

## *Original Sin and the Fall of Adam*

by Frank Selch

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“... *salvation for man and creation cannot come by a simple act of forgiveness of any juridical imputation of sin, nor can it come by any payment of satisfaction to the devil (Origen) or to God (Rome)*”.

The idea of a contagious *Original Sin*, whose infectiousness is handed down along the strands of human DNA is not a Biblical idea, but was conceived during the early centuries of Christianity when Platonic philosophy was the measure not only of Greek, but also Roman culture. Most likely through the influence of Philo in the late first and early second centuries Platonic thought became the guiding light for interpreting the Hebrew Scriptures.

The chief architect of the concept of *Original Sin* was Augustine of Hippo in the 4<sup>th</sup> century, though he, most likely, took this idea from 2nd-century theologian Tertullian who had actually coined the phrase. He, in turn, appealed to the Pauline-apocalyptic understanding of the forgiveness of sin, but **also included the notion that sin is sexually transmitted** [like a disease – *my emphasis*]! According to this view, Adam’s disobedience/rebellion is responsible for the brokenness of our world and consequent sufferings of the human race and by extension all of Creation. Nevertheless Augustine also held the view that deliverance from this curse is also foreshadowed the instance it was pronounced by God (Gen. 3:15). There is no question in my mind that St. Jerome (c. 347 – 420), the Hermit of Bethlehem would also have had considerable influence on the development of the doctrine. Jerome’s treatment of questions of celibacy and marriage enormously helped to shape the Christian sexual ethic that was to dominate Western civilization until the Renaissance at least.<sup>1</sup> Jerome hated women and even for Augustine, no woman could measure up to the piety of his mother Monica and therefore sexual abstinence was a major focal point for him.

Augustine had a mistress for fifteen years, when he was a teacher of Rhetoric in Carthage and with whom he fathered a son. However, he ditched both when he converted to Christianity from *Manichaeism* under the guidance of Ambrose of Milan. The ditching of his mistress and son, however, was most likely encouraged by his mother, as he puts it in his *Confessions...* ‘...*she feared lest a wife should prove a clog and hindrance to my hopes*’.<sup>2</sup> Both Ambrose and Augustine ignored the Biblical injunction that he had a lifelong responsibility for his mistress and his son!

Based on Augustine’s own struggles with sin, he began to teach extremely harsh rules for holy living including consigning infants to hell and everlasting torment; if they died in an unbaptised state. For Augustine virtually every move he made was sinful to him and his obsession with sin eventually produced a theological perspective in the Latin Church that was far removed from Biblical thought and from reality.

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<sup>1</sup> Jane Barr, "The Influence of St. Jerome on Medieval Attitudes to Women," in *After Eve: Women in the Theology of the Christian Tradition*, ed. Janet Martin Soskice (London: Marshall Pickering, 1990), p.94-95.

<sup>2</sup> Augustine of Hippo, *Confessions...* Book II, Chapter 3, p.51

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He could only perceive God as a fearsome, wrathful judge waiting to punish, in the harshest way possible, any wrong move his creatures might make. Some of Augustine's followers continued to identify *Original Sin* with concupiscence<sup>3</sup> in the psychological sense. This identification was challenged by the 11th-century Saint Anselm of Canterbury, who defined *Original Sin* as '*privation of the righteousness that every man ought to possess*', thus separating it from concupiscence. The Greek Orthodox Church, however, confuses the Yetzer HaRa (or evil inclination/impulse) of Judaism with concupiscence, which they refer to as our 'disordered passion'. According to the Greek scholars it isn't only that we are born in death, or in a state of distance from God, but also that we are born with disordered passions within us. In countering Pelagius, Augustine was led to state that infants who die without Baptism are consigned to hell, which Gregory the Great confirmed by asserting that God condemns even those with only *Original Sin* on their souls; even infants who have never sinned by their own will must go to "everlasting torments"...

The Bible teaches that a reverential fear of God is important for every human being, but what these men taught was an absolute terror of God that was only lifted by the revival movements in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. But then the pendulum swung too far the other way that [*even a healthy, reverential*] fear of God is almost totally absent from the modern, music obsessed Christianity of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

In the 12th century, however, the identification of *Original Sin* with concupiscence was again supported by Peter Lombard and others, but rejected by the leading theologians in the next century, chief of whom was Thomas Aquinas. He distinguished the supernatural gifts of Adam before the Fall from what was merely natural and said that it was the former that were lost, privileges that enabled man to keep his inferior powers in submission to reason and directed to his supernatural end. Even after the fall, man thus kept his natural abilities of reason, will and passions. The overly rigorous Augustine-inspired views persisted among the Franciscans, though the most prominent Franciscan theologians, such as Duns Scotus and William of Ockham, again eliminated the element of concupiscence.

Eventually, medieval theologians retained the idea of *Original Sin* and the Augustinian view was reasserted by the 16th-century Protestant reformers, primarily Martin Luther and John Calvin based on the Epistles of Paul; viz. Rom.3:10-19; 5:12; etc.) thus overturning the changes brought by Scotus and Ockham. The Reformers once more equated *Original Sin* with concupiscence, affirming that it persisted even after baptism and completely destroyed freedom. Ignatius of Loyola in 1534 founded the Order of the Jesuits in 1534 based on the Franciscan principle of chastity, poverty and obedience [to the Pope] and revived self-flagellation as a means of 'conquering the flesh'. So, what was the point of Jesus coming '*to die for us*' if there was no change for the believer and if he had to torture his 'flesh' into submission?

