have anyone waiting for Him or anyone who could understand His message.

In coming from the Jewish nation, Christ did not side with them; He loved and welcomed all men. He declared that the heathen would come from the east and the west and "recline in Abraham's bosom", whereas the unbelieving Jews would be cast outside (Luke 13:28). Moreover, He commanded His disciples, who carried His message, to preach it not only in Judea, but throughout the whole world as well (Mark 16:15), and this is exactly what they did.

4.) [Supposing the Jews did not crucify Christ, how could He atone for our sins otherwise?]

The answer: Nothing other than what happened to Christ could have happened to any pure and holy person who rebukes the wicked community in which he lives for its evils and wrong-doings. Evil men in all ages hate and withstand the truth. Had Christ lived in any other age, or in any other country, the evil of His contemporaries would have manifested itself in the same manner as that of the Jews. The pain that was inflicted on Christ by the Jews when they crucified Him was the pain of direct atonement between Him and God's justice, which He could have borne at any time and by any means. So this objection is ruled out.

God intended from the beginning of time that Christ's coming into the world would be a light to reveal the enormity of their sins to the people when they went away from Him and rejected His truth, and at the same time the extent of His love and compassion for them.

5.) [If God meant Christ's crucifixion to reveal His atonement of our sins to us, then the Jews who crucified Christ fulfilled God's will and participated in the salvation of the world. On that basis, they did not perpetrate any crime!]

The answer: The Jews did not crucify Christ to fulfil God's will, but because they hated Christ on account of His moral perfection that revealed their wickedness and malice. By crucifying Him they wanted to crucify truth, holiness and perfection, which is itself an unsurpassable crime.

Nevertheless, in His infinite wisdom, God used the crime they performed against Him to manifest His love for them and for the world in general. After they shot all of their hate-filled arrows at Him, and merited the condemnation of God with all its horror, Christ went up and accepted this condemnation upon Himself for them and for other people. For without exception all have disobeyed and rebelled against God in various ways. So Christ endured the pains of atonement and fulfilled the words of the Bible, "Where sin abounded, grace abounded much more" (Romans 5:20).

6.) [If Christ died as an atonement for our sins, He would not rise from the dead, because the wages of sin is eternal death. Also salvation from sin would not be by grace as the Bible says but according to justice, because the requirements of God's justice would then be fulfilled.]

The answer: Christ's resurrection from death does not indicate that His own death was not for atonement. It indicates that His infinite divinity imparted an infinite value to His atoning suffering as man, which was able to fulfil the infinite requirements of God's justice. Hence, there was no need for Him to remain in the

grave. Besides, had Christ remained in His grave, He would have been like other animal sacrifices that did not please God for their inability to pay for sin in reality.

Furthermore, Christ's resurrection proved that His atonement for our sins is valid forever and that He obtained salvation for us by justice, that it became His acquired right. But we obtain this salvation on the basis of grace alone, because we did not do anything on our part to deserve it. Moreover, the Bible is perfectly right in saying that "By grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God" (Ephesians 2:8).

7.) [How could Christ fulfil the requirements of God's unlimited justice during the hours of crucifixion only? His manhood was limited and He could therefore only endure a limited amount of suffering, which does not satisfy such unlimited requirements.]

The answer: (A) An efficient man can discharge the job assigned to him in such a short time, while another man may not be able to do any of what has been assigned to him. According to this analogy we can say that, due to His absolute perfection, Christ has unlimited sufficiency. Therefore He was able to fulfil the unlimited requirements of God's justice during the hours of crucifixion. Along with this, Christ did not achieve the atonement apart from the Godhead; it was the Godhead dwelling in Him that did so. It follows then that the requirements of His justice have been completely fulfilled, because God, or the Godhead, cannot be careless with any of the requirements of His justice.

(B) God was pleased to offer Christ as an atonement for us, just as Christ Himself was. The Bible says of God that He was pleased to bruise Christ (Isaiah 53:10), and of Christ it said that He delighted to do God's will (Psalms 40:8). It also says in Hebrews 12:2 that for the joy that was set before Him, Christ endured the cross, despising the shame. This tells us that Christ must have fulfilled the demands of God's justice (or rather God fulfilled them in Him) to the full, because when one is pleased with his job he does not leave any part of it undone.

8.) [If the Godhead was really united with manhood in Christ it would not be necessary for Christ to remain several hours on the cross to atone for sin. One moment would be enough because the Godhead has an unlimited sufficiency.]

The answer: The element of time in our sight is not the same in God's sight; for one day in God's sight is as a thousand years in ours (2 Peter 3:8). Since this is the case, the period of time we think of as several hours could be but a moment in God's sight or it could be a whole aeon or an endless eternity. We face the same thing in terms of Christ's crucifixion. For Christ endured the pain of the atonement as a limited man, but He was at the same time the unlimited God, therefore His atonement had an unlimited effect. It should satisfy us enough to know that He did not come down from the cross until He uttered these unforgettable words, "It is finished," which point out the fact that he completed His redemption of us.

9.) [If Christ declared His completion of redemption by saying, "It is finished," why then did He not come down from the cross alive after having uttered this sentence?]

