

Calvinism – Imputed Righteousness and/or Substitution

by J. T. Smith

I have been reading history from the Anti-Nicene fathers. According to them for the first 300 years it was believed that man was a free moral agent. He had free will to choose whether to say “yea” or “nay” to God regarding his soul’s salvation. But there was a change in thinking near the end of the 4th century. The leading figure in this change was Augustine who lived from 354 to 430. John Calvin wrote his *Christian Institutes* in 1536. He did not, however, systematize Augustine’s findings though he agreed with them. “In the beginning of the seventeenth century, Arminianism rose as a necessary and wholesome reaction against scholastic Calvinism, but was defeated in the Synod of Dort, 1619, which adopted the five knotty canons of unconditional predestination, They organized it thus: **T** total depravity; **U** unconditional election; **L** limited atonement; **I** irresistible grace; **P** preservation of the elect. Thus the **T-U-L-I-P** theory was born.” (from Schaff’s *History of the Christian Church*)

Many in the denominational world believe in predestination and election Calvinistic style. The *Philadelphia Confession of Faith* is Calvinistic to the core. It is used by the Presbyterians, and other denominations. Primitive Baptist and some other Baptist accept the **T-U-L-I-P** theory. Although Missionary Baptist believe in the free moral agency of man, they also try to hold on to at least two of Calvin’s points in part – imputed righteousness and preservation of the saints or once saved always saved. It is obvious, when you study both positions, that those who teach the **T-U-L-I-P** theory are more consistent in their teaching than those who try to take only a part of it. If you grant total depravity (which is not truth but error) the rest of the theory fits right in.

Some years ago a number of our brethren “bought into” at least a part of the **T-U-L-I-P** theory. They were trying to uphold “salvation by grace alone” and the “imputed righteousness or substitution” theory. The theory went something like this: our sins were imputed to Christ while He was on the cross and His righteousness is imputed to us.

There are a number of passages in Romans chapter 4 that use the word “impute.”

The word “impute” in our English language comes from the Greek word *logizomai*. It is also translated “reckoned,” “counted,” “put down to one’s account” (Vine’s *Dictionary of New Testament Words*).

Romans 4:3 “For what saith the Scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.”

The Doctrine of Inherited Total Depravity

“The imputation of Adam’s sins to his posterity is not an isolated fact.”

“The whole plan of redemption rests on this same principle. Christ is the representative of His people, and on this ground their sins are imputed to Him and His righteousness to them.”

(*Systematic Theology*, 11, pages 198, 199, 201 ~ Taken from *The Reformed Doctrine Of Predestination* by Loriane Bottner, page 78).

In an effort to try to prove that man has no part in his salvation, The great Baptist preacher, Charles H. Spurgeon, said: “If Christ has died for you, you can never be lost. God will not punish twice for one thing. If God punished Christ for your sins He will not punish you. ‘Payment God’s justice cannot twice demand; first, at the bleeding Saviour’s hand, and then again at mine.’ How can God be just if he punished Christ, the substitute, and then man himself

afterwards?" (page 155)

If Our Sins Were Imputed to Christ ~ And His Righteousness Was Imputed to Mankind ~ Who Then Can Be Lost? Hebrews 2:9 "But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone."

Question: When Christ died on the cross, did He become our substitute. If *not*, what do passages like Isaiah 53:6, etc. mean?

Isaiah 53:6 "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all."

Perhaps the Septuagint (Greek) version of the Old Testament explains it better.

Isaiah 53:6 "All we as sheep have gone astray; every one has gone astray in his way; and the Lord gave Him up for our sins."

Septuagint (Greek-English Version of the Hebrew)

"It cannot be:

(1) That He was literally sin Nor,

(2) That He was a sinner, for it is said in immediate connection that He 'knew no sin,'

(3) That He was, in any proper sense of the word, guilty, for no one is truly guilty who is not personally a transgressor of the Law.

(4) If the declaration that "He was made 'sin'" *hamartian* does not mean that He was sin itself, or a sinner, or guilty? If not, then what does it mean?

What about II Corinthians 5:21? "For He hath made Him *to be* sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him."

