

The Flaws of Substitution Theories



There are many theories of the 'atonement'. For that matter, the word 'atonement' was invented many centuries later by Tyndale ("at-one-ment") to translate the same Greek word that is also translated "**reconciliation.**" *Reconciliation* simply means a *return to favor*.

"And all things are of God, who hath **reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ**, and hath given to us the **ministry of reconciliation;**" 2 Cor. 5:18

"God was in Christ, **reconciling the world unto himself**, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath **committed unto us the word of reconciliation.** 2 Cor. 5:19

"Wherefore in all things it behooved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make **reconciliation for the sins of the people.**" Heb. 2:17

The bible always speaks of putting away wickedness and living morally right. It is taught in both testaments. However, somewhere along the line, Christ's mission became a "Substitution" instead of "Example." The moral character and conduct of Christ was to be an example to his followers so that they may receive the "gift" of life, which is a life of immortality in the kingdom of God to come. This is the purpose for which Christ was sent (Luke 4:43), to preach the **good news** of the kingdom of God. He started off by telling people they needed to repent, but this has taken a back seat to imputation of Christ's righteousness (which the Bible never teaches) and all kinds of theories about the atonement. Jesus said,

"But go and learn what *this* means: ***I desire mercy and not sacrifice.*** For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance."

This truth taken from Hosea 6:6 that states fully: "For I desire mercy and not sacrifice and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings,"

This reveals the full principle of God's word that to **obey** is better than sacrifice.

Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, As in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, And to heed than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, And stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, He also has rejected you 1Sam. 15:22-23

God has never required a Substitution for man's sins or a Penal remuneration. Rather, He calls all sinners to repentance and faith proven by deeds. (The scriptural evidence of this truth is overwhelming throughout both testaments.) From the very beginning the **only** pardon from

willful and deliberate sin was **repentance**, which the broken and contrite sinner purified himself of all filthiness of the flesh and laid aside his overflow of wickedness in genuine godly sorrow with a heart free from guile and cried out for **mercy**.

In the Old Testament, there was no sacrifice sufficient to atone for **serious deliberate moral sins** and New Covenant as well. The **penalty** for such infractions **was death**. The following shows how there was no prescribed sacrifice for the following sins under the Old Covenant, only the **death penalty, physical death**:

- Murder – Gen. 9:6; Ex. 21:12-14, 20,23; Lev. 24:17,21; Num. 35:16-34; Deut. 19.
- Smiting Parents- Ex. 21:15.
- Kidnapping – Ex. 21:16; Deut. 24:7.
- Cursing Parents – Ex. 21:17; Lev. 20:9.
- Negligence with animals that kill – Ex. 21:28-32.
- Witchcraft – Ex. 22:18.
- Bestiality – (sexual intercourse with an animal) Ex. 22:19; Lev. 18:23-29; 20:15,16. Lev. 20:15,16
- Idolatry – Ex. 22:20; Deut. 17:2-7.
- Adultery (including sexual intercourse with father’s wife, daughter-in-law, mother-in-law) Lev. 20:10; Deut. 22:22-30.
- Working on the Sabbath – Ex. 35:2.
- Incest – Lev. 18:6-29; 20:11-22.
- Consecration of children to idols – Lev. 20:1-5.
- Sodomy/Homosexuality – Lev. 20:13.
- Whoredom – Lev. 21:9; Deut. 22:21,22.
- Sorcery Lev. 20:27
- Blasphemy – Lev. 24:11-16.
- False prophecy – Deut. 13:1-18; 18:20.
- Leading men away from God – Deut. 13:6-18.
- Stubbornness, rebellious, glutton drunken sons – Deut. 21:18-23.
- False dreams and visions – Deut. 13:1-18.
- Rape Duet. 22:25

Sacrifices in the Old Testament could not cleanse these types of sins. In the New Testament the penalty is still death (though not physical death as in the Old Testament) and disqualifies one from entering the Kingdom of God (1 Cor. 6:9-10; Eph. 5:5; Gal. 5:19-21; Rev. 21:8; Gal. 6:8, Rom. 2:6-8) and will face eternal destruction on judgment day.

The only solution **throughout** Scripture is the necessity of **repentance**, to turn from their evil ways. If they did not, they were to be put to death. A classic example is in the case of David. David had murdered and committed adultery. These sins were punishable by death, but David pleaded with God and depended upon God’s mercy and kindness by going to Him in repentance. Out of **LOVE** God forgave David. God showed him **MERCY** rather than death and David’s relationship with God was restored. Another case has to do with the people of Nineveh. God was going to destroy them but changed His mind when they repented. No one had to be *punished*, there was *no payment*, and there was *no substitute*.

The blood of animals was never sufficient to once and for all crucify the flesh with its passions and desires. That requires a complete moral transformation from within through obedience to the truth.

Moral Government Advocates

Substitution in any form negates all of this and does everything by proxy. Even the *gratitude angle* under the Moral Government theory is not enough to enforce a change in moral conduct in following Christ's example.

Moral Government advocates insist that **Public Justice** must be appeased in order that God's divine authority is not defrauded. In this manner Christ's death on the cross balanced the scales of Justice, so to speak. Jesus did not have to suffer the Wrath of God or be blackened by sin (as under the Penal model), but according to Moral Government theory, he did have to satisfy **Public Justice** as an '*alternative*' to divine punishment. (In other words, even though a person comes to Christ in faith and repentance and is forgiven, those sins still need to be dealt with.) Thus through Jesus' morally perfect life and sacrificial death serves as a means of restoring God's honor and allowing Him to extend forgiveness of sins to all who believe in His Son according to this theory. So Christ acted as man's **Substitute** in that we now '**avoid**' the wages of sin and are restored to favor in faith.

