

justice and mercy are reconciled by wisdom: justice is upheld but mercy triumphs in Christ's death by means of a compromise. Christ's expiatory sacrifice was not an exact equivalent of the demands of justice: it was not the payment of a debt nor a complete satisfaction for sin nor the bearing of a penalty. His sufferings were a substitute for a penalty, what God was willing to accept in lieu. If Christ made full satisfaction for sins, then forgiveness would not be a matter of compassion but of justice, and neither faith nor obedience could be demanded for the application of Christ's benefits (since that would be equivalent to demanding more than full satisfaction).

Hugo Grotius (1583-1645) held that if God were justly to exercise mercy, a satisfaction for men's sins must be made (contrary to Arminius). However, he viewed God as Governor rather than as Judge. A Judge must vindicate the law; he cannot violate or suspend it to free the guilty from punishment or to transfer guilt to another. But a governor can relax the strict demands of the law while upholding it for the general good. Grotius held that, in order to maintain the authority and moral government of God, Christ, by His sufferings and death, met the requirements of God's relaxed law, and thus satisfied, in some sense, the violated holiness of God. There is thus a causal relationship between Christ's death and the forgiveness of sins. And yet Christ's death is not itself an atonement for sin, not a meeting of the law's full demands, but rather a demonstration of God's regard for His law. Christ fulfilled the requirements of the relaxed law and took the relaxed penalty of our sin on Himself. Thus at the same time He upheld the moral government of God and satisfied the rectoral justice of God.

Phillippus van Limborch (1633-1712) held that God's nature does not require punishment of or satisfaction for sin. Christ's death displays God's wrath against sin and serves as both an example and an influence to move men toward repentance. Limborch held that Christ did not satisfy the law for us, and did not make an exact equivalent payment for men's sins. Yet He did suffer grievously and did shed His precious blood as if it were the price of our redemption; and the Father accepted that blood as if it were payment in full for our sins, and was moved by it to bestow on us full forgiveness of sins.

Charles Grandison Finney (1792-1875) also espoused the Governmental Theory of the atonement.

2. The Extent of the Atonement

a. Clarification of the points at issue

(1) Negative (what is not at issue)

- (a) The basic question is not whether Christ's death is sufficient for all human beings -- it is more than sufficient!

This sufficiency does not lie in the concept that Christ experienced a specific amount of suffering to atone for a