

Is The Vicarious Death Of Jesus Both Immoral And Unscriptural?

1. Your use of Deuteronomy 24:16 and Ezekiel 18:19-20 as proof that “the Law and the Prophets specifically prohibited substitutionary death” is fundamentally flawed, in that the very thing you claim these passages disprove still awaits proof. Neither the letter nor the spirit of Deuteronomy 24:16 prohibited one from graciously volunteering to pay the deserved penalty of another. Instead, such was designed to prohibit those in positions of authority from perverting justice by wrongly punishing one for the sin, crime, or debt of another. This is borne out by Deuteronomy 25:1, where the obligation of judges and those in positions of authority to “justify the righteous and condemn the wicked” is made clear. It is precisely this kind of justice we see being demonstrated by Judah’s King Amaziah in 2 Kings 14:6, which says, “But the children of the murderers he did not execute, according to what is written in the Book of the Law of Moses, in which the LORD commanded, saying, ‘Fathers shall not be put to death for their children, nor shall children be put to death for their fathers; but a person shall be put to death for his own sin.’”

2. Furthermore, the demands of Deuteronomy 24:16 and similar passages were not given to constrain God, but man. Therefore, when God, the Righteous Judge, does justice and righteousness, He is not being guided by the external dictates of His law to man. Instead, He simply acts consistent with His own nature. In other words, He does justice and righteousness because He is just and righteous (viz., God always exercises Himself consistent with Who and What He Is). Thus, any effort to judge the justice and righteousness of God based on His amenability to an external (i.e., outside of Himself) law code misunderstands the very nature of the I AM THAT I AM.

3. Once again, and it bears repeating, God’s justice and righteousness are not dependent on, nor judged by, any law He has given to His creatures. On the contrary, His justice and righteousness are solely dependent on His divine Being. This means, among other things, that when the only absolutely righteous Judge is portrayed as doing the very kind of things He has prohibited His fallen, finite creatures from doing (cf. Ex 20:5; 34:7; Isa 14:21; Jer 32:18), He must not be judged by, and is not guilty of, the law He has given to His creatures. Rather, God-given law has a context, which is man himself. It is only man who is the subject of God-given law, and it is therefore only man, not God, who is amenable to it. Misunderstand this and you find yourself in the unenviable position of bringing false charges against the Almighty God Himself. I’ll have more to say about this when critiquing your explanation of how God is both just and the justifier of those who exercise faith in His Son (Rom 3:26).

4. However, nothing I have said here should be taken to mean that I believe God was unjust or unrighteous when He visited the iniquity of the fathers on their children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Him (cf. Ex 20:5; 34:7; Isa 14:21; Jer 32:18). What I am saying is that an almighty, all-knowing God, as opposed to His sin-sick creatures, is able to execute justice and righteousness flawlessly. He does so without the constraints of external law. Thus, when the Righteous Judge visited the iniquity of the

fathers even to the fourth generation, He was doing so perfectly consistent with justice and righteousness, and I like the way Adam Clark speaks of this in his commentary on 1 Samuel 15:2-3: “Nothing could justify such an exterminating decree but the absolute authority of God. This was given: all the reasons of it we do not know; but this we know well, the Judge of all the earth doth right. This war was not for plunder, for God commanded that all the property as well as all the people should be destroyed.”

5. Therefore, I view your first mistake as trying to make God Himself subject to the law code He has given to His sinful creatures—a law code which was designed to prevent them from making the same sort of mistake you have made, which is one that perverts justice and righteousness by making God a sinner for doing what He, but not man, had the perfect right to do. There is more to all this, of course, and we can pursue some of this if you choose to do so. Even so, what I have said here is sufficient to demonstrate that refuting the vicarious or substitutionary death of Jesus is a bit more “difficult” than you think.

