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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

The aim of this discussion is to investigate the meaning of the term ‘ἰλαστήριον’ in Romans 3.25. This essay will be of a conceptual rather than of an exegetical nature, because of the ambiguity of this concept. The first section will briefly examine the wide and the immediate context of Romans 3.25. In the second part, various interpretations of the term ‘ἰλαστήριον’ will be introduced and examined. The third section will propose the most suitable explanation of the discussed concept. The following section will discuss the meaning of Romans 3.25. The conclusion will recapitulate the findings of this essay and will propose a direction for the further investigation.

This essay will not deal with the concepts such as justification or redemption that are mentioned in the immediate context of the verse discussed. It will, however, touch the meaning of the concept of righteousness that is a crucial part of Romans 3.25. Considering the limitations, the full spectrum of the meaning of ‘ἰλαστήριον’ will probably not be exhaustively analysed in this short essay.

Chapter 2

A BRIEF CONTEXTUAL ANALYSIS

Morris¹ recognises that the purpose of the first three chapters in Romans was to demonstrate that all humanity ‘is caught up in sinfulness’. Similarly, Käsemann² points out that these chapters are divided into two subsections: the first, dealing with the sinfulness of the Gentiles, and the second dealing with the sinfulness of the Jews. Thus, Paul starts with the idea of the wrath of God being revealed against the radical depravity of humanity. Green & Baker³ propose that God’s wrath is not an ‘affective quality’ in God’s being, rather, it is his peculiar way of expressing his attitude towards sin. This view seems to be in accord with the passage which repeats three times the idea of God allowing evil to go on (‘he gave them over’ to their own desires vv. 26, 28, 32). It appears that in his wrath God does not directly punish, but rather turns his back on perverted people and leaves them to the consequences of their own choices. This is why one may wonder whether God is righteous, and whether he upholds justice, when there is so much injustice in the world. The answer comes in the next section, which is the immediate context of the text discussed in this essay. After God’s wrath has been revealed, God’s righteousness is revealed in Jesus Christ (vv. 21-22). In what way has God’s righteousness been revealed?

God obviously left the sins of the past unpunished, ‘but now’ God demonstrated his righteousness by presenting Christ as a ‘ἰλαστήριον’. Does this mean, as Morris⁴ suggests, that God waited patiently for a long time until the coming of Jesus

¹ Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Leicester: IVP, 1988), p. 172.

² Ernst Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans* (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1980), p. 33.

³ B.J. Green & M.D. Baker, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross* (Downers Grove, Illinois: Inter Varsity Press, 2000), p. 56.

⁴ ‘Justice demands that guilty should be punished just as it demands that innocent goes free. So God might be accused of being unjust. Not any more, says Paul. The cross shows us God’s inflexible righteousness in the very means whereby sin is forgiven’ Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, p. 183. One may question Morris’s argument that God demonstrated his justice on the cross – how can God be

to punish him instead of us for our sins, in order to demonstrate his justice? Or, perhaps this means that God exercises his justice, his righteousness differently from the way humanity exercises justice? Harrison⁵ recognises that ‘the character of God needs justification’ because of his unwillingness to punish the sins of the past. How does God justify the possible accusation that he is not fair, just and righteous? Is God doing the **right** thing in allowing us to commit sin and evil? Would it be better if he would punish us immediately after we have committed sin or have done wrong?

One thing is clear—God did not use the means of punishment against us, and somehow he justified this apparent injustice through Jesus Christ. The key seems to be found in the word ‘ἰλαστήριον’, for God presented Jesus as a ‘ἰλαστήριον’ ‘in order to demonstrate his justice’, because he left the sins of the past unpunished (v.25). God’s righteousness is now (with the coming of Jesus) revealed apart from law (v.21). The word ‘law’ in this text does not have an article, and therefore, according to Morris⁶, it does not refer only to the Jewish Torah (as elsewhere in the Pauline writings) but to any kind of law or legislation or instruction in general that is used in any society to bring order and justice. Therefore it appears that God’s righteousness, or justice, was revealed in an alternative way, in a way different from the way we humans understand justice. God obviously does not condone the sins of humanity, ‘for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God’ (v.23). However, he does not deal with us according to law, but ‘apart from law’. In other words, he does acknowledge the guilt of humankind, but he does not give us what we deserve - he demonstrates his justice in an alternative way.

just if he punished the innocent one when according to Morris justice ‘demands that innocent goes free’?