In its essence, the concept of '*Original Sin*' is largely an academic, Greco-Christian (Augustinian) construct that became associated, virtually exclusively, with nakedness and sex; both of which came to be seen as inherently evil and to be avoided at all costs even in marriage— except for the purpose of procreation. At least in R.C. theology, even the act of reproduction was regarded until only fairly recent times to be sinful and priests (especially the Jesuits) used the Confessional to terrorize people (mostly women) over their sexual conduct; whether such took place in private or elsewhere! A woman could be burned at the stake if she was considered too demanding by her husband in her sexual needs. From the

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<sup>3</sup> Lust or strong sexual desire

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early centuries of Christianity, celibacy was encouraged and sexual abstinence (at least in theory) was seen as one of the highest virtues to be achieved.<sup>4</sup>

The R.C. Church taught, until as late as Vatican II (1963), that [even] the marital sex-act was a mortal sin; meriting hell if unconfessed before a priest! Never mind the priest's own moral position! Paradoxically, nakedness in Christian art, as such, is admired throughout [normative] Christianity and abounds with naked, or semi-naked figures including the semi-naked, crucified Jesus. Even God Himself is often portrayed as a semi-naked old man (i.e. Michelangelo's *God and Adam* on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel in Rome), as is John the Baptist, as well as naked cherubs replete with exposed genitals and Jesus as a naked infant [yes, also with exposed genitals] in his mother's lap or in her arms. All of these images are in a direct contrast to Hebrew thought and in direct conflict with the teaching of the Bible; except the mother of Jesus who is always portrayed as the chaste, ever-virgin. A very good example of the unworkability of enforced celibacy is found in the artwork of the *Villa d'Este* at the Tivoli Gardens near Rome—displaying the moral degeneracy of the Borgia and Medici Popes, as well as their Cardinals. One of the Popes (Leo X.)<sup>5</sup> had the bedroom of his palace adorned on walls and ceilings with images of naked women and men in all kinds of erotic posturing, which is regarded today as 'priceless art'. Throughout the palace is an abundance of paintings of erotic art and a multitude of sculptures of little, nude cherubs!

'*What a God!*'— is one bound to cry, who creates people as sexual beings, orders them to be fruitful and multiply (Genesis 1:26-28) — which 'coincidentally' involves sexual contact between a man and a woman (!) — and then consigns them to hell for doing so. The only way out is admitting to the act of reproduction as a SIN to a priest who happens to be administering a system that would cause Sodom and Gomorrah blush with shame!!<sup>6</sup>

When we drill down to the core of the matter, logic and reason have to admit that God appears as a shameless hoaxer who surrounded his creatures (only the humans made in His image, by the way — not the animals) with so many pitfalls that they have no hope in hell of avoiding. On the one hand we have Adam and Eve made in the image and likeness of God, yet, on the other we have a snake that is smarter than they and thus able to rob them of Paradise merely by suggesting to them an act of disobedience against their mutual Creator. But then, there is also the dilemma that, had Adam and Eve passed that first test, they would most surely have failed the sexual test. They would have had to engage in that very activity medieval theologians considered sinful in order to obey God and to multiply. Based on such logic and theology Adam and Eve were 'fall-guys' from the very beginning, no matter which way they turned and by extension every human being born!

Well, considering that God is not a sexual being, what would He understand anyway; he probably did not realize that procreation involves sex?!!!

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<sup>4</sup> Ascetic used to flee into isolation in the desert to escape temptation; lock themselves into cells and flagellate their bodies mercilessly to overcome their sexual urges. Yet, despite all evidence to the contrary, the R.Catholic Church has continued to impose celibacy upon the clergy despite the most horrific sexual abuses perpetrated upon minors and vulnerable fellow clergy

<sup>5</sup> Interestingly, this pope is also the '**Reformation Pope**' and was greatly admired by Martin Luther; viz. '*...[you] Leo, are sitting like a lamb in the midst of wolves, like Daniel in the midst of lions, and, with Ezekiel, you dwell among scorpions.*' Luther, in his letter referred to the Vatican — in his letter to Leo, that, '*...your See, however, which is called the Court of Rome, and which neither you nor any man can deny to be more corrupt than any Babylon or Sodom, and quite, as I believe, of a lost, desperate, and hopeless impiety...*'. Martin Luther (1483–1546). **Letter of Martin Luther to Pope Leo X, 'Concerning Christian Liberty'** ... <http://www.bartleby.com/36/6/1.html>

<sup>6</sup> The Roman Catholic Church has clearly demonstrated to this very day, that as a system it is incapable of reigning in its inherent morally corrupt and anti-Semitic nature. I acknowledge the sincere piety of individuals throughout R.C. history, but the system as such is nothing less, and has never been any less, than the militant, murderous, polytheistic and political Empire of Rome dressed in a religious garb.

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According to Calvin, not only set God Adam and Eve a sure-fire trap they had no hope of avoiding, but He ACTUALLY designed the genetic code so that not everyone would be saved, but would actually go to hell. In other words, God's intention had always been to populate hell!

What an oxymoron!!

Judaism, on the other hand, does not encourage the monastic ideal of celibacy and poverty. To the contrary - all of the Torah's Commandments are a means of sanctifying the physical world, and, because we are expected to 'serve God with joy' (Deut. 28:47). Notwithstanding this, Nazirites entered periods of abstinence from grape products, haircuts, and contact with the dead. However, they did not withdraw from general society, and they were permitted to marry and own property; moreover, in most cases a Nazirite vow was only for a specified time period and not permanent.

Enter Christian theology and we find that according to Augustine, human nature is utterly depraved and needs a saviour. A close look at the events in the Garden shows us that the information given to the reader is actually quite scant. What I believe has happened is that due to the scarcity of information in Genesis, Augustine and others had to bring Paul's writings into play in order to come up with their theological conclusions. However, in order to come up with a proper exegesis of the Genesis text it is improper to read any information back into the text to provide us with a satisfactory outcome.

As I mentioned earlier, Martin Luther supported Augustine's views, but it was John Calvin who further defined Augustine's thinking with his doctrine of **Total Depravity**, which – according to him – reflected a **radical and total corruption of the human soul from the time of conception**, as well as an **absolute inability to improve its lost condition**. It is summarized in that teaching that, as a consequence of the Fall of Adam, every person born into the world is enslaved to the service of sin and, apart from the efficacious or *prevenient grace of God*, is utterly unable to choose to follow God or choose to accept salvation as it is offered.<sup>7</sup> Man cannot escape *Original Sin* of his own efforts since it is transmitted by the very act of procreation— *like a venereal disease*. If this is taken at face value in line with the Christian idea of Atonement through the death of Jesus, how was Enoch able to walk with God and then be raptured? How was Elijah able to please God that he too would be taken body and soul into heaven? Something is amiss here with the Christian option!