6. Ezekiel 18:19-20 is found in the context of a rebellious people who are being confronted by the wrath of God via the Babylonian Empire. At the time it was written, the first Babylonian deportation in 606 B.C., as well as the second deportation in 597, have already happened. The destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in 586 B.C. are yet some five years into the future. The claim of these rebellious people, which is that God is unfairly dealing with them, is a familiar one by this time. Their audacious we-deserve-nothing-of-what-we-are-getting claim is, “The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge.” Although their claim may appear to have some merit, this is the case only because they have stubbornly refused to repent of their rebellious and idolatrous ways, and it is for just such things that they are rightfully experiencing the wrath of God.¹ Therefore, any such charge leveled against God based on the appearance His actions were violations of the justice and righteousness principles found in His law must be viewed as in error.

7. Concerning your use of Isaiah 5:20, Jeremiah 31:27-34 and Hebrews 8, and their applicability to the New Testament, you will find no objection from me. I believe that we, as the people of God today, can have no part in any effort to punish, or otherwise impose a penalty upon, anyone but the perpetrator of a sin, crime, or wrong done, as any action to the contrary would be unjust/unrighteous, and thus unscriptural. But when all this is said and done, none of it says anything about it being wrong for someone to graciously volunteer to accept the debt, penalty, or punishment that rightly belongs to another, and Paul’s actions on behalf of Onesimus, which are recorded in verse 18 of his letter to Philemon, are a demonstration of this fact. There Paul said concerning Onesimus, Philemon’s runaway slave, “But if he has wronged you or owes anything, put that on my account.” The key phrase here is “put that to my account” (touto emoi ellogā). As I assume you know, the only other time the Greek verb *ellogā* is used is in Romans 5:13, where it is translated as “imputed,” which is not insignificant to the subject we are discussing.

¹ This is a crucial point when trying to understand God’s righteousness when visiting the iniquity of the fathers on their children to the third and fourth generations (cf. Ex 20:5).

8. Now, there can be no doubt that it would have been unjust for Philemon, or anyone else, to charge whatever wrong Onesimus had done, or debt owed, to the apostle Paul without his consent, and nothing Paul says here indicates it would ever be right to do so, for such is a matter of God-given law. But what is in play here is not the law, per se, but grace, and in order to see this, it is helpful to look closely at the process being described. This has been nicely outlined by Albert Barnes in his *Notes on the Bible*:

(1) Onesimus, not Paul, had done the wrong.

(2) Paul was not guilty of it, or blameworthy for it, and never in any way, or by any process, could be made to be, or conceived to be. It would be true forever that Onesimus and not he had done the wrong.

(3) Paul assumed the debt and the wrong to himself. He was willing, by putting himself in the place of Onesimus, to bear the consequences, and to have Onesimus treated as if he had not done it. When he had voluntarily assumed it, it was right to treat him as if he had done so; that is, to hold him responsible. A man may assume a debt if he pleases, and then he may be held answerable for it.

(4) If he had not assumed this himself, it never could have been right for Philemon to charge it on him. No possible supposition could make it right. No agency which he had in the conversion of Onesimus; no friendship which he had for him; no favor which he had shown him, could make it right. The consent, the concurrence on the part of Paul was absolutely necessary in order that he should be in any way responsible for what Onesimus had done.

(5) The same principle prevails in imputation everywhere.

(a) What we have done is chargeable upon us.

(b) If we have not done a thing, or have not assumed it by a voluntary act, it is not right to charge it upon us.

(c) God reckons things as they are.

9. But for you to be consistent, you must argue that not only did Paul sin by suggesting such a solution (viz., having Onesimus' debt and wrong doing put to his account), but he compounded it by asking Philemon to become a partaker with him in his evil scheme. I couch it this way for two reasons. The first is based on your argument that says: "If Jesus died as a substitute for one man or any number of men, He violated the Law of Moses and the inspired word of the prophets. But since we know Jesus never actually sinned, the sacrificial death of Jesus could not have been a substitutionary death." The second is based on the fact that we both agree this was not just an OT principle, but a NT one as

well. As I see it, then, you have but two choices: you must recognize that you have (1) wrongly interpreted and applied the passages under discussion, or (2) you must view Paul as sinning when he asked Philemon to “put that to my account.”