⁵ Everett F. Harrison, ‘Romans’ in Frank E. Gaebelein (ed.), *The Expositors Bible Commentary* (London: Pickering & Inglis Ltd, 1976), p. 44.

⁶ ‘The word *law* (not “the law”) is general.’ Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, p. 174.

Chapter 3

‘HILASTERION’: A LAMB OR A LID?

While the nineteenth-century theologian Charles Hodge⁷ recognises that ‘ἱλαστήριον’ has been interpreted traditionally by many Early Fathers as a mercy-seat or the lid on the ark of the covenant, he disagrees with their interpretation. Instead he proposes that ‘ἱλαστήριον’ is referring to the concept of appeasement of God, which was promoted by Anselm in the eleventh century.⁸ What were the arguments that Hodge uses as a support of his interpretation?

First, he disagrees with the idea that the writers of the Bible would use the lid of the ark as an illustration for Jesus Christ.⁹ Secondly, Hodge¹⁰ proposes that the word ‘sacrifice’, which is not found in the Greek text, needs to be supplied to the biblical text; thus interpreting the term as a ‘propitiatory sacrifice’. While one may justifiably agree that the New Testament does not usually use the lid of the ark as an illustration of Christ, nevertheless, this does not exclude the possibility of one ‘unconventional’ use of this term. However, Hodge’s second argument does not carry much weight since it is based merely on an insertion of a non-existing word into the text of the Bible.

McGrath¹¹ recognises that Hodge wrote ‘in conscious opposition’ to modernists. One of the main views which Hodge firmly stood for was the idea of the perfect infallibility of the Bible.¹² Considering that Hodge’s understanding of ‘ἱλαστήριον’ was based on an insertion of a non-existent word (sacrifice) into the biblical text, one

⁷ Charles Hodge, *A Commentary on Romans* (Edinburgh: First Banner of Truth Trust, 1975), p. 92.

⁸ Hodge, *A Commentary on Romans*, p. 92-93.

⁹ Hodge, *A Commentary on Romans*, p. 92.

¹⁰ Hodge, *A Commentary on Romans*, p. 92.

¹¹ Alister E. McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 2002), p. 177.

¹² McGrath, *Christian Theology*, p. 177.

can easily detect an obvious contradiction in his views. Therefore, one is compelled to revisit and reassess the interpretation of the text in Romans 3.25.

Similarly to Hodge, Morris¹³, in the second half of the twentieth century, also understands ‘ἱλαστήριον’ to mean ‘the removal of wrath’, thus, an appeasement. He suggests that the term ‘ἱλαστήριον’ in LXX referring to the lid on the ark cannot be used to interpret ‘ἱλαστήριον’ in Romans¹⁴. He points out that ‘ἱλαστήριον’ in LXX does not only refer to the lid on the ark but also to the ledge of the altar.¹⁵ Morris concludes that ‘we need more than the simple, unqualified use of the word to see here a reference to that article of tabernacle furniture’¹⁶. While his arguments against the use of LXX are valid to a certain degree, one may wonder why he does not even mention an obvious reference to ‘ἱλαστήριον’ as the lid on the ark in the epistle to Hebrews. Hebrews 9.5 is surely an obvious use of the term ‘ἱλαστήριον’ as the lid on the ark.

Käsemann¹⁷ recognises that the heart of the debate about Romans 3.25 is whether ‘ἱλαστήριον’ refers to the lid on the ark (just as in Hebrews 9.25) or not. For Käsemann, ‘ἱλαστήριον’ refers to the lid on the ark that was called a place of God’s presence because it was sprinkled with blood on the Day of Atonement.¹⁸ While Harrison recognised that ‘ἱλαστήριον’ in Romans does not have an article, unlike Hebrews 9.25, he suggests that if Paul’s intention was to stress ‘that Christ is the antitype of the OT mercy seat, he would naturally omit the article so as to avoid identifying Christ with a material object’.¹⁹ Therefore, he does not consider the absence of the article to be a serious objection to the view that the meaning of ‘ἱλαστήριον’ in Romans is identical to the one in Hebrews.²⁰ All in all, Harrison’s and Käsemann’s interpretations appear to be more convincing than these of Hodge and Morris.