The answer: Because mankind had gone far away from God and committed whatever evil they liked, it was appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment would come (Hebrews 9:27). So in order to atone for men completely, Christ had to bear the two judgments; the judgment of divine justice and the judgment of death to His glorious body. From what has been said previously we see that the words "It is finished" were not isolated from His death; but rather united with it, for He died as soon as He had spoken these words. So they mean that He completed the atonement by dying on the cross.

10.) [If salvation comes through Christ, then why didn't Christ come immediately when Adam fell into sin, or a short time after that, to offer Himself up as an atonement for him and his children? Why should God demand that they offer animal sacrifices for thousands of years even though these animals were not sufficient in themselves to cover their sins in reality?]

The answer: (A) Men of old did not recognize the evil and danger of sin fully. If Christ had offered Himself up as an atonement for sin as soon as Adam sinned, or shortly after, mankind would not have really appreciated it for what it was. Neither would they be touched by or benefit from it. On the other hand, God was aware of human nature and the way men should be taught and refined, so He decided to leave them to their own devices at first to prove that to them. "They have all gone out of the way; they have together become unprofitable; there is none who does good, no, not one" (Romans 3:10-12). Animal sacrifices, however numerous they might be, are not enough to atone for a single sin. Later God would uplift their minds bit by bit to where they could realize how dangerous sin is, not only for themselves but also for Him. The reason for all this was to show them that they could not qualify themselves in His presence by any means.

(B) Having made this truth clear to them, He began to prepare them for the salvation of Christ through prophecies. He sent them through the prophets from time to time concerning Christ's titles, family name, the place and time of His birth, His qualities and diverse works and His atonement for sin (Read for example Isaiah 7,9,53; Daniel 9; Micah 5 and Malachi 3). Shortly before Christ appeared, many godly men were awaiting Him (Luke 2:25,26; John 1:41,45,49; 4:25,29 and 7:26,27). Hence, Christ's coming to declare God's salvation was in accordance with the truth. He came after the people had spread out over the earth and kept records of events that took place, and after the elect recognized the evil of sin and their own inadequacy to live in harmony with God by their works. This created an honest desire within them to be saved from sin and its results (Luke 2:25,37).

11.) [If God has suffered because of sin when Adam and his descendants fell into it in the past (Isaiah 43:24), it would be that He had atoned for it in His own self, in the spirit realm, (or: privately) in the past also. Therefore, every man who approaches God and repents of his sins has the right to be forgiven and pardoned. In this case the cross would only be an illustration of the pain God felt of old because of sin. Consequently, the cross is not necessary to atone for sin.]

The answer: From the beginning God felt pain because of man's sin. This pain was because of the misery they wallowed in, their violation of the law He had

given them for their benefit and their failure to recognize his great benevolence to them. This pain had to be in accordance with His complete spirituality. His pain was not that of atonement, because it requested the infliction of punishment upon the wrongdoers from time to time (Genesis 17, 19). Through the cross, however, God, in Christ, endured all the pain of the judgment brought about by our sins, without inflicting any of it upon us. Thus, His pain on the cross was only the pain of atonement. This is not extraordinary, for only through the cross did God show that His love surpasses all our sins, and that no matter how overwhelming the floods are, they cannot quench this love or lessen its intensity (Song of Solomon 8:7). At the cross sinners find complete forgiveness which gives them absolute rest and assurance.

12.) [Atonement is not supposed to be offered for the sins that have not yet been committed, but for the ones that have been already committed. Therefore, the atonement of Christ must be for the sins that had been committed before Christ's crucifixion.]

The answer: If some being atoned for our sins, he would atone for our past sins only. He would not know the ones that would be committed in the future. But since it is God Himself that atoned for our sins, He knew already from the eternal past all humans that would come into the world, as well as the sins they would commit. It is not impossible for Him to atone for sins all at once. He did not need to atone at the end of each century, so to speak, for the sins that had been committed during that century. In this case, one can definitely say that He atoned for all people in all countries and ages, exactly as the Bible states. For the Bible says of Christ, "... that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone" (Hebrews 2:9).

13.) [The doctrine of salvation and God's atonement for all mankind has been adopted from the myths of the heathen, who believed that through the shedding of the blood they obtained salvation. They also believed that their gods; such as Mithras, Krishna, Buddha, Tammuz, Osiris and Prometheus suffered to save their followers from their sins.]

The answer: The doctrine of the necessity of the shedding of blood for obtaining salvation, which the Bible proclaims, has been one of the most essential doctrines since Adam was found on earth. It was the heathens who borrowed it from their ancestors, who previously believed in God alone, as we mentioned in chapter three.

Besides, Christ's disciples differed in terms of upbringing, disposition, culture and social status. They could not have agreed among themselves on borrowing certain beliefs from the heathens. Neither were they philosophers, politicians or historians, who could be extensively acquainted with heathen myths. Nor were they travelling traders who knew the traditions and religions of diverse nations. There was no chance for them to borrow from the heathen. Moreover, the contents of these myths are far removed from the realities of Christianity, as we will show presently:

(A) Myth has it that Mithras went out of a rock carrying a knife and a torch, fought the sun, conquered it and made it his ally. Afterward he fought the first being that

was created in the world, the terrible ox which disturbed the people and killed it. Thus the blood of that ox became a symbol for the salvation of people, because Mithras killed it and rescued the people from its violence. The minions of Ahriman, the god of evil (the scorpions, vipers and ants), overtook this blood and disfeatured it, so Mithras left earth and flew to his ally the sun! Now, what relation is there between such a tale and the atoning death of Christ!