10. So, if there is, as you contend, no room in God’s law for one to graciously take upon himself the debt or penalty of another, then Jesus could not have died in our stead without sinning, and thus your claim would be substantiated. On the other hand, if there is nothing in the passages you’ve cited, either explicitly or implicitly, that forbids someone from voluntarily assuming another’s debt or, as in the case of Jesus, suffering the judicial penalty for someone else’s sin (cf. 2 Cor 5:21; Gal 3:13; 1 Pet 2:24), then you must see that your claim remains unproven. Thus, it is precisely here—viz., whether one is permitted to voluntarily take the penalty of another—that the crux of this matter lies.

11. If a discussion of this subject is limited to “works of law,” as Paul used the term (viz., as a system of justification by perfect law-keeping [cf. Eph 2:8-9]), then there can be no doubt that all of us remain under God’s condemnation and, as such, are on our way to hell—for indeed, all of us have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (cf. Rom 3:23). However, we both know there is something at work other than the “works of law” system—viz., the “grace through faith” system. It is this latter system, and this system alone, that is indispensable to the “how are we saved” question, for without God’s marvelous system of justification by grace through faith (the basis of which is, and always has been, the sacrificial death of that precious One who died “outside the gate” or “outside the camp” some nineteen hundred and eighty-four years ago [cf. Heb 13:11-13], and this wasn’t the Passover lamb/kid), we would have no hope of life everlasting in a “new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells” (cf. 2 Pet 3:13).

12. As you no doubt know, the “outside the gate” or “outside the camp” expressions are connecting our Lord’s sacrificial death at Golgotha to the “outside the camp” burning of the bodies of those sacrificial animals whose blood was brought into the Jewish sanctuary “by the high priest for sin” (Heb 13:11). Furthermore, and you know this as well, I have made it clear that I believe everything the Scriptures say about Jesus being an acceptable and sufficient sacrifice for our sins. So what I find hard to believe about your position is how you can reject the vicarious or substitutionary nature of Jesus’ sacrificial death while claiming to believe that the sum total of God’s word is the objective standard for everything we believe and practice (cf. Psa 119:160; 2 Tim 3:16-17). All (everything) is fulfilled in Christ, and this means we are not at liberty to pick and choose which types we impose on the antitype, who is Christ Himself. Consequently, I remain convinced that it’s you, not me, who is denying the plain and clear teaching of God’s word on this subject.

13. Furthermore, I find it astonishingly hypocritical that while you are accusing me of rejecting “the actual words of the Bible” in favor of “conveyed ideas” and “implied concepts” out of one side of your mouth, you are, on the other side of that same mouth, claiming an exegesis of Isaiah 53 vis-à-vis your analogy of Jesus as “The Garbage Man.” Not only does your interpretation of this critical section of Scripture demonstrate a fanciful wresting of it to fit your own “preunderstanding,” which is that Jesus could not

possibly have died in our place on the cross, but it borders—and it gives me no pleasure to say so—on blasphemy.

14. Jesus' sacrificial death on the cross was, is, and always will be, the very basis for our salvation by grace through faith. But, and this is the point you just don't get, this could not be possible without God the Father making "Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Cor 5:21), as this was the only way God "might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus" (Rom 3:26). Clearly, the two of us are at polar extremes in our understanding of these two passages, and the fact that we are explains at least one of the reasons why you have failed to appreciate that with everything you've said thus far, you have yet to explain the "how" question. Oh, you tried all right; but while doing so, you have demonstrated a failure to fully comprehend God's marvelous system of justification by grace through faith. This is evidenced by your mishandling of Romans 3:26, for in your attempt to explain it, you said:

When sinners are justified, they are regarded as righteous, innocent, not guilty. God's wrath is not directed at people who are righteous, innocent, and not guilty. Therefore, God's wrath was propitiated...turned away from those who are washed in the blood of the Lamb that was slain. God is still just...for a just God punishes those who die in their sin, and a just God does not punish people who are righteous. And God is the justifier, for He justifies us by the blood of Christ poured out in His sacrificial death.

