

## CHRISTIANITY ANTHOLOGY

Below are summaries of each of the Anthology extracts. It would also be useful for you to read the extracts themselves which have been supplied to you in a separate booklet.

### Extract 1 – Jurgen Moltmann – “The Suffering of God”

- ❖ The Council of Nicaea declared that God was not changeable
- ❖ God is not a being who is compulsive and will only do actions that fit in with his divinity
- ❖ God is still free though to change and to be changed by something else
- ❖ We cannot be certain that God is totally unchangeable
- ❖ The early Father believed that God could not suffer. They felt that God it was better that God could not suffer rather than experiencing passive suffering which is where God had no control over suffering
- ❖ Moltmann suggests a third type of suffering – active suffering, the suffering of love
- ❖ This is God allowing himself to be affected by other things
- ❖ If God were incapable of suffering, he would also be incapable of love (This is like the Prime Mover of Aristotle who did nothing and only thought about himself)
- ❖ God does not suffer like humans. God suffers out of his love for humans
- ❖ What we understand about how God relates to humans tells us nothing about the Trinity itself and how it relates to each other
- ❖ Jesus’ death is the fulfilment of his obedience to God, he was not abandoned by God
- ❖ For some people, Jesus crying out to God from the cross was pointless and why did God not answer?
- ❖ Speaking about God on the cross of Christ opens up a debate about the Trinity itself.
- ❖ The best expression of the Trinity is God’s action on the cross in which God allowed the Son to sacrifice himself through the Spirit
- ❖ It is helpful to refer to St Paul and his writings about Jesus on the cross
- ❖ Thinking about the passion, betrayal and Jesus’ death are all negative views and show that God has abandoned Jesus. BUT, St Paul looks at the way God has abandoned humans who have abandoned God.
- ❖ “God did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all; will he not also give us all things with him?”
- ❖ St Paul is looking at eschatological abandonment
- ❖ In stressing that God had given up his own Son, Paul extended the abandonment of the Son to the Father although not in the same way.
- ❖ Jesus suffered death being abandoned by the Father BUT the Father suffered the death of his Son in the pain of his love. The Son was “given up” by the Father and the Father suffered his abandonment from the Son. This is the pain of God
- ❖ The death of the Son and the pain of God the Father are different and so we cannot speak of the death of God
- ❖ Not only does God give his Son up but the Son also gives himself up. This tells us that God and the Son wanted the same thing
- ❖ The cross separates Jesus and God but at the same time they are in the united most intimately as they both want the same thing. It is the Holy Spirit that is between them
- ❖ On the cross God calls to God and dies to God. Only here is God dead and not dead
- ❖ We cannot say that it only the humanity of Jesus that dies as that removes God from the cross. Jesus was both human and divine and so it is the Spirit of abandonment and self-giving love who raises up abandoned men
- ❖ The death of Christ is not an event between God and man but an event between the Trinity. The Spirit comes from what the Son and the Father
- ❖ There is no need to reconcile God and the nature of the Trinity. The crucifixion of Jesus can also be understood without reference to God. Finally, there is no need to have the Economic and Essential Trinities
- ❖ God’s being is historical and he exists in history. The “story of God” is the story of the history of man

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## Extract 2 – A. McGrath – “Deluded about God?”

### God is a delusion

- ❖ Belief is not grounded in evidence. It is “blind - trust”
- ❖ Belief is a “process of non-thinking”
- ❖ Delusions need to be removed
- ❖ Beliefs should be examined to make sure they have a firm basis.
- ❖ Religious people should question their faith
- ❖ McGrath agrees that beliefs are used to shape our lives

### Faith is infantile

- ❖ Children are prone to believe what their parents tell them
- ❖ Belief in Santa will eventually cease as a child gets older
- ❖ Religious belief is the same but what about those who believe when they are older?
- ❖ Dawkins says that bringing children up in a faith is a form of abuse. McGrath argues that bringing a child up in atheism would also be abuse?
- ❖ McGrath suggests that Dawkins has shown a need for the RE Curriculum in schools to be taught to broaden the minds of young people