(B) Krishna, on the other hand, used to commit unprecedented, heinous iniquities so that the heathens dubbed him "the god of evil". They called him "the saviour", as well, because they did not think of salvation in terms the deliverance from the punishment for sin and its mastery over the soul, but in terms of complete indulgence in profanity. This indulgence, they believed, quenched the burning fire of lust. People who make this objection used this profane, twisted meaning of salvation without pointing out the extreme difference between this meaning and the Christian meaning of the word. Some people also claim that the followers of Krishna believed that he could save them from sin, just as Christians say of Christ, to get the simple-minded Christians to think that their doctrines are adopted from heathenism.

As to the way Krishna died, one narrative says that while he was taking a stroll through the woods, a hunter missed his target and shot Krishna with a pebble. Another narrative says that he shot him with an arrow, in a deadly area of his body. So Krishna fell dead on the spot. The people who posed this objection added to this story certain details to make it sound like the Christian story of Christ's passion. They said, "When Krishna's side was pierced with a spear, he said to the hunter who shot him, while he was crucified, 'Go, hunter, surrounded by my mercy, to heaven the abode of the gods.'" This false addition does not suit the episode of Krishna's death at all. Evidently it is borrowed from the episode in the gospels, when a soldier pierced Christ with a spear as He was on the cross, and when Christ said to the repentant thief, "Today you will be with Me in Paradise." They simply inserted these two sayings of Christ into their tale in such an absurd way to make it look the way they wanted. They were not successful, however, as it is the case with all forgers. Historians attest that crucifixion was not known among the Indians, but only among the Phoenicians, the Egyptians, the Romans and the Jews.

(C) Buddha rejected the doctrine of atonement because he believed that no creature could save anyone from his sin. He maintained that every man should lift himself above his passions and lusts to reach the Nirvana, in which he would be completely released from lusts. His last words to his followers were: "Be a light and a fortified refuge for yourselves. Never take refuge except with yourselves!" So Buddhists used to correct themselves by themselves, not waiting for the help of another, thinking that they could rise above their weaknesses by their inner powers. The Ahram newspaper of Cairo pointed this fact out in 1971 on May the 7th: "Buddha was a guru, not a saviour. He never promised help for anyone, except that which one gets from himself. A very famous saying of his was: 'Continue your struggle till you reach the way to salvation.'"

When Buddha was in the town of Bafa {I am not sure of the name}, a blacksmith named Tshunda wanted to honour him, so he offered him roasted meat. On eating it, Buddha felt a piercing pain in his intestines, which caused his death in a few hours. Yet, objectors claimed that he said, "Let the iniquities that have been committed in the present age fall upon me, so that the world may be saved from its punishment," to make simple Christians believe that their belief in Christ's salvation was borrowed from Indian myths!

(D) Tammuz was considered the god of agriculture by the heathen. They believed that he comes to life when the plants appear and dies when they droop. When he dies as the plants droop, most of the women cry over him, and when he comes to life as the plants reappear, they greatly rejoice and give themselves to sexual passions with no restraint or self-control. They considered this act as salvation, not from the profanity of sin, as is the case in Christianity, but from the law of purity and chastity! It is a false claim to say that "Some heathens believe that Tammuz suffered for mankind and was called the saviour and the crucified one." It is also a heinous moral crime because it distorts the established facts and makes the simple people doubt their doctrines.

(H) One legend has it that Osiris loved the people and saved them from their troubles, but his brother Set killed him and cut his body up into many pieces. His wife, however, gathered these pieces and brought him back to life. Another legend claims that when Osiris died, his wife wept over him, and that he came back to life when her tears fell on his body. While a third legend says that Osiris used to drown during the flood season and Isis used to go down the Nile to draw him out; thus he died and came back to life every year. So the claim that some ancient Egyptians believed that Osiris saved them from sin is nonsense.

(I) Prometheus, as we learn from Greek mythology, resisted the aristocracy in ancient Greece, loved the common people and helped them in their daily affairs. Jupiter was so angered that he crucified him on Mount Caucasus. He commanded Vulcan to torture him, so he used to drive heated iron rods into his body. He also set a vulture against him, which tore at his liver and ate it every day. Prometheus remained in that tormented state till he was delivered by Hercules.

Clearly, Prometheus' myth differs greatly from Christ's crucifixion. Therefore it cannot be claimed that this one is adapted from that one. Christ delivered Himself to die, while Prometheus was led to death against His will. Christ agreed to atone for the sins of men; Prometheus did not die for anyone's sins. Also the claim that Prometheus "was wounded for the iniquities of mankind, and was bruised for their transgression," is a false claim because these words were never written in the actual legend. These words are rather taken from the prophecy of Isaiah (chapter 53), which was said of Christ hundreds of years before the narrative of Prometheus appeared. If they wanted to imitate the biblical style, the objectors should have said that Prometheus was wounded for his defense of democracy, and was bruised for his devotion to it. Yet, they distorted the established facts, taking the verses that were said of Christ and applying it to Prometheus, to make simple Christians believe that their forefathers had assumed Christian doctrines

from Greek mythology, while in fact the objectors themselves are the ones that should be accused of assuming!