From about the 18th century, belief about *Original Sin* has tended to become softened, but has persisted in some form as in Immanuel Kant's idea of a 'radical evil'. To this day it remains the basis for all evangelism, which holds that only the 'Cross of Christ' can bridge the chasm created by that first sin.

### *Adam's Garments...*

**I**t is commonly taught that the covering of the reproductive parts means that Adam and Eve became aware of their nudity for the first time and hid from each other in shame! As it says in Gen.3:11 "...*who told you that you were naked?*" What was so different to the time before they disobeyed? Is it just possible that it was the glory of God, which covered them at their creation was now extinguished; and THAT was the nakedness they experienced? The common reason extended to explain the sudden onset of

<sup>7</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Total\\_depravity](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Total_depravity)

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shame is that they realized their genitals, etc were exposed. But aren't we reading here a moral concept back into a time before such a concept even existed? Why would Adam and Eve feel shame over their body-parts when there had been no theological expose on nudity? With amazing hindsight we can now see that that Neo-Platonic thought created a suspicion of all matter. Based on Hellenistic categories, which generated a 'Christian Neo-Platonism', even the soul's intrinsic immortality provided no hope, because it was polluted by the human body. Carroll writes that '*among Christians, the Greek idea of soul became entirely removed from the biblical idea of spirit, since it literally means breath, is intrinsically physical. Indeed, now the body, even with its breath was defined as the source of all evil. Christian piety became penitential – the self flagellation of body became the highest form of devotion*'.<sup>8</sup> If we were to follow this through, we would discover that the suffering of Jesus, his own flagellation [by his stripes we are healed] and torturous death on the cross, lead us to the conclusion that the death of Jesus is the only answer to the Augustinian concept of sin and man's restoration into God's favour. For Augustine, flagellation became the only means by which concupiscence could be kept in check! Then of course are the conflicting theological perspectives between the Eastern and Western branches of Christianity. For example, the Eastern Orthodox Church teaches that no one is guilty for the actual sin they committed, but rather everyone inherits the consequences of this act; the foremost of this is physical death in this world. This view of course creates an additional problem; if Jesus was sinless and therefore not tied to the Adamic consequences of a physical death, was he already immortal? If so, then he was not like us in every way (Heb.4:15).

The problem is that there is a snag with this reasoning when the Torah is called onto the witness stand! Let us therefore consider the following fact!

The Creator made every single creature with a unique, splendid covering, be it a fur, feathers or scales, etc. yet mankind, made in His image should have nothing but bare, vulnerable skin?! Logic and reason should tell us that there is something amiss here! Since God is light, is it not feasible that Adam too was given a garment of light? And does it not stand to reason that when Adam disobeyed God, the glory he had shared with his Creator also vanished and with it his covering; in other words, his light went out— which is the true fall of Man and the condition he cannot get back. A part of him died! That is also the reason why God mercifully made garments for Adam and Eve to lift them at least to the level of the beasts. It is for this reason in my view, and no other, that human nakedness is abhorrent to God because it serves as a constant reminder of Adam's disobedience! Let us be mindful that God has no problems with genitals and female breasts as such, after all they are His idea and are well displayed on most creatures!

Since the Fall, human beings are now forced to continually choose between good and evil; between right and wrong. Although Adam was created in the image of God— he was not God. He may have shared some of God's glory — at least for a while, but he was still human and just so he would not forget himself in that area God put a boundary into place, i.e. a prohibition or taboo: "*Do not eat from the tree of.... lest you die...*" (Gen. 2:17). Adam and Eve however followed the serpent's advice and ate! What they did not experience before they now discover with great alarm; viz. their conscience kicks in and they feel shame. But what also kicks in is their defence mechanism and blaming begins, '*I am not responsible! It was the woman, it was the snake, etc...*'. We need to stop at this point ask what this story is really all about. Did God not know the outcome from the beginning? Or He knew and then proceeded to play an utterly macabre game with His creatures? I believe that it is neither! Jonathan Sacks points out that we are

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<sup>8</sup> Carroll, p.579

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witnessing here the birth of *ethical life*!<sup>9</sup> Had the first humans not eaten from the tree, they would have most likely eaten from the tree of life and continued in their semi-divine state as semi-robots in divine perfection. As Sacks puts it, the eating of the fruit provided them for the first time with a truly free will to choose. Mankind is unique in all of creation because of that and among all creatures we are the only ones with the capability of being creative. We can frame alternatives and choose between them. *But freedom has boundaries!*<sup>10</sup>

By contrast with Christian theology, Hebrew thought brings out a different dimension, i.e. that true freedom only comes with responsibility and accountability, because responsibility creates identity and accountability develops integrity! What we also find in this episode is an unusual Hebrew word תְּשׁוּקָה (t<sup>e</sup>shukah) commonly translated as desire and which occurs only three times in the entire Bible; viz. in Gen. 3:16; 4:7 and in Song of Songs 7:10. However, the Greek translators of the LXX used two different Greek words to render the term in the Genesis and Song of Songs verses; words that are totally unsatisfactory and unrelated to the Hebrew meaning how they are translated into English versions.

*Jonathan Sacks* writes in ***Covenant and Conversation***, in his commentary on the weekly Parashah: ***Vayakhel-Pekudei***: ‘*It was Christianity, under the influence of classical Greece, that drew a distinction between eros (love as intense physical desire) and agape (a calm, detached love of humanity-in-general and things-in-general) and declared the second, not the first, to be religious. It was this self-same Greek influence that led Christianity to read the story of Adam and Eve and the forbidden fruit as a story of sinful sexual desire – an interpretation that should have no place in Biblical thought.*’

This is the love we find in passages like Psalm 63: 2, “*My soul thirsts for you, my body longs for you, in a dry and weary land where there is no water.*” Only because the sages thought about love this way, did they take it for granted that The Song of Songs (7:10 [BHS v.11]) – an extremely sensual series of love poems – was about the passionate love between God and Israel. Rabbi Akiva called it “the holy of holies” of religious poetry’.

