

*Redemption  
Accomplished  
and Applied*

*by John Murray*

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Second Lecture

Presented by Dr. Richard Spencer

# Review

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- The accomplishment of redemption, or atonement, is central to the Christian religion
- We are currently discussing the necessity of the atonement. We have established that:
  - The source of the atonement was God's love
  - Adam's sin plunged man into bondage; and death, both physical and eternal, resulted
  - Sinful man cannot redeem himself
  - God freely chose, in eternity past, to save some

# Review

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- We have also discussed the fact that many people have denied the necessity or, in some cases, the reality of the atonement
- These liberal views are not reconcilable with Scripture and come, ultimately, from a denial of the authority and/or reliability of the Bible
- We all have some ultimate standard for deciding truth, if it isn't the Bible, then it is human reason
  - We should use our reason in a ministerial way, not a magisterial way

# *The Atonement was Necessary*

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- The necessity of the atonement is an essential doctrine of Biblical Christianity –

*there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.* Acts 4:12

- Wayne Grudem also addresses the necessity of the atonement in Chapter 27 of his *Systematic Theology* and offers a couple of good arguments not adduced by Murray ...

# Grudem's Arguments

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- In Matthew 26:39 Jesus prayed, “*if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will.*” Since Jesus always prayed in the Father’s will, and the cup was not taken from him, we can conclude that it was not possible for God to do so
- In speaking to two disciples on the road to Emmaus, Jesus said, “*Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?*” (Luke 24:26, ESV), which was a conclusion Jesus reached from the OT

# *Back to Murray*

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- We have looked briefly at some of the liberal theories of the atonement and presented some arguments opposed to them that are not in Murray's book
- So, let's now return to Murray's book

# *The Necessity of the Atonement*

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- Murray examines the two most important answers that have been given to this question by Bible-believing Christians:
  - Hypothetical necessity
    - A phrase that goes back to Aristotle and means “that which is necessary on the condition (on the hypothesis) that the end is to be obtained.” (The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy)
  - Consequent absolute necessity
    - Something that is absolutely necessary as a consequence of something else – in this case, Christ’s substitutionary death is a necessary consequence of God’s having chosen to save some

# *Hypothetical Necessity*

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- This view says that there is nothing inherent in the nature of God or the remission of sin that makes a blood atonement essential
- The necessity arose only because God chose to accomplish it this way, but he could have done it some other way
- Berkhof says this view has been held by some great Christians, including Augustine, Luther, Zwingli, Calvin, Bavinck, and, at one point, Owens; therefore, the *type* of necessity is certainly not an essential Christian doctrine



# Argument for Hypothetical Necessity

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- Calvin wrote:

*It deeply concerned us, that he who was to be our Mediator should be very God and very man. If the necessity be inquired into, it was not what is commonly termed simple or absolute, but flowed from the divine decree on which the salvation of man depended. What was best for us, our most merciful Father determined. Institutes, Bk 2, 12.1*

- The main concern of Calvin and others was to uphold the sovereign free will of God

# *Aside - God's Perfection*

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- The Scriptures tell us that God is perfect and all that he does is perfect, for example:

*He is the Rock, his works are perfect* Deut 32:4

*As for God, his way is perfect* Psalm 18:30

*Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.* Matthew 5:48

- So, given that all God's ways are perfect, it seems that God is bound in some way by his perfection to use the best means possible – this does not limit his sovereign will, but recognizes that he *always* wills what is best

# Bavinck's View

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- Herman Bavinck seems to mostly agree with this view, he wrote that the atonement, as a way of satisfying God's justice,  
*May be called "necessary," not as a necessity that is imposed on God from without and from which he cannot escape, but as actions that are in agreement with his attributes and display them most splendidly. [emphasis added]*  
H. Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, Vol. 3, pg 371
- He goes on to write ...

# Bavinck's View

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*If God wanted to reveal himself in his consummate glory, then the creation and re-creation, Christ's incarnation and satisfaction, were necessary. His perfections were already made manifest in creation, but they are much more richly and superbly displayed in the re-creation.*

H. Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, Vol. 3, pg 371

- So, it seems that Bavinck might well have supported Murray's "consequent absolute necessity", which he calls the "classic protestant position"

RA&A, pg. 11

# Turretin's View

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- In his book *The Atonement of Christ*, Francis Turretin (1623–1687) writes that the necessity of the atonement:  
*makes a glorious display of the most illustrious of the divine perfections: of his Holiness, on account of which he can have no communion with the sinner, until, by an atonement, his guilt is removed and his pollution purged; of his Justice, which inexorably demands punishment of sin; of his Wisdom, in reconciling the respective claims of justice and mercy; and of his Love, in not sparing his own Son in order that he might spare us.*

Translated by James R. Willson, published 1859

# Consequent Absolute Necessity

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- Murray explains,

*The word “consequent” in this designation points to the fact that God’s will or decree to save any is of free and sovereign grace* RA&A, pg 12

*The terms “absolute necessity,” however, indicate that God, having elected some to everlasting life out of his mere good pleasure, was under the necessity of accomplishing this purpose through the sacrifice of his own Son, a necessity arising from the perfections of his own nature* RA&A, pg 12

# Vain Speculation?

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- Murray writes:

*It might appear to be vainly speculative and presumptuous to press such an inquiry and to try to determine what is inherently necessary for God. ... But it is not presumptuous for us to say that certain things are inherently necessary or impossible for God. It belongs to our faith to avow that he cannot lie ... The real question is: does the Scripture provide us with evidence or considerations on the basis of which we may conclude that this is one of the things impossible or necessary for God*

# Anselm of Canterbury

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- Saint Anselm of Canterbury (1033–1109) was an early Scholastic Christian philosopher and theologian
- His motto was *fides quaerens intellectum*, which means faith in search of understanding
- Thomas Williams writes that this motto means something like “*an active love of God seeking a deeper knowledge of God.*”\*

\* Quoted from the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/anselm/>)



# Murray's Arguments

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- He says the six arguments he presents must be viewed in their cumulative effect rather than individually

- His first argument is that,

*There are those passages which create a very strong presumption in favour of this inference.*

RA&A pg 13

- Let's examine the two verses he gives as examples, Hebrews 2:10, 17 ...

