

A STUDY OF THE RANSOM IDEA WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF
THE CONFLICT BETWEEN GOOD AND EVIL

A Discussion of the Meaning of Christ's Death

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

*‘And there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back.’*¹ The book of Revelation presents the idea of a conflict between good and evil that took place in the heavenly realms, thus implying that the issue of evil is not limited to humankind only. Similarly, the Gospel accounts speak of the direct encounters between Christ and the evil angels,² which suggest that Christ’s mission involved not only the Earth but the heavenly realities, too. Accordingly, the Early Church presented God’s incarnation in the context of the struggle between good and evil that took place on planet Earth, yet had a cosmic dimension.³ It involved God and Christ as his representative on one side, and the devil and the forces of evil on the other side. The aim of this essay is to identify the main issues, strategies and battlefields in this conflict.

The Old Testament account of the conflict between God and his enemies uses extensively the imagery of redemption.⁴ Also, the idea of redemption or ransom appears to be the leading idea used in the New Testament,⁵ and moreover, it is included in Christ’s own definition of his work and mission.⁶ Thus, the ‘aorta’ of this research is the idea of redemption or ransom. As an introductory clarification, this discussion

¹ Rev. 12.7.

² Mt. 4.1-11; Mt. 8.28-32; Mt. 12.22-29; Mt. 17.18.

³ ‘It is widely known that the early church interpreted the cross as an event in which humankind was ransomed from captivity to the devil... The owner or captor in this case is the devil, or collectively the demons or the “powers” (especially as referred to in Col 2.13-15 or 1 Cor 2.8).’ E. Teselle, ‘The Cross as Ransom’, *Journal of Early Christian Studies*: Summer 1996, vol. 4, pp. 147-148.

⁴ See Exod. 6.6; Deut. 7.8; 2 Sam. 7.23-24; Ps. 44.26; Ps. 130.7-8; Job 19.25-27; Isa. 35.9-10; Jer. 31.11; Hos. 13.14...

⁵ See Rom. 3.24; Eph. 1.7; 1 Tim. 2.6; Tit. 2.14; Heb. 9.15; 1 Pet. 1.18-19; Rev. 5.9...

⁶ ‘... and to give his life as a ransom for many.’ Mt. 20.28 and Mk 10.45.

intends to use interchangeably and synonymously the words ransom, redemption and liberation—these all carry the same redemptive meaning in this study. Accordingly, the design of this dissertation is constructed around the logical-thematic meaning of the biblical ransom motif expressed through the idea of a liberator who provides liberation for humanity by defeating or overcoming the obstacles enslaving humankind. Thus, the ransom motif contains the themes of a liberator, liberation and victory.

This essay proposes that the cross produced an ‘earthly’ outcome and a ‘cosmic’ outcome of redemption. While these two are interrelated for both are interwoven around the cross, one can still distinguish the two aspects. Thus, for the sake of clarity the ‘earthly’ outcome and the ‘heavenly’ outcome will be discussed separately. Accordingly, the first part of this study will focus on the work of the liberator in terms of the outcome for humanity, and this is the liberation aspect of redemption; the latter part will focus on the work of the liberator in terms of overcoming or defeating the obstacles, and this is the victory aspect of redemption. Nonetheless, an attempt will be made to put these two segments into an appropriate relationship.

As a general introduction, the first part of this essay presents a historical overview of the idea of the conflict between Christ and the devil, which has been ‘traditionally’ presented through the ransom motif. This traditional view will be evaluated in the light of the biblical understanding of redemption. Therefore, as a biblical introduction, the second part systematically presents the biblical view of the idea of ransom. The third section discusses the ‘earthly’ aspect of redemption. The following section is the culminating part that discusses the ‘cosmic’ aspect of the work of Christ by attempting to logically unfold the progressive flow of the historical timeline of the war between good and evil and the crucial moments, key issues and the outcome of this conflict. Thus, as it is stated in the title, this discussion will investigate the idea of redemption in the context of the conflict between good and evil. The following part discusses the purpose and the effect of the central redemptive act (Christ’s death) in the context of the cosmic conflict. The concluding chapter offers recapitulation and the assessment of the examined material.

While this essay is not of an exegetical nature, but is primarily of a historical-systematic theological nature, it may be necessary to look closely at some biblical texts that may hold the key to understanding the main issue in this discussion. Nonetheless, these tasks will remain in an explanatory-subordinate relationship to the main theme of redemption. Furthermore, the issues such as authorship of certain biblical books are not discussed in this essay, and therefore, the classical-canonical view will be assumed. The following themes are also assumed in this study: the classical Trinitarian view of Deity, an incarnational Christology⁷ and the classical first principles regarding the biblical world-view such as the infinite God, finite dependant creation, human dependence and human fallenness. Finally, it is assumed that the primary character attribute of God is love and that divine law is its expression defining the boundaries between good and evil in the context of human sinfulness.

⁷ While fully divine Christ limited himself to the existential conditions of humankind. See Phil. 2.6-11; Heb. 1.1-3.; Gal. 4.4.

Chapter 2

A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

'The strength of evil in this world is greater than the summary total which human sin has wrought'.⁸ How did the Christians throughout the centuries understand the dimension of evil? McGrath recognises that in the New Testament there is a 'considerable emphasis' on the idea of Christ, through his death and resurrection, defeating not only sin and death, but also the devil and the forces of evil.⁹ Therefore, the Apostolic Church has certainly acknowledged the cosmic dimension of the problem of evil. It is no wonder then that the earliest descendents of the Apostolic Church (represented by the Early Fathers) have presented the central redemptive act of Christ (his death and resurrection) in the context of the cosmic conflict between good and evil.

Curiously, as Fiddes points out, from the 'middle of the second century the Church lost interest in the victory of Christ over demons, and focussed the whole struggle with evil in the figure of the devil'.¹⁰ Origen, for example, does make the person of the devil very central in his writings.¹¹ While contemplating the idea of ransom Origen followed a logic that the 'ransom' had to be 'paid to someone'.¹² He concluded that we are the servants of the devil, and therefore, the price of our release

⁸ John G. Gibbs, *Creation and Redemption: a Study in Pauline Theology* (Leiden: E.J.Brill, 1971), p. 146.

⁹ Alister E. McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 2002), p. 415.

¹⁰ Paul S. Fiddes, *Past Event and Present Salvation: the Christian Idea of Atonement* (London: Darton Longman and Todd, 1989), p. 122.

¹¹ When reading Origen's writings one does find a high number of references to the term devil. See Ante-Nicene Fathers, vol. 4—Fathers of the Third Century, *Origen on The AGES Digital Library Collections CD-Rom* (AGES Software Albany, OR, Version 5.0: 1997).

¹² 'If Christ's death was a ransom, Origen argued, it must have been paid to someone.' McGrath, *Christian Theology*, p. 415.

had to be paid to the devil by Christ.¹³ Thus, Origen presented the devil as an ‘unjust tyrant’ from whom humankind needs to be liberated.¹⁴

Furthermore, Irenaeus claimed that the ‘apostasy’ held us in unjust possession and thus, God needed to ransom us from it (the apostasy).¹⁵ Bettenson proposes that Irenaeus speaks of Satan when using the term ‘apostasy’ and he reinforces this point by capitalising the first letter of the word (Apostasy) and by inserting the word Satan into brackets in his own translation of Irenaeus’ document.¹⁶ However, this is not as obvious as Bettenson presents it—it is not really clear whether the ‘apostasy’ is the devil, or merely the impersonal power of sin. The end of the quoted passage suggests that Irenaeus believed in the redemption through a living communion with God, rather than in salvation as a simple transaction between the two parties.¹⁷

Thus, it is not always clear whether all Early Fathers believed in salvation through a **literal** transaction between Christ and the devil. Still, it is indisputable that the Early Fathers centralised the idea of Christ defeating Satan in their presentation of redemption. For example, Gregory the Great suggested that the devil claimed the right to have possession of the sinners, and the way to release the captives ‘was through the devil exceeding the limits of his authority, and thus being obliged to for-

¹³ ‘If then we were “bought with a price”, as also Paul asserts, we were doubtless bought from one whose servants we are, who also named what price he would pay for releasing those whom he held from his power. Now it was the devil that held us, to whose side we had been drawn away by our sins. He asked therefore, as our price the blood of Christ...’ Grensted, *A Short History of the Doctrine of Atonement* (London: Butler & Tanner, 1920), pp. 37-38.

¹⁴ ‘Elsewhere Origen definitely calls the Devil an “unjust tyrant”...’ Hastings Rashdall, *The Idea of Atonement in Christian Theology* (London: Macmillan, 1920), p. 260.

¹⁵ ‘And since the apostasy tyrannised over us unjustly, and, though we were by nature the property of the omnipotent God, alienated us contrary to nature, rendering us its own disciples, the Word of God, powerful in all things, and not defective with regard to his own justice, did righteously turn against that apostasy, and redeem from it His own property, not by violent means, as the (apostasy) had obtained the dominion over us at the beginning, when it insatiably snatched away what was not its own, but by means of persuasion, as became a God of counsel, who does not use violent means to obtain what he desires; so that neither should justice be infringed upon, nor the ancient handiwork of God go to destruction.’ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* (The AGES Digital Library Collections CD-Rom, AGES Software Albany, OR, Version 5.0: 1997), V. I. 1.

¹⁶ ‘And since the Apostasy (i.e. the rebellious spirit, Satan) unjustly held sway over us...’ Henry Bettenson, Ed., *Documents of the Christian Church* (2nd ed., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), p. 30.

¹⁷ ‘Since the **Lord thus has redeemed us** through his own blood, giving His soul for our souls, and His flesh for our flesh, and has also poured out the Spirit of the Father for the union and communion of God and man, imparting indeed God to men by means of the Spirit, and, on the other hand, attaching man to God by his own incarnation, and bestowing upon us at His coming immortality durably and truly, **by means of communion with God.**’ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, V. I. 1.

feit his rights'.¹⁸ Gregory used a bait-hook illustration: 'Christ's humanity is the bait, and his divinity the hook. The devil, like a great sea-monster, snaps at the bait—and then discovers, too late, the hook'.¹⁹ The point Gregory makes is that Christ was a sinless person who came in the likeness of a sinful person; when the devil attempted to 'claim the right' over sinless Jesus, he clearly overstepped his 'authority'.²⁰

Nonetheless, this illustration was probably unjustly caricatured by some later interpreters; it is likely that Gregory has been misunderstood and misinterpreted by a mindset that is far removed from the time and culture in which the Early Fathers lived. Perhaps this lack of clarity contributed to the paradigm shift in the atonement doctrine that took place in the eleventh century. Thanks to Anselm, the ransom motif was pushed into the background and was replaced with the justice motif.²¹ He presented the idea of redemption in terms that could be easily understood in his 'social milieu'.²² Pointing to this paradigm shift Provonsha suggests that Anselm 'put an end to earlier transactional thinking'.²³ It appears, nevertheless, that probably even without realising it, Anselm only shifted the 'traditional' idea of redemption from the point of 'the price being paid to the devil' to the point of 'the price being paid to God the Father';²⁴ thus, he continued the old 'transactional' tradition, only in a different form.

Later, in the time of the Reformation, while Luther adopted Anselm's ideas he also 'rediscovered' the motif of Christ's victory over the devil and death.²⁵ Aulen even suggests that 'Luther's teaching can only be rightly understood as a revival of

¹⁸ McGrath, *Christian Theology*, p. 415.

¹⁹ McGrath, *Christian Theology*, pp. 415-416.

²⁰ McGrath, *Christian Theology*, p. 415.

²¹ 'Anselm's theory did in the end displace in the imagination of the Church the "Patristic" view.' Sidney Cave, *The Doctrine of the Work of Christ* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1947), p. 132.

²² 'Anselm's satisfaction theory was the logical expression of such a social milieu.' Jack Provonsha, *You Can Go Home Again* (Washington D.C: Review and Herald, 1982), p. 28.

²³ 'Certainly he put an end to earlier transactional thinking.' Provonsha, *You Can Go Home Again*, p. 27.

²⁴ 'Is sin, therefore, anything else than not rendering to God what is his due?... This is **the debt** which both angels and men owe to God. No one who **pays** this, sins, but every one who does not **pay** it does sin... Moreover, as long as he does not **repay** what he has stolen, he remains in fault... In like manner, therefore, everyone who sins ought to render back to God the honour he has taken away, and this is the *satisfaction* which every sinner ought to make to God.' Anselm, *Cur Deus Homo* (London: Religious Tract Society, 190-?), pp. 65-66.

²⁵ 'Luther rediscovered the ransom motif in his struggle over the works of the Law and justification by faith.' Teselle, *The Cross as Ransom*, p. 160.

the old classic theme of Atonement as taught by Fathers'.²⁶ Nonetheless, the post-Luther Protestantism found Anselm's teaching more appealing.²⁷ By the beginning of the era of Modernism and the Enlightenment the victory motif was totally discarded for it was considered to be outdated and primitive.²⁸ The ideas of a personal devil and the presence of the spiritual forces of evil were rejected as 'premodern superstition'.²⁹

Nevertheless, Aulen resurrected the idea of the victorious Christ in 1931.³⁰ McGrath traces one of the reasons for the appearance of Aulen's 'Christus Victor' to the horrible realities of evil in WWI. Another reason, according to McGrath, is Freud's insight into spiritual imprisonment of people 'by the hidden forces within their subconscious', which demolished 'the Enlightenment view of the total rationality of human nature'.³¹ However, soon enough Aulen's book became the target of the critics. Gunton points out that there is a problem with Aulen's 'too triumphalist' presentation of the atonement which fails to give attention to the tragic elements of human history.³² Similarly, Fiddes recognises that there is a difficulty in establishing the relationship between one past event and our present experience—if 'we live in a century... of the Nazi Holocaust... what victory could have been objectively achieved by Christ on the cross?'³³ Likewise, McGrath justifiably points out that Aulen failed to give a rational explanation 'for the manner in which the forces of evil are defeated through the cross of Christ'.³⁴ The task of this essay is exactly that—to try to identify a meaningful explanation of Christ's victory over (d)evil, sin and death on the cross. Thus, the question that needs to be discussed is: what exactly happened on the cross between Christ and the forces of evil? The answer to this question needs to be thoroughly biblical if it is to be credible.

²⁶ 'I shall now maintain that Luther's teaching can only be rightly understood as a revival of the old classic theory of the Atonement as taught by the Fathers, but with a greater depth of treatment.' Aulen, *Christus Victor*, p. 118.

²⁷ 'Luther's teaching on the Atonement was not followed either by his contemporaries or by his successors... without hesitation they reverted to the Latin doctrine.' Aulen, *Christus Victor*, p. 139.

²⁸ McGrath, *Christian Theology*, p. 417.

²⁹ McGrath, *Christian Theology*, p. 417.

³⁰ McGrath, *Christian Theology*, p. 417.

³¹ McGrath, *Christian Theology*, p. 418.

³² Gunton views this as 'a common criticism of Aulen's book' Colin E. Gunton, *The Actuality of Atonement* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988), p. 58.

³³ Fiddes, *Past Event and Present Salvation*, p. 113.

³⁴ McGrath, *Christian Theology*, p. 418.

Chapter 3

THE BIBLICAL BASIS FOR THE RANSOM MOTIF

The Old Testament idea of ransom or redemption appears to be related primarily to God's liberating power—it often refers to the Exodus from Egypt³⁵ or to the return from Babylon.³⁶ God's people, throughout their history, were invited to look back to these divine redemptive acts. Furthermore, they remind God's people that the past redemption from slavery may be realised again as the present redemption. Nonetheless, Israel's redemptive hopes were not directed merely towards the fulfilments of the present, 'earthly' expectations. On the contrary, the Old Testament idea of ransom appears to be related to the eschatological future also—it refers to the liberation from death³⁷ and grave³⁸, and so, it points to the day of resurrection.³⁹ Therefore, clearly, the Old Testament idea of redemption encompasses more than just one dimension.

Moreover, in New Testament the idea of liberation or redemption is further expanded and deepened by Christ and the apostles. Christ himself made it plain that the need for redemption is global and universal, rather than limited merely to the people of Israel; the enslavement of humankind is not external, exercised by an earthly oppressive power, but it is rather a spiritual, internal oppression exercised by the

³⁵ 'I will free you from being slaves to them, and I will **redeem** you...' Exod. 6.6; '...and **redeemed** you from the land of slavery from the power of Pharaoh...' Deut. 7.8; '...whom you **redeemed** from Egypt' 2 Sam. 7.23-24...

³⁶ 'The next great crisis in the history of biblical Israel after the enslavement in Egypt was exile in Babylon. The message was proclaimed that the God who liberated Israel from Egypt would act again.' Clark Williamson, 'A Christian View of Redemption' in Tikva Frymer-Kensky *et al.* (eds.), *Christianity in Jewish Terms* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2000), p. 288.