Simon May speaks about the love of God that is revealed in the T<sup>e</sup>nakh (OT) as being characterised by “*intense devotion; absolute trust; fear of his power and presence; and rapturous, if often questioning, absorption in his will ... Its moods are a combination of the piety of a vassal, the intimacy of friends, the fidelity of spouses, the dependence of a child, the passion of lovers ...*”

He later adds, “*The widespread belief that the Hebrew Bible is all about vengeance and ‘an eye for an eye,’ while the Gospels supposedly invent love as an unconditional and universal value, must therefore count as one of the most extraordinary misunderstandings in all of Western history.*”

But now I need to go back to the Hebrew word I mentioned above, תְּשׁוּקָה (t<sup>e</sup>shukah)! I have searched Christian commentaries to no avail in the hope of finding a meaningful and satisfactory interpretation of this word. The following is the explanation provided for us by Brown Driver & Briggs in the most authoritative Hebrew Lexicon available:

תְּשׁוּקָה S<sup>8669</sup> TWOT<sup>2352a</sup> GK<sup>9592</sup>] **n.f. longing**;—of woman for man, תְּשׁוּקָתָהּ Gen. 3:16 (J); of man for woman, תְּשׁוּקָתוֹ Ct 7:11; **of beast to devour**, fig. תְּשׁוּקָתוֹ Gen. 4:7 (J). (G ἀποστροφή

<sup>9</sup> Jonathan Sacks, *To Heal A Fractured World*, p.133 ff.

<sup>10</sup> *ibid*, p.136

S *Strong's Concordance*

TWOT *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*.

GK Goodrick/Kohlenberger numbering system of the *NIV Exhaustive Concordance*.

n. *nomen*, noun.

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Gn, ἐπιστροφή, Ct whence Nes<sup>Marg.</sup> proposes תַּשְׁכַּחַת Gen. 3:16, which Ball<sup>Hpt</sup> reads in all; but how to explain the unusual and striking word in MT?).<sup>11</sup>

Brown Drive & Briggs call it an unusual word, which indeed it is. You will notice that initially they render the word in the traditional sense, but then they give a figurative meaning of ‘*like a beast to devour*’. In the Hebrew we have the word [תַּשְׁכַּחַת; *t<sup>l</sup>shukatecha*], which is translated as ‘*your desire*’, probably of a sexual nature (see above), giving ‘*Your desire will be for your husband.*’ The LXX and Old Latin have ἀποστροφή and *conversio*, ‘*turning*’- respectively; but the general meaning is far from the original. In the Vulgate however we have *sub potestate*, i.e. ‘*you will be under the power of your husband.*’ (Gen. 3:16 - Douay Rheims Bible). Jerome’s fluency in Hebrew makes it difficult to defend the possibility of linguistic issues. However, in the next chapter in the story of Cain the identical word recurs, but Jerome had no problem to translate it there as *appetitus*, viz. ‘*strong desire*’— a little better, but still a long shot from the real meaning. Overall, the Greek word *apostrophe* refuses to render a satisfactory meaning that even remotely agrees with the Hebrew text.

After a careful consideration of the three passages it is found in, it is this secondary meaning given by BD&B, which becomes of particular interest. A major clue comes to us from the Cain passage. ‘*Sin is crouching at your door and seeking to devour you, but you will [are able to] master it...*’ The sense here is that an ambush is waiting for Cain by a ravenous beast [i.e. sin]. If we then reflect at the totality of the Creator’s pronouncement upon Adam and Eve, it becomes easier to make sense of the judgment. May I therefore suggest the following for your consideration!

As fallen human beings we have never allowed ourselves to be fully impacted of *Creation Event*, so we tend to look at the generation of life in a womb/egg as nothing more than the [normal] consequence of a mating process ordained by a process of nature! Is it just possible that this lack of understanding influences the ease, by which countless women all over the world, nowadays terminate the lives of their unborn; simply because they never contemplate what it means to generate life where there is none?

The same word, תַּשְׁכַּחַת (*t<sup>l</sup>shukah*), which describes the depth of passion between the *Shulamit* and her beloved, also has a negative meaning; viz. it speaks of a beast-like urge to devour! So, what have we here?

In the case of Adam and Eve it cannot be attributed the same meaning as in *Song of Songs* because of the controlling relationship that was spoken into existence by the Creator and now exists between the man and the woman. Adam is now destined to become a tyrant to ‘*lord*’ over his wife in an oppressive manner. Since he has now acquired the knowledge of good and evil, he will be continually forced to make the decision *to do good*. Because he chose the negative path of rebellion against his Creator, it will be his nature not only *to do evil*, but it will be an ongoing struggle for him and his descendants to seek and accomplish good. The Jewish people call it the battle between the good and evil inclinations (c/f. Rom. Ch.7). From now on Adam would be forced to exercise his dominion over his wife, and indeed the rest of creation, the best way he could— through his rebellion against God, he forfeited the natural and willing

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f. feminine, *feminae*.

J Jehovist.

fig. figurative.

Ⓞ Greek version of the LXX.

Nes E. Nestle, Marginalien u. Materialien.

<sup>Hpt</sup> Sacred Books of the O.T.ed. Hpt (Polychrome Bible).

MT Masoretic Text.

<sup>11</sup> Brown, F., Driver, S. R., & Briggs, C. A. (2000). *Enhanced Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*. Strong's, TWOT, and GK references Copyright 2000 by Logos Research Systems, Inc. (electronic ed.) (1003). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems.

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submission to his rule. I believe that the real answer comes to us in the Song of Songs. In chapter 7:11 the word תְּשׁוּכָה *t'shukah* re-emerges. The term is found in the midst of one of the most passionate portions of the entire Song. What shall we make of this? The word describes at once sinful and legitimate, passionate and erotic desire of man for a woman, as well as the nature of sin. I believe that the Scriptures show us the true meaning of the term here. It shows us the enormity of rebelling against God (Gen 3 and 4:7), while at the same time demonstrating the intensive, explosive love of God for the human race. Just as God's love is all encompassing and extraordinarily passionate, so is sin; neither will stop short of totally embracing the object of its desire.