# First Argument

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*In bringing many sons to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering.* Hebrews 2:10

*For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people.* Hebrews 2:17

- These verses strongly imply it was necessary that redemption be accomplished this way

# Second Argument

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- Murray's second argument is that,

*there are passages, such as John 3:14-16, which rather definitely suggest that the alternative to the giving of God's only-begotten Son and his being lifted up on the accursed tree is the eternal perdition of the lost. ... we can hardly escape the additional thought that there is no other alternative.*

RA&A, pg. 14

# Second Argument

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*Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life. For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.*

John 3:14-16

- This passage certainly seems to suggest that no alternative was available

# Third Argument

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- Third, Murray argues that the gravity of sin required a sacrifice that only Christ, the unique God-man, could offer

Hebrews 9:22-23, “*without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness. It was necessary, then, for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified with these sacrifices [i.e., animals], but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.”*

- What are “the heavenly things”?

# *The Heavenly Things*

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- The “heavenly things” are the people of God
  - They are not fit for heaven until their sins have been atoned for

*we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all*

Hebrews 10:10

# *The Better Sacrifice*

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- The nature of this better sacrifice is shown clearly in Hebrews:

*The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.* Hebrews 1:3

*For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people.* Hebrews 2:17

# *The Better Sacrifice*

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- And finally:

*When Christ came as high priest of the good things that are already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not man-made, that is to say, not a part of this creation. He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption.*

Hebrews 9:11-12



# Third Argument

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- He further points out that the Levitical sacrifices are presented in Hebrews 9 as mere patterns of the heavenly exemplar, the transcendent blood offering by which the heavenly things were purified. He states

*The necessity of blood-shedding in the Levitical ordinance is simply a necessity arising from the necessity of blood-shedding in the higher realm of the heavenly.*

RA&A, pg. 15

# Third Argument

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- Murray then asks,

*What kind of necessity is this that obtained in the realm of the heavenly? Was it merely hypothetical or was it absolute?*

RA&A, pg. 15

- He then gives three sub-arguments to support his contention that blood-shedding was an absolute necessity in the heavenly realm

# *Sub-Argument for Absolute Necessity*

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- First, speaking about the passages in Hebrews 9, Murray writes,

*The emphasis of the context is that the transcendent efficacy of Christ's sacrifice is required by the exigencies arising from sin. And these exigencies are not hypothetical – they are absolute.*

RA&A, pg. 15

- To fully appreciate what he is saying, we must consider the typological symbology used in the Old Testament and then look again at the passages in Hebrews 9

# *Old Testament Tabernacle*

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- The Tabernacle:
  - Was in the middle of the Israelite camp
  - The altar was in the courtyard
  - The Holy Place was first
  - The Most Holy Place was behind a curtain
  - The ark of the testimony contained the law and had a solid-gold “atonement cover”
  - God appeared in a cloud above the cover and met with the Israelites there
  - Only the High Priest could enter the Most Holy Place, only on the Day of Atonement, and only with blood

# The Atonement Cover

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- The atonement cover, or mercy seat, is central to the typology
  - It was the top of the ark and, in the Greek translation of the OT (the Septuagint) and also in Hebrews 9:5 it is called ἱλαστήριον
  - In Romans 3:25 Paul writes that “*God presented [Christ] as a sacrifice of atonement*” where “sacrifice of atonement”, or “propitiation” in the KJV and ESV, is ἱλαστήριον in the Greek
- It is Jesus himself, and his blood, that offer the ultimate propitiation, or atonement, typified by the atonement cover

# *The Better Sacrifice*

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- Now reconsider just one of the passages:

*When Christ came as high priest of the good things that are already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not man-made, that is to say, not a part of this creation. He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption.*

Hebrews 9:11-12

# *Sub-Argument for Absolute Necessity*

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- Second, Murray writes,  
*The precise nature of Christ's priestly offering and the efficacy of his sacrifice are bound up with the constitution of his person.* RA&A, pg. 15
- In other words, Hebrews argues that the superior nature of the heavenly exemplar, on which the earthly Tabernacle and sacrifices were patterned, points to the need for the unique God-man to be both Priest and sacrifice, e.g., reconsider Hebrews 1:3 & 9:23

# The Person of Christ

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*The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.* Hebrews 1:3

*without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness. It was necessary, then, for the copies of the heavenly things [i.e., the things in the earthly sanctuary] to be purified with these sacrifices [i.e., animals], but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.* Hebrews 9:22-23



# *Sub-Argument for Absolute Necessity*

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- Third, Murray writes,  
*If the sacrifice of Christ is only hypothetically necessary, then the heavenly things in connection with which it had relevance and meaning were also only hypothetically necessary. And that is surely a difficult hypothesis.* RA&A, pg. 16
- In other words, if God chose to save some, then the intimate connection between those who are saved and the person and work of Christ, as presented in Hebrews, shows the atonement to be necessary

# *Application and Preparation*

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- To apply today's teaching, meditate on the fact that the source of our redemption is God's eternal love and then consider:

*We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love our brothers. Anyone who does not love remains in death. ... This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers.*

1 John 3:14, 16

- To prepare for next time, you should read up to page 29 in Murray's book