No matter how one looks at it, it all leads to Jesus being our "substitute" (whether by the Penal Code or Moral Government to satisfy Public Justice) when Scripture never mentions nor gives the idea of him being our substitute in any manner.

The major flaw under this theory is the '*alternative*' angle. However, in the Bible **repentance** is the alternative to divine punishment, and not a satisfaction of Public Justice!

A person who holds the moral government theory states,

The atonement is the greatest influence upon our hearts to turn from a life of sin unto a life of loving holiness unto the Lord. It is by grace through faith that we are saved, not merely from the penalty of sin but from the practice of sin!

*The atonement is the greatest influence upon our hearts...? Shouldn't it be about **repenting and believing the gospel of the Kingdom of God?** What turned the hearts away from sin before Jesus was crucified? Jesus went about preaching the gospel, the "good news," about the Kingdom of God for three and a half years before he was crucified. He sent the 12, along with 70 other disciples, to go and preach the gospel. Certainly the "greatest influence" upon the hearts of the people to turn from a life of sin was not the cross for Christ was not yet crucified. The gospel is more than Jesus dying on the cross. The gospel began with "**repent**" for the kingdom of God is at hand. To repent means to change your mindset and life direction and believe the good news. (Mark 1:15) The good news, the gospel, should influence us to change our mindset and life direction. The average sinner on the street is not going to be influenced just because we*

talk about Christ crucified for the forgiveness of sins as if this is the *full gospel*. Where is the "good news" that brings us up to the crucifixion, the resurrection, and our future in the kingdom of God? Are they simply led to try and be filled with emotions of regret because Jesus died as a substitute for them on the cross and then try and believe their sins are forgiven so they will escape the torture of eternally burning in hell fire and enjoy eternal bliss in heaven? This is not the gospel at all and filled with major errors.

We must ask, in what manner does a Moral Government teacher preach repentance? Because if the repenting sinner is coming to Christ as his *substitution* to divine punishment, **how** can his heart be purified from the corrupting influence of sin in such a repentance? The '*clearing*' of wrong doing that results in a pure heart (2 Cor. 7:11), becomes a '**COVERING**' by which the sinner '*Trusts*' in the sufficiency of Christ's accomplishment to satisfy public justice *instead of returning to obedience and actually doing what is right to reconcile his past life of sin as God has always expected.*

'Wash yourself, make yourself clean. Put away the evil of your doings from before My eyes. Cease to do evil and learn to DO good!' Isa. 1:16-17

Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, **for he will abundantly pardon.** Isa 55:7

The argument of Moral Government advocates is that *repentance alone is not enough* to restore man's confidence in Public Justice in that God would have to suspend the sanctions of His law in order to pass over the sin committed which would result in the public's lack of confidence in His authority to rule. So a sinner's repentance does nothing to remedy the evil done to the public's welfare or serve as a means of motivating others to repent. How providing man with a **substitution** that makes the difference is unclear. Man must **obey from his heart and repent**, all *substitution* does is give him another excuse *not* to obey.

Therefore Moral Government is **NOT** a reasonable alternative to Penal Substitution. **BOTH** theories are severely flawed from the start because God has shown time and again He is willing to forgive man's sin on virtue of **pure mercy** and **loving kindness** without demanding any form of **satisfaction or payment**.

Throughout the Bible we see that repentance and faith is proven by deeds. Nowhere do I see where God required a substitution as a satisfaction to divine punishment or punishment in order to satisfy the demands of justice. Although scripture can be misrepresented to imply these things, the language of God is **MERCY** not sacrifice. As Jesus said,

"But go and learn what *this* means: ***I desire mercy and not sacrifice.*** For I did not come to call the righteous, but **sinner, to repentance.**"

He demands nothing more from man than a **moral reformation of character and conduct** for entrance into the kingdom of God. Christ provided mankind with the example and the imperative

to deny self and live for God. (*Which serves both the greater good of mankind and upholds the universal Justice of God, thereby fulfilling all the law and Prophets Matt. 22:37-40*) This can only happen by releasing man from the bondage and corruption of sin and that isn't going to happen by him accepting the notion of a **substitution** and then repenting out of **gratitude** that Jesus satisfied the Justice of God to divert divine punishment. **Repentance is already a satisfactory diversion to punishment**, it's the slavery to sin man must escape. And that is one of the reasons the Son of God was revealed: '**To Destroy the works of the devil**' (1 John 3:8). How is this done? By believing and obeying Jesus the Messiah and, by following his example, man could have victory over sin, the flesh, and the devil.