15. First, where does the Bible ever say anything about sinners who are saved by the precious blood of Jesus being viewed by God as "innocent" or "not guilty"? It doesn't. So once again, you demonstrate yourself guilty of the very thing you charge me with, which is failing to use Bible words to describe Bible terms. This is not just ironic, but downright hypocritical as well. I therefore reiterate, where are "innocent" and "not guilty" used to describe those who have been saved by the blood of Christ? I'll even do you one better by asking, Where in the Bible is it taught, either by "conveyed idea" or "implied concept," that God views the redeemed as being innocent or not guilty? Truth is, there isn't. Instead, the Bible speaks of the saved, redeemed, or justified in terms of forgiveness, and this means that the "righteousness" we have "in Him" is not our "own righteousness" that comes from keeping law, "but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith" (Php 3:9). This means that as long as we stay connected to the blood of Christ, we remain 100% righteous. In such a relationship, God does not treat us as if we've never sinned, as you envision (i.e., "innocent" or "not guilty"), but just as if the penalty for our sins has been paid. In other words, when we are justified by the sacrificial, atoning, propitiatory blood/death of Jesus Christ, we are declared or reckoned righteous, not made righteous, as your theology requires. This is understood by the use of the verb "justified" (dikaioo) in Luke 7:29, which says that those who heard the Lord's teaching concerning John the Baptist "justified God" (NKJV). Clearly, this cannot mean that the people made God righteous. Instead, they were simply declaring or acknowledging Him to be righteous. Consequently, the NASB translates it as "They acknowledged God's justice," while the NIV says they "acknowledged that God's way

was right.” Thus, when God justifies us, He is not making us righteous, *per se*, but declaring us so based on our obedient faith.

16. So, and your unsatisfactory explanation of Romans 3:26 demonstrates why this is the case, the question remains, How (or why) is it possible that a holy and righteous God can justify sinners and remain just in doing so? The only way this was possible was by the Heavenly Father sending His Only Begotten Son into this world to die for us or on our behalf (cf. 2 Cor 5:21). This necessitated Jesus’ bearing of “our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes [we] were healed” (1 Pet 2:24). This means that the Father “made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Cor 5:21). It is therefore indisputable (or at least it should be) that “Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree’)” (Gal 3:13). As a result of passages like these, most Bible students, regardless of their theological leanings, have recognized the absolute necessity of Jesus’ vicarious or substitutionary death on the cross. Your biggest mistake is believing that God could have saved man just any ol’ way. He couldn’t, and everything He has revealed to us about Himself says He couldn’t, and Romans 3:21-26 is the conclusive proof He couldn’t. Until you recognize this, there is little hope of you ever understanding the necessity of Jesus’ vicarious or substitutionary death.

17. But there is more. Because God’s law consists not just of commandments to be obeyed, but penalties to be suffered for disobedience, it is precisely these penalties that require you to come to grips with my original “how” question, for Paul makes it clear that the Lord could not have redeemed us from the curse (penalty) we rightly deserved as sinners “without being made a curse [or ‘sin’] for us,” or on our behalf (cf. Gal 3:13; 2 Cor 5:21). It is simply undeniable that this is the very thing that Peter taught when he said that Jesus, “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” (1 Pet 2:24). Consequently, our Lord was not a “Garbage Man,” as you unbecomingly depict Him and His work. Instead, the divine Logos, who was God, and therefore the One who was sinned against, voluntarily took upon Himself flesh and paid the price (suffered and died) in order to effect our redemption, which was something clearly done *for us* or *on our behalf*. But because He did all this voluntarily (i.e., “No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself,” Jn 10:18a), there was no violation of the various scriptures you’ve cited. This means your claim that these passages prove Jesus could not have died a vicarious or substitutionary death on the cross actually prove no such thing.