As Rabbi Burnham puts it, human existence became a purely physical issue. But with the primal sin, humanity showed that they favoured the physical over God's word and through their rebellion died a spiritual death. This is underscored in the Bible's description of Eve's decision to eat from the tree: '*And the woman perceived that the tree was good for eating and that it was a delight to the eyes*' (Genesis 3:6).

From now, Eve would no longer be automatically a willing companion at Adam's side, but someone in competition, whose desire was to usurp and devour him; she had become a person in her own rights. Man's only hope of remaining in a place of control over his wife was to subjugate her by physical means.<sup>12</sup> Through the spiritual death that both man and woman died, their animal instincts came to the fore and henceforth the male/female relationship would be marred by an ongoing battle for supremacy. In this process an initially healthy, creative passion turned evil and adversarial, into degrees of insatiable, greedy and at times even murderous lust! What prevented the woman from gaining the upper-hand was the superior physical strength of the male for most of history.

So unless the Vulgate has in the meantime been changed by another hand we must conclude that Jerome intended to suppress the true meaning here, and this alteration is of the greatest significance. Jerome established here that the subordination of women was God ordained from the very beginning.

[*It is worth noting here that the true meaning of the word t'shukah was not lost to the rabbinic mind. For some reason, however, the Christian translators chose to follow a theological/philosophical path of their own.*]

Global history testifies to the suffering, women have undergone, at the hand of men. In Judaism, the Torah restored dignity, respect and worth to women more than a thousand years before Christianity. However, it was the mistaken interpretation of this verse in Genesis by the Church Fathers, which relegated women to a second class existence. Throughout the ages and endorsed by the Church, women played mostly a rather subservient role to men, where only occasionally a woman stands out through notoriety of some kind; e.g. *Cleopatra in Egypt, 'Bloody Mary' and Elizabeth I. in England, Marie Antoinette in France, the Empress Marie Theresia in Austria, the Tzarina Elizabeth in Russia, et al.* These women had come into places of power and were thus able to cast off traditional restraints— actions impossible to women of lower rank at that stage. Other women who made it onto the stage of history are often framed by selfless giving; to name but a few, e.g. Florence Nightingale, Mother Theresa, et al. But a true 'Genesis' equality among men and women has never returned to the human race since the tragedy of the Garden. Such an equality is envisaged by the Torah, but it seems to me that mankind still has a ways to go!

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<sup>12</sup> Modern life, where the shackles of traditions have been thrown off, women are emerging as superior emotionally, intellectually and spiritually. The only avenue for the human male to shine is in the arena of physical strength; and even there his prowess is under challenge.

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Since the age of the suffragettes and the ‘*Women’s Liberation Movement*’ in the last century, the meaning of the word *ʿshukah* has truly come to the fore. In innumerable cases (especially in the Western world) women have shown themselves not only equal to men in the quest and lust for power and control, but often superior. Men have a deep tendency to brutality when pushed hard enough, but on the other hand, the cruelty of a woman scorned knows no measure! She will not stop at anything to achieve her aims.

Today it is a woman’s world, where female submission to the male, in a humble and quiet spirit, is often despised and scorned as a weakness. In today’s world, the male has served his purpose. TV shows and Hollywood Movies clearly portray this! The economy, TV shows, magazines carry the unmistakable imprimatur that the female is superior and everything exists with predominantly her in mind. The male, on the other hand, is seen as a sometimes useful idiot, as an accessory for social functions or as an object of ridicule, but apart from that he serves little purpose— except as a beast of burden [i.e. to do the jobs unpleasant and too difficult for the female]. Even as a procreator, the male is virtually superfluous since the advent of the sperm bank. Today there are probably more spermatozoa in frozen storage, than are needed to fertilize every human female in the world for some time into the future!<sup>13</sup>

### *The Eastern Factor*

Western Christianity has traditionally recognized only the Latin Tradition of the church. It is this factor, which further clouds the protestant reliance on its dictum of *Sola Scriptura* established by Martin Luther. If the Reformation was indeed a work based on the Scriptures, then Luther should have addressed the entire Christian Spectrum— not just the Vatican. But for him the Eastern Church did not exist! It is astounding indeed that Protestant scholars have never given any credence to the traditions of the various Orthodox denominations; especially the Greek tradition. Both Greeks and Latins disputed the same issues, but it was by political and military power that Rome established itself as the leader of the Christian world. The assumption of Western Scholarship is therefore that Orthodox thinking is not credible.

I am not going to enter into a theological discussion concerning all the differences between East and West, except to highlight the fact that a true Reformation should have taken the existing theological differences into account— especially concerning *Original Sin*. If these issues were being truly studied in the Theological Seminaries and Bible Colleges of today, surely someone would twig on that there are issues from long ago that have not been resolved.

### *A Question of Atonement*

The concept of *Atonement* comes to us from the Book of Exodus and originated with Moses pleading with God on behalf of Israelites who had fallen into idolatry with the golden calf. Extraordinarily, Moses never offered God a bull, lamb or goat as an appeasement; not a drop of blood was required to avert disaster from the Israelites. Yet, the Almighty relented from His intention and extended His Mercy to them merely on Moses intercession.

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<sup>13</sup> It is widely known that global sperm banks are abundantly supplied with ejaculates from homosexual men and University students in need of a few bucks.