Nonetheless, Käsemann’s interpretation still appears to lack some detail and clarity. As mentioned above, Käsemann proposes that ‘ἱλαστήριον’ was called the

¹³ Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, p. 180.

¹⁴ Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, p. 181.

¹⁵ Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, p. 182.

¹⁶ Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, p. 182.

¹⁷ Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, p. 97.

¹⁸ Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, p. 97.

¹⁹ Harrison, ‘Romans’, p. 43.

²⁰ ‘The Hebrews passage has the definite article, whereas the reference in Romans does not. This is not an insuperable objection, for if Paul is intent in stressing that Christ is the antitype of the OT mercy seat, he would naturally omit the article so as to avoid identifying Christ with a material object.’ Harrison, ‘Romans’, p. 43.

place of God's presence because it was sprinkled with blood on the Day of Atonement. However, the lid was the meeting place of God and his people before the very first Day of Atonement.²¹ To be precise, God's glory was seated upon the 'ἱλαστήριον' six months and nine days²² before 'ἱλαστήριον' was sprinkled, on the very first Day of Atonement.²³ Moreover, while God's presence abode there continually, the sprinkling of the lid with blood happened only once a year. While the sprinkling of the lid had a certain purpose, it was not related to the main function of the lid which was 'God's seat'.

²¹ 'There above the cover between the two cherubim that are over the ark of the Testimony, I will meet with you ...' Exod. 25.22 and 30.6.

²² 'So the tabernacle was set up on the first day of the first month ... then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle.' Exod. 40.17 and 34.

²³ 'On the tenth day of the seventh month ... atonement is to be made once a year for all the sins of Israelites.' Lev. 16.29 and 34.

Chapter 4

‘HILASTERION’: CHRIST’S DEATH OR CHRIST’S LIFE?

The various ‘translations’ of the word ‘ἱλαστήριον’ in the different versions of the Bible reveal that Christianity in general accepts the idea that ‘ἱλαστήριον’ refers to the cross, to Christ’s death. The question is whether this view explains fully the meaning of ‘ἱλαστήριον’? Even though the earthly sanctuary is merely a ‘parable’²⁴, and thus, should not be interpreted literally, it still does illustrate different aspects of the work of Christ. For instance, it was the high priest who sprinkled blood upon ‘ἱλαστήριον’, upon the place of God’s presence; and there is no doubt that the idea of the earthly high priest symbolically pointed to Christ as our great High Priest.²⁵ It is interesting to notice that Christ’s High-priestly ministry probably did not begin until the day of his ascension, when he sat at the right hand of God—at the place of God’s presence.²⁶ If this was the case, then it seems that Jesus, as our high priest, was not able to symbolically sprinkle the ‘ἱλαστήριον’ (or fulfil this symbol whatever it means) until at least 40 days after his death. Does this mean that God was not ‘propitiated’ until Jesus’ ascension? How can ‘ἱλαστήριον’ refer only to Christ’s death if Christ was not able to fulfil ‘the sprinkling of the ‘ἱλαστήριον’ part of the sanctuary parable until at least 40 days after his death—the ascension? Does ‘ἱλαστήριον’ really refer only to Christ’s death?

As mentioned above, the main purpose of ‘ἱλαστήριον’ in the Old Testament was that it was the place of God’s presence; the lid was the place upon which God’s glory *dwelt*. The purpose of the earthly sanctuary is very clear from God’s perspective—‘have them make a sanctuary for me, and I will *dwell* among them.’ (Exod. 25.8).

²⁴ Heb. 9.9 uses the Greek word παραβολή.

²⁵ Heb. 4.14.

²⁶ ‘We do have such a high priest, who sat down at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, and who serves in the sanctuary, the true tabernacle set up by the Lord, not by man.’ Heb. 8.1-2.

Perhaps, it is unconventional to combine John's ideas with Paul's ideas, but there is a valid connection between these two writers when it comes to the meaning of 'ἱλαστήριον'. While interpreting John 1.14 Boice²⁷ points out that the glory revealed in Jesus is most likely related to the idea of God's glory visibly manifested in the Old Testament Sanctuary as the *Shekinah*. Thus, Boice suggests, just as in the desert God asked the Israelites to make a sanctuary for him so that he could 'dwell among them'²⁸, in the same manner 'the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us'.²⁹ In fact, the verses quoted above, both in the New Testament and LXX use the same verb σκηνοῶ³⁰. Just as in the desert God's glory was continually present among the Israelites by means of the sanctuary, so in the beginning of the first century God's glory was continually present among his people by means of God's embodiment in the person of Jesus Christ.