³⁷ 'I will **ransom them from the power of grave**; I will **redeem them from death**...' Hos. 13.14.

³⁸ 'But God will **redeem my life from the grave**; he will surely take me to himself.' Ps. 49.15.

³⁹ 'I know that my **Redeemer** lives and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. **And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God.**' Job 19.25-26.

power of sin.⁴⁰ Christ presented the idea of ‘ransom’ or liberation in direct relation with the fact of him giving up his life.⁴¹ Thus, in the New Testament the Exodus and the return from Babylon are powerfully overshadowed by another event—the cross. Consequently, just as the Israelites were invited to look back to the divine liberating acts that took place in their history, so are Christians called to look back to the cross. Romans,⁴² Ephesians,⁴³ 1 Timothy,⁴⁴ Titus,⁴⁵ Hebrews,⁴⁶ 1 Peter⁴⁷ and Revelation⁴⁸ contain the imagery of ransom that is directly related to the idea of Christ’s death. Clearly, the idea of ransom has been recognised as a central New Testament idea by the Apostolic Church. Therefore, the idea of liberation appears to have considerable continuity between the Old and the New Testament; the redemption theme appears to be the ‘aorta’ that brings life from the very heart of the Bible.

Since the language of redemption or liberation is at the very heart of the Early Christian presentation of the work of Christ, the crucial question that needs to be answered is: from what (or from whom) does Christ liberate? Some of the post-apostolic Early Fathers appeared to have presented humans as the literal slaves of the devil through the ransom motif. However, none of the biblical ransom passages quoted above mention the devil at all. Neither Jesus, nor Paul, nor John, nor Peter related the idea of ransom to the devil. In fact, it seems that almost every ransom passage is related to the idea of sin rather than to the person of the devil. Jesus, Paul, John and Peter tell us that we need to be set free from sin, wickedness and the empty way of life.⁴⁹ In his metaphorical language Paul even personifies Sin in order to illustrate our desperate situation—‘for sin, seizing the opportunity... deceived me’.⁵⁰ Moreover, he

⁴⁰ ‘I tell you the truth, everyone **who sins is a slave to sin... so if the Son sets you free, you will be free** indeed.’ Jn. 8.34-36.

⁴¹ ‘... and to give his life as a **ransom** for many.’ Mt. 20.28 and Mk 10.45.

⁴² ‘...are justified freely by his grace through the **redemption** that came by Christ Jesus.’ Rom. 3.24.

⁴³ ‘...In him we have **redemption through his blood**, the forgiveness of sins...’ Eph. 1.7

⁴⁴ ‘...who gave himself as a **ransom** for all men’ 1 Tim. 2.6.

⁴⁵ ‘...who gave himself for us **to redeem us from all wickedness**.’ Tit. 2.14.

⁴⁶ ‘...he has died as a **ransom to set them free from the sins**...’ Heb. 9.15.

⁴⁷ ‘...**you were redeemed from the empty way of life** handed down to you from your forefathers... with the precious blood of Christ.’ 1 Pet. 1.18-19.

⁴⁸ ‘...to him who loves us and has **freed us from our sins** by his blood.’ Rev. 1.5 and ‘...with your blood you **purchased** men for God.’ Rev. 5.9.

⁴⁹ See the previous 9 footnotes.

⁵⁰ Rom. 7.11.

makes the identity of our ‘evil master’ clear—‘but I am unspiritual, sold as a **slave to sin**’,⁵¹ and ‘in the sinful nature a **slave to the law of sin**.’⁵² Here, Paul is harmonious with Jesus who said that ‘**everyone who sins is a slave to sin**’. Therefore, in the light of the New Testament it is very clear that humans are not slaves to the devil, but slaves to sin. Consequently, the theme of liberation cannot be fully appreciated apart from a consideration of the problem from which humans are to be liberated.

A. *The Problem of Sin*

Gunton questions the adequacy of human language to speak about the action of God independently of metaphors.⁵³ He points out that the man Jesus Christ is an earthly illustration of God and his way of acting in this world.⁵⁴ The redemptive activity of Jesus is the language we may use to speak about God, and therefore, ‘God is enabled to come to human speech as a *saving* God’.⁵⁵ Similarly, Provonsha points out that the Bible deals with ideas that are greater than language and, thus, he is concerned about the human ability to express an idea that is beyond words.⁵⁶ He reminds one of the fact that Jesus Christ was a living example of God translated into flesh—he was an earthly picture of the heavenly God.⁵⁷ Thus, he concludes that the parables and metaphors used by the writers of the Bible are necessary tools of expression. McGrath also sees difficulty in an attempt to express reality in mere principles, to explain all the truth in statements.⁵⁸

⁵¹ Rom. 7.14.

⁵² Rom. 7.25.

⁵³ Gunton points out that metaphors are the essential tools used to express our ideas about the world. It is the same with theological language. Gunton, *The Actuality of Atonement*, p. 47.

⁵⁴ ‘We learn, that is, that God is the kind of being who makes his presence felt in our world in the way in which the life and death of Jesus take shape.’ Gunton, *The Actuality of Atonement* p. 80.

⁵⁵ ‘If the victory of Jesus is the victory of God, then the language in which the story is told is one of the ways in which we are enabled to speak of God... The metaphor of victory is therefore one of the means by which God is enabled to come to human speech as a saving God. We are given a real but limited knowledge of the action and therefore of the being of God through the way in which Jesus does the conquering work of the Father.’ Gunton, *The Actuality of Atonement* p. 80

⁵⁶ Provonsha, *You Can Go Home Again*, p. 19.

⁵⁷ Provonsha gives the example from John 1,14. (‘and the Word became flesh’) He also points out that Jesus himself spoke in parables for his message was timeless and he did not want it locked into a single cultural and historical setting. Provonsha, *You Can Go Home Again*, p. 19.

⁵⁸ Alister E. McGrath, *The Enigma of the Cross* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1987), p. 83.

Therefore, it is not surprising that the post-biblical Christian authors also decided to use metaphorical language in order to express the biblical message. However, while the Bible clearly presents sin as the ‘evil master’, some of the Early Fathers presented the devil as the ‘evil master’. Thus, the proponents of this theory removed the ransom metaphor from its biblical frame. Nonetheless, as Provonsha suggests, the Early Fathers knew that they used metaphorical, rather than literal language.⁵⁹ They were probably aware of the fact that they created some new extra-biblical metaphors. This is not wrong in itself, for it is just a new way of expressing an old idea.

Even so, the problem inevitably arose when their future interpreters took them literally. Anselm found a problem with God’s morality while evaluating (perhaps in a too literal manner) the traditional ransom theory and he attempted to rectify this problem. Still, he too fell into the same trap of removing the ransom metaphor from its biblical frame. While some of the Early Fathers suggested that Christ paid the ransom to the devil, Anselm suggested that Christ ‘paid the price’ to God the Father.⁶⁰ If both views are incorrect the question remains: to whom did Christ pay the ransom through his death?

In Christ’s own words, the ransom that he came to pay is his life. John makes it clear that the price is not paid to God, but it was paid by God in order to purchase men for himself—‘with your blood you purchased men **for** God.’⁶¹ Therefore, Christ did not pay the ransom to the devil, nor did he ‘pay the price’ to God the Father. It was God himself (Father, Son and the Holy Spirit) that metaphorically paid the price (suffering on the cross).⁶² Accordingly, Green and Baker recognise that, for example, in the Old Testament God did not ransom Israel ‘by “paying someone off” but by delivering the people from slavery in Egypt.’⁶³

⁵⁹ ‘These great writers knew they were employing figures of speech, of course.’ Provonsha, *You Can Go Home Again*, p. 25.

⁶⁰ ‘Is sin, therefore, anything else than not rendering to God what is his due?... This is **the debt** which both angels and men owe to God. No one who **pays** this, sins, but every one who does not **pay** it does sin... Moreover, as long as he does not **repay** what he has stolen, he remains in fault... In like manner, therefore, everyone who sins ought to render back to God the honour he has taken away, and this is the *satisfaction* which every sinner ought to make to God.’ Anselm, *Cur Deus Homo*, pp. 65-66.

⁶¹ Rev. 5.9.

⁶² ‘God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself.’ 2 Cor. 5.19.

⁶³ B. J. Green & M. D. Baker, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter Varsity Press, 2000), p. 42.

Some of the Early Fathers and Anselm failed to remain within the biblical framework which presents the idea of ransom in the terms of Christ **metaphorically** paying the price of sin. Consequently, the result of traditional ransom theory was to exalt the devil and his power too high, nearly making him into a god,⁶⁴ while the result of Anselm's justice theory took Christ too far down, and nearly made him into a non-God. At this point an important question arises: in what way exactly is humankind enslaved to sin?

As Coleridge points out, 'a will cannot be *free* to choose evil – for in the very act it forfeits its freedom, and so becomes a corrupt nature, self-enslaved.'⁶⁵ Similarly, Ovey states that 'sin is profoundly captivating' and causes humans to 'become futile in thought.'⁶⁶ Furthermore, he asserts that 'Adam's sin is engulfing in its effects, including the decision-making faculties'.⁶⁷ In addition to this, Paul appears to think of the problem of sin in terms of the inheritance principle—sin comes through Adam upon his children or upon entire humankind,⁶⁸ and thus through a decision of one man the entire humankind is 'sold as a slave to sin.'⁶⁹

Genesis 3 portrays a picture of man's hesitation to return to God after falling into sin—man is in a state of being lost; he is in a condition of 'nakedness', in a condition of 'hiding from God'.⁷⁰ It seems that ever since humankind experienced evil it somehow became incapable of freely communing with God; there is some sort of barrier in this relationship on man's side. Accordingly, Volf points out that sin is 'the inability to turn to God on one's own, indeed even to properly recognise one's sin *as* sin

⁶⁴ 'The image of ransom, when it is taken literally, suggests too much of an equality between God and the devil.' Teselle, *The Cross as Ransom*, p. 149.

⁶⁵ See Gunton, p. 84.

⁶⁶ Michael Ovey, 'The Cross, Creation and the Human Predicament' in David Peterson (ed.), *Where Wrath and Mercy Meet* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2002), p. 118.

⁶⁷ Ovey, 'The Cross, Creation and the Human Predicament', p. 116.

⁶⁸ In Romans 5.12-20 Paul expresses this in terms of Adam passing on the unfortunate 'inheritance' of sin and death unto all of his children or unto the every member of humankind. Nonetheless, while Adam passes on the 'negative inheritance' of sin and death, Christ as the new Father of humankind passes on the 'positive inheritance' of righteousness and life unto all those who are his children. 'For if, by the trespass of the one man death reigned... gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ' Rom. 5.17.

⁶⁹ Rom. 7.14.

⁷⁰ 'I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid' Gen. 3.10.

and therefore oneself as a sinner'.⁷¹ It appears that sin made so deep an impact on the human psycho-dynamics (or spiritual dynamics) that it affected the mind on all levels, including the subconscious and perhaps even more than that. Thus, the problem of sin has made so deep a wound in humanity, that humankind is somehow incapable of fully understanding it and dealing with it. Likewise, Ovey asserts that 'sin means we desperately need changing, but part of its nature means we cannot change ourselves'.⁷² Consequently, Volf concludes that the initiative must be taken from the other side if the relationship is to be restored.⁷³ God needs to come to man and liberate him from his self-imprisonment.

According to Baggott, true redemption is 'the process by which man is won to realisation of a mislaid and forgotten sonship'; it is 'an essential spiritual experience'.⁷⁴ Likewise, Sabourin claims that the essential meaning of redemption is 'the return to God'.⁷⁵ The essence of the Old Testament idea of redemption is presented in similar terms—God makes the prodigal people his own again, they belong to him again—'The one nation on earth whose God went out to **redeem** a people **for himself**... whom you **redeemed** from Egypt... you made your people Israel **your very own**...'⁷⁶

Accordingly, the Old Testament idea of redemption implies liberation from the oppression of the false gods of the heathen nations by a liberator. Similarly, Fiddes points out that Paul exposed sin as idolatry, or mislead worship⁷⁷—'They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator' (Rom. 1.25). While in the Old Testament God liberated his people from the false gods of Egypt and Babylon, Paul in the New Testament expands the problem of idolatry into a universal sinfulness and obsession with the created things that replaced

⁷¹ Miroslav Volf, 'The Lamb of God and the Sin of the World' in Tikva Frymer-Kensky *et al.* (eds.), *Christianity in Jewish Terms* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2000), p. 315.

⁷² Ovey, 'The Cross, Creation and the Human Predicament', p. 121.

⁷³ Volf, 'The Lamb of God and the Sin of the World', p. 315.

⁷⁴ L. J. Baggott, *A New Approach to Colossians* (London: A.R. Mowbray & Co Limited, 1961), p. 42.

⁷⁵ Stanislav Lyonnet & Leopold Sabourin, *Sin, Redemption, and Sacrifice: a Biblical and Patristic Study* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1970), p. 293.

⁷⁶ 1 Chron. 17.21-22.

⁷⁷ Fiddes, *Past Event and Present Salvation*, p. 115.

the worship of the true God.⁷⁸ Ovey recognises the problem of attachment to one's idol which echoes the idea of addiction.⁷⁹ The idea of addiction seems to be about one's desire to voluntarily give oneself into enslavement; in other words, it is the preference of enslavement rather than freedom. Accordingly, McCormick points to the psychodynamics of 'denial, projection and delusion' that one uses in order to justify the irrationality of 'an unreal world' one creates by replacing God with an idol.⁸⁰ Thus, Ovey concludes, 'it is little wonder that sin is associated... with uncompromising language of helplessness; it enslaves... it has dominion'.⁸¹ Likewise, McCormick suggests that sin inevitably leads to perdition—'Sin, like addiction, seems to involve a progressive enslavement to our compulsion'.⁸²

It would appear that there is an inbuilt function in humans that passionately seeks to relate to the divine. Since sin has made God inaccessible (at least from human perspective), humans cravingly seek to find a replacement, a surrogate god in order to fulfil this essential need. Thus, humankind 'exchanged the truth of God for a lie' and worshiped 'created things rather than the Creator'. Accordingly, redemption from sin has to involve a change of orientation from creation (from self) to the Creator. One can achieve true freedom only in a relationship with God. While the effect of true freedom is eternal life, the consequence of the enslavement to sin is death, according to the biblical testimony. Thus, sin generates a fatal problem for humanity.

⁷⁸ See Romans chapter 1.

⁷⁹ 'Verse 20 comments on the irrational blindness of the idolater... Part of the difficulty, no doubt, is the attachment one feels to one's idol. In this respect there is an echo in some analyses of addiction...' Ovey, 'The Cross, Creation and the Human Predicament', p. 118.

⁸⁰ 'Denial, projection and delusion constitute the unholy trinity of addiction. In order to justify irrational thought and behaviour it is necessary to block out painful information, create and maintain an unreal world, and affix blame for all bad news on any source except the self or the source of the addiction.' P. McCormick, *Sin as Addiction* (New York: Paulist Press, 1989), p. 155.

⁸¹ Ovey, 'The Cross, Creation and the Human Predicament', p. 119.

⁸² McCormick, *Sin as Addiction*, p. 161.

B. *The Problem of Death*

As Fiddes points out, the conflict between good and evil is not an eternal one—‘in the Christian perspective there is no absolute “dualism” of two equally balanced powers’.⁸³ Thus, in the biblical perspective there is a clear point in history when sin and evil will vanish forever, and then ‘there will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away’.⁸⁴ Since it is not the devil who is the evil master, but it is sin who is the evil master, even the devil who is a murderer and a liar⁸⁵ sins and is therefore a slave to sin, just as humans are. And the concluding pages of the Bible make it clear that the devil is decisively and irrevocably unwilling to be set free;⁸⁶ his followers, many angels, and many humans are also unwilling to be set free, and all these, together with the devil, will receive ‘the wages of sin (which) is death’.⁸⁷

The question is whether death is the ‘wages of God’ as Ovey suggests⁸⁸ or death is the ‘wages of sin’ as Swain proposes.⁸⁹ In other words, one wonders whether God’s words spoken to Adam ‘you will surely die’ mean ‘I will surely kill you’ or ‘I will surely let you die.’ In the grammatical structure of Rom. 6.23 God and sin are presented as two equal subjects⁹⁰ and again, in this verse, Sin is probably personified by Paul. Each subject or each ‘person’ holds an object; while God has life, Sin has death. While Sin is the evil master who exploits its servants unto death, Christ is the good Master (Lord) who gives life. Thus, if Christ becomes our master (Lord) ‘sin

⁸³ Fiddes, *Past Event and Present Salvation*, p. 114.