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Within [Western] Christianity there are however, historically, four main theories for how such atonement might work: the **ransom theory/Christus Victor**, the **satisfaction theory**, the **penal substitution theory** and the **moral influence theory**. Atonement is a doctrine that describes how human beings can be reconciled to an angry, offended God from Whom they have been separated since the Fall. In Christian theology the atonement refers to the forgiving or pardoning of sin through the [necessary] death of Jesus by crucifixion, which made possible a reconciliation between God and the human race. There is a problem here between the two scenarios! Firstly, if we consider that Adam really did not have much of a clue what God expected of him. We don't know how much time had lapsed since creation and the test with the tree. Irrespective of that, Adam did not know very much about life; there was nothing for him to go by; except brand new experiences. No matter what he did it would have been new for him! Yet, according to Christian theology, God punishes him and all of his descendants after him with everlasting wrath and burning hell-fire with no release for 4000 years until he decides to send Himself in the form of His own Son to die to appease His own anger so that He could forgive the human beings who had died and those who were yet to be born. The clincher here is that He cannot forgive unless He sheds His own blood on a torture stake that would also become the source of endless suffering for the people He chose to bring Himself into the world! What an insane scenario!

Secondly, God brings the Israelites out of Egypt and does mighty wonders in their full sight. Yet, having experienced God's mighty wonders, including hearing His voice from the mountain, they lapse into idolatry when their leader seems to have disappeared. Somehow it had not sunk into their consciousness Who this God of Moses really was. Nevertheless, they had experienced might miracles and still fell into idolatry. Despite such a conscious and deliberate transgression they experienced God's mercy and forgiveness through Moses' intercession!

*'And the Lord passed before him and proclaimed, "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin..." (Exod.34:6-7)'*

What changed between Adam and Moses— then a God of wrath(?) and now a forgiving God Who declares that “ כִּי אֲנִי יְהוָה לֹא שֹׁנֵי יֵתִי — ...because I am YHWH I do not change...” (Mal.3:6)?!

I have touched on this issues elsewhere, but I believe that it is important us Gentiles will get it right before it is too late. The sin and atonement issue has kept the world in bondage and it is time for our race to taste the freedom of the sons of God as Paul so eloquently put it in Romans 8:19 ff.: *'...for the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God ... because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God'*.

Oh, yes, Atonement!

The doctrine, which left its most lasting impact until our day was developed by the 11th century theologian Anselm of Canterbury, is called the 'satisfaction' theory. Anselm was operating out of the belief system of feudal politics, consequently he took God to be an Overlord whose insulted sense of justice required an act of '**satisfaction**' equal to the offence He had suffered, i.e. the *Original Sin*. In this picture humankind owes a debt not to Satan, but to God. If the state has been dishonoured, a sovereign may well be able to forgive an insult or an injury in a private capacity, but not as the state's sovereign. Anselm argued that the insult given to God is so great that only a perfect sacrifice could satisfy and Jesus, being both God and human, was this perfect sacrifice. This view is strongly held by Roman Catholic theologians, but the average Catholic would be hard pressed to define what procures and constitutes his right standing before

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God. But even though Jesus' death made satisfaction for human sin and guilt; even though Jesus paid the price for our sin, Catholicism still sends the average Catholic into purgatory to fry for a while for his personal sins— unless he chooses to die as a martyr as many of the early Christians did; and later the Anabaptists who believed similar doctrines.<sup>14</sup>

What has impacted the Christian world most strongly in recent decades, however, is a revival of the '*penal substitution theory*' developed by the Reformers of Anselm's satisfaction theory. Predominantly Evangelicals regard sin as an affront to God's honour and as the breaking of God's moral law. Placing a particular emphasis on Romans 6:23 ('...*the wages of sin is death...*'), penal substitution sees sinful humans as being subject to God's wrath. Therefore, the essence of Jesus' saving work is his substitution in the sinner's place; bearing the curse in the place of humanity (Galatians 3:13) and paying the price for the sin of all humanity from Adam until the Day of Judgment.

It is by this *Penal Substitution*, which Evangelicals use as a lever in convincing people, that only Jesus as the Man-God can pay the penalty due by the human race. The problem with this is that there is no evidence in the Hebrew Scriptures that God ever declared the human race as lost unless we could come up with something that would satisfy a God Who has been consistently angry since the *Garden Episode*. Theologians overcame this problem by declaring that the Creator had planned a rescue from before the beginning of time when the Trinity sat in council. What troubles me with this scenario that God foreknew He would become so angry with the humans He created that the only thing to appease that fierce divine anger, would be the horrific death of His son! Not only did He foreknow only that, but also that the followers of His son would create one of the most murderous, corrupt, oppressive and immoral institutions ever known to mankind!!! This scenario is even worse than the grossly immoral deities of the pagans!

The Epistles, however, seem to be full of texts supporting this view. Yet when we study them in conjunction with the Tenakh suddenly the alleged proof-texts, which they seem to be offering, become rather flakey in substance. So let us look at a few!

The letter to the Hebrews is frequently called upon to proof-text several christological issues. I want to focus here on only two of these, which have made the greatest impact on Christian thinking, viz. the New Covenant (*see* above) and the question of sacrifice.

Introduced formally by Origen (c. 185–254) in the 3rd century, the theory of atonement teaches that the death of Christ was a *ransom*, usually said to have been paid to Satan, in satisfaction of his just(!) claim on the souls of humanity that were, in effect, made Satan's property through their sin. This generates the idea that Satan is an independent cosmic power in some kind of business relationship with the Creator with sufficient power to hold even the Creator to ransom. Satan is regarded as omnipresent and somehow also omniscient with virtually unlimited powers. The problem with this theory is that Satan is given little space in the Bible. We find him mentioned in the book of Job and again in Zechariah; however, he is not portrayed there as having any authority at all. In fact, the idea of a human sacrifice as a ransom is totally foreign to the Hebrew Bible. The idea of human sacrifices to appease the gods clearly comes from pagan, [esp. Greek] mythology, where frequently an innocent virgin (male or female) is offered up to some angry deity in order to avert its wrath. The idea is common also in some Hindu sects (i.e. the sect of Kali), it was found among the pagan tribes of Mesopotamia, Europe and the British Isles, throughout the Polynesian Islands and the South Americas, etc.— albeit NOT among the Hebrews! The Almighty clearly put an end to all human sacrifices when He prevented Abraham from killing his own son.