While God's glory dwelt upon the man Jesus ever since his birth and throughout his life, he revealed his glory 'formally' and 'publicly' at the wedding in Cana.³¹ However, it appears that the full realisation of this fact in the disciples' minds did not happen until after Jesus' death and resurrection when the disciples contemplated on his death. Even though God's glory dwelt upon Jesus since his birth, the people around him started realising it only gradually, step by step. The wedding at Cana was one of those great steps, and the cross was the crucial step. Therefore, just as in the Old Testament God's glory dwelt upon the lid of the ark, so did God's glory dwell upon Jesus since incarnation.

So, it appears that 'ἱλαστήριον' does not refer merely to Jesus' death but it encompasses all of his life. It is interesting to notice that all the Synoptics report that exactly at the time of Jesus' death the curtain of the temple was torn in two³², and consequently the Most Holy became visible. Christ opened a new way for all to see God's glory that was up to that moment formally hidden in the Most Holy, being restricted to the eyes of the designated priests only. Therefore, it seems that Christ's death was the moment when God's glory was fully revealed. The epistle to Hebrews

²⁷ 'There can be little doubt that these statements derive their meaning from the visible manifestation of God in the Old Testament through the Shekinah and that their purpose for the evangelist is to speak of the visible manifestation of God in Jesus.' Montgomery J. Boice, *Witness & Revelation in the Gospel of John* (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1970), p. 55,

²⁸ 'Have them make a sanctuary for me, and I will dwell among them.' Exod. 25.8.

²⁹ Jn 1.14.

³⁰ See The BibleWorks 4.0 CD-Rom.

³¹ Jn 2.11.

³² Mt 27.51/Mk 15.38/Lk. 23.45.

presents the idea that ‘by the blood of Jesus ... a new and living way (was) opened for us’.³³ Through Christ we gained confidence to approach God in a new way, as never before. From the moment of Christ’s death, the cross became the designated place where God and humanity would meet.

Christ’s death revealed fully the reality, the glory of God’s character, the depth of his love for sinners. There God’s glory was manifested as never before or ever after—the cross was the greatest revelation of God’s glory in history and in the future. Christ had been ‘ἱλαστήριον’ ever since his birth and throughout his life, but people could not perceive it until his death. It was the torn curtain that made it clear. Christ replaced the ‘ἱλαστήριον’ of the tabernacle, he replaced the meeting place of God and man (‘There above the cover ... I will meet with you’³⁴), and according to Harrison³⁵ he has become the new ‘meeting place of God and man’. Similarly, Swain³⁶ concludes that God has presented Jesus ‘as a new mercy-seat, a new locus of reconciliation, a new meeting place for God and men’. Moreover, he points out that the mercy seat was not only the locus of God’s presence, but also the locus of God’s revelation.³⁷ Thus, since the incarnation, humanity was to meet with God in the person of Christ and him crucified.

³³ Heb. 10.19-20.

³⁴ Exod. 25.22 and 30.6

³⁵ Harrison, ‘Romans’, p. 43.

³⁶ 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. 137.

³⁷ Swain, *For Our Sins*, p. 138.

Chapter 5

‘HILASTERION’: EXECUTION OR DEMONSTRATION OF RIGHTEOUSNESS?

How should one understand the second part of Romans 3.25? Did God demonstrate his justice and justify his apparent overlooking of the past sins by pouring out his wrath (that was stored up for centuries) upon Jesus on the cross? If one understands ‘ἱλαστήριον’ to mean an appeasing sacrifice, then yes. Hodge believes that ‘the satisfaction of justice was the immediate and specific end of the death of Christ’.³⁸ While Käsemann³⁹ proposes that ‘the satisfaction theory cannot be based’ on this verse, he does not feel obliged to suggest any alternative to it. Through the statement that God demonstrated his righteousness ‘in the very means whereby sin is forgiven’, Morris⁴⁰ sides with Hodge’s idea of satisfaction of God’s justice. Another highly regarded theologian, Stott⁴¹ presents very clearly and straightforwardly the idea that human sins were punished on the cross and this was how God demonstrated his justice.