*For the **grace of God that brings salvation** has appeared to all men, teaching us that, **denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age**, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for himself His own special people, zealous for good works. Titus 2:11-14*

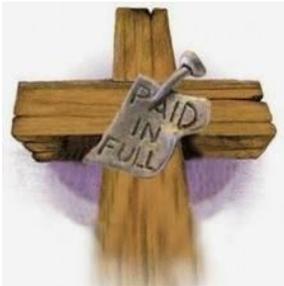
Among the early Christians **morality replaced sacrifice**. Purification occurred not by a multitude of offerings but by obedience to the truth. (1Pet. 1:22) The purpose of the commandment was purity, sincerity and love (1 Tim.1:5). They were cleansed of all unrighteousness by presenting their bodies as a **LIVING sacrifice**, holy and acceptable to God, no longer conformed to the world but transformed by the renewing of the mind. (Rom. 12:1-2) Actually living a life of sacrificial service to God was the means by which they were pure as he is pure. (1 John 3:3) If they continued walking in the light then the blood of Jesus Christ cleansed them of all sin. (1 John 1:7-9) Not by a ritual of blood (as under the old covenant) but by a reminder of the awesome price Jesus made to **ransom** them from the futile ways of the past. And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay here in fear; knowing that you were not **redeemed (ransomed)** with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, **but with the precious blood of Christ**, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. 1Pet. 1:17-19

The fatal error post modern Bible pundits have made is applying an erroneous application of the Jewish sacrificial system in the Old Testament to the theological tenet of substitution invented in 10th Century Rome. Herein we have the massive system of error stretching its tentacles over mankind.

Under the sacrificial system of Moses there was no atonement for willful moral sins. (As listed above.) These are the **Sin unto death** (1John 5:16) that meant instant disqualification from the coming Kingdom. (See such passages 1 Cor. 6:9-10; Gal. 5:19-21, etc.) Only God's merciful kindness could spare an individual from eternal loss for these sins **IF** they take the opportunity of what God has granted them, **repentance** (Acts 11:18), forsaking their wicked deeds. This eternal concept has **not** changed; God still requires full and clean repentance to receive remission of sins, otherwise, the wages of sin is still death! (Rom. 6:23). There is no negotiation.

For by this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow his steps: Who committed no sin, Nor was deceit found in his mouth"; who, when he was reviled, did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but committed himself to Him who judges righteously; who himself bore our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness by whose stripes you were healed. For you were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls. 1 Pet. 2:21-25.

Penal Substitution



The teaching that Jesus *paid for our sins* or that he was *punished* and our *substitute* is Post-Reformation theology. The bible does not teach Penal Substitution. This theory says that Jesus took our place on the cross and suffered the guilt and punishment that should belong to us, that he became a curse in our place. We get statements like "Jesus Paid It All."

Charles Stanley says, "*How can I lose Christ's **payment** for my sin? Can God declare me "guilty" after he has declared me "not guilty"?*" He also says, "*When Christ died, which of your sins did he die for? Which sins were you forgiven of when you trusted him as Savior? If the sins you commit after becoming a Christian can annul your relationship with the Savior, clearly those sins were not covered at Calvary.*"

Scripture teaches that *past sins* are forgiven at the moment of repentance and believing the Gospel. (Acts 20:21, 26:20; 2 Peter 1:9) However, this theory has led to the belief that all **future** sins are automatically forgiven as well. This leads us to the doctrine of Unconditional Eternal Security rather than conditional as scripture tells us.

Also, why are scriptures silent as to who was paid? Since scripture states that Christ gave himself a *ransom* for ALL (1 Tim. 2:6) and if this was an actual "payment," then in reality sin is irrevocable and we must accept Universalism. Since Jesus "paid it all" two thousand years ago, then "all" must be acquitted.

If we are to believe that the atonement was a payment then we are left with the idea that Jesus was ***punished*** on the cross. Charles Stanley says, "*We trust that Christ was punished in our place.*" Trust that Christ was punished? The only reason why he could claim a "trust" is because he does not have any clear statement that can be found in scripture. No where does it say Christ was punished or died in our place. The wages of sin is still death.

There are a couple of problems if we want to say Jesus had to PAY for sins. If Jesus had to PAY the debt for sin, then there was *no true forgiveness*. If a debt was paid then it was not cancelled as the Bible says. Nowhere in the Bible does it say Jesus had to *pay* or be *punished for our sins*. In fact, quite the opposite is said. In Matthew chapter 18 we see where a debt was cancelled without **anyone having to make a payment or punished**. If someone has to pay for

sin, then sin is not freely forgiven. In the penal substitution, it simply has been *transferred* to someone else who happened to be an innocent person.

Some people may say that the Penal Substitution does speak of forgiveness, in that God can forgive sins because He punished Jesus. Just the thought of this should concern us. God punished Jesus? Let's use the analogy of a mortgage to put things into perspective, and will show that such an act does not represent true forgiveness. Imagine a letter from your bank saying, "Your mortgage does not need to be repaid and is forgiven, so long as it is repaid in full by one of your relatives." Obviously the bank has not cancelled the debt graciously at all! The bank is allowing someone else to pay it. Likewise, penal substitution suggests that God will 'forgive' so long as there is punishment in full. Yet that is not free forgiveness. It is simply transferring punishment to an innocent person (which raises another set of ethical problems). Contrary to popular belief, such a transfer of punishment has no basis in Israel's sacrificial customs. One could call this 'forgiveness' only in a very twisted sense of the word. The idea of penal substitution takes us far from the biblical picture of a loving God forgiving repentant sinners freely and graciously.¹

Also, why would God go against the very things He commanded His people? That is, a person cannot be punished for the crime of another. (Deut. 24:16; Ezk. 18:20)

Another problem with this theory is that it voids God's mercy. Mercy is the withholding of that which is due. If Jesus had to be punished for the sins of the world, this does not show the mercy of God since He demands that every sin be punished, and salvation cannot be of grace because the cause of salvation is by the merit of payment.