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<sup>14</sup> Austin Flannery, O.P., *Vatican Council II* (Dominican Publications: Dublin; 1975) p.63 – 69; 415; 914

*Does the blood of Jesus serves as an atonement for sin ?*

This theory is based on Hebr. 9:11, which in turn relies heavily on Lev. 17:11. The Hebrews passage fails, however, to reproduce the context of Leviticus concerning sin offerings for unintentional sin and the prohibited consumption of blood! This prohibition has far reaching implications for Christian salvation theology. It is a major factor that should make Christians take note since the doctrine of Atonement affects all; right across the spectrum.

Leviticus 17:11	Hebrews 9:22
<i>'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'</i>	<i>'And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission [of sin]'</i>

The book of Genesis makes the categorical declaration that the blood of living beings — human or otherwise — belongs to God. He makes that abundantly clear in chapter 9:4 – viz. *'...but you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood. Surely for your lifeblood I will demand a reckoning; from the hand of every beast I will require it, and from the hand of every man's brother I will require the life of man.'*

So, when we take a close look at the Leviticus passage and the preceding chapters on offerings (*i.e. qorbanot*), we note that it has absolutely nothing to do with any remission of sin. The admonition here concerns the indiscriminate sacrificing of animals. God tells the Israelites that they must hold themselves accountable whenever they offer an animal as an atonement. However, it is not true that blood is required to atone for sin as is shown by this passage from Leviticus: *'But if he is not able to bring two turtledoves or two young pigeons, then he who sinned shall bring for his offering one-tenth of an ephah of fine flour as a sin offering. He shall put no oil on it, nor shall he put frankincense on it, for it is a sin offering. Lev.5:11.* This offering does not contain one single drop of blood, yet it is acceptable before God as an atonement.

Therefore, the reference to Leviticus by the writer of Hebrews stands at once discredited, whilst at the same time producing a huge problem for the atonement theory. If God does not require sacrificial blood to forgive sins, why did Jesus have to die? But it is not only the verse in question, rather the entire chapters 9 & 10 follow the same path.

If we step forward to Hebrews 10:5-10 we read the following,

*Therefore, when he came into the world, he said: "Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you have prepared for me. In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin you had no pleasure. Then I said, 'Behold, I have come— in the volume of the book it is written of me—to do your will, O God.' " Previously saying, "Sacrifice and offering, burnt offerings, and offerings for sin you did not desire, nor had pleasure in them" (which are offered according to the law), then he said, "Behold, I have come to do your will, O God." He takes away the first that he may establish the second. By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.*

There are several conflicts in this passage!

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- 1) ***a body you have prepared for me***: there is no record in the NT that Jesus ever uttered such words. The translators of the NKJV<sup>15</sup> reference the portion to Psalm 40:6, which however says something entirely different; viz. ‘...*sacrifice and offering You did not desire; my ears You have opened...*’. This reading is shared by the Masoretic text and the LXX. Nevertheless, there are apparently some ancient MSS (Vaticanus, Sinaiticus) that have the word *body* in the text, but access to these documents is virtually impossible. What matters to me is that all our Bibles that were allegedly translated from the best available ancient texts. I find it strange therefore that the vernacular versions available today (including those as far back as Luther and Tyndale) do all have the same reading of Psalm 40:6.<sup>16</sup>
- 2) ***Previously saying, “Sacrifice and offerings,...”*** (*which are offered according to the law*): The bracketed statement is not in the Bible, but an insertion by the author of Hebrews who is now developing his Christology based on the earlier text portion.
- 3) ***...we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all***: v.10 insists that the body of Jesus was a means of sanctification for the rest of us. The question arises here, how can this be when the verse from the Psalm, which is used as a foundation for this claim, is a fabrication?

The truth is that sacrifices in the T<sup>e</sup>nakh (OT) have NEVER atoned for sin as such; in fact, the very word *sacrifice* is a Latin word and belongs to the Christian era. However, forgiveness of sin was obtained through a heartfelt repentance, when the appropriate restitution was made and THEN the offering (*qorban*) obtained its atoning (covering or blotting out of sin) significance. The *qorban*, whether it was an animal or a cake, was the evidence that a right standing before God was accomplished and the sinners act of repentance was fulfilled.<sup>17</sup>

### ***Communion in the Blood of Jesus as A Symbol of the New Covenant***

‘...*Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you...”*’ John 6:53

**T**his statement in the Gospel of John became the foundation for the Roman Catholic Mass and its essential ***transubstantiation***, which allegedly transforms a cup of wine into the literal *blood of Christ* through *the unbloody sacrifice of Jesus* upon the altar! Although most Protestants, apart from Lutherans and Anglicans, do not hold to this doctrine they partake symbolically of the same blood; albeit in the form of grape juice.

The *Last Supper* events, as recorded in Matthew, Mark and Luke all make reference to blood in relation to the *Cup of the New Covenant*, when linked with a Passover celebration the actual drinking of Jesus’s blood does not come into the equation. However, Paul in first Letter to the Corinthians adds his own words and from that it can be read as if he advocated the drinking of Jesus’ blood; viz. ‘*In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.”*’ 1 Cor.11:25.

Notwithstanding the Synoptic accounts and Paul’s reference, the narrative in John stands alone and must be rejected as authentic. My reason for asserting this is the fact that if the author of John was indeed the

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<sup>15</sup> And most major versions

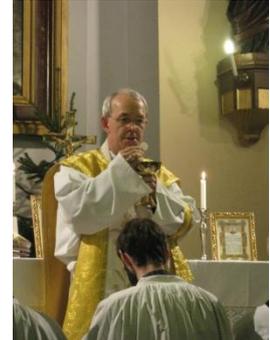
<sup>16</sup> Similar issues are found with the rendering of Romans 3:10ff., Galatians 3:10ff. et al

<sup>17</sup> A reference to the veracity of this claim comes to us from the NT itself when Yeshua healed a leper and then asks him to offer up the correct *qorban* before the priest as evidence of his healing. In other words, Yeshua told him, “*if you are really healed then bring the proof, based on the Torah, to the priest*”.