### Faith is irrational

- ❖ Dawkins feels there is enough evidence to disprove religious beliefs
- ❖ Dawkins' research is poor as he is using information from the internet and not thinking about his sources
- ❖ McGrath calls the God Delusion “propaganda”
- ❖ McGrath shows how Dawkins misquotes Tertullian
- ❖ Dawkins quotes Luther but McGrath says that Luther is misquoted. Luther was arguing that human reason can never take a central role in faith
- ❖ McGrath feels that Dawkins abandons rigorous scholarship

### Arguments for God's existence

- ❖ McGrath says the “Blind Watchmaker is the best in print” about design and evolution
- ❖ McGrath does argue that Dawkins is out of his depth with religion. He skims the surface and lacks total knowledge to really engage with the topics
- ❖ Aquinas uses empirical evidence to show evidence of God and this is what scientists would use also
- ❖ The theory of evolution is the best we have for now. It may change in the future but for now, it answers the questions we have

### The improbability of God

- ❖ McGrath suggests that this is a loose argument by Dawkins. The main question he is looking at is about “Who designed God?”
- ❖ Dawkins suggests that to say there is something more complex than the universe is improbable
- ❖ McGrath suggests that improbability does not mean non-existence
- ❖ The question is not whether God is improbable, but is God actual?

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- ❖ McGrath argues that Dawkins has "loosely collated a series of assertions"

### **The God of the Gaps**

- ❖ Dawkins suggests that *God* is always used to fill something people cannot explain
- ❖ Dawkins is making a very general assumption that religion / religious people need satisfaction and so use *God* to give it
- ❖ The mind is too limited to fully understand *God* and the same can be said about understanding science

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### Extract 3 – John Hick – “Atonement by the Blood of Jesus?”

- ❖ At-one-ment signifies becoming one with God. Not in the sense of being but of entering into a right relationship with God which is our salvation
- ❖ In a narrower sense Atonement refers to a specific way of receiving salvation of which the barrier is guilt
- ❖ Therefore sacrifice, satisfaction, justification, ransom and remission of sins are essential
- ❖ In the narrower sense, Jesus’ crucifixion was an act of atoning or making up for human sin
- ❖ In the broader sense Jesus’ death may or may not be separated off from his self-giving life as a whole as having a special significance of its own
- ❖ Hick focuses on the narrower term. The basic notion is that salvation requires God’s forgiveness and that this in turn needs atonement to satisfy divine righteousness
- ❖ The atoning act is a transaction. It is a sense of wiping out a debt or cancelling an impending judgement
- ❖ Humans disrupted the order by sinning and it is this that needs to be repaid
- ❖ Hick argues that atonement in a narrow sense is a mistake but in a broad sense it is important

### History of the doctrine of atonement

- ❖ Early Christian community was of a living spirit which was the spirit of the risen Jesus within them both individually and together as a community. This spirit was setting them free from the world and liberating them
- ❖ This new liberated life with hope and meaning was the religious reality which was to be expressed in various doctrines. It became known as Transactional Atonement
- ❖ Western Church may have the view that these ideas are not plausible and that instead we should turn to the eastern church and their development of its understanding
- ❖ Latin theology has the view that justification won by Jesus’ death leads to sanctification which is the transformation of the sinner into saint
- ❖ Orthodox theology holds that Jesus’ death was crucial in bringing about his divinity
- ❖ Eastern church has the view of transformational and the Western Church is about transactional atonement
- ❖ Before the division of the Churches the earliest comment about liberation and new life comes from the Gospel of Mark, “the Son of man also came not to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many”
- ❖ The word “Ransom” means to be made free
- ❖ There is a challenge in taking metaphorical language literally. The early Christians asked themselves to whom was Jesus paying the ransom? The inevitable answer was the devil
- ❖ Origen asked to whom did Jesus pay the ransom to? It had to be the devil who held out until the soul of Christ was paid to him
- ❖ For a long time, it was thought that humans had fallen under the devil’s power until the cross of Christ was part of the bargain
- ❖ There is also another idea that God outwitted the devil. The devil believed he had a claim over humanity and so he ended up putting himself in the wrong by taking a greater ransom, God the Son.
- ❖ Gregory of Nyssa said, “in order to secure that the ransom would be accepted by the devil, the Deity was hidden under the veil of our nature so that the hook of the deity would be gulped down with the bait of the flesh”
- ❖ St Augustine – “As our price, he held out his cross to him like a mouse-trap and as a bait set on it his own blood.”
- ❖ The ransom theory never made it into the Creed
- ❖ Anselm points out a difficulty with this approach which is, why would the Devil have any authority over God?
- ❖ Other theories that came about through the years were based on the idea that original sin was inherited guilt and affected the whole human race requiring adequate atonement to expunge it