⁸⁴ Rev. 21.4.

⁸⁵ ‘You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father’s desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.’ Jn. 8.44.

⁸⁶ See Rev. 20.7-15.

⁸⁷ Rom. 6.23.

⁸⁸ ‘Penalty, however, fits the terms of Genesis 2:17 and the subsequent judgement section of Genesis 3 like a glove. It is vital to grasp the significance of seeing Genesis 2:17 as involving penalty that includes, but goes beyond, physical death.’ Ovey, ‘The Cross, Creation and the Human Predicament’, p. 116.

⁸⁹ ‘For Paul, death is the inevitable result of man’s sinful separation from God.’ William Swain, *For Our Sins’ (The Image of the Sacrifice in the Thought of the Apostle Paul)* (OCLC First Search: ATLA Religion, Interpretation 17.2 [Apr 1963]), p. 134.

⁹⁰ ‘The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life.’ Rom. 6.23.

shall not be your master, because you are under grace'.⁹¹ Consequently, since Christ also liberated us from death through his resurrection, life comes to every member of humankind—'For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive... who belong to him'.⁹² The difference between 'the first Adam' and 'the last Adam'⁹³ is the following: all belong to the first Adam but not by choice, and therefore all have to die; on the other hand, only those who chose to enter into a relationship with Christ belong to Christ, and therefore, only those who choose Christ will live forever. Thus, while death is inevitability, the eternal life is a matter of choice.

It appears that, rather than in terms of punishment, the idea of death should be understood in the light of a creaturely dependency principle⁹⁴—life is unsustainable if a creature is separated from the Creator. Considering that only God is immortal⁹⁵ and he is the only one who has life in himself, everything that is not God does not have life in itself but is radically dependant upon the **external** gift of life flowing from God. This is obvious if one looks at the Tree of Life in the Garden of Eden—humans were not to have life of their own even in their sinless state, but their life depended on the continual eating of the fruit of the Tree of Life.

Perhaps the whole idea of the Tree of Life in the Garden of Eden actually may have been a visible illustration of the principle of creaturely dependence upon their Creator. In other words, the Tree of Life may have been merely an illustration point-

⁹¹ Rom. 6.14.

⁹² 1 Cor. 15.22-23.

⁹³ "'The first man Adam became a living being"; the last Adam, a life-giving spirit.' 1 Cor. 15.45.

⁹⁴ This 'dependency' principle which is closely related to a previously mentioned 'gift' principle appears to arise out of the first premises of a biblical world—this view assumes that everything that is not God is created, and therefore, it radically depends on God for its origin, form, function and existence. In other words, a creature's existence is fully dependant on the Creator's continual sustaining work; **the Creator is also the Sustainer**. Both the theme of God's creating work (**God gives life**) and the theme of God's continual sustaining work (**God sustains life**) can be found throughout the biblical report, and thus, it provides a theological framework within which the logic of the whole story proceeds. This theme is detected in many verses: 'In the beginning God created...' Gen. 1.1; '**If... he withdrew his spirit and breath, all mankind would perish together...**' Job 34.14-15; 'Through him all things were made...' Jn 1.1-3; '**For in him we live and move and have our being.**' Acts 17.28; 'All things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and **in him all things hold together.**' Col. 1.16-17; '...and through whom he made the universe. The Son is... **sustaining all things by his powerful word.**' Heb. 1.1-3; 'for you created all things, and **by your will they were created and have their being.**' Rev. 4.11. Thus, the idea of inherent immortality of the soul appears to be unsustainable from the biblical point of view. Consequently, this study assumes a non-immortality view where all creaturely existence is seen as contingent rather than self-sustained..

⁹⁵ '...God, the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords, **who alone is immortal...**' 1 Tim. 6.16.

ing to the reality—Christ or God. On the other hand, the Tree of the knowledge of good and evil could probably be called the ‘Tree of free choice’, where humankind was given the choice to separate from God and taste the fruit of independence. Accordingly, rather than pointing to a flaw in God’s character, the Tree of the knowledge of good and evil reveals the principle of God respecting the creatures’ freedom of choice. Therefore, the presence of the Tree of Life and the Tree of the knowledge of good and evil appear to signify the two important principles upon which God operates—the principle of creaturely dependency and the principle of Creator’s respect of the free choice of his creatures. These both principles were embodied in the person of Christ where the illustrations given by the two peculiar trees in the Garden of Eden became revealed and demonstrated as reality.

When humankind separated itself from God it was simultaneously separated from the Tree of Life, and consequently, its inevitable fate was death that was to happen sooner or later. Accordingly, considering the reasoning given above, it appears that the ‘second death’⁹⁶ is the moment when God finally grants the sinners their own choice of eating and fully digesting the fruit of the Tree of the knowledge of good and evil (separation-independence from God), by completely letting them go and absolutely breaking the relationship through ceasing to sustain them.⁹⁷ This is the irrevocable withdrawal of God and there is no chance of returning to existence after the second death.

Therefore, ultimately, death does not appear to be a punishment inflicted by God—it is not the ‘wages of God’ but rather the ‘wages of sin’ as Paul implies. Similarly to Paul, the Apostle James does not present death as God’s agent but as sin’s agent; he presents death as a natural consequence of sin—‘sin, when it is full-grown,

⁹⁶ See Revelation 20.

⁹⁷ The Bible appears to present a theme of God respecting fully the choice of humans- this is expressed often through the invitation, ‘choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve’. Josh. 24.15; ‘I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life...’ Deut. 30.19. This theme is even clearer in the life of Christ, if one observes his encounters with people. He also expresses the respect for free choice by using invitation, ‘come to me’: See Jn 5.40 and 7.37. If the principle of the respect of free choice is combined with the principle of creaturely dependency, then by allowing the sinners choice of separating from God he has to let them die, unless he is to act contrary to his own character of love. Thus, the final second death appears to be ultimately human personal choice.

gives birth to death'.⁹⁸ Moreover, death is presented in the Bible as something God liberates from; the Old Testament uses the imagery of redemption when speaking of the problem of death—'I will **ransom them from the power of grave**; I will **redeem them from death**...'⁹⁹

Accordingly, in the New Testament Paul does not present death as God's agent executing the divine will against the sinners; on the contrary, he presents death as God's enemy—'For he (Christ) must reign until he has put everything under his feet. **The last enemy to be destroyed is death**';¹⁰⁰ 'Death has been swallowed up in victory'.¹⁰¹ While the Old Testament uses the imagery of redemption when speaking about the problem of death, Paul uses the imagery of victory when speaking of solving the death problem. Thus, the motifs of liberation and victory appear to be interwoven and inseparable. Christ redeems from sin and death by gaining the victory over sin and death. Therefore, it is not God but it is sin that holds the power of death over humankind.

Furthermore, at times Paul considers death to be a present or even a past experience rather than a future experience—'when you were dead in your sins...';¹⁰² 'for sin, seizing the opportunity... deceived me, and... put me to death'.¹⁰³ Similarly Christ presents death not only as a future experience but also as a present experience—'Follow me, and let the dead bury their own dead'.¹⁰⁴ Therefore, it appears that the biblical idea of death has more than one dimension; it is not just a physical or biological phenomenon. Accordingly, Ovey points out that 'if the "death" of Gen. 2.17 is only a physical death, then it is obvious that Jesus has not yet delivered believers from it' since humans still die.¹⁰⁵ Similarly, Schweiker claims that in 'the strictly biblical

⁹⁸ Js 1.15.

⁹⁹ Hos. 13.14; also 'But God will **redeem my life from the grave**; he will surely take me to himself.' Ps. 49.15; 'I know that my **Redeemer** lives and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. **And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God.**' Job 19.25-26.

¹⁰⁰ 1 Cor. 15.25-26.

¹⁰¹ 1 Cor. 15.54.

¹⁰² Col. 2.13

¹⁰³ Rom. 7.11.

¹⁰⁴ Mt. 8.22.

¹⁰⁵ Ovey, 'The Cross, Creation and the Human Predicament', p. 112.

account of “soul”, the problem of death is really about spiritual death’.¹⁰⁶ While functioning perfectly on a biological level a living person can at the same time be spiritually dead¹⁰⁷—dead in sin.¹⁰⁸ Just as Paul realises that he is ‘**unspiritual**, sold as a slave to sin’,¹⁰⁹ so are spiritually dead (or unspiritual) all the human beings who are slaves to sin.

In this context one may take seriously the words ‘for when you eat of it you will surely die’¹¹⁰ without siding with the serpent who presented God as liar by saying ‘you will not surely die’,¹¹¹ since Adam did not instantly die physically but rather many years later.¹¹² Here the ‘serpent’ appears to deceive humankind and simultaneously make God a liar by presenting the separation from God as having no negative effect upon life. However, while his biological functions kept on working for many years after, even so, when Adam tasted of the fruit of evil his spiritual death appears to have happened instantly—he became ‘unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin’. Consequently, Ovey points out that the problem was not merely physical death, but also the ‘exclusion from the garden’.¹¹³ Similarly, Healy perceives that the essence of the fall problem was that ‘God became exiled from his royal seat within Adam’, and simultaneously ‘Adam was exiled from Eden’.¹¹⁴ Therefore, it appears that rather than being a mere metaphor or an abstract, spiritual death is a reality and a concrete experience for humankind—broken relationship with God is the real problem; physical death is its manifestation.

¹⁰⁶ William Schweiker, ‘The Image of God in Christian Faith: Vocation, Dignity, and Redemption’ in Tikva Frymer-Kensky *et al.* (eds.), *Christianity in Jewish Terms* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2000), p. 353.

¹⁰⁷ ‘One can be alive physically but spiritually dead.’ Schweiker, ‘The Image of God in Christian Faith: Vocation, Dignity, and Redemption’, p. 353.

¹⁰⁸ ‘In Ephesians... the state of those who are not Christians is put in terms of those who are ‘dead’ (2:1), and this is a death that is not physical, but spiritual, dead in sins’. Ovey, ‘The Cross, Creation and the Human Predicament’, p.114.

¹⁰⁹ Rom. 7.14.

¹¹⁰ Gen. 2.17.

¹¹¹ Gen. 3.4.

¹¹² ‘After Seth was born, Adam lived 800 years and had other sons and daughters. Altogether, Adam lived 930 years, and then he died.’ Gen. 5.4-5.

¹¹³ ‘The reader is being invited to look deeper at the notion of dying to see if ore than the physical is at stake. Contextually, it must be noted that the judgement in chapter 3 issues not just in physical death, but exclusion from the Garden.’ Ovey, ‘The Cross, Creation and the Human Predicament’, p. 113.

¹¹⁴ Kim Coleman Haley, ‘Christ the Gardener: Labors of Redemption’, *Parabola*: Spring 2001, vol. 26, p. 74.

Sin is the root of the problem and death is the fruit of the problem. In the natural world, while the separation from the vine is instant, a branch does not dry instantly but keeps on living for a while. Similarly, just as separation of humankind from God was instant, the physical deterioration was left to its natural course. Some questions may be posed at this time: Why is there a gradual biological deterioration of humankind rather than an instant oblivion? Why is the remainder of the physical bodily activity limited to a certain period of time? Is this an outworking of God's justice, or perhaps the outworking of his mercy?

While one may rightly say that it is God's justice that does not allow sin to live forever, perhaps it is contrary to the mercy of God to allow the sufferings in this world to continue into eternity. Furthermore, if according to the creaturely dependency principle a separation from the Sustainer should result in an instant obliteration, then it appears that God has willingly decided to keep on temporarily sustaining humankind for a reason. The Apostle Peter appears to explain it—'The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise... he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance'.¹¹⁵ Thus, it appears that the main reason for God's temporary sustaining of the sinful humankind is found in God's redemptive purposes. Apparently, God did not want to let humans die instantly but rather he gave them a limited time in which they have a second chance to learn from their mistake and return to God—Paul here agrees with Peter by saying that, 'he (God) determined the times set for them... so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out and find him'.¹¹⁶ However, a discussion of this issue is out of the scope of this study.

Nonetheless, it is an obvious theme in the biblical report that God is unchangeably determined that sin would not live forever; God will not sustain forever those who separated themselves from him—Adam and Eve were excluded from the Garden, and the access to the Tree of Life was denied to them; thus, the termination of sin and sufferings for a person is just a matter of time.

¹¹⁵ 2 Pet. 3.9.

¹¹⁶ Acts 17.26-27.

Chapter 4

THE RANSOM MOTIF AND HUMAN LIBERATION

Since, according to the biblical teaching, humankind is clearly enslaved to sin and consequently to death, there is a need for liberation from sin and death. Williamson points out that ‘the root meaning of the concept of redemption is *buying back*’.¹¹⁷ Accordingly, the Apostle Peter claims that we have been bought back ‘from the empty way of life... with the precious blood of Christ’.¹¹⁸ Therefore, this kind of redemption is concerned with a *present* liberation from an enslaving lifestyle (‘empty way of life’) that is based on some misconceptions about God and self. It is ‘the delivering of men’s minds from every form of spiritual bondage’.¹¹⁹ Paul agrees with Peter by stating that ‘we were buried with him (Christ) through baptism into death in order that... we too may live a new life’.¹²⁰

Nonetheless, for Paul redemption is not only the present liberation from ‘wickedness’ in order that we may ‘do what is good’,¹²¹ but he sees it fully realised only in the *future*—‘The whole creation has been groaning... we... groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the **redemption** of our bodies.’¹²² The present redemption is only a foretaste, a first-fruit, a *deposit* of the future redemption—‘Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who

¹¹⁷ Clark Williamson, ‘A Christian View of Redemption’ in Tikva Frymer-Kensky *et al.* (eds.), *Christianity in Jewish Terms* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2000), p. 288

¹¹⁸ ‘...you were **redeemed from the empty way of life...with the precious blood of Christ**, a lamb without blemish or defect’ 1 Pet. 1.18-19.

¹¹⁹ A. J. Tait, ‘The Atonement in the Synoptic Gospels’ in L.W. Grensted, *The Atonement in History and in Life* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1936), p. 131.

¹²⁰ Rom. 6.4.

¹²¹ ‘Who gave himself for us **to redeem us from all wickedness** and **to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.**’ Tit. 2.14.

¹²² Rom. 8.22-23.

is a **deposit** guaranteeing our inheritance until the **redemption** of those who are God's possession'.¹²³ Thus, for Paul, the present experience is just a partial, incomplete experience since the consequences of sin are still present in human bodies that await restoration to the fullness of the glory that will be realised only in the eschatological future. Furthermore, Paul does not apply this complete redemption to humans only but to all nature or creation—'the creation itself will be **liberated** from its bondage to decay'.¹²⁴ The problem of 'decay' or the problem of death appears to be the final problem God will deal with. Death is 'the last enemy' to be defeated. Before finally removing the curse of death God needs to deal with the problem of sin. Only after the cause of the problem (sin) is removed it makes sense to remove the consequences (death), too.

Additionally, Paul says that 'Christ **redeemed** us from the curse of the **law**'.¹²⁵ Likewise, he says that 'God sent his Son... to **redeem** those under **law**, that we may receive the full rights of sons'.¹²⁶ Similarly, the epistle to Hebrews recognises that Christ 'died as a **ransom** to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant'.¹²⁷ Accordingly, there appear to be legislative dynamics in redemption. Apparently, humans are in a need to be set free from the condemning power of the law. Therefore, it appears that the New Testament presents the idea of the 'three-dimensional' redemption that is related to the *past* liberation from the condemnation of the law, the *present* liberation from the enslaving power of sin and the *future* liberation from the effect and consequences of sin—'body of death'.¹²⁸ The Apostle Paul sums up the three-dimensional obstacle facing humankind by saying that 'the sting of **death** is **sin**, and the power of sin is the **law**'.¹²⁹ Accordingly, redemption needs to deal with all of the three aspects of the human problem; the task of the Redeemer is to

¹²³ Eph. 1.13-14.

¹²⁴ Rom. 8.21.

¹²⁵ Gal. 3.10-13.

¹²⁶ Gal. 4.4.

¹²⁷ Heb. 9.15.

¹²⁸ 'What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!' Rom. 7.24-25.

¹²⁹ 1 Cor. 15.56.

liberate humankind from the curse or condemnation of the law, from sin and from death.

The idea of Christ's liberation of the 'slaves' implies also the defeat of an oppressing, enslaving power. Christ liberates from sin and death by gaining victory over sin and death. In other words, the biblical theme of redemption appears to be inevitably interwoven with the imagery of victory. Thus, Gunton rightly points out that, 'there is a victory, won, being won and to be won'.¹³⁰ While Christ's victory over sin, death and condemnation are inseparable, these will be discussed in separate sections for the sake of clarity.