The Penal code conclusion is that if there had to be an absolute *payment* at Calvary and it brought a legal satisfaction because our sins were supposedly *transferred* to Christ on the cross, then all mankind are always free from all obligation and punishment. After all, Jesus "is the propitiation for our sins; and **not for ours only, but also for the whole world.**" Since all sins are *paid for*, everyone must be saved!

Did God Require Human Sacrifices?

*When the LORD your God has cut off before you the nations whom you are about to enter to dispossess them, when you have dispossessed them and live in their land, take care that you are not snared into imitating them, after they have been destroyed before you: do not inquire concerning their gods, saying, 'How did these nations worship their gods? I also want to do the same.' You must not do the same for the LORD your God, because every abhorrent thing that the LORD hates they have done for their gods. **They would even burn their sons and their daughters in the fire to their gods.** (Deut: 12:29-31)*

*Because the people have forsaken me, and have profaned this place by making offerings in it to other gods whom neither they nor their ancestors nor the kings of Judah have known, and because they have filled this place with the blood of the innocent, and gone on building the high places of Baal to **burn their children in the fire as burnt offerings to Baal, which I did not command or decree, nor did it enter my mind;** therefore the*

days are surely coming, says the LORD, when this place shall no more be called Topheth, or the valley of the son of Hinnom, but the valley of Slaughter. (Jer. 19:4-6) See also Ps. 106:37-38 and Ezek. 16:20

It is apparent that God hates human sacrifices. It was so abhorrent to God that it didn't even enter His mind! And we are to believe that God the Father wanted His Son, who was a human being, to be a *human sacrifice* when He is against such sacrifices?

The Scriptures do speak of Christ as a sacrifice for us (Eph. 5:21), but people think in terms that **Christ had to be slaughtered** in order for sins to be forgiven when throughout Scriptures God has always forgiven a person's sin when they came to Him in repentance, turning from their evil deeds as He commanded and all He required.

Today many Christians are under the assumption that Christ's sacrifice was somehow a *punishment* from God for our sins, who took the penalty for all sins ever committed to satisfy God's justice. I don't see this. Rather, I see scripture showing us that Christ was a living sacrifice *as in sacrificial service to God* as he taught us to be. It is a symbol of holiness. The wages of sin is death and always will be unless a person repents and lives for God.

When we are **reconciled** to God, we are not **reconciled through punishment**, but by repenting and living a pure life, as Jesus set the **example**. For more on this topic how the Hebrews viewed sacrifices: [Sacrifice](#)

The following words do **not** mean *payment*: Propitiation, reconciliation, justification, redemption, being brought near, putting away sin, suffering, dying for sin, ransom, and offering oneself up.

Nowhere does the Bible say Jesus was punished. For a person to be punished, he must be guilty to deserve that punishment.

Many will say that we are "bought" with a price and are a "purchased" possession, that we are "redeemed" and there was a "ransom." All this is true, but it does not prove that Jesus was punished or that there was a "payment *for* sins." Many may talk about the military men serving their country and how many have died during the war and talk about the high "cost" of freedom, and how many "paid the price." There was a cost, but it was not an actual payment. One does not see "payment" in the scriptures, it can only be assumed if read into the passage.

What about Isaiah 53:4-5? Many look at that as though Jesus was being punished. They read the penal system into the passage. We should read it without a preconceived bias, for when we do, we will see that the passage does not explicitly or indirectly imply the Messiah was going to be punished. Note: "Yet **WE OURSELVES ESTEEMED HIM STRICKEN, SMITTEN OF GOD AND AFFLICTED...**" It isn't saying that God was striking, smiting and afflicting His own Son. It's how the people perceived it.

What about chastisement? People often think of chastisement as punishment. Chastisement carries the idea of discipline and correction. If someone were to bear the 'chastisement' for me,

that does not mean the person is being punished. Punishment requires guilt. Christ was not punished and was not guilty.

In Isaiah 53:10 it says, "Yet it please the LORD to bruise him." In Gen. 3:14,15 we read, "And the LORD God said to the serpent... I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." This is not declaring punishment upon the Son or the Son punishing the serpent. In respect to what happened at Calvary, it brought the desired results; God in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself. (2 Cor. 5:19) Christ's crucifixion is confused with the wrath of God falling upon His Son, when this is not what happened.

God was not punishing Jesus, Jesus was not facing the wrath of God, God did not abandon or turn his face away from Jesus as he was hanging on the cross (see Ps 22:24) because He couldn't look at sin; God sees sin everyday! What does the bible say? It unequivocally reveals Jesus SUFFERED:

"And he began to teach them, that the Son of man must **suffer**..." Mark 8:31

"But first he must **suffer** many things...." Luke 17:25

"... I have desired to eat this passover with you before I **suffer**..." Luke 22:15

"Was it not necessary for Christ to **suffer** these things...." Luke 24:26

"So it is written, and so the Christ must **suffer**...." Luke 24:46

"...that the Christ should **suffer**..." Acts 3:18

"That Christ should **suffer**..." Acts 26:23

"...**Jesus suffered** outside the gate." Heb. 13:12

"...when it testified beforehand the **sufferings of Christ**..." 1 Peter 1:11

"...because Christ also **suffered for us**, leaving us an example..." 1 Peter 2:21

"...who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he **suffered**..." 1 Peter 2:23

"For Christ also hath once **suffered** for sins..." 1 Peter 3:18

"Christ hath **suffered** for us..." 1 Peter 4:1

"...and a witness of the **sufferings of Christ**..." 1 Peter 5:1

"...and a witness of the **sufferings of Christ**..." 2 Cor. 1:5)

As one can see, Christ was not punished, was not under God's wrath, and was not making a payment, but rather he suffered. I believe the theories of the Penal Substitution and Moral Government Substitution has its problems.