Abbas Mahmud al-Aqqad knew that the objectors were unjustifiably biased against Christian doctrines. He wrote, "The writers of these remarks have used the similarity between rituals and information as evidence of the fabrication of Christ's history. It seems to me that the rise of the science of comparative religions was the reason those who developed it wanted to give too much significance to these similarities and comparisons... It is not right to say that all the gospels are untrustworthy sources of Christ's history. The right thing is that they are the only source of this history. Moreover, whether these gospels go back to one source or more, it should be considered that they have been the authority for those people who were the nearest to Christ in terms of time. Today, after two thousand years, we do not have the right to depend on any other as our authority" (The Genius of Christ, p. 126; God, p. 149-154).

Al-Aqqad's statement was preceded by the statements of such luminaries as Sir James Frazer and the Swiss historian Dr. Edward Meyer. The former said, "The doubts raised about the truth of the historicity of Christ are inconsequential. They are as absurd as saying that Napoleon is a legendary, mythical person." While the latter said, "There is nothing that makes us reject the history of Christ as it is recorded in the gospels." These two scholars were not religious people interested in upholding Christians doctrines that are written in the gospels. They were historians who viewed the subject from the historical viewpoint only. Their testimony, therefore, is as indisputable as that of al-Aqqad's.

## **Chapter Nine**

### **God Cannot Be Blamed for the Sinfulness of Mankind**

Many philosophers and thinkers have searched many issues of doctrine and wondered: "Why did God not destroy the devil from the beginning? Why did He allow him to tempt Adam and Eve without intervening to keep them from disobeying? Why did He choose certain people for eternal life, while appointing others for eternal torment?" But, they found a solution to all these problems. Yet, in the light of the previous chapters there will not be any room for these problems, as we shall see in the following:

#### **1. God cannot be blamed for Adam's Fall**

1.) [Why did God create Adam although he already knew that he would disobey Him and incur eternal damnation on himself?]

The answer: He created him because he loved him (1 John 4:8). Someone who loves another does not focus on making himself happy, but the other. So philosophers and religious men were not right in saying that God created Adam to reveal His own existence through him or to receive the honour and worship worthy of Him from Adam, that is because God is perfect and self-sufficient.

God already knew that Adam would disobey Him and incur damnation upon himself, but this foreknowledge did not keep Him from creating him. There is no obstacle, however big it may be, that can keep God from fulfilling His magnificent

purposes toward man. Yes, God created Adam although He already knew that he would disobey him, because He can save him from the results of this disobedience and fulfil all His magnificent purposes toward him. These purposes have been actually fulfilled in the atonement of Christ.

2.) [If God created Adam out of love, why did He not create him infallible?]

The answer: Infallibility is available only to the One who had no beginning or end, and that is God alone. Man or any other creatures cannot be infallible. Although God did not create Adam infallible, He still created him in His image, in that he has a rational spirit that has all the faculties for living in harmony with God in terms of His excellent moral character. It was possible for Adam not to sin if he resolved not to do so.

3.) [If God loves Adam, why did He not prevent him from disobeying his will, in order to spare him and his descendants evil and affliction?]

The answer: Had God not allowed Adam to disobey against Adam's own will, He would have robbed him of his own free will, with which He created him. God does not cancel or annul any of His works, because he does everything with wisdom and prudence (Psalms 104:24). Besides, had God denied Adam the exercise of his will, Adam's obedience would only be mechanical, not willful. A mechanical will is no will at all, consequently it cannot make Adam feel the pleasure of having a relationship with God. He would feel downcast and dissatisfied, which would kindle the desire to break the law in disobedience. His situation would have been like that of a drunkard whose desire to drink would increase if people prevent him from drinking against his own will!

4.) [By not preventing Adam from disobeying, God paved the way for Adam to fall into sin, so Adam is responsible for his sin.]

The answer: God is far above paving the way for anyone to fall into sin. It was Adam who voluntarily disobeyed God, thus meriting the punishment that ensued from his disobedience. The Bible leaves no room for this objection, for it says that God does not tempt anyone by evil but each one is tempted when he is drawn away and enticed by his desires. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death (James 1:13-15).

5.) [If God wanted Adam to live happily in the Garden, He would equip him with the means that would help him not to disobey.]

The answer: This objection would have been valid under the following condition: If God had created Adam with a sinful nature. If He had placed him in a barren desert and forbidden him from eating of a certain tree that was in it. Or if He had forbidden him to eat of all the trees in the Garden except for one tree. If He had allowed him to eat of all the trees except for the best and the finest one. Or if the forbidden tree had been hidden in a place that made it difficult for Adam to recognize it. But God created Adam upright, placed him in a Garden not a barren desert, did not command him to keep away from all the trees except for only one and this tree was intimately known to Adam. Furthermore, it was not the best tree ever, but it was just like any other tree. The point is that Adam's desire to eat of it lent it a special beauty in Adam's eyes! Contrary to what the objectors presume,

God had provided Adam with everything necessary for preserving him from disobedience, so Adam had no excuse whatsoever.

6.) [Does not the fact that God did not destroy Satan, on the one hand, and the fact that He tested Adam, on the other hand, prove that He did not want a happy life for Adam?]