A. Liberation and Enslavement to Sin

McGrath points out that sin may be seen as a 'power which holds us captive, and... Christ is thus seen as the liberator.'¹³¹ Accordingly, Christ pointed out that 'everyone who sins is a slave to sin' and only 'if the Son sets you free you will be free indeed'.¹³² Ever since humankind experienced evil, as mentioned previously, it became unwilling to return to God and incapable of freely communing with him. Therefore, God assimilated himself with humankind through the incarnation and in this way the man-God relationship was restored; not by man coming back to God but by God coming to man, 'for the Son of man came to seek and save what was lost'.¹³³

Christ liberates humans by revealing the truth, 'you shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free.'¹³⁴ However, this is not only a theoretical knowledge of truth—since Christ said that he is the truth,¹³⁵ the truth is revealed through a person (Christ is the 'radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being')¹³⁶ rather than merely through statements. Moreover, the Hebrew concept of 'knowing'

¹³⁰ Gunton, *The Actuality of Atonement*, p. 82.

¹³¹ McGrath, *Christian Theology*, p. 446.

¹³² Jn 8.34-36.

¹³³ Lk. 19.10.

¹³⁴ Jn 8.32.

¹³⁵ See Jn 14.6.

¹³⁶ Heb. 1.3.

implies an intimate relationship rather than theoretical knowledge.¹³⁷ Similarly, as Lee points out, while the Greeks acquired the knowledge of the ultimate reality by distancing from the object of knowledge, John's Gospel presents knowledge of God in opposite terms—it is acquired by relating to God (Christ).¹³⁸

Furthermore, John suggests that Christ can liberate from sin only because he has first overcome it as a man—'I have overcome the world'.¹³⁹ Thus, it appears that the redemption is not accomplished merely through the element of the divine but it has to also involve the element of the human—this is, of course, accomplished through the incarnation. In Johannine writings the theme of 'overcoming'¹⁴⁰ is related to the theme of being 'born of the Spirit'¹⁴¹ or 'born of God'—those who are 'born of God' have overcome sin.¹⁴² Therefore, according to John, the present liberation from the enslaving power of sin is never possible apart from union with God.

Similarly, in Pauline writings the liberation from the oppressive power of sin is never within the capacities of a human being. Paul speaks of redemption in terms of a change of master—we do not belong to sin (the evil master) anymore, 'for sin shall not be your master',¹⁴³ but we belong to our new master, Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν;¹⁴⁴ 'You have been set free from sin and become slaves to righteousness'.¹⁴⁵ Thus, again, it is only through union with Christ that humans can be free from oppression of sin.

While John employs the illustration of the new birth in order to explain how humans are liberated from the enslavement of sin, Paul tends to use the illustration of

¹³⁷ For instance, Adam knew (עָדָה) Eve and she became pregnant. See Gen. 4.1.

¹³⁸ Lee recognises that knowledge in John 'is never a purely intellectual process', but it includes the 'exercise of all the faculties.' While the Greeks acquired knowledge of the ultimate reality by distancing from the object of knowledge, John's Gospel presents knowledge of God as a love-response to God. For more information see Edwin Kenneth Lee, *The Religious Thought of St. John* (London: S.P.K.C., 1950), pp. 223-223.

¹³⁹ Jn 16.33.

¹⁴⁰ The idea of overcoming is expressed in numerous texts in Johannine writings: 1 Jn 2.13-14; 4.4; 5.4-5; Rev. 2.7; 2.11; 2.17; 2.26; 3.5; 3.12; 3.21; 17.4; 21.7.

¹⁴¹ 'I tell you the truth, no-one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit.' Jn 3.5.

¹⁴² 'No-one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God's seed remains in him; he cannot go on sinning, because he has been born of God.' 1 Jn 3.9.

¹⁴³ Rom. 6.14.

¹⁴⁴ Rom. 1.4.

¹⁴⁵ Rom. 6.18.

adoption for the same purpose—‘For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave... but you received the Spirit of adoption’.¹⁴⁶ Thus, both John and Paul use the illustration of ‘becoming a child of God’ in order to explain the dynamics of redemption. Accordingly, both John and Paul claim that there is nothing within the capacities of humans to qualify them for God’s kingdom—humans are fully dependent upon the gift from above, the gift from God, the gift of the Holy Spirit, the gift of righteousness that comes to humans through Christ.

According to the dependency principle¹⁴⁷ humankind can have life only through God, only through Christ. It appears that one cannot just have God without everything that God is and stands for. In other words, God’s ontological qualities (such as life principle) and his character do not come separately but as a whole. Thus, God expects from the creatures to accept him holistically, to be fully committed to him. God wills to share with his creatures not only the life principle but the love principle (his character) also. God does not redeem only from death but primarily from sin, and these two aspects are inseparable. The eternal life is not only about the quantity and length of life, but it is equally about the quality of that life. Thus, a person needs to become one with God not only in terms of life, but also in terms of character. Accordingly, the dynamics of redemption from sin could be summed up in the following words: by connecting to humankind God incarnate reconnects humanity to himself and there is a new possibility for renewed spiritual life for all those who become one with Christ—this may be called a relational aspect of redemption.

Nonetheless, Paul qualifies the liberation from sin as ‘incomplete’ since we have been given only a deposit of the Spirit, the taste or the firstfruit¹⁴⁸ of the Spirit who is a guarantee of our inheritance in the future glory—‘he anointed us, set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit guaranteeing what is

¹⁴⁶ Rom. 8.14.

¹⁴⁷ Considering the two important principles upon which God operates (the principle of creaturely dependency and the principle of Creator’s respect of the free choice of his creatures) that are presented through the two peculiar trees in the Garden of Eden one understands why the relational aspect of redemption is necessary: one cannot have life apart from God and one needs to make a personal free-will choice and turn to God in order to have life.

¹⁴⁸ ‘Not only so, but we ourselves, who have **the firstfruits of the Spirit**, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.’ Rom. 8.23.

to come.¹⁴⁹ Although he has been liberated from the enslaving power of sin, the consequences of sin are still felt in his body psychologically and physiologically. Thus, Paul recognises and confesses that he still needs to be rescued from ‘this body of death’.¹⁵⁰

B. Liberation and ‘the Body of Death’

Since Christ became a man it was no longer the Tree of Life that gives life to humankind, but it is Christ himself that has this function—‘I am the resurrection and the life’;¹⁵¹ ‘...come to me to have life’;¹⁵² ‘I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread he will live forever. This bread is my flesh which I will give for the life of the world.’¹⁵³ Metaphorically speaking, Christ brought back onto the earth ‘the fruit of the Tree of Life’ from the Paradise in his own body in order that humankind may ‘eat’ of it again and live. Through the incarnation humankind is reconnected to God and there is a new possibility of eternal life. In Christ the human and the divine were reunited. This is how humankind benefits from Christ’s work.

However, through the assimilation or identification with humankind Christ not only gave benefits to humanity but he also inevitably took upon himself all the consequences of sin of this world. Stott understands the idea of ‘carrying the sins of the world’ in terms of Christ bearing human sins merely in a very short point in time—while he was dying on the cross.¹⁵⁴ However, since Christ was not a sinner himself,¹⁵⁵ rather than trying to explain how exactly the sins of the world have been

¹⁴⁹ 2 Cor. 1.22. See also: ‘Having believed, you were marked in him with **a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit** guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession.’ Eph. 1.13-14; ‘And do not grieve **the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.**’ Eph. 4.30.

¹⁵⁰ Rom. 7.24.

¹⁵¹ Jn. 11.25.

¹⁵² Jn. 5.40.

¹⁵³ Jn. 6.51.

¹⁵⁴ Stott presents very clearly the idea that human sins were punished on the cross and this was how God demonstrated his justice—‘...their punishment on the cross (by which God demonstrated his justice).’ John R.W. Stott, *The Message of Romans* (Leicester: IVP, 1994), p. 116.

¹⁵⁵ ‘But you know that he appeared so that he might take away our sins. **And in him is no sin.**’ 1 Jn 3.5.

‘transferred’ from the sinners to Christ on the cross, perhaps the idea of ‘carrying the sins’ should be rather understood in terms of Christ doing away with sin.¹⁵⁶ This would be in harmony with the previous section where it was noted that Christ gained a victory over sin.

Furthermore, the idea of Christ carrying the sins of the world should perhaps be understood in terms of Christ taking upon himself all the consequences of the sin of humankind in general, which is suffering and death. In this case, Christ did not bear sins only while hanging on the cross, but rather he did it from his very birth unto the moment of his death. In other words, it appears that Christ ‘carried our sins’ in his body, rather than merely ‘carrying our sins’ on the cross.

Consequently, humans are not saved from death merely by Christ’s death, but by Christ himself; humans are not redeemed merely by the event (Christ’s death) but by the person (Christ). Christ has done for humans that which they were incapable of doing themselves—as a human he brought humanity back into the direct presence of God (in his own body), and he brought it back into perfect union with God by living a sinless life. Consequently, since he was sinless death could not hold him¹⁵⁷ (death is the wages only of those who sin); in other words, when he was murdered¹⁵⁸ he rightly came back to life. Accordingly, Christ does not appear to liberate humans from death merely through his death, but rather through his resurrection and he is the firstfruits¹⁵⁹ of humanity that is victorious over death.

Thus, it appears that rather than being an end of the means (the incarnation being the means) Christ’s death was the inevitable consequence of the incarnation, of his decision to become one with humans and thus participate in all the consequences of

¹⁵⁶ When John speaks of Jesus ‘taking away’ the sin of the world (‘Look, the Lamb of God who **takes away** the sin of the world.’ Jn 1.29), and the author of the epistle to Hebrews speaks of Jesus ‘doing away’¹⁵⁶ with sin (‘But now he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to **do away** with sin by the sacrifice of himself.’ Heb. 9.26), this does not necessarily imply that Jesus **carried**, or **kept** the sin or the guilt upon himself on the cross—this appears to imply only that somehow **sin has been done away with**.

¹⁵⁷ ‘... it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him.’ Acts 2.24.

¹⁵⁸ ‘The Jews who killed the Lord Jesus...’ 1 Thes. 2.14-15. Christ’s death was not a suicide but it was a murder. While on the one hand the **murder of Christ was the act of wicked men**, on the other hand **the resurrection of Christ was the act of God**—‘...and you, with the help of **wicked men put him to death** by nailing him to the cross. **But God raised him from the dead.**’ Acts 2.23-24.

¹⁵⁹ ‘But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the **firstfruits** of those who have fallen asleep.’ 1 Cor. 15.20.

human sin: suffering and death. The incarnation is not merely a means to an end in terms of dying; Christ did not live merely in order to die; it is not merely his death but his incarnation and resurrection that redeem us; Christ redeems humanity from death by reconnecting it to God in his own body by his whole being and his whole life.

C. Liberation and the Condemnation of the Law

The presence of the two peculiar trees in the Garden of Eden implies the existence of certain principles upon which God's creation operates. Sin, as a breach of this principles caused humankind to loose the 'right' to the Tree of Life and the 'right' to be in God's direct presence. While a complete study of the biblical theology of the law cannot be pursued in this study it should be noted that the legal expression termed 'law' in the Bible seems to refer to divinely authorised principles of existence that defines the boundaries between good and evil.¹⁶⁰ The occasion for the 'legal' formulation of divine principles appears to be the presence of sin—'What, then, was the purpose of the law? It was added because of **transgressions** until the Seed to whom the promise referred had come.'¹⁶¹

Thus, redemption from the 'legal' condemnation of the law is related to the coming of the promised 'Seed'. The way humankind is liberated from condemnation of the law and the 'rights' of humankind are restored (right to the Tree of Life and right to be in direct God's presence) is through the incarnation of God's Son, as Paul tells us—'But when the time had fully come, God sent his son, born of a woman, **born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons**'.¹⁶² Similarly to Paul, John claims that 'to those who believed in his name, **he gave the right to become children of God**'.¹⁶³ By overcoming sin in his body Christ has earned the 'legal right' to give us his Spirit—'I have overcome the world';¹⁶⁴

¹⁶⁰ 'I would not know what sin was except through the law.' Rom. 7.7.

¹⁶¹ Gal. 3.19.

¹⁶² Gal. 4.4.

¹⁶³ Jn 1.12.

¹⁶⁴ Jn 16.33.

‘unless I go the Counsellor will not come to you’;¹⁶⁵ ‘When he ascended on high, he... gave gifts to men’.¹⁶⁶ Paul states that since ‘God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts... you are no longer a slave but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir.’¹⁶⁷ In this way humankind’s ‘right’ to be in God’s direct presence is restored through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

Nonetheless, the Holy Spirit is only the partial fulfilment of the promise—he is the seal of God’s ownership, the taste, the firstfruit,¹⁶⁸ the deposit guaranteeing human inheritance in the future glory.¹⁶⁹ Thus, while humankind’s ‘right’ to the Tree of Life has been restored, it has not yet been fully realised—God’s children are still awaiting the inheritance of eternal life. So, through the work of Christ humankind has been liberated from condemnation of the law and the ‘legal rights’ of humankind (the right to the Tree of Life and the right to be in God’s direct presence) have been fully restored—‘the judgement followed one sin and brought condemnation, but the gift followed many trespasses and brought justification’.¹⁷⁰ Considering the material given above and expressions such as ‘to **redeem** those under **law**’¹⁷¹ and ‘Christ **redeemed** us from the curse of the **law**’,¹⁷² it appears that the Bible very clearly indicates the presence of the legislative dynamics in redemption. How should one understand the legal aspect of redemption?

Since law in the biblical context is seen as an expression of unchangeable principles with God as the authority behind it, it has often been suggested by numerous highly regarded theologians that there is some problem in God that must be worked around, which is the obstacle to human existence.¹⁷³ Does God have a need

¹⁶⁵ Jn 16.7.

¹⁶⁶ Eph. 4.8.

¹⁶⁷ Gal. 4.6-7.

¹⁶⁸ ‘Not only so, but we ourselves, who have **the firstfruits of the Spirit**, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.’ Rom. 8.23.

¹⁶⁹ 2 Cor. 1.22. See also: ‘Having believed, you were marked in him with **a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit** guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession.’ Eph. 1.13-14; ‘And do not grieve **the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.**’ Eph. 4.30.

¹⁷⁰ Rom. 5.16.

¹⁷¹ Gal. 4.4.

¹⁷² Gal. 3.10-13.

¹⁷³ **Hodge**, for instance, agrees with the concept of appeasement of God, which was promoted by **Anselm** in the eleventh century. See Charles Hodge, *A Commentary on Romans* (Edinburgh: First Banner of Truth Trust, 1975), p. 92-93. Another highly regarded theologian, **Stott** presents very

for some sort of ‘legal’ satisfaction prior to accepting the sinners, as Stott proposes?¹⁷⁴ If this is the case then the barrier between man and God would not be only on human side (sin) but is also on God’s side (a need for self-satisfaction). Consequently, redemption could appear not only as a matter of God delivering the sinners from sin and death, but also as a matter of God delivering humans from himself. Inevitably some questions arise: What is meant by the legal aspect of redemption? What are the implications of this idea?

Anselm presented a legal theory of redemption in terms of God’s satisfaction being the primary motive for redemption. However, this view ignored the idea clearly portrayed in the New Testament, namely that God’s motive for redeeming humankind is love for others¹⁷⁵ rather than God’s self-satisfaction or self-interest. Furthermore, Anselm neglected the relational aspect of redemption that gives proper place to human choice and responsibility by saying that humans are redeemed primarily in order to fill the vacancies of the fallen angels.¹⁷⁶ On the other hand, while the classical ransom theory upheld the New Testament assertion that God’s motive for redeeming humankind is love, it still neglected the issue of human choice and responsibility by presenting humans merely as victims; consequently, all that is needed in redemption is God defeating the devil. Thus, both Anselm and the Fathers focused on a transactional aspect of redemption while they appeared to have neglected the perspective of human responsibility.

Green and Baker point out that it was Abelard who highlighted the relational or ‘subjective aspect of Christ’s atoning work that has received minimal attention in previous atonement writing but is present in the Bible’.¹⁷⁷ Thus, Abelard put an emphasis on human responsibility that is in harmony with God’s love principle that re-

clearly and straightforwardly the idea that human sins were punished on the cross and this was how God demonstrated his justice—‘...their punishment on the cross (by which God demonstrated his justice).’ John R.W. Stott, *The Message of Romans* (Leicester: IVP, 1994), p. 116. See also **Morris** who agrees with Hodge and Stott. Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Leicester: IVP, 1988), p. 180.

¹⁷⁴ Stott claims that Jesus through his death secured God’s forgiveness and enabled God to forgive us through “satisfying” Him. See John Stott, *The Cross of Christ* (Leicester, IVP: 1986), p. 89.