And remember in the beginning of this post where the word "atonement" comes from. The word 'atonement' was invented many centuries later by Tyndale ("at-one-ment") to translate the same Greek word that is also translated "**reconciliation**." (2 Cor. 5:18,19; Heb. 2:17) **Reconciliation** simply means *a return to favor*.

I would recommend a good read by Maruice Bennett. Click [here](#) to read "The Vicarious Death of Christ?"

-
1. A.J. Wallace & R.D. Rusk [*Moral Transformation: The Original Christian Paradigm of Salvation*] p.304

In Response to Moral Government Theory

Someone wrote to me in response to The Flaws of Substitution Theories where Moral Government is concerned. I will cover some points he made in his email.

At one point he states,

Throughout the Old and New Testaments, the message is clear that man's problem is not that he is loving by keeping the law and that he just needs more information, an example, to take it to a greater degree of perfection. Rather, man's problem is that he is wholly unwilling to do what he knows to be right; more definitions of righteous behavior, even in the form of an example, will not affect this one bit. (Underline is my emphasis.)

All through scripture it is true where we see man is unwilling to repent of his evil deeds; however, let's not forget those who have repented and *did* what was right. Making a blanket statement that mankind is *wholly unwilling* to do what he knows to be right is not really accurate as I see it. Why would God tell man to repent knowing they are simply unwilling and therefore, won't? God has always given mankind the opportunity to repent, and there are righteous people mentioned throughout the Bible. If man is wholly unwilling to do what he knows to be right, how does one explain Cornelius, for example (Acts 10 & 11), who was a devout God fearing man, who gave alms and always praying before he received the baptism of the holy spirit? If man is wholly unwilling to do what he knows to be right, how could Peter say,

"In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality. But in every nation WHOEVER fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him..." (Acts 10:34-35)?

He quotes Gordon Olson who says,

"The sufferings of Christ were not a substituted penalty, but a substitute for a penalty." (Historical Opinions as to the Nature of Christ's Atoning Death," 3, in The Truth Shall Make You Free, Olson, page following T-VII-10).

To me this means Christ is still considered a substitute. Nowhere in scripture do I see where it says Jesus is a **substitute for a penalty**. I just don't see it. Jesus is still viewed in the position of having to be **punished** for the sins of others (including those who have repented), who had to be the *substitute for a penalty*. The word itself (*penalty*) means, *a punishment imposed or incurred for a violation of law or rule*. The word *substitute* means, *"a person or thing acting or serving in place of another; to take the place of; replace."* Nowhere is Jesus ever mentioned as having to take the place of another and have to endure punishment imposed upon him for the crime of another.

The Bible repeatedly tells us that Christ SUFFERED – (Mark 8:31; Luke 22:15; 24:46; 17:25; Acts 3:18; 26:23; Hebrews 13:12; 1 Peter 1:11; 2:21; 2:23; 3:18; 4:1; 5:1; 2nd Corinthians 1:5), The man who suffers for the benefit of others is a *martyr*, not a convict.

For the first thousand years it was always the **Ransom** model that was taught (Mat_20:28; Mar_10:45; 1Ti_2:6).

The scripture repeatedly teaches that a person is responsible for their own sin, and that a person cannot morally be punished for the sins of others.

He also stated,

“This is my view of the atonement. Scripture presents Christ’s death as influencing our repentance.”

And then continued by offering the following Scriptures to try and support his statement:

I have loved you with an everlasting love; Therefore I have drawn you with lovingkindness. (Jeremiah 31:3)

I will put My law within them, and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. (Jeremiah 31:33)

‘And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself.’” (John 12:32)

By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him. (1 John 4:9)

We love because He first loved us. (1 John 4:19)

And who is the one who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? (1 John 5:5)

None of these scriptures quoted presents Christ’s **death** as influencing our repentance. The scripture clearly says,

*“For **godly sorrow** produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death.”*

Genuine repentance is initiated by God through a crisis of conviction leading to a season of godly sorrow for sin. (Jn. 16:8; Acts 2:37; 4:8-10; 5:31; 11:18; 2 Co. 7:10). The process of repentance is to *sweep, scrape, scrub* and *cast out of doors all defilement of the heart in order* to make it clean for the reception of the holy spirit. (Matt. 12:43-45; Lk. 11:24-26; Acts 5:32). Repentance is a change of mind, inclinations and desires, which **translates into a total change in character and conduct**. (Mt. 3:8; Mk. 4:12; Lk. 8:15; Jn. 8:34; 8:36; Lk. 19:1-10; Acts 26:20;

2 Co. 6:1; 5:17; 1 Thess. 1:9; 2 Tim. 2:19; Titus. 2:11-12). The design of Bible repentance from Genesis to Revelation is clearly, “forsake” your wickedness, “purge” your heart of evil and SEEK the mercy of God. (Isa. 55:7; Jer. 26:13; Pro. 28:13; Jon. 3:8-10; Matt. 12:41; Lk. 15:11-32; Acts 3:19; 2 Co. 7:10-11; 2 Tim. 2:19; Jas. 3:7-10; 1 Pe. 4:1; Rev. 2:5; 2:16; 2:20-22; 3:3; 3:19).