The answer: (A) Satan is a weak, insignificant and lowly creature in comparison to God. His continuing to exist does not stand in the way of the divine purposes; because of His supreme power, God can destroy all the works and tricks of Satan and even use them to manifest His love and mercy for mankind, whom He created in His image and according to His likeness. This way He brings out for them out of the eater something to eat, and out of the strong something sweet (Judges 14:14).

Secondly, Satan did not force Adam to disobey; he neither brought him to the forbidden tree nor did he pluck the fruit of the tree and put it into his mouth. It was Eve who went to the tree with her own free will to pluck the fruit of the tree and eat it. It was she who gave it to her man to eat as well, and it was Adam himself who responded. So Satan's existence does not remove the responsibility of disobedience from Adam's and his wife's shoulders. They could have turned away from Satan's voice if they had wanted to live in obedience to God. But they could also have disobeyed God even if there was no Satan, because of the free will they had been given, which leads to obedience as well disobedience. So, there is no room for objection.

(B) The test was necessary so that Adam and his wife could prove that they are fit for the high position God placed them in. If they ended up obeying God they would enjoy this position forever. If they fell, however, they could still be restored. Such restoration would not bring them back to their original state, but to a much better one by God's unlimited grace. So, there is no room for objection against this test.

7.) [God has known all along that Adam would disobey Him. Why did He not leave him alone without testing him, for then he would not have banished him from the Garden?]

The answer: God has known all along that Adam and Eve would disobey His command, but they would not know this fact without a test. They had to be tested in order to know the truth about themselves, and also to know how to act toward God.

For illustration let us suppose that the school exams were cancelled. Most of the students would not know the truth about themselves. But perhaps those of them who are educationally poor would think that they were better than others and grow conceited. When they begin to work later on they would do badly on the job, because they were bad students even if they themselves are ignorant of the fact. Testing is an indispensable, inevitable moral necessity. Only those who do not wish to know the truth about themselves would try to dodge it. Yes, an educationally poor student would fail the test, but it is much better to fail and be set right than to think that one is O.K. and deceive oneself and others. For this

reason godly men of old used to ask God to show them the right direction. David prayed to God, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my anxieties; and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me I the way everlasting" (Psalms 139:23,24).

8.) [If God wanted for Adam to live in the Garden eternally, then would Adam have transgressed God's will by his disobedience and spread of evil, although God's will controls the world, as we know?]

The answer: True, God's will controls the universe; yet we have to remember that there is a difference between God's sovereign will and God's permissive will. The will is a positive act by which we control things and direct them to go the way we choose. Permissive will, on the other hand, is passive agreement by which we leave things going the way they are for a special reason or purpose. Now God let Adam disobey Him, not because He could not force him to obey him, but because He created him with free will, able choose good as well as evil. Nevertheless, the existence of evil in the world does not hamper God's purposes, because God can use even that to refine man and show His love and compassion for him. But for the evil we would not have known the importance of goodness, and but for our falling into sin we would not have known of God's compassion and care for us.

9.) [Why did God create Adam with free will, although He knew that he would abuse this freedom?]

The answer: (A) God is love (1 John 4:8). Love was the main factor in creation, so it was necessary for God to create man with a free will so that he could have an internal power to respond to His love, because mutual love depends on free will. Further, it is this free will that shapes people's morals and personalities and provides them with means of progress and growth in life. Without it man would have remained as primitive as he was thousands of years ago. In addition, God does not want us to be like puppets that move mechanically each time the player draws them or pushes them. He does not take pleasure in machines, but in creatures that respond to Him with their free choice. This however, cannot be accomplished unless they have the power to disobey whenever they want to. So, there is no room for objection at all.

(B) Looking at freedom from the overall human viewpoint, we see that it is the thing dearest to a rational man. Also those who are deprived of it strive with their strength to get it back. Accordingly, it would be nonsense to cherish freedom and, at the same time, protest that God created us free. Although Adam used his freedom to turn away from God, it was his fault, not the freedom's fault. Nonetheless, because of His unlimited love for us, God did not treat man according to his disobedience, but has shown him all mercy and compassion, and provided him with all the means necessary for utilizing his freedom in keeping away from evil and doing good. Yet this is only available when man truly believes, as already discussed in chapter seven. So, there is no room for objection.

10.) [If things are as they appear, did God allow Adam to fall into sin to show His eternal love for him and to atone for him Himself?]

The answer: God forbid that he would let Adam fall into sin for those two reasons. He does not allow evil to bring goodness, because He does not "fish in murky waters" as men do. In fact, He provided Adam with enough things to keep him in the Garden. But when Adam willfully fell, God did not want to leave him in sin, but He took it upon Himself and atoned for it. The intention to take up sin upon Himself and atone for it did not crop up suddenly in relation to God. He had this intention from the eternal past because He knows all things before they come into being. This is in total harmony with His perfection and unchangeableness.

## 2. God Cannot Be Blamed for the Problems of Mankind in General

1.) [Does it please God that millions of people labour in misery because of the sin of Adam their forefather?]

The answer: (A) Of course it does not. It is because of this that God has appointed another representative for them long ages before the beginning of time, who is Christ. The Scriptures call Christ in terms of humanity "the last Adam" (1 Corinthians 15:45) so as to distinguish Him from the first Adam. Yet, in terms of His personal existence, Christ existed an innumerable number of years before Adam, because He is the "Son of God", and the "Word of God". So, although misery became the lot of humanity because of the first Adam, all goodness becomes the blessing of humanity through the last Adam. The Bible says, "For if by the one man's offence [that is the first Adam] many died, much more the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abounded to many... For if by the one man's offence death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ. Therefore, as through one man's offence judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even though through one Man's righteous act [with which Christ fulfilled the requirements of divine justice] the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's (that is Jesus Christ) obedience many will be made righteous" (Romans 5:15-19).