¹⁷⁵ See Jn 3.16 and Rom. 5.8.

¹⁷⁶ ‘You have proved that the wicked angels are to be replaced from human nature, and it is clear, from this reasoning, that elect men will not be less in number than the reprobate angels.’ Anselm, *Cur Deus Homo*, p. 80.

¹⁷⁷ Green & Baker, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross*, pp. 138-139.

spects free choice. Nonetheless, while he upheld the relational aspect of redemption unlike Anselm and some of the Fathers, Abelard neglected the transactional or the legal aspect of redemption that is also clearly detectable in the New Testament.¹⁷⁸

Thus, it appears that the New Testament clearly speaks of both a relational and a legal aspect of redemption. Nonetheless, it seems that neither (some of) the Fathers, nor Anselm, nor Abelard managed to retain a good balance between these two aspects. Through neglect of one of the aspects we got an imbalanced portrait of redemption. Consequently, the key question that needs to be answered is: how to put both the legal and relational aspects of redemption into a right and balanced relationship that is in harmony with the New Testament perspective?

By presenting the idea of an intelligent ‘serpent’ who clearly question God’s principles, Genesis 3 implies that the sin problem involves a third party that is not a part of humankind.¹⁷⁹ Thus, it appears that at the very beginning of the Bible there is the idea of a cosmic perspective to the issue of sin, and consequently there is a suggestion to the presence of God’s adversary who apparently has ‘reservations’ about God’s law even prior to the creation of humankind. As Gibbs points out, ‘evil is not anthropocentric, nor is man capable... of recognising fully the dimensions of it’.¹⁸⁰ Thus, he concludes that ‘evil is cosmic in scope and can be dealt with only by the cosmic lordship of Christ’.¹⁸¹ The redemptive work of Christ is presented in the New Testament as involving not only himself (God) and humans, but also the third party—the heavenly, demonic forces of evil that are led by Satan. These evil powers are presented as continually attempting to obstruct Christ’s work of redeeming of humanity.¹⁸² Thus, Christ’s redemptive work was not straight forward, involving only God and humans, but it also had another dimension. Could the cosmic perspective of evil further illuminate the legal aspect of redemption?

¹⁷⁸ ‘Abelard does not agree with Anselm’s answer or the *Christus Victor* model.’ Green & Baker, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross*, p. 136.

¹⁷⁹ ‘Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord god has made. He said to the woman, “Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden?’” Gen. 3.1.

¹⁸⁰ Gibbs, *Creation and Redemption*, p. 145.

¹⁸¹ Gibbs, *Creation and Redemption*, p. 147.

¹⁸² ‘Jesus said to him, “**Away from me, Satan!** For it is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only’.” Mt 4.10; ‘**Get behind me, Satan!** You are a stumbling-block to me; you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men.’ Mt. 16.23.

Chapter 5

THE RANSOM MOTIF AND COSMIC VICTORY

The New Testament presents very clearly the idea of the real conflict between Christ and an enemy figure that culminated at the closure of Christ's earthly life. Immediately before his death Christ said that, 'now is the time for judgement on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out' (Jn 12.31). Similarly, Paul said that Christ 'disarmed the powers and authorities; he made a public spectacle of them triumphing over them by the cross' (Col. 2.14-15). In Hebrews there is even the idea that Christ's incarnation and death were necessary in order for Christ to defeat the devil—'He too shared in their humanity so **that by his death he might destroy** him who holds the power of death—that is **the devil**' (Heb. 2.14-15). Therefore, it is clear that the New Testament upholds the idea of Christ defeating the cosmic adversary through his death on the cross. The question is—how? What exactly happened between Christ and the cosmic forces of evil on the cross? In order to answer this question one has to take a closer look at the wider theological perspective regarding the forces of evil especially as it is understood in the New Testament.

The idea of Christ's liberation of the 'slaves' suggests both the presence of a third party and the defeat of this oppressing, enslaving power. In other words, the biblical theme of redemption appears to be inevitably interwoven with the imagery of victory. Christ liberates from sin and death by gaining victory over sin and death. Though it is clear in the New Testament that humankind is enslaved by sin, nonetheless, the demonic figure called Satan (adversary or accuser) always appears as the main representative of evil. While he is presented as the spokesman for sin, since he

is portrayed in the context of the cosmic war, he is also presented as sin's first general—'And there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back.'¹⁸³ Thus, it appears that the conflict between good and evil is presented as initiated in heaven, in the angelic world, and was only later introduced onto this planet. The causal place of this problem that pervades the universe is heaven, while the earth is only a consequential habitat of the problem. Therefore, if the problem is to be resolved it needs to be dealt with on a causal level, rather than on a consequential level. In other words, the problem needed to be resolved primarily in heaven, if it was to be resolved on Earth.

Revelation 12 portrays a conflict between the two groups of angelic beings. One group is led by the dragon, and the other group is led by Michael. It is quite clear that the dragon is identified as the devil, or Satan—'the great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan'.¹⁸⁴ Fiddes claims that Satan 'appears in God's heavenly court as the public prosecutor, accusing sinners'.¹⁸⁵ Furthermore, Gunton proposes that in the book of Job Satan is presented as 'a member of God's household'.¹⁸⁶ While Thompson also portrays Satan 'as a member of the heavenly court' in the book of Job, Satan is 'clearly not a wholehearted supporter of the heavenly government'.¹⁸⁷ Whether at this point in time Satan was still a member of God's government or merely exercised a great influence upon the heavenly government, is not important. What is clear is that Satan's influence was significant and that God even negotiated with Satan; Job 1-2 and Zechariah 4 present the God's government as 'democratic', where God's opponents are allowed to openly evaluate, question and

¹⁸³ Rev. 12.7.

¹⁸⁴ Rev. 12.9. Thompson recognises some allusions to the presence of God's adversary in Genesis 3, 1 Chronicles 21, Job 1-2 and Zechariah 3. He suggests that in the Old Testament the 'understanding of Satan developed gradually'. Alden Thompson, *Who's Afraid of the Old Testament God?* (Exeter: The Paternoster Press, 1988), p. 45. Similarly, Fiddes proposes that 'the developing view of Satan as a fallen angel was probably both a way of expressing the degradation in Satan's character and... in his reputation'. Fiddes, *Past Event and Present Salvation*, p. 119. However, it is not until one reads Revelation 12 that it becomes obvious that the Edenic serpent is 'the great dragon... that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray... the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night...' Therefore, the Old Testament gives us only a partial understanding of Satan.

¹⁸⁵ Fiddes, *Past Event and Present Salvation*, p. 118.

¹⁸⁶ 'Satan began his biblical career, certainly as he appears in the prologue of the book of Job, as a member of God's household.' Gunton, *Actuality of Atonement*, p. 83.

¹⁸⁷ Thompson, *Who's Afraid of the Old Testament God?*, p. 62.

criticize the ruler of the universe. Thus, clearly, in the Old Testament period Satan had a great influence on the government of God. He was allowed to question God's rule and God's methods.

While Revelation 12 clearly reveals the identity of 'the great dragon', the identity of Michael is not revealed in this passage. Does the Bible offer sufficient information that could explain the identity of Michael the Archangel? Jude 9 in the New Testament and Zechariah 3 in the Old Testament contain an identical phrase, 'the Lord rebuke you Satan'. In Zechariah it is the Lord himself speaking to Satan, and in Jude it is Michael the Archangel speaking to Satan. Thus, it seems logical to conclude that the Lord and Michael the Archangel are one and the same person.¹⁸⁸ Furthermore, 1 Thess. 4.16 points out that 'the Lord himself will come down from heaven ... with the voice of the archangel... and the dead in Christ will rise'. So, it is the Lord himself who speaks with the voice of the archangel. Jn 5.25 makes it even clearer that the Lord, the archangel and the Son of God are identified in the New Testament as one and the same person, for 'the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live'. Therefore, the voice of the archangel, or the voice of the Lord, or the voice of the Son of God are one and the same voice spoken by one and the same person which will cause the resurrection of all those who hear this voice. It is important to establish the right identity of Michael, for Jude 9 is one of the critical passages in this discussion.

¹⁸⁸ The Adventist publication *Questions on Doctrine* recognises a misunderstanding of associating Seventh-Day Adventists with Jehovah's Witnesses concerning Michael the Archangel. While both Adventists and Jehovah's Witnesses share the belief that 'Michael the Archangel was Jesus Christ prior to his incarnation', only the Jehovah's Witnesses believe that Christ is a created being. The Adventists believe that Michael is one of the names of 'the Son of God, the second person of the Godhead'. Therefore, this view does not deny Christ's full deity and his equality with the Father. See A Representative Group of Seventh-Day Adventist Leaders, Bible Teachers, and Editors, *Seventh-Day Adventist Answer: Questions on Doctrine* (Washington D.C: Review and Herald, 1957), p. 71. Furthermore, Wolfson, speaking from the Jewish perspective, points to many Old Testament texts that indicate 'the incarnation of the divine in the angelic figure'. He quotes the texts concerning 'the angel of the Lord' where there is 'deliberate confusion between the angel of God and divinity itself (Gen. 16.9-13, 18.2, 21.7, 22.11, 31.11, 33.11-13...)' Wolfson concludes that there is an 'ontological blurring of the divine presence and the highest of the angels—designated variously as "Michael", "Yahoel" ...' Thus, based on the Old Testament, a Jewish theologian suggests that 'God appears in the guise of the angel'. See Elliot R. Wolfson, 'Judaism and Incarnation: the Imaginal Body of God', in Tikva Frymer-Kensky *et al.* (eds.), *Christianity in Jewish Terms* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2000), p. 244.

A. *The Cosmic War Imagery*

According to Gibbs, in Col. 2.15 Paul speaks of Christ's death in the context of the victory over the cosmic powers of evil.¹⁸⁹ Similarly, Barclay suggests that the powers and the principalities 'seem to fit in the category of what is "in heaven" and "invisible"... spiritual realities deeper than human power structures'.¹⁹⁰ Yates also points out that 'the principalities and powers are the angels of heaven'.¹⁹¹ Baggott reinforces this position even more by asserting that in Colossians the fact 'that Christ is the *Cosmic* Christ, cannot be exaggerated'.¹⁹²

On the other hand, Caird considers 'the principalities and powers' in Colossians to refer merely to earthly realities such as 'political, economic and religious structures of power'.¹⁹³ Fiddes suggests that these are both the invisible 'spiritual powers in the cosmos' and their visible manifestation in the political power of the state.¹⁹⁴ What is the position of the author of the epistle? It appears that in his writings Paul refers primarily to the heavenly realities when speaking of these powers – 'the ruler of the kingdom of the air';¹⁹⁵ 'rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms';¹⁹⁶ 'for our struggle is... against the rulers, against the authorities... against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms'.¹⁹⁷ If this is the case, then Colossians 2.14-15 should be interpreted in the context of the cosmic conflict between good and evil.

Although some Bible versions insert the word '*and*' between verses 14 and 15, the connective is not found in the original Greek text. Therefore, one should read

¹⁸⁹ 'Even though Pauline literature speaks specifically of Christ's victorious death in conquest of the cosmic powers only once (Col. 2.15), the motif of conflict is strong in Pauline literature, and there is more in the motif of triumph than is expressible in moral categories.' Gibbs, *Creation and Redemption*, p. 145.

¹⁹⁰ John M.G. Barclay, *Colossians and Philemon* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), p. 84.

¹⁹¹ Roy Yates, *The Epistle to the Colossians* (London: Epworth Press, 1993), p. 51.

¹⁹² L. J. Baggott, *A New Approach to Colossians* (London: A.R. Mowbray & Co Limited, 1961), p. 49.

¹⁹³ See Gunton, *The Actuality of Atonement*, p. 65.

¹⁹⁴ Fiddes, *Past Event and Present Salvation*, p. 122.

¹⁹⁵ Eph. 2.2.

¹⁹⁶ Eph. 3.10.

¹⁹⁷ Eph. 6.12.

verses 14 and 15 in one breath. By one and the same action Christ defends human-kind in the verse 14 and disarms ‘the powers and authorities’ in the verse 15. This action consists of ‘nailing to the cross’ the χειρόγραφον, (meaning literally a hand-written document) that ‘was against us’. There is a general agreement among the commentators that the word χειρόγραφον should be interpreted as a record of debts.¹⁹⁸ It appears to be implied that on the one hand, the document contains the regulations, laws, and, on the other hand, it contains the charges against humans that are based on these regulations. The person who holds χειρόγραφον is obviously against human-kind. The question is—who is this person?

Paul has already identified the person who is removing this document. It is Jesus Christ who has taken this document out of the way, or out of the *middle* (τοῦ μέσου)¹⁹⁹ as the correct translation should say. The question is: who is this accuser who is against humans? According to Martin, based on the Jewish literature there is some evidence supporting the existence of a book, or a record of man’s sins.²⁰⁰ The idea of χειρόγραφον ‘can be found in an anonymous Jewish apocalyptic writing’ dated to the first century BCE that speaks of ‘the accusing Angel’ who writes down man’s sins.²⁰¹ Dunn lists some Jewish apocryphal writings such as the *Apocalypse of Zephaniah* that contain this idea.²⁰² Bauckham accordingly points out that ‘the devil appears in his ancient role as a legal accuser’.²⁰³ However, all these documents belong to the category of the extra-biblical evidence. Thus, one needs to verify whether the Bible supports the position of these apocryphal writings.

¹⁹⁸ See L. J. **Baggott**, *A New Approach to Colossians* (London: A.R. Mowbray & Co Limited, 1961); John M. G. **Barclay**, *Colossians and Philemon* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997); Roy **Yates**, *The Epistle to the Colossians* (London: Epworth Press, 1993); D. G. **Dunn**, *The Epistle to the Colossians and to Philemon: a Commentary on the Greek Text* (Carlisle: The Paternoster Press, 1996); Ralph P. **Martin**, *Colossians: the Church’s Lord and Christian’s Liberty* (Exeter: The Paternoster Press, 1972).

¹⁹⁹ See The BibleWorks 4.0 CD-Rom.

²⁰⁰ Ralph P. Martin, *Colossians: the Church’s Lord and Christian’s Liberty* (Exeter: The Paternoster Press, 1972), p. 79.

²⁰¹ Martin, *Colossians*, p. 79.

²⁰² Dunn points to the Apocalypse of Zephaniah 7.1-8, and to the Apocalypse of Paul 17 which use the term *chirographum* (=heirografon) for the heavenly books. See D. G. Dunn, *The Epistle to the Colossians and to Philemon: a Commentary on the Greek Text* (Carlisle: The Paternoster Press, 1996), p. 164.

²⁰³ Richard Bauckham, *Jude and the Relatives of Jesus in the Early Church* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1990), p. 274.

The scene in Col. 2.14-15 reminds of Zech. 3.1-4 where there were the accuser, the accused one and the Lord (who defends) standing in the middle surrounded by the angels. The word ‘*Satan*’ in Zech. 3.1-4 is actually a transliterated Hebrew word that means adversary, or accuser.²⁰⁴ Furthermore, Rev. 12.9-10 reveals clearly the identity of our accuser—‘the ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan... (is)... the accuser of our brothers who accuses them before our God day and night’. In the light of the Bible, the accuser of humankind is clearly an angelic being.²⁰⁵

LaRondelle points out that it was Satan who initiated the war ‘in judicial terms in the heavenly court against God and his Archangel Michael’.²⁰⁶ Thus, it would seem that ‘war in heaven’ is not a struggle fought with muscles and weapons, but rather with ideas and words. Consequently, the environment of this war would not be a physical battlefield but rather something comparable to a human parliament or a court room. So, what is the main issue in this conflict? Based on Zechariah 3, Colossians 2, Jude 9 and Revelation 12 a scene appears to emerge: the humankind is accused by Satan before God and before the universe. The idea of the document (χειρόγραφον) appears to be a speech expression of the satanic charges, or accusations against the ‘brothers’, or the people of God. And, of course, this document is legitimate because it is based on the principles of God’s government (‘regulations’).

Jude 9, a very similar passage to Zech. 3.1-4, tells us that the Archangel Michael, which in the New Testament appears to be just another name for Jesus, is depicted as having a dispute with Satan about the body of Moses. Satan ‘claimed’ the right over Moses’ life or challenged God’s right to resurrect Moses, to give eternal life to Moses. As Bauckham suggests, Satan probably pointed out a simple logic—Moses

²⁰⁴ See BDB Lexicon on the BibleWorks 4.0 CD-Rom.