However, the arguments given in this essay do not harmonise with the idea of ‘ἱλαστήριον’ being an appeasement of God; ‘ἱλαστήριον’ does not refer only to the sacrificial death of Jesus, but to the whole (sacrificial) incarnation and (sacrificial) life of Jesus. So, if God ‘demonstrate(d) his justice’ by presenting Christ as a ‘ἱλαστήριον’⁴², in what way did he do it? How did God justify his apparent injustice of overlooking the past evil? There are several interpreters who recognise that the idea of righteousness needs to be considered from the perspective of the Hebrew mindset, rather than from the Graeco-Roman, or the Western mindset perspective.

³⁸ Hodge, *A Commentary on Romans*, p. 96.

³⁹ Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, p. 97.

⁴⁰ Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, p. 183.

⁴¹ ‘...their punishment on the cross (by which God demonstrated his justice).’ John R.W. Stott, *The Message of Romans* (Leicester: IVP, 1994), p. 116.

⁴² Rom. 3.25.

Chamblin⁴³, for instance, proposes that צדקה 'of Yahweh is ... his vigorous and sustained faithfulness to the covenant he has established with his people'; Similarly, Brunt⁴⁴ considers God's righteousness to be primarily a relational term. While he does not deny a legal background and tone of this term, Brunt⁴⁵ points out that the role of a judge in the Old Testament was different from the role of a judge in a contemporary western society—while we see a judge as a person who handles only the administrative aspect of a court process, the Old Testament Hebrew concept of judge assumed a direct bare-hands involvement of a judge in people's lives and a liberation of the oppressed. Therefore, one may say that God's righteousness was demonstrated in Jesus Christ through his liberation of the people oppressed by sin, which he accomplished by his life, death and resurrection. God's righteousness invades the territory ruled by sin; its purpose is salvific. God's righteousness was not manifested through Jesus doing something for God (or himself)—appeasement, but through Jesus doing something for humanity—salvation. The purpose of God's righteousness demonstrated on the cross was not satisfaction of God, but salvation of humanity.

Gunton⁴⁶ also suggests that God's justice 'is the form of God's action in saving human beings'. He points out that the cross should not be seen 'as a suffering of a purely passive kind'⁴⁷, for in Christ, God exercised his power, his righteousness in his own 'strange' way. Christ, as a sinless being, exercised power differently from the way sinful beings exercise power. Christ's righteousness respects the freedom of choice, whereas sinful beings exercise righteousness or justice coercively by using physical force. For Christ, to exercise power and justice does not mean 'butchering your opponent with weapons but refusing to exercise power demonically, in order to overcome evil with good'.⁴⁸

Therefore, God's justice only appeared as injustice or the wrong thing to do when he left the sins of the past 'unpunished'. Actually, the translation 'unpunished' does not do justice to the term 'παρεσιμ' in Romans 3.25. This term means 'overlooked' rather than 'unpunished', which changes the tone of this verse from purely fo-

⁴³ Knox J. Chamblin, *Paul & the Self: Apostolic Teaching for Personal Wholeness* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1993), p. 74.

⁴⁴ John C. Brunt, *Romans: Mercy for All* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1996), pp. 83-84.

⁴⁵ Brunt, *Romans: Mercy for All*, p. 84.

⁴⁶ Colin E. Gunton, *The Actuality of Atonement: A Study of Metaphor, Rationality and the Christian Tradition* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988), p. 102.

⁴⁷ Gunton, *The Actuality of Atonement*, p. 77.

⁴⁸ Gunton, *The Actuality of Atonement*, p. 77.

rensic to relational.⁴⁹ God chose a way of dealing with sin that is very different from the way humanity deals with sin. God's justice, according to Gunton⁵⁰, is a relational phenomenon – 'it is not a *state* but something that takes place between God' and the people. From God's perspective, the right way to deal with sin is to forgive it rather than to punish it. Imprisonment, punishment as a deterrent and retaliation do not solve the problem of sin but only the consequences of sin.

Still, while God forgave the sins he did not condone them; he rather confronted them in his own unusual way. By refusing to retaliate, one can actually defeat injustice and change it. Gandhi is one of the best examples—he openly confronted injustice and evil, but he dealt with it through fasting and through refusing to use force; he used a 'non-aggressive resistance'⁵¹. Similarly, the cross was the outworking of the most powerful 'non-aggressive resistance' act that ever took place. Just as Gandhi brought the British rule and authorities to their knees, so Christ 'disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross'.⁵² By stripping off, disarming, uncovering the true nature of the government of sin and the reign of evil, Christ and his kingdom gained the loyalty of many who were previously loyal to the powers and authorities of the world 'below'. In this way many are saved, for if they stay loyal to sin and separated from God they will perish for eternity.