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- ❖ Original sin presupposes the wilful fall from grace of the first humans and the genetic inheritance by the whole species of a guilty and sinful nature
- ❖ Prior to the Enlightenment (18<sup>th</sup> Century) this idea was considered
- ❖ The Council of Trent stated, “If anyone does not profess that the first man Adam immediately lost the justice and holiness in which he was made when he disobeyed the command of God in the Garden of Eden, and that through this sin he brought about the wrath of God and also brought about death. If anyone believes that Adam’s sin was harmful only to Adam and not to the rest of humanity, let him be an anathema” (He should be hated / excommunicated)
- ❖ Today the idea of an actual human fall resulting in a guilt for all humanity is unbelievable for educated Christians
- ❖ Instead of the human race being descended from a single created pair, we see the species as having evolved out of lower forms of life over a long period of time
- ❖ To say the first humans fell from a state needs to be abandoned because surely that state never existed
- ❖ Anselm put forward another way of thinking about atonement. In his *Cur Deus Homo*, he proposes the idea that disobedience to your God was a slight upon God’s honour and required some form of penance to be done. This then rebalanced the order
- ❖ Anselm states sin is “nothing else than not to render to God his due” What is due to God is absolute obedience
- ❖ “Even God cannot raise to happiness any being bound at all by the debt of sin, because he ought not to”
- ❖ It is impossible for humans to make the necessary satisfaction as they cannot give something greater than God
- ❖ Since it is humanity that has offended God, it must be humanity to make the satisfaction but this is a problem (see point above)
- ❖ The needed satisfaction is, “none but God can make and none but man ought to make, it is necessary for the God-man to make it”
- ❖ The God-man can give something that was not already owing to God, his own life. Christ’s death on the cross provided a full satisfaction for the sins of the world
- ❖ The penal-substitutionary theory then was developed
- ❖ Are we suggesting that God punished Godself in order to forgive sinners? Does this mean that God deliberately put in place an innocent person to save the guilty?
- ❖ Richard Swinburne – Responsibility and Atonement has made an attempt to retrieve transactional conception. His understanding of atonement is as follows:
  - (1) Guilt is the great barrier between man and God and so eternal life is not available
  - (2) For humans, reconciliation needs four things (i) Repentance (ii) apology (iii) reparation (iv) penance
  - (3) God is a personal being
  - (4) All wrong doing to fellow humans is also wrong doing done to God
  - (5) We can apologise and repent for sins to God but we cannot give adequate atonement
  - (6) The “perfect human life” is given by Christ who lived without sin and voluntarily suffered a death which he gave as a sacrifice that if we accept from him can give us atonement for our sins both individually and collectively
  - (7) To be sanctified and saved is only possible to those who take part in Christian worship of God and plead the atoning death of Christ thereby throwing off their guilt. To be saved we must be joined either in this life or the one after with the Christian Church which is the Body of Christ

Hick suggests that all of this is possible BUT the real question is whether it is religiously plausible and to many it will seem implausible.