(B) All those who feel the horror of sin, which penetrated them through the first Adam, have to repudiate their relationship with him as their old head and cling by faith to Christ in the Spirit, who is the last Adam, as their new head. They then become separated from mankind, their sin and their destiny on one hand, and united with the righteous Christ and partakers with Him in His atonement on the other hand. The Bible says, "Therefore, if any one is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17). But if anyone refuses to cling to Christ, he then has chosen to stay in the sinful state that he ended up with due to the representation of the first Adam. He has preferred to stay in sin. Then the first Adam's representation of him would not only be legal, but voluntary. At this point, the condemnation he deserves would not be due to Adam's representation of him in terms of the test, failure and judgement, but due to his rejection of Christ's representation of him in terms of fulfilling the requirements of divine justice.

Thence, inasmuch as the sinful nature penetrated us through Adam, and thus we became partakers of its results without even committing any transgression, the wisdom of God determined that we receive Christ's life in our souls and thus we become partakers in the results of His atonement without even paying its price to God. All that we have to do is to receive Christ into our hearts as our representative and head, to believe in Him truly.

2.) [Why did not God make Christ the head of creation from the beginning instead of Adam? For in that case there would be no place for sin, which offended God and obligated Him to redeem mankind.]

The answer: God established Adam as head of creation because he was an earthly being who begot humans like himself through the natural process of procreation. Christ, however, was a heavenly Being who had no relationship with anybody except through the Spirit. So naturally He did not appear as head of the new spiritual creation until the first Adam came into being and until a real desire was formed in his descendants to communicate with God and live in harmony with Him.

It was not the representation of the first Adam, together with the evil it resulted in, that called God to establish Christ as a second representative. On the contrary, Christ's representation has always been the basis in God's eternal purposes. The evidence of this is that He stated that the first Adam was merely an example of Christ in terms of His representation of mankind, as is made clear by Romans 5:12. Now an example cannot be valid unless there is already a truth that it refers back to or symbolizes.

3.) [If salvation is through Christ alone, how then were the prophets and the godly men prior to Him saved?]

The answer: (A) God commanded the people in the Old Testament to offer atoning sacrifices for themselves. Each one who repented of his sins and approached God with these sacrifices enjoyed forgiveness and acceptance with God. These sacrifices, however, were not sufficient in themselves for atonement, but they were just a symbol of Christ's atonement that has been known to God from the eternal past. The apostle Peter said to the believers, "Knowing that you were... redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. He was indeed foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last day for you" (1 Peter 1:18-20). Likewise, the apostle Paul said of Christ, "... whom God set forth to be a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed [by those who believed in ages prior to Christ, who had shown this faith through real repentance to God and offering the above-mentioned symbolical sacrifices], [also] to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus" (Romans 3:25,26).

Forgiveness by Christ's blood also extends from the cross backwards, passing all the ages prior to Christ's birth to reach Adam before he ever left the Garden. For this reason God did not punish Adam immediately by physical death, which would foretell an eternal torment for him because of sin. Instead, He pardoned him and

kept him alive on the basis of the symbolic sacrifice, which He arranged and accepted as a substitute for him at that time. Furthermore, this forgiveness extends forwards, passing all the ages subsequent to the birth of Christ, so as to save the last man coming to earth, so long as he truly believes in Christ. In which case, true believers who lived before the crucifixion were saved before God by looking up to Christ, who was, for them, about to come and reveal the atonement of God. And true believers who lived, and still live after Christ, are saved by believing that He has come and revealed this atonement. This befits God's perfection and love for mankind in all ages without exception.

4.) [God loves all people, so it is completely unthinkable that He would save only those belonging to Christ, especially since many of them are sinners just like the rest of the people.]

The answer: Those enjoying salvation are not those who belong outwardly to Christ; because many of those are sinners just like the rest of the people, but those enjoying salvation are the ones who receive Christ as their Saviour and are born again of God. This second birth qualifies them to be in harmony with God in terms of His exalted moral attributes, who are only a minority in all ages. This is not extraordinary; for the Scriptures stated that among the thousands that lived at the time of the Flood, only eight people were saved (1 Peter 3:20), and among the numerous inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah only Lot was saved (2 Peter 2:7).

5.) [God's compassion and mercy are unlimited, so He cannot destroy all those who do not truly believe in Christ for ever.]

The answer: True, God's compassion and mercy are unlimited. Yet, we should not overlook the fact that His holiness and justice are also unlimited. Nominal believers and unbelievers reject the salvation offered them freely by Christ, so it is fair to deprive them of it. It is fair, as well, that they lose the right of demanding it.

It is not God who destroys them, but they themselves, because of their unwillingness to come to Him and enjoy His salvation. Christ pointed this fact out by saying, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). [Note: The Scripture does not say: "...that He should not destroy whoever believes in Him," but that "whoever believes in Him should not perish." Also in the Old Testament God spoke through wise Solomon, saying, "But he who sins against me wrongs his own soul [not that I would wrong him]" (Proverbs 8:36). The same fact has been discussed in chapter one.