Just as God in the Old Testament fought for his people as a warrior, so did God in Christ invade the territory ruled by sin and consequently suffered the wounds in this conflict. He liberated those who were oppressed by the rule of sin for the price of his blood. His justice is salvific, rather than administrative; it has a saving effect, rather than a punishing effect. On the cross Christ demonstrated God's justice and he confronted and exposed publicly the injustice of the government of sin. Christ's life, culminating in his death, was indeed the greatest demonstration of God's righteousness. He did the **right** thing when he became a man—any other choice of demonstrating his righteousness would fall short of perfection. God did the right thing, just thing when he left the past sins unpunished and allowed evil to go on. He did the right thing in not punishing us immediately after we had sinned and turned away from him.

⁴⁹ See BibleWorks 4.0 CD-Rom.

⁵⁰ Gunton, *The Actuality of Atonement*, p. 104.

⁵¹ Eknath Easwaran, *Gandhi the Man: the Story of his Transformation* (Tomales, CA: Nilgiri Press, 1997), pp. 147-171.

⁵² Col 2.15.

Therefore, if one expects God to punish evil in this world in order to demonstrate his justice, one may die waiting. A simple reality check will prove that God allows evil to go on around us. We may not understand the reasons for this, but it appears that in the long run God's way of doing righteousness is better than our way of doing righteousness. This is God's choice simply because punishment can never solve the sin problem—and in the long run, sin (cause) rather than evil actions (consequence) is God's main concern. A good question is whether God will allow evil to go on forever? The Bible points out that at one point in the future 'the old order of things'⁵³ will be brought to an end, and evil and sin will vanish forever. However, the limitations of this essay do not allow a further study of this question.

⁵³ Rev. 21.4.

Chapter 6

CONCLUDING REMARKS

While the main purpose of ‘ἱλαστήριον’ (the place of God’s continual presence and revelation) was fulfilled in the life of Jesus and culminated in his death, the secondary function of ‘ἱλαστήριον’ (sprinkling of it on the Day of Atonement) is not discussed in this essay because of limitations. If a further study was to be undertaken, it would continue in the direction of the meaning of the yearly blood-sprinkling of ‘ἱλαστήριον’. Swain points out that while the Israelites responded to God through repentance and daily sacrifices, they ‘always lived in the unfulfilled tension of the expectation of a final vindication of God’s righteousness.’⁵⁴ This probably points to the eschatological judgement day and the final demonstration of God’s righteousness, when he will fully liberate his people from the oppression of sin through glorification. Moreover, on that day all those who did not want to be liberated from sin will have their choice granted—they will reap the fruit and the final consequence of sin, the final consequence of separation from God, which is death. Those who did not accept **Life** (‘I am ... life’, John 11.25, ‘you refuse to come to me to have life’, John 5.40) will have their choice granted and they will cease to receive the life-support from God. Thus, God will finally demonstrate his righteousness through making all things in the whole universe right again and restoring them to their right order. Nonetheless, as mentioned already, the limitations of this essay do not allow a further exploration of this matter. Furthermore, this essay focused on the ‘now’ aspect of salvation and did not deal with the ‘not yet’ aspect of salvation.

It seems plausible to conclude that the idea of ‘ἱλαστήριον’ in Romans 3.25 refers to the ‘parable’ of the lid on the ark of the covenant rather than to the concept of appeasement of God. The ‘ἱλαστήριον’ illustration is not related merely to Christ’s

⁵⁴ Swain, *For Our Sins*, p. 139.

death, but rather to the whole of his sacrificial life culminating in his death. By God becoming man, Jesus Christ became a new ‘ἱλαστήριον’, the new meeting place of God and humanity. He also became the focal point of the revelation of God’s glory. Moreover, Christ and him crucified is now the designated place where the prodigal children may return to their heavenly Father and in this way regain life that was lost when the first man walked away from God and exhausted his rightful inheritance. Finally, in presenting Jesus as a ‘ἱλαστήριον’ God demonstrated his righteousness by doing what is right in his eyes—forgiving of sins, and liberating from sins.

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