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Hick offers his own critique of Swinburne's proposal

- (1) Salvation being linked to guilt and atonement is a central theme of Latin theological tradition launched by St Augustine. The Greek tradition thinks of salvation as transforming. Swinburne prefers the Greek to the Latin and he does not seem to have considered the radical alternative which the Eastern church offers. If you see salvation as the transformation of human existence from self-centredness to a new view centred upon the Divine Reality, the transaction theories of salvation then appear as implausible answers to a mistaken question
- (2) Swinburne's analysis of guilt and reconciliation between human beings is excellent
- (3) That God is another person with unique attributes but subject to the same moral requirements as us is anthropomorphic and unimaginative
- (4) Our relationship with other humans involves our relationship with God so that in all we do we are also ultimately having to do with God is "another element of truth"
- (5) When we do wrong, the action we do to make up for our wrong is in some way to reverse the consequences of our action. When we contribute to the common evil of the world, we can counter it and contribute to the common good of the world. Swinburne points out it is good to do something extra – penance. Can we do this for God? When we have offered reparation to a human there is nothing extra we can do for God. God cannot be benefitted by human acts in addition to those that benefit his creation. The penitent can only accept forgiveness as a free gift of grace, undeserved and unearned. Swinburne emphasises that "one man can help another to make the necessary atonement- can persuade him to repent, help him formulate the words of apology and give him the means by which to make reparation and penance." To do something extra for God rests upon a mistake in which God is treated as another individual within the same moral community as ourselves. Swinburne suggests that God was free to choose what he wanted as an atonement for sin. This means that there was no necessity for the cross. God could have established the conditions for salvation. This means that God's insistence on the sweat, pain and anguish involved in the crucifixion of God's innocent Son now seems to cast doubt on the moral character of the deity
- (6) Swinburne suggests that Jesus openly intended his death "as an offering to God to make expiation in some way for the sins of men" There is no consensus among New Testament scholars as to how Jesus understood his own death. E. P. Sanders says it is possible that Jesus gave his own death a martyr significance. Joachim Jeremias suggests that Jesus saw his death as an eschatological Passover sacrifice bringing about the new covenant of God. Swinburne goes on to suggest that the payment to God was not a full payment and God let men off the rest. If this is the case, why could God not just forgive people anyway. Why was the sacrifice needed?
- (7) Swinburne modifies the traditional exclusivist view that salvation is confined to Christians. He suggests that non-Christians have an opportunity to be converted after this life.

Hick does not like or find convincing Swinburne's idea of Jesus' death as an atonement to God for human sin.

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## Extract 4 – Karl Barth – “Jesus Christ, the Lord as Servant”

### The Obedience of the Son of God

- ❖ Jesus shows himself to be God in the way that he went into the Far Country and became a servant
- ❖ The eternal son of the eternal father became obedient by offering and humbling himself to be the brother of man, taking his place, and dying
- ❖ Christ takes the place of judge and judges himself
- ❖ God the Father raised him from the dead and gave effect to his death giving humans redemption from death to life

### 1. The Way of the Son of God into the Far Country

- ❖ Atonement is history of God with man and man with God
- ❖ Jesus Christ is himself both God and man and so through Christ God and man are brought together
- ❖ The atonement is an act of grace, of God's free will, humans do not deserve it but God still gives it
- ❖ Jesus is both the Son of Man and the Son of God.
- ❖ These are not Christian concepts of Christ but Christ himself in his revelation and being
- ❖ It is as the man Jesus that he is the Messiah. By being man, he is concealing his being
- ❖ The true God is obedient. Jesus is the suffering servant of God necessarily
- ❖ The history of redemption is essentially the history of the Passion
- ❖ In Jesus, God himself made himself the object of accusation and willed to confess himself a sinner. The man who rejects God is also rejected by God
- ❖ The Son of God was a man. He stands under the wrath and judgement of God. In him, God did not merely affirm the divine sentence on man but allowed it to be fulfilled on himself
- ❖ Jesus Christ the Lord and servant is a slave
- ❖ The “word being made flesh” is a free divine activity. God remains God in his humiliation. He went into a strange land but never became a stranger to himself. How is this not blasphemous?
  - (1) Is it a paradox? God against God? (Barth rejects this)
  - (2) No paradox in God. Through Jesus God put into effect the freedom of his divine love
- ❖ The humility of Christ is proper and this confronts us with the mystery of Christ as God
  - (a) Subordinationism
  - (b) Economic modalism
- ❖ Three presuppositions about this (a) Reconciliation is Jesus Christ, the one who takes upon himself the judgement of the world (b) Atonement is an event in the world. God enters the world (c) The one God is himself the subject of the act of atonement. His action and presence coincide and are identical with existence of the humiliated Jesus
- ❖ The cross shows the true humiliation of God. He obeys and is obeyed. The Spirit holds the other two together
- ❖ Jesus who becomes man is one with God the Father, he is equal to him