²⁰⁵ The Bible does not present Satan, the devil as some kind of impersonal force that works within humanity, as Modernism presented the devil. While Freud’s insight about people being ‘spiritually imprisoned by the hidden forces within their subconscious’ demolished ‘the Enlightenment view of the total rationality of human nature’, many still believe that it is just us humans inventing evil things; it is just our evil thoughts; it is just something in our minds. But this is not the way the Bible presents the devil—he is an individual, an intelligent person, a real creature that has a power to influence the conduct and the destiny of the human beings. The Bible does not present him as a red half-human, half-animal creature with two horns and a long tail. He is more likely to be wearing a ‘suit, shirt and tie’ while doing his work of a ‘lawyer’, attorney or accuser. Thus, it was the rejection of the personal devil by the Modernists that took away a whole dimension out of the biblical report that helps us understand the culmination of the biblical storyline.

²⁰⁶ LaRondelle, *How to Understand the End-Time Prophecies of the Bible*, p. 266.

was a sinner for he killed an Egyptian, he broke the law, and he deserves to die.²⁰⁷ Therefore, God's right to give eternal life to Moses is questioned. The following legal logic appears to be involved: if God ignores Moses' sins and gives him eternal life, then God is acting out of harmony with his own character and law. God's order of existence is either valid, or it is not valid—and the question is whether God has a double standard. God should either let **none** of the sinners live forever, or he should let **all** of them live forever, and that would include the adversary—the devil. Furthermore, such an act of God appears to legitimise sin and evil, and if sin becomes a legitimate way of life the implication of this is that God would also allow eternal sufferings which are an inevitable outcome of sin.

The incident with Moses appears to present the idea that God's motivation for redeeming sinful humankind is not very clear at this point in historical timeline of the cosmic conflict. Thus, the entire universe appears to be intrigued (through the satanic insinuations) to find out how God can justify his act of redeeming the sinners, and 'even angels long to look into these things'.²⁰⁸ In relation to this, the presence of the angels in the Sanctuary who are looking onto the lid of the ark of the covenant or 'ἱλαστήριον', which appears to represent the person of Christ according to some interpreters,²⁰⁹ seems to indicate the same thing—the heavenly beings are intrigued to look into the mystery of redemption of humankind.

Is God's redemptive act justifiable, legal and in harmony with the principles of God's character? Does God's desire to save a sinner reveal a flaw in God's character? Is Satan right in saying that God acts inconsistently? Apparently, God is not a god who would just close his eyes to these kinds of allegations, but he rather takes time needed to clear up the issue. Paul claims that this time was fulfilled at the cross where

²⁰⁷ 'Satan makes a last attempt to assert his power over him, by accusing him of the murder of the Egyptian.' Bauckham, *Jude and the Relatives of Jesus in the Early Church*, p. 247.

²⁰⁸ 'The Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted **the sufferings of Christ** and the glories that would follow. It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. **Even angels long to look into these things.**' 1 Pet. 1.11-12.

²⁰⁹ See Everett F. **Harrison**, 'Romans' in Frank E. Gaebelein (ed.), *The Expositors Bible Commentary* (London: Pickering & Inglis Ltd, 1976, p.43, and Ernst **Käsemann**, *Commentary on Romans* (London: SCM, 1980), p. 97.

the problem was finally resolved—‘he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus’.²¹⁰

B. *The Earthly Dimension of the Cosmic Conflict*

God’s activities in redeeming deceived and fallen humanity are clearly depicted as being the object of accusations by cosmic powers in the terms of questioning validity of the divine order. So, how did God respond to the accusations against his character and the legitimacy of human redemption? Gal. 4.4 reveals that God had a specific preordained plan to become man in order to settle the issue—‘But when the time had fully come, God sent his son, born of a woman, born under law, **to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons**’. Since human redemption is the object of attack from the cosmic adversary, it should be no surprise that Christ as the God incarnate exposes himself to attacks, accusations and hostility from the adversary when he enters the world of sin. The New Testament authors clearly describe this as being the reality from birth to death of Jesus.²¹¹

Consequently, the human story becomes the arena in which a larger conflict is fought and settled. However, this does not necessarily mean that God orchestrated human redemption as a means to that end; the New Testament asserts that the motive behind human redemption is God’s love for humans²¹² rather than self-interest (God using humankind to defeat the cosmic enemy).

When Satan questions God’s right to resurrect Moses the issue does not appear to be about the individual (Moses) but rather about humankind in general; the accuser uses ‘χειρόγραφον’ against the entire humankind because every human is sinner—

²¹⁰ Rom. 3.26.

²¹¹ Matthew chapter 2 describes the hostility towards Jesus as expressed through the earthly political authorities, when Herod killed the children in Bethlehem. Also, throughout his life Christ was not only the object of constant accusation made by the religious authorities, but they also attempted to murder him a few times (See any Gospel, and especially John). Thus, Christ was the object of demonic hostility just like any other prophet—‘You suffered from your own countrymen the same things those churches suffered from the Jews who killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets and also drove us out.’ 1 Thess. 2.14-15.

²¹² See Jn 3.16; Rom. 5.8.

‘there is no-one righteous, not even one’.²¹³ Thus, it seems that what is at stake is God’s ‘right’ to redeem humankind in general. Gen. 1.28 claims that God has given the Earth to Adam to ‘rule over’ it; in other words, God has given the ‘dominion’ over the Earth to humanity. However, ever since humankind sided with the ‘serpent’ the dominion over earth has been willingly given over to the ‘serpent’ by humans. Thus, since the fall, God is no more a co-ruler over the Earth with humankind, but instead Satan is the co-ruler over the Earth with humans. Since humankind expressed the desire to side with Satan, in other words they decided that they do not want God, he would not take over by force—otherwise he would act out of harmony with his character that respects free choice.

Satan claims that he was ‘given’ dominion over earth²¹⁴ and God does not deny that Satan is the ruler of this world—Christ calls Satan ‘the prince of this world’.²¹⁵ The temptations in the desert imply that Satan knows that the mission of Christ is to reclaim the dominion over the Earth on behalf of God and humankind, and he offers him a compromise—Christ would be given dominion over the Earth under one condition, ‘if you worship me, it will all be yours’.²¹⁶ However, if Christ regained the dominion through a compromise with Satan, then the devil would have remained forever a part of the earthly kingdom and its co-ruler, since Christ would have cooperated with Satan. Nonetheless, it is clear that God incarnate has chosen to reclaim the dominion over the earth independently from Satan. In other words, the Son of God would do it by rightfully reclaiming it according to God’s plan and purpose, which is the co-rulership of God and man. In this way, Satan would have lost his usurped right over the Earth (or humankind) and in this way Satan would have been cast out from this world. Thus, Satan and consequently sin also could not remain eternally a part of the earthly kingdom. Accordingly, Heb. 2.14 says specifically that

²¹³ Rom. 3.10.

²¹⁴ ‘The devil led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant **all the kingdoms of the world**. And he said to him, “I will give you all their authority and splendor, for **it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to**.”’ Lk. 4.5-6.

²¹⁵ ‘Now is the time for judgment on this world; now **the prince of this world** will be driven out.’ Jn 12.31; ‘I will not speak with you much longer, for **the prince of this world** is coming. He has no hold on me.’ Jn 14.30; ‘And in regard to judgment, because **the prince of this world** now stands condemned.’ Jn 16.11.

²¹⁶ See Lk. 4.6-7.

the purpose of Christ's incarnation was to defeat the devil who holds the government of death.²¹⁷

The war against the 'serpent' has been declared by the words 'And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel', which imply the fierceness of the conflict on this planet.²¹⁸ Consequently, the adversary would employ all of his resources against Jesus Christ who was the promised 'offspring'. Accordingly, through the incarnation Jesus would become an object of Satan's enmity, accusations and temptations from cradle to grave.²¹⁹ The Gospels make significant reference to the temptations of Christ from the very first one mentioned, 'If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread',²²⁰ to the very last one 'Save yourself! Come down from the cross, if you are the Son of God'.²²¹ Gunton points out that 'the temptation narratives are of crucial importance, for they depict the choice of one approach to the exercise of power rather than another'.²²² Accordingly, he argues that for Christ, to exercise power does not mean 'butchering your opponent with weapons but refusing to exercise power demonically, in order to overcome evil with good'.²²³ Similarly, Fiddes points out that through his death God incarnate demonstrated the way of using power that is totally opposite to the way this world uses power—'In our world, power depends upon being able to escape death oneself and being able to inflict death on others'.²²⁴

²¹⁷ 'Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil.' Heb. 2.14.

²¹⁸ LaRondelle points out that this was initially revealed in the very first prophecy about the coming of messiah in Genesis 3.15, '*he (Jesus) will crush your head and you (satan) will strike his heel.*' See LaRondelle, *How to Understand the End-time Prophecies of the Bible*, p. 272-273. Furthermore, according to Doukhan, the harming of the seed (the Messiah) and the defeating of the serpent (the devil) is simultaneous—'The hebrew describes the crushing of the head and the bite of the heel by the same verb: *shuf.*' Jacques B. Doukhan, *Secrets of Revelation: the Apocalypse through Hebrew Eyes* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2002), p. 111.

²¹⁹ Matthew chapter 2 describes the hostility towards Jesus as expressed through the earthly political authorities, when Herod killed the children in Bethlehem. Also, throughout his life Christ was not only the object of constant accusation made by the religious authorities, but they also attempted to murder him a few times (See any Gospel, and especially John). Thus, Christ was the object of demonic hostility just like any other prophet—'You suffered from your own countrymen the same things those churches suffered from the Jews who killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets and also drove us out.' 1 Thess. 2.14-15.

²²⁰ Mt. 4.3.

²²¹ Mt. 27.40.

²²² Gunton, *The Actuality of Atonement*, p. 75.

²²³ Gunton, *The Actuality of Atonement*, p. 77.

²²⁴ Fiddes, *Past Event and Present Salvation*, p. 211.

Thus, the main purpose of these temptations appears to be: if Christ really is divine (Son of God) he should act that way and display his power—simply because he can. Here Gunton implies that ‘to use a power in a certain ways is to be possessed by it’.²²⁵ If Jesus himself became a slave to power, or self-enslaved, he would become a slave to sin; and how could he ever save anybody else from slavery to sin? Thus, as Gunton concludes, Christ’s victory is found in his refusal to use power in a demonic manner.²²⁶

Since Christ is not only a man but simultaneously God, the devil’s temptations are not only about his humanity, but about his divinity also. Satan appears to focus his temptation against the ‘Son of God’, rather than merely against the ‘Son of Man’. It is actually Christ’s encounter with the demonic powers that clearly reveals that Satan is not only an accuser-adversary of humankind, but first and foremost an accuser and adversary of God and of all God stands for. **Thus, the main purpose of the temptations appears to be: if God incarnate acts in a certain way, how can he expect and demand from anyone else not to act in the same way?** Accordingly, the life of Christ would also demonstrate whether or not God would abide with his own principles and stay true to Himself, or he would choose another way of life that would ultimately compromise God’s claims about himself. The life of God incarnate would clearly show whether or not God would really act in the self-sacrificial mode which he expects from others (the other-centred mode that is in accordance with his law, ‘love the Lord your God... (and) love your neighbour as yourself’²²⁷), or he would act in a self-interest mode that is self-centred and out of harmony with God’s law. Satan seems to tempt Christ to use his divine power in a self-centred manner, demonically—‘If you are the Son of God change bread to stones’; ‘If you are the Son of God come down from the cross.’ As Fiddes suggests, Peter became Satan’s agent against Christ when he started ‘urging him to avoid the cross’.²²⁸ Thus, the temptation was in Peter’s attempt to compel Christ to change the mode of his life from self-

²²⁵ Gunton, *The Actuality of Atonement*, p. 72.

²²⁶ Gunton, *The Actuality of Atonement*, p. 75.

²²⁷ Mt. 22.37-39.

²²⁸ Fiddes, *Past Event and Present Salvation*, p. 120.

sacrificial to self-preserving. Apparently, if Christ decided to preserve himself he would not be able to save humankind; only through self-sacrifice may Christ redeem humankind. Furthermore, if God incarnate decided to preserve himself that would ultimately jeopardise his character and his claim about himself—this would demonstrate whether God really has a right to expect and demand from his creatures to act in certain ways if he cannot do it himself. Ultimately, if Christ used his divine power in a ‘demonic manner’ or he acted in a self-preserving manner, the evil would have been legitimised, sin would have become immortal and eternal, and the universe would become a place of eternal sufferings.

So, the adversary apparently attempted to entrap God incarnate into acting out of harmony with his own being, according to the New Testament report.²²⁹ However, this never happened as Jesus resisted his temptations to the very end. In the end Satan revealed the true motives behind his ‘legal’ claim against humankind and God when he prompted Christ’s earthly trial based on **false** accusations. Just as the devil is ‘a liar’ and ‘a murdered’ so his human agents ‘want to carry out’ his purpose;²³⁰ thus, through the actions of the Jews who arrested Christ, the prime motive behind Satan’s work was revealed—a desire to murder God and take over.²³¹ The trial and the crucifixion of Jesus was the time when evil simultaneously reigned and exposed its true face—‘but this is your hour—when darkness reigns’.²³² Nonetheless, the forces of evil were not really in charge, but were only allowed to take over completely for a mo-

²²⁹ “All this I will give you,” he said, “if you will bow down and worship me.” Jesus said to him, “Away from me Satan! For it is written: ‘Worship the lord your God, and serve him only’.” Mt. 4.9-10.

²³⁰ ‘You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father’s desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies’ Jn 8.44.

²³¹ Some theologians propose that the death of Christ satisfied God, but it seems that it was the power of the demonic that found satisfaction in the death of Jesus. While the adversary was satisfied with the actual process of the death of Jesus, Provonsha suggested that the ‘satisfaction’ of God should not be seen in the appeasement of God. Rather, the satisfaction of God is evident in Isaiah’s statement, ‘he shall see the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied.’ (Isaiah 53.11) The author of Hebrews confirms this by the words ‘who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross.’ (Hebrews 12.2) Thus, it seems that God was satisfied with the cross in terms of finding joy in the salvation of many, rather than in terms of finding pleasure in pain of punishment. ‘To speak of satisfaction as appeasement of God or as meeting the requirements of abstract justice is to fail to be aware of the other ways in which what Christ did was satisfactory... He shall see the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied... Such satisfaction can mean “it was worth it”.’ Provonsha, *You Can Go Home Again*, p. 54.

²³² Lk. 22.53.

ment. Christ could have called legions of his angels to fight for him if he wanted to.²³³ However, he made it plain to Pilate that the use of power in this world (that Pilate was a representative of) is contrary to the way God uses power—‘My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews’.²³⁴ Thus, the life of God incarnate is depicted as being lived in a fierce conflict with not only human adversaries, but with a cosmic adversary, too.

In Jn 12.31, where he comments on his death, Christ indicates that ‘Now the prince of this world will be driven out’, and in Jn 14.30 he explains why—‘the prince of the world is coming, but he has nothing in me’. Therefore, this seems to imply that in his life Christ never ever made a compromise with Satan (‘he has nothing in me’), and consequently, because Christ managed to live the uncompromised sinless life up to the point of his death the government of the devil was defeated.

This is why even prior to the resurrection Christ claimed the victory over the devil through the last words spoken on the cross (in John’s Gospel), ‘it is finished’. The resurrection was just a natural consequence of his sinless life, but the real issue, the controversy was settled at the moment of Christ death. In other words, through his death there was no more temptation for Christ and he had **overcome**²³⁵ the devil, and in this manner the prince of this world has been driven out. Therefore, by never submitting to sin, as one of humankind Christ has restored humankind’s right to rule over the earth in co-operation with God; this is how the government of Satan’s co-rulership with man has been destroyed. Christ has regained the dominion over the kingdoms of this world on behalf of humankind,²³⁶ and he restored this world or humankind where

²³³ ‘Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels?’ Mt. 26.53.

²³⁴ Jn 18.36.

²³⁵ The theme of ‘overcoming’ is a significant theme in the book of Revelation which appears to be mainly about this great conflict between ‘the Lamb’ and ‘the Dragon’. Because Christ has overcome, now every human being has a right to share in Christ’s victory by participating in the achievement of Christ’s work—‘To him who over comes I will give the right to sit on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne’ (Rev. 3.21). Somehow through the benefits of the Christ’s life and death, we may also overcome and share in Christ’s victory—‘they overcame him by the blood of the lamb.’ (Rev. 12.11) The word ‘overcome’ appears to be a key word in Revelation it is mentioned 7 times in the letters to the churches, and there is the conclusion in Rev. 21.7 —‘he who overcomes will inherit all this and I will be his God and he will be my son’.