If we read through the New Testament, the apostles do not narrowly focus on the death of Christ as if it had more importance than anything else. The Gospels focus on what Jesus taught and what he did. They present his death as part of a larger story which involved his birth, baptism, ministry and resurrection. Other New Testament writings emphasize his resurrection to a similar extent as his death, and sometimes even more so. A narrow focus on the death of Jesus has little support from the Gospels or from the other New Testament writings. Jesus’ martyrdom gained its significance for the early Christians from the content of his teachings, his movement and his resurrection. Separating his death from his teachings and his movement therefore strips his death of its original significance. It would be comparable to commemorating Martin Luther King Jr. by meditating solely upon his assassination and the weapon that killed him, without remembering the cause for which he lived.”¹

Jesus sent his disciple out to preach to the masses about the Kingdom of God. What was missing? The gospel they preached did not involve any kind of substitution, nor did they teach the people that they had to “trust in,” “believe in,” or have “faith in” the death of Christ in order to have forgiveness of sins. The “good news” they preached was about the Kingdom of God and did not have anything to do with penal substitution or paying the penalty for sin or to satisfy public justice, etc.. Christ was not a substitute by any means, he was a spotless sin offering; He came to **ransom** mankind from the bondage of sinful living.

“The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45 see also Matt. 20:28; 1 Tim. 2:6).

The Greek word translated as “ransom” (*lutron*), means *liberation from bondage*, not as a payment for sin. Jesus gave his whole life – his whole ministry or mission was for the purpose of proclaiming the Gospel of the Kingdom of God (Luke 4:43) in the age to come, to set the captives free and he showed us how we could be free – by obeying him and following his example.

Christians viewed Jesus as a martyr. He was not just *a* martyr, but was *the* martyr. Paul viewed Jesus’ life as a martyr though the word was not invented yet. However, many years later when John penned the Book of Revelation we see,

“And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, [μάρτυς - martus, - martyr] and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood,” Rev. 1:5

In the *Foxe’s Book of Martyrs* it states,

“The dreadful martyrdoms we shall now describe arose from the persecution of the Christians by pagan fury in the primitive ages of the church, during three hundred years, until the time of Constantine the Great.

*The **first martyr** to our holy religion was its blessed Founder Himself, who was betrayed by Judas Iscariot, condemned under Pontius Pilate, and crucified on Calvary.*²

When Paul talks about Jesus’ death on the cross, he emphasized his obedience, “*He humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death – even death on the cross.*” Paul always talks about Christ’s obedience and faithfulness and how we should be faithful as well. To me, to speak of the *blood* and *death* of Christ is to summarize Jesus’ *whole life and work*. Note how Paul, when writing of Jesus’ death, often draws attention to the faithful obedience Jesus demonstrated rather than to the physical death itself. Paul referred to Jesus’ death as if it represented and encapsulated Jesus’ entire life and cause. For example, he wrote, ‘We proclaim Christ crucified.’ We could interpret these passages to imply that Paul was fixated on the crucifixion, yet that interpretation does not seem most appropriate. Paul instructed his converts in details of Jesus’ life; he preached the same Gospel of the Kingdom and did not focus solely on the crucifixion. Thus, these short statements seem to be better understood as references to Christ’s martyrdom, which represented his entire life and cause.³

Post-Reformation and Western thinking has led us far from the simplicity of the Gospel. The interpretation of scriptures keep evolving; it changes gradually over a long period of time until we have lost its original meaning. For instance, a lot of Christians today put emphasis on Jesus’ *blood* as though it has some kind of mystical qualities that supposedly transforms a person’s life. The same with the *death* of Christ. Post-reformation tradition teaches that Christ’s death *itself* causes some kind of supernatural effect. It would seem that if Christ’s death has supernatural effects, that we would have a clear teaching of this from scripture, but we don’t. No Gospel writer mentioned the idea that the world’s sin centered on Christ when he died on the cross, nor did they state that Christ suffered the punishment for all of humanity. Despite describing the whole course of Jesus’ death at length, they failed to completely mention any concept of *effective death*. This omission by the Gospel writers thus challenges strongly the idea that they believe Jesus’ death had an important and supernatural effect.⁴

Christ had human blood. People seem to just concentrate on the blood and death of Christ as though the rest of his life had very little meaning. Those who believe in the efficacy of blood sacrifice look to Leviticus 17:11 for justification:

For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one’s life. (Leviticus 17:11)

The context clearly refers to abstaining from eating or drinking the blood of a sacrifice, and nothing more. You will find that the pagans ate the blood of their sacrifices as a means of incorporating their gods into their bellies and into their lives. (Does this remind you of Catholicism?) The entire quotation reads:

Any Israelite or any alien living among them who eats any blood I will set my face against that person who eats blood and will cut him off from his people. For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one's life. Therefore I say to the Israelites, 'None of you may eat blood, nor may an alien living among you eat blood. Any Israelite or any alien living among you who hunts any animal or bird that may be eaten must drain out the blood and cover it with earth, because the life of every creature is its blood.' That is why I have said to the Israelites, 'You must not eat the blood of any creature, because the life of every creature is its blood; anyone who eats it must be cut off.'

Blood was not required all the time in sacrifices. If a person was very poor, God allowed the use of flour for a sin offering (Lev. 5:11-13). Flour has no blood.