6.) [If salvation is through Christ's atonement alone, what will the destiny of those be who have never heard of it, or have heard of it without understanding what it is?]

The answer: We are in the position of judges who determine people's destinies if we can answer this question. Yet, we know that God loves everybody equally. It is written, "For God so loved the world," (John 3:16) which means that He loved the whole world. Through His unlimited knowledge, God knows everyone's

circumstances quite well, as well as their hearts. It is not His nature to wrong or treat anybody harshly. God does not leave anyone who sincerely desires to enjoy His mercy and walk in His ways; instead He sends them people to guide and educate them, as He did with Cornelius, the official of Candace and others (Acts 10; 8:26-30).

7.) [What is the offence of children, who do not know how to discern their left hand from their right?]

The answer: (A) Those who carry the responsibility are only those who know how to discern good from evil. But since children in general cannot discern between this and that, they do not carry a personal responsibility before God, neither are they considered guilty before Him, even if they have by nature committed what we call "sin". However, in terms of legally considering them sinners before God (just like other people), a result of being born from Adam, God does not allow them to be harmed by the sin of the first Adam because children cannot comprehend the nature of good and evil. Moreover, He does not allow them to not benefit from the salvation of the last Adam, who is Christ. The Scriptures said, "But the free gift is not like the offence [this means that God's gifts to us on the basis of Christ's atonement are by no means the results of Adam's sin]. For if by one mans' offence [that is the first Adam] many died, much more the grace of God and the gift by the grace by the one Man, Jesus Christ, abounded to many" (Romans 5:15-20). Likewise, Christ said concerning the children, "... of such is the kingdom of God" (Mark 10:13-15), and that He did not want that "one of these little ones should perish" (Matthew 18:10-14). So, there should be no doubt as to the fact that children in general do not perish by virtue of Christ's atonement.

The procedures of judgment written in Revelation 20:11,12 prove this. We read there that the wicked will be judged according to the deeds that are written in their records. Those deprived of the faculty of comprehension do not stand before the judgment seat; instead as they inherited Adam's sin unwillingly, they also enjoy salvation and everlasting life freely by virtue of Christ's atonement without their doing anything on their part.

Yet, we should not overlook the fact that although they will not perish in eternity, also their comprehension, a benefit from God's rich love that was manifested in Christ and the superior blessings resulting from it will not be like that of the believers who led an exalted spiritual life. Neither will they wear crowns before Christ's throne like the believers who served the Lord devotedly in the present life; because the crowns will be given for the service and struggle after believing (2 Timothy 4:7,8; 1 Peter 5:4; James 1:12; Revelation 2:10). The position of children in eternity will be like that of simple-minded believers.

### 3. God cannot be blamed for the sins of true believers

1.) [If true believers do not get punished for their sins forever, then they can sin and neglect doing good as much as they like! This, however, increases wickedness in the world and contradicts God's holiness.]

The answer: As already said in chapter seven, true believers are born again of God, and have obtained from Him a new spiritual nature that hates sin. So the

thought that they may indulge in a life of wickedness is far fetched, because their motto is: "How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it (Romans 6:2), for the grace that saved them teaches them to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age" (Titus 2:11,12).

It is characteristic of this spiritual nature, which believers get from God, to lead them to do good works abundantly and richly. If they are remiss in some work, they do not feel comfortable or peaceful on the inside till they redo it with all their strength, so that their consciences may be at rest, and above all, to glorify God who loved and honoured them. The apostle Paul pointed out that it has become the nature of true believers to do good works. He said of himself and the of them together, "... created in Jesus Christ for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:10).

2.) [What is God's attitude toward a true believer when he falls into sin, and does not repent of it immediately?]

The answer: (A) God uses all means to guide this believer and bring him back to Him, through preaching and instruction, or through the diverse trials of life; because this believer is His child, whom He has begotten again to a living hope (1 Peter 1:3) and pledged to take care of and look after till the end of life (John 10:14,15). With David, these believers experience God's guidance after they have deviated, and say with him, "He restores my soul; He leads in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake" (Psalms 23:3).

(B) But if a true believer continues to sin, God chastens him till he comes back to his senses and gives it up. This chastening could be through sickness, distress, loss, etc... The apostle Paul wrote, "If we would judge ourselves [and walk in God's fear], we would not be judged. But when we are judged we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world" (1 Corinthians 11:31,32). He also wrote, "For whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives" (Hebrews 12:6,7). The apostle Peter wrote to the believers, "And if you call upon the Father who without partiality judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your sojourning here in fear" (1 Peter 1:17). Of course this is not the fear of terror, but the fear of reverence before Him.

3.) [How come all true believers, who fall into sin just like the unbelievers and the nominal believers, will not be judged in eternity? Even if we assume, for the sake of argument, that they will go to heaven, still how can they adapt with God in terms of His holiness there?!]

The answer: By offering Himself as an atonement on the cross, Christ carried the punishment of those who truly believe in Him. God's justice does not demand its rights twice, so God does not judge true believers any more for their sins but is satisfied with the earthly chastening they get. Those believers obtain spiritual life from God, so they actually take off the old nature that drives them to sin, and then there is nothing left to hamper their sanctification in the age to come.