²³⁶ Daniel chapter 7 seems to further illuminate the idea of Christ giving over the dominion to God’s people—‘The Ancient of Days came and pronounced judgement in favour of the saint of the Most High, **and the time came when they possessed the kingdom...** then the sovereignty, power and greatness of

it rightfully belongs; he ‘bought it back’, he redeemed it through his sinless life unto the point of death—‘with your blood you purchased men for God’.²³⁷ Thus, Christ is the one human (as the incarnate) over whom sin and Satan never held dominion, and who accordingly holds all the right that the human family lost when the ‘serpent’ usurped the right over the Earth through deceiving humankind. Consequently, Christ can share the rights of his victory with the human family through the relational aspect of redemption, that is, covenantal union with Christ through faith.²³⁸

C. The Cosmic Dimension of the Cross

Col. 2.15 seems to imply that the cross exposed the real nature of the demonic powers operating behind the kingdoms of this fallen world; the forces of evil were stripped naked in openness (ἐδειγμάτισεν ἐν παρρησίᾳ) before the entire universe and it became obvious to all what evil truly is like. Thanks to the work of Christ culminating on the cross all the ‘legal’ arguments of the accuser have been defeated.²³⁹ Furthermore, through murdering an innocent, blameless person the devil has lost all of the influence and credibility that he exercised in the heavenly realms. Somehow the demonic accusations against God in principle and against his redemptive work in particular were completely defeated by Christ.

The cross also revealed that God’s method of dealing with sin and evil is not the use of force, but rather confrontation, exposure and consequently victory over evil. Accordingly, it revealed Christ’s disposition to use force in a humble lamb-like man-

the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be handed over to the saints, the people of the most high.’ Dan. 7.22-27. For more information see William H. Shea, *Daniel 1-7: Prophecy as History* (Boise ID: Pacific Press, 1996).

²³⁷ Rev. 5.9.

²³⁸ The focus of this essay is the pre-ascension work of Christ which explains how Christ regained the lost rights of humankind, in other words, it is about his life on earth. However, his post-ascension work explains how exactly humans may benefit from Christ’s victory, in other words, it is about his High-Priestly Ministry in heaven and the idea of the ‘faith-union with Christ’. However, this is a whole new theme to be explored and this would be a logical next step to pursue if the study of redemption is to be continued. For more information on the idea of the faith-union with Christ see the chapter ‘Union with Christ’ in Robert Letham, *The Work of Christ* (Leicester: IVP, 1993), where he explains in-depth the Luther’s theology of covenantal union with Christ.

²³⁹ Gunton²³⁹ recognises that Satan’s main strategy is legislative—he is the accuser or the prosecutor. Gunton, *The Actuality of Atonement*, p. 83.

ner that stood in clear contrast to the demonic beast-like way of using power exercised by the forces of evil.²⁴⁰ Thus, the trial and crucifixion of Jesus clearly revealed the loving self-sacrificial disposition of Christ that stood in a sharp contrast to the hateful self-promoting character of the powers of darkness. Ultimately, the entire incarnation, life and death of Christ exposed the character of the devil, his reign, and at last the true nature of sin, and simultaneously it revealed that the essential characteristic of God is love.

While Christ **gave up** his life, Satan **took** Christ's life; the cross clearly demonstrated that God and Satan use power in a completely opposite manner. When Gandhi was asked by the British if his fasting was a kind of coercion, he replied that it is 'the same kind of coercion which Jesus exercises upon you from the cross'.²⁴¹ This is a practical twentieth century illustration of the Christ-like way of using power that has a potential to overthrow earthly governments; it is the way of self-sacrifice without sacrificing anyone else's life. Thus, without resorting to despotic strategy, Christ justifiably or 'legally' took χειρόγραφον from Satan's hand and tore it, and consequently humankind received the 'legal' right to be restored to life eternal—'Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus';²⁴² not because Christ presented a document proving our innocence, but because Christ removed the document proving our guilt, the document of accusation against us.²⁴³ Consequently, thanks to the work of Christ, Paul is 'convinced that ... neither angels nor demons ... will be able to separate us from the love of God' (Rom. 8.38). The questions and the accusations of the heavenly beings, concerning God's right to give to sinners eternal

²⁴⁰ As Naden cleverly puts it, 'the power of self-sacrificing love' defeated 'the selfish love of power'. See Naden, *The Lamb among the Beasts*, p. 187. Accordingly, Brown suggests that it would be useful for the church to present 'a rehabilitated Christus Victor view of atonement to a radically suspicious post-modern society' through portraying 'evil as an abuse of power' Charles E. Brown, *The Atonement (Healing in Postmodern Society)* (OCLC First Search: ATLA Religion, Interpretation 53.1 [Jan 1999]), p. 385.

²⁴¹ See E. Stanley Jones, *Gandhi (Portrayal of a Friend)* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993), p. 110.

²⁴² Rom. 8.1.

²⁴³ Likewise, when an adulteress was brought by the Jews before Christ, he did not save her by denying her guilt, but by exposing and removing her accusers one by one. Moreover, he invited her to be restored to spiritual life—'go, and sin no more'. This is Christ's strategy: he does not deal with a sinner in demonic manner—through accusations or by using force, but in a redemptive way—through forgiving sinners and inviting them to return to God; through the restoration of the spiritual life. While in dealings with the sinners Satan uses the strategy of accusation, Christ oppositely uses the strategy of redemption.

life, have been silenced on the cross. Neither Satan, nor any other heavenly being is now able to separate us from God.

Furthermore, as the culmination of this cosmic conflict, Paul says that ‘God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him (Christ), and through him to reconcile to himself **all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven**, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross’.²⁴⁴ Apparently, through the cross Christ reconciled not only humankind but the entire universe to himself. This does not necessarily mean that he reconciled the sinful heavenly beings to himself, but perhaps that the sinless beings who did not clearly understand the devil’s scheme prior to the cross, have now fully sided with God thanks to the cross. Thus, it seems that Christ’s death was redemptive in the sense that he has drawn both earthly and heavenly creatures to himself, so that all may be one with God where they rightfully belong. ‘And he made known to us the mystery... when the times will have reached their fulfillment—to bring all things **in heaven and on earth** together under one head, even Christ’.²⁴⁵

Through murdering Jesus the devil lost the ‘media’ war that he waged against God’s government, and Christ, ‘having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross’.²⁴⁶ The cross answered all the questions and silenced all the accusations, and Satan was ‘hurled down’;²⁴⁷ the prince of this world was ‘driven out’.²⁴⁸ And the last words of Jesus on the cross in John’s Gospel pointed out an important fact about the war in heaven—‘it is finished’, even before Christ’s resurrection. Here a difference between the purpose of Christ’s death and the purpose of his resurrection is noticeable—the heavenly beings do not need resurrection and do not benefit from it; only humankind needs resurrection and benefits from it. However, both heaven and earth somehow benefit from Christ’s death. It is not the Lamb who has **risen**, but it is ‘the Lamb who was **slain**’ that caused an extraordinary response among the heavenly beings and is celebrated

²⁴⁴ Col. 1.20.

²⁴⁵ Eph. 1.9-10.

²⁴⁶ Col. 2.15.

²⁴⁷ Rev. 12.10.

²⁴⁸ Jn 12.31.

and worshiped in the heavenly spheres. Christ's death made an impact throughout the universe—'Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power',²⁴⁹ in other words, Christ has truly been recognised as worthy to remain a rightful ruler of the universe. Finally, it appears that the cosmic dimension establishes the ultimate paradigm within which a theory of atonement should be framed. The cross was the event in which sin, evil and Satan were exposed, confronted and defeated by God on the cosmic scale.

Nonetheless, while Satan has completely lost his influence in heaven, his influence is still immense on planet Earth which is his last stronghold. 'Therefore rejoice, you heavens and you who dwell in them! But woe to you earth and the sea, because the devil has gone down to you! He is filled with fury, because he knows that his time is short.'²⁵⁰ Considering that the war is still fiercely being fought in the last stronghold of the adversary, Fiddes recognises that there is a difficulty in establishing the relationship between one past event and our present experience—if 'we live in a century... of the Nazi Holocaust... what victory could have been objectively achieved by Christ on the cross?'²⁵¹ While Fiddes makes a valid point, in fact, the important question is not whether the victory on the cross was 'objective', but whether it was 'subjective'. To summarise the problem: God himself became a man and in this way he 'objectively' redeemed humanity by bringing man and God together in his own body. However, if this was all, Jesus Christ would have been the only human being who would live forever. Since he redeemed humankind only in general (objectively), the individuals do not necessarily participate in redemption (subjectively). Thus, redemption needs to become personal; people need to participate in it by making an individual and personal choice. The question is: does the cross play any part in the 'subjective atonement'?

²⁴⁹ Rev. 5.12.

²⁵⁰ Rev. 12.12.

²⁵¹ Fiddes, *Past Event and Present Salvation*, p. 113.

Chapter 6

THE 'SUBJECTIVE' ASPECT OF CHRIST'S DEATH

A. The Earthly Drawing

In order to accomplish the redemption of humankind Christ not only needs to deal objectively with the power of sin (general redemption), but also with the subjective power of sin (personal redemption). Since Satan's deceptions caused the people to walk away from God (slavery to sin), the task of the Redeemer is to reverse the effect of these deceptions by causing the people to return to God. According to Christ, this also is accomplished through his sacrifice and death on the cross—'But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will **draw** all men to myself. He said this to show the kind of death he was going to die' (Jn 12.32-33).

Suggit rightly points out that the respect of free choice is the only way to make the atonement harmonious with God's will.²⁵² God has the **power** to resurrect and give eternal life to everyone; however, he will not give eternal life to everyone but only to those who freely choose to return to him. Thus, although the significance of Christ's resurrection is undeniable and immeasurable, the resurrection remains of no use to the sinners unless they personally respond to 'Christ and him crucified'.

Accordingly, Christ Crucified appears to be the central theme of the New Testament. This is noticeable in the two main New Testament writers—Paul and John.

²⁵² 'If man is to be truly free, then any understanding of the atonement which seems to relieve man of his own responsibility is not truly effecting reconciliation, for man is not being permitted to be a responsible free agent.' John Suggit, *Freedom To Be (Peter Abelard's Doctrine of the Atonement)* (OCLC First Search: ATLA Religion, Journal of Theology for Southern Africa 8.1 [Sep 1974]), pp. 31-32.

Wright states it as obvious that the cross is ‘at the heart of Paul’s whole theology’.²⁵³ Likewise, Swain asserts that ‘Christ Crucified’ is ‘central to Paul’s theology’.²⁵⁴ The apostle Paul expresses this in plain language—‘I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus **Christ** and him **crucified**’.²⁵⁵ The second leading New Testament writer expresses the same sentiment, only he uses the Old Testament sacrificial imagery—the central theme of John’s theology in Revelation is **the Lamb who was slain** or the idea of **the blood of the Lamb** or Christ’s death. And this is expressed through the idea of redemption—‘with your blood you **purchased** men for God’.²⁵⁶ This sentiment is also detectable at the beginning of John’s Gospel—‘Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world’.²⁵⁷ It appears that just as for Paul Christ Crucified is the most powerful idea to be presented to humankind, so for John Christ’s death has the power to redeem from sin.

As Gunton points out, the Pauline definition of sin is ‘suppression of the truth’,²⁵⁸ and accordingly, the death of Christ as a revelation of God’s true character and Satan’s true character is a real victory over sin and evil. Thus, Christ is seen by the New Testament writers as *liberating* humans from the deception and the oppressive power of lie—‘then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free’.²⁵⁹ Accordingly, the passion of Christ can be perceived in the terms of redemption and victory—Christ Crucified **redeems** people from their self-enslavement by **bringing them back to God**; in this way the **past victory** over sin that took place on the cross becomes retrospectively a **present real victory** over sin when a person who observes Christ Crucified decides to return to God. Although there are still the consequences of sin present, the root of sin has been cut and a sinner is restored to eternal life.

²⁵³ ‘It is an obvious truism to say that the cross stands at the heart of Paul’s whole theology.’ N. T. Wright, *What Saint Paul Really Said* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), p. 46.

²⁵⁴ See William Swain, ‘For Our Sins’ (*The Image of the Sacrifice in the Thought of the Apostle Paul*) (OCLC First Search: ATLA Religion, Interpretation 17.2 [Apr 1963]), p. 133.

²⁵⁵ 1 Cor. 2.2.

²⁵⁶ ‘Then I saw a **Lamb**, looking as if it had been **slain**... you are **worthy because you were slain** and **with your blood you purchased men for God**.’ Rev 5.6-9. ‘Worthy is the **Lamb who was slain**’ Rev. 5.12. ‘They have washed their robes and made them white in the **blood of the Lamb**’ Rev. 7.14. ‘They overcame him (Satan) with **the blood of the Lamb**.’ Rev. 12...

²⁵⁷ Jn 1.29.

²⁵⁸ Gunton comments on Romans 1.18. Gunton, *The Actuality of Atonement*, p. 59.

²⁵⁹ Jn 8.32.

As Napoleon Bonaparte said, ‘I myself am perhaps the only person of my day who loves Alexander, Caesar, Hannibal, Charlemagne who, like myself, founded empires. But upon what? Force. Jesus founded His empire on love’.²⁶⁰ So, Christ’s death was not merely an exemplary death showing us what we ought to do, as the Liberal Protestantism presented it. What made Christ’s crucifixion special in the first century CE is that it was not just another crucifixion of another man, but it was the crucifixion of God. Christ himself pointed out that the purpose of his death was not merely to give example, but to *draw*.²⁶¹

B. *The Cosmic Drawing*

Furthermore, on the cross God incarnate did not draw only humankind. The Greek text of Jn 12.32 does not contain the word ‘*men*’—it is inserted by translators—it merely says ‘*all*’. Thus, it should read, ‘But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will **draw all** to myself’. Therefore, Christ was not to draw only the sinful humans, but all—the entire universe. His drawing is not only anthropocentric but ‘cosmocentric’. Moreover, as the word ‘the earth’ (τῆν γῆν)²⁶² in Jn 12.32 means not only earth as ground but it also means the planet Earth, Christ being ‘lifted up from the earth’ may be referring to more than merely his death. Through Christ being lifted up from the planet Earth, Christ is exalted from his humiliation. He is exalted to his rightful position and sited on the throne of the universe, on the right hand of the power in heaven. Now, at his Father’s side, he continues to draw all to himself.

Therefore, the idea of Christ being ‘lifted up from the earth’ in Jn 12.32 may have a twofold meaning. First, it refers to Christ (God) being lifted up from the ground onto the cross by humankind; secondly, it refers to Christ (human) being exalted onto the throne of the universe by his Father. The first exaltation refers to his ‘exaltation in humiliation’—the cross where his humiliation culminated. While this

²⁶⁰ See <http://hammer.prohosting.com/~victorm/napoleon.html>

²⁶¹ See Jn 12.32-33.

²⁶² ‘The earth; land, country, region; soil, ground; mankind.’ UBS Greek Dictionary on the Bible-Works 4.0 CD-Rom.

was humiliation in the eyes of humankind, this was truly an exaltation of God's character in the eyes of the angels and the entire universe. In the words 'Father forgive them' that were spoken by Christ while men were crucifying him there was a scandalous revelation of God's forgiving character. One wonders: if sin never happened would the sinless being ever realise that God is merciful, forgiving and accepting? Not that God designed and purposed sin, but God has this ability to make good even out of evil.

Therefore, based on this 'character exaltation', his second exaltation, 'power exaltation' happened—'**worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power...**' (Rev. 5.12). God did not want his creatures to serve him, love him and respond to him because of what he does, but because of what he is. What he does: God, the Almighty Master of the Universe; what he is: Jesus Christ. It was Christ's humiliation on the cross that 'qualified' him to continue to be the rightful ruler of the universe. If before Christ's 'incarnational humiliation' the angels bowed down before God because of his might and power, now they did it because of his character and his humility. Not by his might, but through his character God defeated sin. The cross did not reveal God's status and his high position, but it revealed his loving character. Christ's incarnation culminating in his death was the greatest ever revelation of God's character before the universe. In the form of a 'lamb', stripped from all external qualities such as power and might ('He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him...')²⁶³ Christ 'radiated the glory' of God's inner qualities—'he is the radiance of God's glory and exact representation of his being'.²⁶⁴

Thus, the cross benefited not only the sinful humans, but the sinless heavenly beings, too. Christ does not only bring back those who were separated from God, but he also keeps the ones who never left God's household from a potential free-will separation from God.²⁶⁵ The cross secured the future existence of the universe free

²⁶³ Isa. 53.2.

²⁶⁴ Heb. 1.1-3.