The scriptures do mention plenty of times the 'blood of Christ' (Col. 1:20). God "hath set forth [Christ] to be a propitiation through faith in his blood" (Rom. 3:25). Believers are "justified by his blood" (Rom. 5:9); we have "redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins" (Eph. 1:7; cf. Col 1:14; I Pet. 1:17-18); Gentile believers "who sometimes were afar off are made nigh by the blood of Christ" (Eph. 2:13); the blood of Christ "purges the conscience" of the child of God (Heb. 9:14); we "have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus" (Heb. 10:19); we were "sanctified with the blood of the covenant" (Heb. 10:29); we are "sprinkled" (I Pet. 1:2), "cleansed" (I John 1:7) and "washed" (Rev. 1:5) by that same blood. When I reflect on the blood and death of Christ, I see it as **representing his entire life and cause, which includes his resurrection**. However, some have taken the nature of Christ's blood and have come to heretical views by adopting that his blood as having some mystical power in itself.

Jesus was a man (1 Tim. 2:5) who had human blood flowing through his veins that is comprised of plasma, erythrocytes, leucocytes, thrombocytes (platelets that facilitate clotting) and the hemoglobin which contains iron in the red blood cells. People will say that Jesus did not have human blood, but had "God's blood," which to them is "divine blood." God does not have blood. They will quote Acts 20:28 as proof text. However, God is spirit and not comprised of "flesh and blood." When comparing scripture with scripture, we know Paul, in the book of Acts, speaks of Jesus (Rev. 5:9).

No New Testament writer ever focused on Jesus' blood the way it is done today. No where do we find them pleading the blood of Jesus. We have come to a point in time where we often hear, "There is POWER in the BLOOD." They:

- 'plead the Blood' to relieve fears and depression.
- 'plead the Blood' to cast out demons.
- 'plead the Blood' to remove a curse.
- 'plead the Blood' to heal and work miracles.
- 'plead the Blood' to get what they call the 'baptism in the Spirit' and to speak in tongues.
- 'plead the Blood' to be delivered from difficult circumstances, and harm. 'plead the Blood' to protect their home and family.
- 'plead the Blood' for revival, for intercessory prayer and for worship.

Blood, blood, blood. They have **personified** the blood of Jesus, even spelling it with a capital “B”.

The *death* and the *cross* have no mystical power. What I mean is, the physical death itself, or concentrating on the cross does not change anyone’s immoral behavior or even influence the person to change his behavior by leading them to repentance. However, the early believers did see his death as **very significant** (I do as well) because it proved Jesus’ love for them. It was the greatest act of love to lay down his life, even at the hands of sinners.

Jesus’ mission was all about preaching the Kingdom of God and moral purity and showed us how we could be pure by following his example. **Following and obeying Jesus would free them indeed** (John 8:36) from sinful living.

The early Christians associated Jesus’ death with the concept of **reconciliation** with God. They believed his death as a martyr had resulted from his work to transform the character and conduct of unrighteous people, thus reconciling them to God. Peter wrote of this idea using martyrdom language. *‘Christ also suffered [crucifixion] for sinfulness once and for all, the righteous for the unrighteousness, in order to bring you to God’*⁵

Scripture states Jesus came as the *“Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!”* Jesus came to take away the sinfulness of the world. How does Christ do this? It is through some mystical power? *Or is it through his example that we are to follow?* When we obey Jesus by repenting of our sins and believing the Gospel, and live our lives in obedience, then we are free from sinful living. This is how Christ sets us free. We walk in the light as he is in the light. We are no longer servants of unrighteousness, but of righteousness. We must be ‘born again,’ which means a moral transformation, which does not come about until a person repents of his evil deeds and believes the Gospel. If we love him, we will obey him.

Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. He demonstrates to us how to be **reconciled** with God by living rightly. Deeds do matter! And we will be judged according to our deeds (John 5:28-29; Rom. 2:6-8, etc. etc.). A clear conscience is only a reality when we walk in the light, putting away dead (evil) works and serving the living God (Heb. 5:19; 1 Jn. 1:7).

I can’t help but think back how the early believers must have spread the message of Jesus after his resurrection and ascension. They didn’t know about systematic theology or about any kind of substitution, rather they are those who witnessed his life and followed him and told other people what Jesus taught them, they told of all he did – how he healed people, how he fed the thousands with so little, how he told others they are forgiven, how the rulers came against him, he made the blind to see, he raised the dead, how the authorities crucified him and how God raised him from the dead, which was proof Jesus was sent by God; and how they could look forward to a resurrection as well and enter his Kingdom!

He quotes the original article where it states:

*God has never required a Substitution for man's sins or a Penal remuneration. Rather, He calls all sinners to repentance and faith proven by deeds. (The scriptural evidence of this truth is overwhelming throughout both testaments.) From the very beginning the **only** pardon from willful and deliberate sin was **repentance**, which the broken and contrite sinner purified himself of all filthiness of the flesh and laid aside his overflow of wickedness in genuine godly sorrow with a heart free from guile and cried out for **mercy**.*

He responds by saying, "This is simply not accurate." He doesn't tell me why it is not accurate. He also says, "While it's true that God never required a substitution for our punishment," (which is what I have been saying all along!) "it is not true that 'the ONLY reprieve from willful and deliberate sin was Repentance...the forgiveness of sins required repentance and sacrifice.'"