18. Concerning your Passover illustration and your point about it being “the right blood, in the right place, at the right time, [that] turned away the destroyer,” namely, “It saved the Hebrews from God’s wrath...it turned away God’s wrath...it propitiated God’s wrath,” I see no problem with much of what you describe, believing it myself. But what I could not help but notice was your penchant for ignoring just what the sacrificial blood entailed—namely, the *death* of the sacrificial victim. In your writings, both to me and on your website, you make the suffering and death of the sacrificial victim simply incidental to the blood, which is where you clearly place the emphasis. According to your theology,

it is the blood, not the suffering and ultimate death it represents, that both propitiates and redeems: “The blood is what forgives, and the blood had to be poured out for the sins of the world. The only way to get the blood out of that body was to pierce the body, crush it, chasten it, and scourge it. From His wounds flowed the life-giving, soul-cleansing blood of the Lamb” (from your “Garbage Man” article). So, and it bears repeating, it is Jesus’ blood, and not the suffering and death it represents, that propitiates God and justifies man. You are, of course, wrong about this, and the Bible plainly says so, in that over and over again it teaches us that without the shedding of blood (i.e. the death of the sacrificial victim) there is no remission of sins (cf. Heb 9:22). The OT sacrificial system taught graphically and conclusively that there could be no remission of sins unless something died. And although we know that all the blood (dying) of bulls and goats could not effect the forgiveness of sins, nevertheless, there was forgiveness based on the sacrificial death (viz., the shedding of blood) of God’s own Son some nineteen hundred and eighty-four years ago on Calvary’s mountain, which was located, as I’ve already mentioned, “outside the gate” or “outside the camp” (Heb 13:11-13).

19. Thus, it will do you no good when responding to cite all the passages that teach we are redeemed, saved, justified, purchased, etc., by the blood of Christ, as this is what I believe as well. Instead, convince me that you, too, believe the shedding of blood was indicative of the death of the sacrificial victim. Instead, I suspect you’ll object to any reference to Jesus being a “victim.” After all, such a term is not specifically used of Him in the Scriptures. But, and this is my point, the concept or idea of “innocent” sacrificial *victims* dying on behalf of sinful man is replete in the Scriptures. What’s more, as the complete fulfillment of the sacrificial system, Jesus was not just the Priest who offered the sacrifice, but the ultimate sacrificial victim “when He offered up Himself” (Heb 7:27). He was, therefore, “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” (Rev 13:8b; 1 Pet 1:19-20). However, and this is critical to a proper understanding of who He was, when the Lord voluntarily laid down His life for us sinners (cf. John 10:15-18), He was not just some *helpless* victim who had no idea what was happening. On the contrary, “God with us” became “sin” and a “curse” on our behalf, or in our stead or place, so that Divine grace, and this in connection with our faith, could set us free “once and for all” (Heb 7:25-28) “from the law of sin and death” (Rom 8:2). So, the shed blood of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ was not just “the right blood, in the right place, at the right time,” although it was certainly all these things, but it stood, more importantly, for the sacrificial and propitiatory death of the *only* one who was qualified to take upon Himself our sins and die in our stead.

20. This “in our stead” issue brings us to that song you and others have been singing in full chorus that the Bible nowhere teaches that Jesus died “in our stead” or “in our place.” Sure it does!, and because I know you are familiar with Maurice Barnett’s multi-volume work entitled *The Scheme of Redemption*, I’ll be using his remarks in *Volume II—Reconciliation* to emphasize my point here (his views on this can also be referenced in a five-article series in *Bible Banner* entitled “The Vicarious Death of Christ??” found at http://www.biblebanner.com/ga_art/deity/vicar1.htm). Barnett spends twenty-seven pages in his review of the various Greek prepositions he believes render the vicarious or substitutionary death of Jesus indefensible. His primary focus is on the Greek words *anti*

and *huper*, which are typically translated as the preposition “for” in the critical passages. But even within the context of his argument, Barnett is forced to acknowledge that this is not, in and of itself, definitive, and this because of the ambiguous and imprecise nature of these words—words in which it is the very context that determines the most appropriate meaning or definition. When one adds to this the fact that the meaning or definition of these words is all too frequently influenced by the color of one’s own theological leanings, and one has sufficient reason to be suspicious of another’s *ipse dixit* that the Bible nowhere speaks of Jesus dying “in our stead.” In fact, Barnett makes mention of this when he says:

The prepositions, *anti* and *huper*, are both translated, in most instances, by the English word, for. In pursuit of understanding these words, we’ll find that lexical and grammatical authorities are so contradictory, and in many instances self-serving, that at times they are as confusing as they are informative.