²⁶⁵ After his work of salvation is finished, God, as the Creator, will probably keep on creating new worlds—his universe is not a small place. If one assumes that God respects freedom of choice, this opens the possibility of the re-emergence of sin even in the New Creation. Just as the perfect Morning Star sinned in heaven and became the devil, just as the perfect Adam sinned in the Garden of Eden and became God's enemy, so there is a possibility that in the distant future a new creature may decide to

from sin. Therefore, the cross is not only about the redemption of humankind; the cross has a cosmic dimension. The cross has both an ‘earthly’ and a ‘cosmic’ outcome. Through the cross God secured the ‘payment’ that would ‘redeem’ to himself the entire universe. Christ has reconciled to himself ‘all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven... through his blood, shed on the cross’ (Col. 1.20).

question God’s government. Accordingly, Yancey takes ‘hope in Jesus’ scars’ because they are a permanent reminder of the suffering caused by sin—even though scars eventually stop hurting they never go away—accordingly, Christ’s scars will remain forever for the sake of all those who do not understand the fatality of sin. ‘The scars are to him an emblem of life on our planet, a permanent reminder of those days of confinement and suffering. I take hope in Jesus’ scars. From the perspective of heaven, they represent the most horrible event that has ever happened in the history of the universe ... Scars never completely go away, but neither do they hurt any longer.’ Philip Yancey, *The Jesus I Never Knew* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), p. 219.

Chapter 7

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Biblical account clearly assumes a real conflict between good and evil that has a cosmic dimension. Christ is seen as the representative of one side, whereas the devil or Satan is seen as the representative of the other side. This conflict was ‘traditionally’ presented through the ransom metaphor by some of the Early Fathers. However, their language left the later theologians with the impression that the Early Fathers literalised the ransom metaphor by explaining it in the terms of Christ literally paying the ransom to the devil in order that the devil may set the humankind free. Whether this accusation of literalising is entirely true or not, the point is that the Bible does not present the ransom motif as something that literally took place between Christ and the devil.

Moreover, the New Testament idea of ransom is not related to the devil, but it is repeatedly related to the idea of sin. Thus, the ransom is something that metaphorically happens between Christ and sin. Sin is not the instrument of the devil, but the devil is the instrument of sin. Satan as the primal slave of sin works for his master; he convinces humans to believe the lie about God and about themselves; about the Creator and the creation. In this way he causes humans to separate from God and end up in self-enslavement, which inevitably leads to death.

In biblical perspective death does not appear to be God’s agent, but rather an inevitable consequence of separation from God who is the Giver and Sustainer of all life. Through Satan’s deception many heavenly and earthly beings were led into an experiment of independence from God. An attempt to achieve a ‘perfect freedom’ has

led Satan and his followers into the radical slavery to sin. Consequently, they will experience the final product of the sin experiment, which is called the second death. This is the final, irrevocable God's decision of accepting the sinners' choice to willingly remain severed from the Son of God, the Redeemer, Archangel Michael, Christ Jesus, and accordingly, God will completely and irrevocably separate from them by ceasing to sustain them.

Through the redemptive, liberating acts God leads out of slavery to self, out of the slavery to creation into the freedom in Christ, into the freedom through a restored relationship with the Creator. Furthermore, Christ does not only redeem humans from sin and its consequence—death, but also from the condemnation of the law. Thus, the redemption is a 'three-dimensional' event—it has a past, a present and a future aspect—the past liberation from the condemnation of the law, the present liberation from the oppressing power of sin, and the future liberation from death. The present redemption, from the sin(self)-slavery based on the misconceptions about God and ourselves which we have learned to accept, believe and live because of Satan's deceptions, takes place through the drawing power of Christ Crucified through his representative the Holy Spirit. The future ransom from the presence of sin and death in our perishable bodies will take place on the day of resurrection—'I will **ransom** them from the power of grave; I will **redeem** them from death...' (Hos. 13.14); 'But God will **redeem** my life from the grave; he will surely take me to himself' (Ps. 49.15). 'I know that my **Redeemer** lives and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God' (Job 19.25-26).

Redemption from sin and death may be seen as a relational aspect of redemption. This aspect of redemption is necessary and this is implied by the presence of the Tree of Life and the Tree of knowledge of good and evil, which represent the two major principles upon which God operates—the principle of creaturely dependency and the principle of Creator's respect for the freedom of choice of his creatures. The relational aspect of redemption appears to refer to a covenant union with Christ who as the incarnate into the human family is the only one who never came under the dominion of sin and demonic power. As such he is the head of humanity, 'The Last Adam',

‘The Head of the Church’, having all the ‘rights’ of humanity which he can share with all who through a faith commitment choose to be with him. Since the focus of this essay is the pre-ascension work of Christ, his post-ascension work that explains how exactly humans may benefit from Christ’s victory is a whole new theme to be explored and this would be a logical next step to pursue if the study of redemption is to be continued.

While redemption from sin and death may be seen as a relational aspect of redemption, the redemption from the condemning power of the law may be seen as a legal aspect of redemption. The legal aspect of redemption appears to bring God’s character into question: if God needs some sort of ‘legal’ satisfaction prior to accepting the sinners, then God’s motive for redemption of humankind is self-satisfaction or self-interest rather than love for others. Since the New Testament clearly indicates that God’s motive for the redemption of humankind is love,²⁶⁶ the issue regarding the legal aspect of redemption appears to be blurred. While it is clear in the New Testament that humankind has a problem due to the condemning power of the law, the question is: who is the condemning agent of the law? Based on Zechariah 3, Colossians 2, Jude 9 and Revelation 12 a scene appears to emerge: humankind is accused by Satan before God and before the universe. Therefore, it is not God but the demonic forces who accuse humankind, and Jesus clearly revealed this through his life.²⁶⁷ The origin of sin is not planet Earth but heaven where the adversary initiated the ‘war in heaven’. Once the war has moved onto the planet earth, the issues in this conflict also included God’s right to redeem fallen humanity.

Thus, the biblical account presents the devil as playing the role of accuser through questioning God’s ‘right’ to liberate humankind from death. Accordingly, in delivering humanity from the condemning power of the law God incarnate does not

²⁶⁶ John 3.16; Rom. 5.8.

²⁶⁷ When an adulteress was brought by the Jews before Christ he saved her by exposing and removing her accusers one by one. Moreover, while he did not deny her guilt, he did not condemn her but he invited her to be restored to spiritual life—‘go, and sin no more’. This is Christ’s strategy: he does not deal with a sinner in demonic manner—through accusations or by using force, but in a redemptive way—through forgiving sinners and inviting them to return to God; through the restoration of the spiritual life, through restoration of the relationship with God. While in dealings with the sinners Satan uses the strategy of condemnation and accusation, Christ oppositely uses the strategy of redemption.

deliver humans from himself but from Satan who is presented as their accuser. This insight clarifies the nature of the issue of legal redemption, revealing that God is not the one who demands ‘legal’ self-satisfaction. Since God respects the freedom of choice and his government does not appear to be dictatorial, God decided to perform redemption in a manner that makes Satan’s accusations powerless, instead of simply ignoring the accuser. On the cross Christ accomplished the redemption of humankind—the cross is seen as marking the completion of his victorious life in which he never submitted to Satan’s challenges and temptations.

Furthermore, the cross revealed that God’s motive for redeeming humankind is love while simultaneously exposing the vicious nature of Satan and sin. If God simply ignored Satan’s insinuations about God’s ‘questionable’ character and morality and his ‘right’ to redeem, the satanic accusations would have appeared true, and the entire universe might have been destabilised; the cosmos might have sided with Satan and who knows what the consequences would have been. The possibility of this is implied in Col. 1.20—‘through him to reconcile to himself **all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven**, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross’. If everything is resolved in the heavenly realms prior to the cross, why would there still be a need for the ‘things in heaven’ to be reconciled to God through the cross? It appears that the cross resolved the cosmic aspect of sin—the entire universe and the heavenly creatures have fully sided with God, rather than siding with Satan and sin. Therefore, only if the whole biblical picture is recognised, only if the cross is observed from the cosmic perspective can the death of Christ be properly understood.

Thus, the primary cosmic purpose of the cross is to draw all the creatures back to God—‘But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw **all** to myself’ (Jn 12.32). This is the cosmic redemption: God is ‘buying back’, he is claiming back all that rightfully ‘belongs’ to him, ‘whether things on earth or things in heaven’. The cross is really a ‘cosmic ransom’ through which God has ‘purchased’ his creatures for himself; the cosmic problem of sin is truly defeated by the cross. So, the language of redemption appears to be the main metaphor used in the Bible to describe the cosmic work of Christ Crucified.

Thus, the idea of redemption could be compared to the ‘aorta’ that brings life from the very heart of the Bible. The Bible presents the ransom in the terms of God claiming rightfully the ‘ownership’ over all the creatures of the universe. This claim is not dictatorial, but it is made in the humblest way possible—through God suffering on the cross. This claim was not based on God demanding from the creatures to return to him, but on God giving himself to the creatures and in this way *drawing* them to himself. As Aulen expresses it, ‘the Atonement is, above all, a movement of God to man, not in the first place a movement of man to God’.²⁶⁸

Since Satan’s main strategy was to misrepresent God, through his incarnate life God cleared up all the misunderstanding about his law by respecting and abiding in it; he has remained true to his law; he has remained true to his character; he has remained true to himself, despite the demonic pressures and temptations. Thus, God as the incarnate demonstrated that his law is not some kind of abstract demand that is carved out on the tablets of stone, but it is something that comes from the very heart and nature of God. It is something that the Persons in the Trinity exercise towards each other throughout eternity. The life of Christ culminating on the cross clearly demonstrated that God does not act in self-interest mode, but in self-sacrifice mode. Thus, it appears that the earthly legal expression of God’s character and nature is just a temporary dimension that was introduced because of the intrusion of sin; consequently, it seems that it will be unnecessary subsequent to the final restoration of all things. Accordingly, the relational dimension of God’s law will remain eternally and throughout eternity love will be something that will be going on between creatures and the Creator and between the creatures themselves.

In conclusion, God did not redeem the universe from sin through removing the main representative of sin (Satan) by force but rather by gradually revealing the true nature and character of God, and simultaneously exposing the true nature and character of sin and the (d)evil. It was not until the cross that the revelation of God and exposure of Satan and sin reached its climax; here the way of demonic and the way of

²⁶⁸ Aulen, *Christus Victor*, p. 176.

Divine appeared oppositely different. While Christ demonstrated his lamb-like way of using the power of love, Satan demonstrated the beast-like way of using power that is worshiped. The cross revealed God's self-sacrificial nature and character, and simultaneously it revealed Satan's self-seeking, self-promoting nature and the true character of sin. Consequently, 'Christ and him crucified' does not only save the sinful humankind from sin and its consequences, but he also keeps the sinless heavenly beings from a potential free-will separation from God. The cross is not only anthropocentric; it has a cosmic dimension. Finally, Christ's 'incarnational humiliation' has depths and heights that cannot be fully appreciated theologically if it is observed merely on an anthropocentric, horizontal, earthly level. *'And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge'*(Eph. 3.17-19).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- A Representative Group of Seventh-Day Adventist Leaders, Bible Teachers, and Editors, *Seventh-Day Adventist Answer: Questions on Doctrine* (Washington D.C: Review and Herald, 1957).
- Anselm, *Cur Deus Homo* (London: Religious Tract Society, 190-?).
- Aulen, Gustaf, *Christus Victor* (London: S.P.C.K., 1953).
- Baggott, L.J., *A New Approach to Colossians* (London: A.R. Mowbray & Co Limited, 1961).
- Barclay, M.G. John, *Colossians and Philemon* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997).
- Bauckham, Richard, *Jude and the Relatives of Jesus in the Early Church* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1990).
- Betenson, Henry (ed.), *Documents of the Christian Church* (2nd ed., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979).
- Brown, Charles E., *The Atonement (Healing in Postmodern Society)* (OCLC First Search: ATLA Religion, Interpretation 53.1 [Jan 1999]).
- Cave, Sidney, *The Doctrine of the Work of Christ* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1947).
- Chamblin, J. Knox, *Paul & the Self: Apostolic Teaching for Personal Wholeness* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1993).
- Doukhan, Jacques B., *Secrets of Revelation: the Apocalypse through Hebrew Eyes* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2002).
- Dunn, D.G., *The Epistle to the Colossians and to Philemon: a Commentary on the Greek Text* (Carlisle: The Paternoster Press, 1996).
- Fiddes, Paul S., *Past Event and Present Salvation: the Christian Idea of Atonement* (London: Darton Longman and Todd, 1989).
- Gibbs, John G., *Creation and Redemption: a Study in Pauline Theology* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1971).

- Green, B. J. & Baker, M. D., *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter Varsity Press, 2000).
- Grensted, L. W., *A Short History of the Doctrine of the Atonement* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1962).
- Gunton, E. Colin, *The Actuality of Atonement* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988).
- Haley, Kim Coleman, 'Christ the Gardener: Labors of Redemption', *Parabola*: Spring 2001, vol. 26, pp. 73-79.
- Harrison, Everett F., 'Romans' in Frank E. Gaebelin (ed.), *The Expositors Bible Commentary* (London: Pickering & Inglis Ltd, 1976).
- Hodge, Charles, *A Commentary on Romans* (Edinburgh: First Banner of Truth Trust, 1975).
- Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* (The AGES Digital Library Collections CD-Rom, AGES Software Albany, OR, Version 5.0: 1997).
- Jones, E. Stanley, *Gandhi (Portrayal of a Friend)* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993).
- Käsemann, Ernst, *Commentary on Romans* (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1980).
- LaRondelle, Hans K., *How to Understand the End-Time Prophecies of the Bible* (Sarasota, FL: First Impressions, 1997).
- Lee, Edwin Kenneth, *The Religious Thought of St. John* (London: S.P.K.C., 1950).
- Letham, Robert, *The Work of Christ* (Leicester: IVP, 1993).
- Lyonnet, Stanislav & Leopold Sabourin, *Sin, Redemption, and Sacrifice: a Biblical and Patristic Study* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1970).
- Martin, Ralph P., *Colossians: the Church's Lord and Christian's Liberty* (Exeter: The Paternoster Press, 1972).
- McCormick, P., *Sin as Addiction* (New York: Paulist Press, 1989).
- McGrath, Alister E., *The Enigma of the Cross* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1987).
- Christian Theology: An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 2002).
- Morris, Leon, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Leicester: IVP, 1988).
- Naden, Roy C., *The Lamb among the Beasts* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1996).
- Ovey, Michael, 'The Cross, Creation and the Human Predicament' in David Peterson (ed.), *Where Wrath and Mercy Meet* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2002), pp. 100-135.
- Provonsha, Jack, *You Can Go Home Again* (Washington D.C: Review and Herald, 1982).

- Rashdall, Hastings, *The Idea of Atonement in Christian Theology* (London: Macmillan, 1920).
- Samaan, Philip G., *Portraits of the Messiah in Zechariah* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1989).
- Schweiker, William, 'The Image of God in Christian Faith: Vocation, Dignity, and Redemption' in Tikva Frymer-Kensky *et al.* (eds.), *Christianity in Jewish Terms* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2000), pp. 347-356.
- Stott, John, *The Cross of Christ* (Leicester, IVP: 1986).
- The Message of Romans* (Leicester: IVP, 1994).
- Suggit, John, *Freedom to Be (Peter Abelard's Doctrine of the Atonement)* (OCLC First Search: ATLA Religion, Journal of Theology for Southern Africa 8.1 [Sep 1974]).
- Swain, William, 'For Our Sins' (*The Image of the Sacrifice in the thought of the Apostle Paul*) (OCLC First Search: ATLA Religion, Interpretation 17.2 [Apr 1963]).
- Tait, A. J., 'The Atonement in the Synoptic Gospels' in L.W. Grensted, *The Atonement in History and in Life* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1936), pp. 121-132.
- Teselle, E., 'The Cross as Ransom', *Journal of Early Christian Studies*: Summer 1996, vol. 4, pp. 147-170.
- Thompson, Alden, *Who's Afraid of the Old Testament God?* (Exeter: The Paternoster Press, 1988).
- Volf, Miroslav, 'The Lamb of God and the Sin of the World' in Tikva Frymer-Kensky *et al.* (eds.), *Christianity in Jewish Terms* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2000), pp. 313-319.
- Williamson, Clark, 'A Christian View of Redemption' in Tikva Frymer-Kensky, *et al.* (eds.), *Christianity in Jewish Terms* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2000), pp. 285-291.
- Wolfson, Elliot R., 'Judaism and Incarnation: the Imaginal Body of God', in Tikva Frymer-Kensky *et al.* (eds.), *Christianity in Jewish Terms* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2000), pp. 239-254.
- Wright, N.T., *What Saint Paul Really Said* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997).
- Yancey, Philip, *The Jesus I Never Knew* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995).
- Yates, Roy, *The Epistle to the Colossians* (London: Epworth Press, 1993).