Of this passage Adam Clarke said, "He made him who knew no sin (who was innocent), a sin-offering for us. . . It signifies a sin-offering, or sacrifice for sin. . . Had our translators attended to their own method of translating the word (*hamartia*) in other places where it means the same as here, they would not have given this false view of a passage which has been made the foundation of a most blasphemous doctrine; namely, that our sins were imputed to Christ, and that He was a proper object of the indignation of Divine justice, because He was blackened with imputed sin." (*Commentary on II Corinthians*).

Our Sins Forgiven Through Christ

Ransom — "Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many." (Matthew 20:28)

"The word translated 'ransom' is the one commonly employed in the papyri as the price paid for a slave who is then set free by the one who bought him, the purchase money for manumitting slaves." (from Robertson's *Word Pictures in the New Testament*).

Our Sins Forgiven Through Christ's ATONEMENT – "A. Verb. 'to cover over, atone, propitiate, pacify.' This "root" is found in the Hebrew language at all periods of its history, and perhaps is best known from the term Yom Kippur, 'Day of Atonement.' Its verbal forms occur approximately 100 times in the Hebrew Bible. (from Vine's *Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words*)

Leviticus 17:11 "For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul."

"It cannot be:

(1) That He was literally sin in the abstract, or sin as such. No one can pretend this. The expression must be, therefore, in some sense, figurative.

Nor,

(2) Can it mean that He was a sinner, for it is said in immediate connection that He

‘knew no sin,’ and it is everywhere said that ‘He was holy, harmless, undefiled.’

“Nor,

(3) Can it mean that He was, in any proper sense of the word, guilty, for no one is truly guilty who is not personally a transgressor of the Law; and if He was, in any proper sense, guilty, then He deserved to die, and His death could have no more merit than that of any other guilty being; and if He was properly guilty it would make no difference in this respect whether it was by His own fault or by imputation: a guilty being deserves to be punished; and where there is deserving of punishment there can be no merit in sufferings.

“But all such views as go to make the Holy Redeemer a sinner, or guilty, or deserving of the sufferings which He endured, border on blasphemy, and are abhorrent to the whole strain of the Scriptures. In no form, in no sense possible, is it to be maintained that the Lord Jesus was sinful or guilty. It is a corner stone of the whole system of religion, that in all conceivable senses of the expression He was holy, and pure, and the object of the divine approbation. And every view which fairly leads to the statement that He was in any sense guilty, or which implies that He deserved to die, is ‘prima facie’ a false view, and should be at once abandoned.

“But,

(4) If the declaration that He was made ‘sin’ *hamartian* does not mean that He was sin itself, or a sinner, or guilty, then it must mean that He was a sin-offering, an offering or a sacrifice for sin; and this is the interpretation which is now generally adopted by expositors; ... There are many passages in the Old Testament where the word ‘sin’ *hamartia* is used in the sense of sin-offering, or a sacrifice for sin. Thus, Hosea 4:8, ‘They eat up the sin of my people;’ that is, the sin-offerings; see Ezekiel 43:22, 25; 44:29; 45:22-23, 25.” (from *Barnes’ Notes* by Albert Barnes).

“II Corinthians 5:21

(2.) The sacrifice He offered: He was made sin; not a sinner, but sin, that is, a sin-offering, a sacrifice for sin.” (from Matthew Henry’s Commentary)

“[To be sin] The words ‘*to be*’ are not in the original. Literally, it is, ‘He has made Him sin, or a sin-offering’ *hamartian epoieesen*. But what is meant by this? What is the exact idea which the apostle intended to convey?

The word [for] in “for many” is from the Greek preposition *anti* and is sometimes used to mean “in place of.” However, in I Timothy 2:6 “Who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time,” the word [for] in “for all” is from the Greek preposition *huper* and means “in behalf of.”

Sometimes we take for granted that a practice is scriptural because “we have always said or done that.” But if we think about this subject we know that substitutionary theory nor the imputed righteousness theory cannot be correct – unless we are willing to accept Calvin’s **T-U-L-I-P** theory, then we cannot accept the explanation of many (even brethren) on II Corinthians 5:21.