Repentance is not enough? How could God require sacrifice when I showed that there are sins for which there was no prescribed sacrifice? (Ex. Murder, Idolatry, Adultery, Sorcery, etc. etc.) No amount of sacrifices could cleanse anyone of these sins. The only solution **throughout** scriptures is the necessity of **repentance**. This is abundantly clear throughout the Old and New Covenant.

I had quoted Jesus when he said, "I desire mercy, not sacrifice," and he replied that *it was directed at a group of people who were offering sacrifice, but had not repented*. I agree. Jesus never renounced sacrifices, but he did criticize the Pharisees and Sadducees for the excessive preoccupation with the minute observance of the Law. They failed to understand, "I desire mercy and not sacrifice" (Matt. 9:13; 12:3). In other words, they were so preoccupied with the "outward" cleanliness that they neglected inward purity (Mark 7:1-23; Matt. 23:25-38). When the Scribes confronted Jesus, they asked him "what was the greatest commandment of all." Jesus gave his answer that the love of God and his neighbor was more important than burnt-offerings and sacrifices and was not far from the kingdom of God (Mark 12:33-34)

Remember, there were sins for which there was no prescribed sacrifice. Jesus was referring back to Hos.6:6 about their burnt offerings. Does God require burnt offerings or sacrifices? The one thing God prefers is to **do justly**, and **to love mercy**, and **to walk humbly** with him (Mic. 6:8)

He continued to say,

"Your use David's repentance as an example. But David's prayer must be read in its entirety: 'For You do not delight in sacrifice, otherwise I would give it; You are not pleased with burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; A broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise. By Your favor do good to Zion; Build the walls of Jerusalem. Then You will delight in righteous sacrifices, In burnt offering and whole burnt offering; Then young bulls will be offered on Your altar.'" (Psalms 51:16-19).

The point is, to me, that God always demanded **obedience**; and what the prophets always stressed was that the sacrificial system was useless without *moral virtues*. As seen in Mic. 6:8, the superiority stressed was that of justice, mercy, and love to all. These prophets did not deny

that God required service from his people Israel, but insisted that they were neglecting the one kind of service which God demanded, the end of oppression of the poor, loving kindness, and justice. Until moral virtues were active in their life, **then** God delighted in their sacrifices. Why? Because **obedience to God is better than sacrifice** (Ps 1, 5, 24, 119, etc.). As he pointed here in full context, it shows a corrective to the sacrificial worship that they accompanied. It is a *broken spirit and contrite heart that God desires*, it is then he delights in sacrifices rightly offered (Ps. 51:10-19).

Jesus 'message was no different. To be angry with one's brother without cause makes a sacrificial gift invalid (Matt. 5:23-24). Those who wanted to escape taking responsibility for their aged parents did so by declaring all financial support owed them 'Corban', meaning that it was dedicated to God as a sacrificial gift. They were seriously abusing the sacrificial law (Mark 7:9-13), which is also confirmed by his cleansing of the Temple.

However, having said all this, now that the temple and sacrificial system no longer exists as it did under the Old Covenant, what must a person do today to be right with God? It's the same message as in the Old Testament - to turn away from wickedness, return to the LORD and He will abundantly pardon. (Isa. 1:16-17; Isa 55:7)

He states, '*Why faith saves,*' and then said concerning what I believe, "*You often state that faith is required by God, and you state way more frequently that repentance or obedience are required by God.*" Because it is. It is clearly understood, and the overwhelming evidence from scripture is that God demands repentance and faith **proven by deeds**. (Acts 26:18-20). The early believers **never** separated the deeds of faith from the act of repentance because they clearly understood the nature of divine reconciliation. They did not speak of some mysterious transfer taking place or substitution, but a restoration of favor determined on the condition of repentance. God had granted man "favor" (grace) so he could now approach the mercy seat of "reconciliation" on the **condition** of repentance that included **not** merely a "change of mind," but of their conduct as well.

He went on to say, "*The Biblical definition of faith involves believing in (or trusting in) the love of God for us (1 John 4:16-18).*"

Many wicked sinners out there believe God loves them. They all *believe in (or trusting in)* the love of God for them. Does this change their immoral behavior? No. The biblical fact is that **faith is synonymous with obedience**. A person can believe all he wants about how much God loves him, but real faith is a work. It is a work of righteousness. **DEEDS** are linked with faith. It is *obedience to the truth* (1 Peter 1:22). Faith is not just a mental assent, it involves being "faithful." Devils believe and acknowledge that one God exists (James 2:19), because anyone can "*believe in*" or "*trust in*", but faith and obedience go hand-in-hand because only those who OBEY are in Christ (Acts 5:32; Heb. 5:9). It is a faith (faithfulness) that works by love (Gal. 5:6) and purifies the heart (Acts 15:9) by being obedient (1 Peter 1:22).

Scriptures are clear that *repentance is the alternative to divine punishment*. There is no need for a substitute. I still have not heard an answer to the question; In what manner does a Moral Government teacher preach repentance? That's the central issue in this discussion. IF the

repenting sinner is coming to Christ as his Substitution to divine punishment, HOW can his heart be purified from the corrupting influence of sin in such a repentance?

¹A.J. Wallace & R.D. Rusk [*Moral Transformation: The Original Christian Paradigm of Salvation*] p. 300

²Foxe's Book of Martyrs, p.9

³A.J. Wallace & R.D. Rusk [*Moral Transformation: The Original Christian Paradigm of Salvation*], p. 227

⁴ Ibid p.237

⁵Ibid, p. 229