4.) [If the believers who fall into sin enjoy God in the age to come, God would have put them side by side with the believers who kept themselves clean from

sin, served Him and kept His commandments in the present age, which contradicts good reason!]

The answer: There is no room for this objection, for God will reward true believers specially who keep themselves clean from sin, serve Him and keep His commandments. The Bible says, "If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward" (1 Corinthians 3:14). Of course this reward or wages is not eternal life, but a special glory in addition to that life, because eternal life is a gift of God on the basis of Christ's atonement (Romans 6:23) and not a reward for good works. Although they will enjoy God forever by virtue of Christ's atonement, the other true believers will lose the reward mentioned above. The Scriptures say, "If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss [of the reward]; but he himself will be saved [from eternal condemnation], yet so as through fire (1 Corinthians 3:15). This says that this person's salvation will be like someone whose house caught fire and everything he had was burned; yet he himself was delivered, as was the case with Lot (Genesis 19:20).

5.) [The belief that true believers who sin do not suffer eternal condemnation causes them to brag over themselves, which is neither appropriate for them nor for others!]

The answer: Those believers suffer divine chastening in the present age, as mentioned earlier, which calls them to walk in humility before Him. The fact that they will not come into judgment does not cause them to brag or swagger, because their salvation from it depends, first and last, upon Christ's atonement. And if they glory, they glory not in themselves, but in the Lord and none else (2 Corinthians 10:17).

However, people who brag about themselves are those who glory in their so-called "good works", and believe that these qualify them to have eternal life. They despise the people who do not do such works, as was the case with the Pharisee in Luke 18:9-14. They do not know that these works cannot atone for a single sin of theirs, for they are smeared with many bad deeds that render them sinners in God's sight, as already discussed in chapter two. Even if their works are free from sin, still they are not acts of favour that deserve a reward, but a duty that adds more sins to their sins if they omit it.

6.) [If Christ really saved true believers from the punishment of sin, which includes physical death, why do they die physically like anybody else?]

The answer: The sinful nature lies in the bodies of true believers, just as it does in the bodies of others. The only difference between the two parties is that true believers rise above this nature, by the grace of God, whereas others succumb to it. Death had to come over their bodies, too. Nevertheless, as a result of receiving forgiveness and acceptance with God in Christ, death is no more the same for true believers; it has become a means of being transported to heaven. Through this transport, the power of the old nature comes to an end within them, and each of them shouts, "For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain... I am... having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better" (Philippians 1:21-23). They also acknowledge with assurance, "For we know that if our earthly house, this tent [namely our temporal earthly bodies], is destroyed, we have a building

from God [that is a heavenly body], a house not made with hands, eternal... We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body [by departing from this world] and to be present with the Lord" (2 Corinthians 5:1-8). Therefore, when a believer dies, the Bible says that he "lies" or "sleeps" (John 11:12), because after it they rise again in spiritual activity to a happy life, clothed in heavenly bodies like the body of Christ Himself. It is written that Christ "will transfer our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body" (Philippians 3:21). That is why they, of all people, neither fear death nor what comes after death.

How great God's love is, which manifested itself in the redemption Christ accomplished for us, and how precious the blessings are, which become ours because of this redemption! No matter how much we thank God, we cannot pay Him even a drop of what we ought to for His favours toward us. We cannot help falling to our knees before Him, giving Him honour, glory, majesty and authority forevermore. Amen.

#### QUIZ OF THE SECOND PART

Dear reader, if you have studied the second part of this book, you will easily answer the following questions. If you answer twenty of the following twenty-five questions correctly, we will send you a prize. Please, do not forget to write your name and address clearly on the answer sheet of the quiz, not only on the outer envelope.

1. What is the evidence that proves the authenticity of Christ's testimony?
2. Why did the darkness spread out at the time of Christ's crucifixion?
3. Why were Christ's legs not broken?
4. What kinds of pain did Christ endure to remove the torment and curse of sin from us?
5. What true events testify to the sufficiency of Christ's atonement?
6. Why is it necessary to be born again spiritually of God?
7. How can one be born in this way?
8. What changed in our relationship with God after Christ's sufficient atonement for us?
9. What is true faith?
10. What are the necessary conditions for the person who wants to believe in Christ?
11. How can one be sure he has obtained real salvation?
12. What makes a true believer sure he has been saved?
13. Can we avoid sin after having recognized it?

14. Has God pardoned us because of Christ's terrific life, or because of His atoning death for us?
15. If Christ agreed with God in terms of redemption, why then did He ask Him in Gethsemane to keep the cross away from Him at first?
16. Is there a reason for having a personal faith in Christ?
17. If God wanted to atone for our sins in Christ, why did He not do that between Himself and Christ without letting any human participate in crucifying Him?
18. How could Christ satisfy the infinite demands of God's justice during the few hours of crucifixion?
19. Why does "justification" mean?
20. By saying, "It is finished," Christ stated that He completed the work of redemption. Why then did He not come down from the cross immediately after saying this?
21. Does Christ's atonement cover the sins that have not been committed yet? How?
22. Why did God create Adam with a free will, although He knew already that he would abuse this freedom?
23. What makes true believers hate sin, although they have not been punished for it?
24. What is God's attitude toward a true believer who falls into sin and does not immediately repent of it?
25. Why do true believers die physically like other people?

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