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Apostle and therefore a Hebrew, he could never, ever, have advocated the consumption of Jesus' flesh and blood— even in a symbolic manner. But, overarching all of that is Jesus' own statement concerning the eating of his own flesh and the drinking of his own blood. Some theologians say that Jesus' expression was merely a metaphor and not to be taken literally. Whether he meant it literally or not, the Catholic Church views it in a literal sense as shown below.

*The Catholic Church teaches that when the bread and wine are consecrated in the Eucharist, they cease to be bread and wine, and become, respectively, the body and blood of Christ, each of which is accompanied by the other and by Christ's soul and divinity. The empirical appearance and physical properties are not changed, but for Catholics, the reality is that the consecration of the bread (known as the host) and wine represents the separation of Jesus' body from his blood at Calvary. However, since he has risen, the Church teaches that his body and blood can no longer be truly separated. Where one is, the other must be. Therefore, although the priest (or minister) says, "The body of Christ", when administering the host, and, "The blood of Christ", when presenting the chalice, the communicant who receives either one receives Christ, whole and entire.*



I grew up with this understanding and strongly held that view well into my forties. Even when I changed camps and joined the Evangelical stream of Christianity, the 'blood' issue remained central to my belief. However, the Torah sends a clear message — from the book of Genesis onward that the consumption of anyone's blood is prohibited. Jesus knew that, so would he indeed have offered his own blood as 'a life giving drink' and his flesh for food— contrary to God's explicit command? Even the Noahic laws speak against eating the flesh of a living animal; let alone that of a human being.

What about Calvin? He was 20 years old when he left the Catholic Church to join the Reformation. By the time he was 26 he had written his *Institutes...*, but despite his attempts at reforming Roman Catholicism, he could not break away from its entrenched mysticism. This is what he had to say about *The Lord's Supper*:

Chap. xvii. **Concerning the Sacred Supper of Christ.** . . . *'That sacred communication of his own flesh and blood by which Christ pours his life into us just as if he were to penetrate into the marrow of our bones, he witnesses and attests in the Supper. And that he does not by putting before us a vain or empty sign, but offering there the efficacy of his Spirit, by which he fulfils his promise. . . . If it is true that the visible sign is to attest the granting of the invisible reality, then, on receiving the symbol of the body, we may be confident that the body itself is no less given to us. . . .'*<sup>18</sup>

And so Luther! When he stood accused of abolishing the Mass he vigorously denied it by affirming its great significance for him. Luther merely changed the terms, by which he called the ritual, from Transubstantiation to Consubstantiation. The idea is that in the Communion, the body and blood of Christ, and the bread and wine, *coexist* in union with each other. "*Luther illustrated it by the analogy of the iron put*

<sup>18</sup> Extract from **Christianae Religionis Institutio** (*Institutes of the Christian Religion*) Calvin Op. ii. 31 sq. (edition of 1559) [The first edition of the *Institutes* was published 1536 when Calvin was twenty-six. It was several times revised but there was no development in Calvin's thought after the last edition.

In his second account he speaks of a long process of inner turmoil, followed by spiritual and psychological anguish. Being exceedingly alarmed at the misery into which I had fallen, and much more at that which threatened me in view of eternal death, I, duty bound, made it my first business to betake myself to your way, condemning my past life, not without groans and tears. And now, O Lord, what remains to a wretch like me, but instead of defence, earnestly to supplicate you not to judge that fearful abandonment of your Word according to its deserts, from which in your wondrous goodness you have at last delivered me.

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*into the fire whereby both fire and iron are united in the red-hot iron and yet each continues unchanged”* (The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church, F.L. Cross, Ed., London: Oxford, 1958, p. 337).

Most Evangelicals, however, would read the words of Jesus figuratively— not literally. For these Christians the ‘*Lord’s Supper*’ is a symbolic ritual. Like many, if not most basic Christian dogmas, it hinges on an unverifiable statement of Jesus without any wider basis in the T<sup>e</sup>nakh. But then, like many of Jesus’ sayings, esp. in John, it is a cryptic statement without any link to a broader theme or context.<sup>19</sup>

## Summary

Original Sin is a concept contrived by two major factors. One, it is underpinned by a gross misunderstanding of the Hebrew text, and two, a total disregard of the fact that many of the early Christian theologians had come from paganism trying to understand the Hebrew Scriptures through the eyes and mind of Greek philosophy. The Hebrew Scriptures were put on par with other ancient Law documents and the philosophies of other ancient cultures. The major damage, I believe, was done by the mistranslation of the Hebrew term *Torah* by the Septuagint into *Nomos*.

If the architects of the doctrine had truly understood the Hebrew Scriptures it would never have led to the aberrations construed by men like Tertullian, Augustine, Jerome and Chrysostom, et al. There is absolutely nothing in the T<sup>e</sup>nakh that would justify the sacrificial death of a divine being or anyone else for that matter. The ancient, as well as medieval Christian scholars confused the ways of God with the practices of human rulers. For countless centuries many offences could only be extinguished by the offender making some sort of penal satisfaction to appease the offended. If such a thing were required by God, then all His assurances of forgiveness are no more than so much ‘*hot air*’; viz. ... “*Come now, and let us reason together,*” *Says the Lord, “Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool. If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land; but if you refuse and rebel, you shall be devoured by the sword”;* *for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.. . . .* (Isa. 1:18-20).

I pointed out earlier, there are many passages in the Scriptures that speak of forgiveness, but there isn’t a single one that speaks of a need for a bloody human death to effect it. The inevitable question that arises out of this meditation is, ‘*why then, does the New Testament (esp. Paul) teach the necessity of a sacrifice?*’. Since the Torah does not require the shedding of blood so God can forgive sin, why are these things taught in the Epistles? And why are there so many textual incongruities with O.T. quotes on the subject?

The only conclusion I can arrive at is that the doctrine was nurtured because it kept the people in bondage to the fear of an eternal hell; if they disobeyed the church authorities and their dogmas!

**Selah!**

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<sup>19</sup> The Gospel of John is presented as a unified book. However, a close examination reveals beyond a shadow of doubt that it actually consists of a jumble of sayings and narratives without any intrinsic connection.