21. He followed this up by saying:

A consensus of lexical sources tells us that *anti* means over, for, to, opposed to, before, because of, over against, exchange, in the place of, instead of. Some lexical authorities will also assign ‘on behalf of’ as a meaning as well.

22. Finally, concerning *huper*, he said:

Huper has a basic meaning of over, above, upon, across, and then for, for one’s advantage, for the sake of, on behalf of. Many will also assign the meaning of “in the place.”

23. I am not questioning the above observations by Barnett. But the question is, Why is this the case? It very well may be that such definitions are driven by theological bias. But it is also possible, and quite likely, that the words have different definitions based on the context in which they are found. This ought to be no surprise to us since this is precisely what prepositions do, as the following definition makes clear:

A preposition is a word placed before a noun or object that qualifies or produces an adverbial phrase. For grammarians, the case, or syntactic relationship or or position of the noun, affects the meaning of the preposition and ultimately the meaning of the sentence.

24. This is just a technical way of saying that context plays a significant role in determining the definition of the preposition being used. This is illustrated by the following examples:

Anti

1 John 4:3—“over against”

Matthew 2:22; 5:38; Romans 12:17—“in place of”

Matthew 17:27—“on behalf of”

Huper

Romans 9:3—“in place of”

Philippians 1:3—“on behalf of”

25. It should be obvious, then, that a consultation of grammarians, lexicons, etc., will not produce an authoritative answer to the question of whether or not Christ died “in our place.” As is frequently the situation, the *immediate*, *general*, and even the *remote*, content must be our guide to interpretation. Thus, for me to say I found the following statement by Barnett a disappointment is a significant understatement, for with an evidently straight face he said, “I do not believe the substitution theory to be scriptural in the first place and thus *huper* could not indicate what does not exist, regardless of whether or not that at times it may mean ‘in the place of’ in some secular sources.” In other words, if bro. Barnett doesn’t believe it, then it simply “could not” be true. How about you, David? Is this the way you’ve arrived at your conclusions about the “poor translation of the Greek preposition ‘huper’” concerning Isaiah 53, 2 Corinthians 5:21, Galatians 3:13, and 1 Peter 2:24? If so, then shame on you, brother.

26. You wrote: “Substitution theory cannot account for how the physical death of the body of Jesus somehow satisfies the true penalty of sin, which is eternal death in the lake of fire. The only way substitution theory can satisfy the true penalty of sin is if it holds hands with the “forsaken theory” which sends Jesus to hell when He died, rather than allowing Him to go to Paradise as He said He would.” Contrary to what you seem to think, the vicarious or substitutionary death of Jesus that I defend is nowhere represented in the above quote. As I have tried to make clear to you and others, I advocate neither Catholic nor Calvinist doctrine concerning the vicarious or substitutionary death of Jesus. Consequently, the constant demand of folks like you for folks like me to defend the theology of such groups is a bit irksome. The Bible does not teach, nor do I believe, that Jesus went to hell when He died. On the contrary, what the Bible teaches is that, in bearing our sins in His body on the cross (cf. 1 Pet 2:24), Jesus was made to be sin on our behalf/account (cf. 2 Cor 5:21), and as a consequence, became cursed in our place (cf. Gal 3:13), which is perfectly consistent with the prophetic witness of Isaiah 53’s Suffering Servant. Truth is, what Jesus, who was God enfleshed, actually experienced in His passion (viz., His suffering and agony on our behalf) is quite beyond the comprehension of finite creatures. Hence, one must be very careful of the limitations he seeks to impose on the definitive result of the I AM THAT I AM in the body of a man suspended between heaven and earth outside the gates of Jerusalem at the precise fullness-of-time moment that was, is, and always will be, the apex of God’s grand scheme of redemption.