### 2. The Judge Judged in our place

- ❖ Why did Jesus become a servant?
- ❖ God willed to bear the need of man. He took it upon himself and he cries with man
- ❖ God exposed himself and withstood temptation. Jesus became man to judge the world and to show his grace
- ❖ God became man that he might bring about our reconciliation and conversion

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- ❖ Jesus Christ took the place of all men and gave us salvation. This was done with no co-operation from humans. Jesus is both our representative and substitute
- ❖ Jesus was and is “for us” in that he took our place as our judge.
- ❖ Jesus took the place of us sinners. He does not come to sin but accepts responsibility for what we do. As he does this, it ceases to be our sin. Jesus is the one who is judged, condemned and rejected
  - A) We do not know we are sinful
  - B) Christ bears our sin
  - C) Jesus closes the door for the return to evil

Jesus Christ was an is for us in that He suffered and crucified and died

- a) In the passion of Jesus, we have a free self-offering
- b) This act took place on earth
- c) This act was coincidental with the free act of a man and so it was the passion of God himself

Jesus was and is for us in that He has done this before God and has done right

- a) Jesus was amongst us and lived and acted for us as the just or righteous man
- b) Jesus was obedient in that He willed to take our place as sinners and did take our place

### 3. The Verdict of the Father

- ❖ How do we believe that we are those for whom Jesus has acted?
- ❖ There is a large gulf between us and Christ caused by time
- ❖ There is also a problem with the atonement itself. There is a distance between God and man
  - a) God for man – Order
  - b) Man against God – Disorder

That Christ has died for us does not mean that we do not have to die but that we have died with him and in him.

Anything beyond judgement must meet the following:

- (1) It must be an act of the same God
- (2) It must be actual and revealed in a distinct and new act of God
- (3) It must stand in a meaningful relation to the first act
- (4) It must take place in history
- (5) It must be in unity with the first event – it must be an event in the life of the same historical subject, Jesus

This event is the RESURRECTION:

- (1) The raising of Christ is an act of God. It does not have any element of human willing. The resurrection was not just a miracle accrediting Christ, but the revelation of God in him
- (2) It is an autonomous, new act of God. It came in the midst of real death and delivered him from death. The resurrection is the verdict of God
- (3) The connection of the crucifixion and resurrection is the Yes of the reconciling will of God, first in Christ's act of obedience in our place and second as the first recipient of the grace of God the Father

According to the resurrection, the death of Jesus as the negative act of God took place with a positive intention. What about the connection in time?

- (a) The resurrection decided that what Jesus was then, he is for all time. He is the mediator between God and man

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(b) The New Testament differentiates its time from the time of Christ not only by looking back and by looking forward to it expecting the coming of the Lord. Our time is time of expectation and hope. So our time is a time between times; as with Christ in the tomb between death and resurrection. Jesus is the absolute and final future of humanity. The death of Jesus is not an end but a beginning.

4. The resurrection happened in the human sphere and time. Jesus appeared to his disciples but there is no proof this happened. The problem is that it is a unique event but it is still an event.

The awakening of the faith of the disciples in the living presence of Jesus and the formation of the community

5. The two acts of crucifixion and resurrection are one act of one God, one Jesus and one goal of reconciliation. Jesus is the One Word of God that we must hear, trust and obey, both in life and death. How can we arrive at the perception that Jesus belongs to us and we to him? If in Christ's death we were delivered up to death, what more is there?

5. The crucified and risen Christ is God's YES to man. Death is swallowed up in victory

4. Easter depends on Christ's concrete otherness. If he is not rise then our preaching and faith are futile

3. The Christian community shows the fact that even after Ester God still has time for humanity

2. This divine verdict has been passed, Jesus loves and acts and speaks for all ages and in eternity

1. The resurrection was a free act of the grace of God. It is of this act that when we say "Jesus lives" and can continue "and I with him"