27. Although I do not know what your specific response to what I've said here will be, I mentioned "immoral" in the title of this response because it is apparent that one of the reasons you object to Jesus' vicarious, substitutionary death on the cross is that you believe it would have been immoral to punish an innocent person in the place of the guilty person who truly deserved it, and this even though the innocent person did so willingly. This may be valid if the innocent substitute were merely an apathetic third party picked at random to suffer the divine Lawgiver's wrath on behalf of the guilty party. But in Jesus' case, this was clearly not the situation. On the contrary, Jesus, the Substitute, was Himself the divine Logos enfleshed, and because He was, He was not just some innocent bystander. Instead, He was the eternal Lawgiver and Judge Himself, suffering the judicial penalty of His own law. As I believe H.E. Guillenbaud has rightly observed with reference to substitutionary atonement, "...if the Victim is not truly identical with the Judge, then the sacrifice is of a third party, and becomes unjust" (Why the Cross?, 2nd ed., 1946, p. 148). Thus, it seems clear that Jesus' deity was a precondition of His work on the cross.

28. Another objection that is made in opposition to Jesus' substitutionary atonement is that it appears logically impossible for just one person to pay the penalty for the sins of the whole world. In fact, Maurice Barnett, in his rejection of just such an idea, argues that if Jesus actually paid the penalty for all the sins that have ever been committed, then the only alternative would be universal salvation, which is simply not true, as it is faith that is the sole *means* to such an end, and obedience to the gospel its *conditions*. But since man's ultimate penalty for sin is death (i.e., "triple-D death," as I like to call it; viz., physical, spiritual, and eternal death), and since any one person only has one life to give, then it seems that one individual could only be a substitute for one other person. It is just here that the unique nature of Jesus must be factored in, for if the substitute is but a mere man who is not qualitatively different from those whose penalty he is bearing, then he could not possibly pay the penalty for more than one other person. But Jesus, praise God, was different, for He was not just a mere man. Instead, He was uniquely, and wonderfully, both God and man—that is to say, 100% God and 100% man. He was, therefore, not just a finite creature, but the infinite I AM THAT I AM. When He suffered on our behalf, He suffered not just in His physical human body, but in His divine nature as well. I do not for a moment think I can fully fathom all this; but this I know, when Jesus suffered on our behalf, such suffering was, in a sense, infinite, and therefore sufficient for all the sins of the whole world. Consequently, and this by the very nature of His suffering, His suffering as He was suspended between heaven and earth on Calvary's tree was more than equivalent to eternal punishment in hell for every member of the human race.

29. As for the "forsaken theory," as you refer to it, I do not believe the Father forsook His only begotten Son to the tormenting fire and foreboding darkness of hell, not even for a moment. Accordingly, I do not believe the "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" cry that penetrated the gloomy darkness on the afternoon on which Jesus died is proof that He died as our substitute. Therefore, I do not use it as a proof-text for what I believe the Bible teaches on this subject. As has rightly been pointed out by some who take your position, the psalm from which this statement is no doubt taken (viz., Psalm 22)

is one that clearly ends in vindication. It is therefore perfectly consistent with the idea that Jesus was not, in the grand scheme of things, abandoned by His heavenly Father. All through His ordeal He knew who He was, where He was going, and that it was only through His death on the cross that sinners could and would be redeemed. In spite of all that Jesus was *experiencing* in our stead, He did not believe He was being totally forsaken by the Father. At the same time, what He was experiencing under the brunt of our curse was no sham, no elaborate kabuki play; it was, instead, very, very real. Thus, I believe that in the moment of created time and space our Lord and Savior may very well have experienced, due to His finite nature or humanness, some sort of “forsakenness” as he bore our sins and felt the curse we so rightly deserved.

30. Finally, you and others may accuse folks like me of creating some man-made philosophical construct on which to hang my theological hat, or of being a Calvinist or a Universalist, but the truth is that I have at least as many, if not more, scriptures to hang my doctrinal hat on than what you, and those who think like you, do.