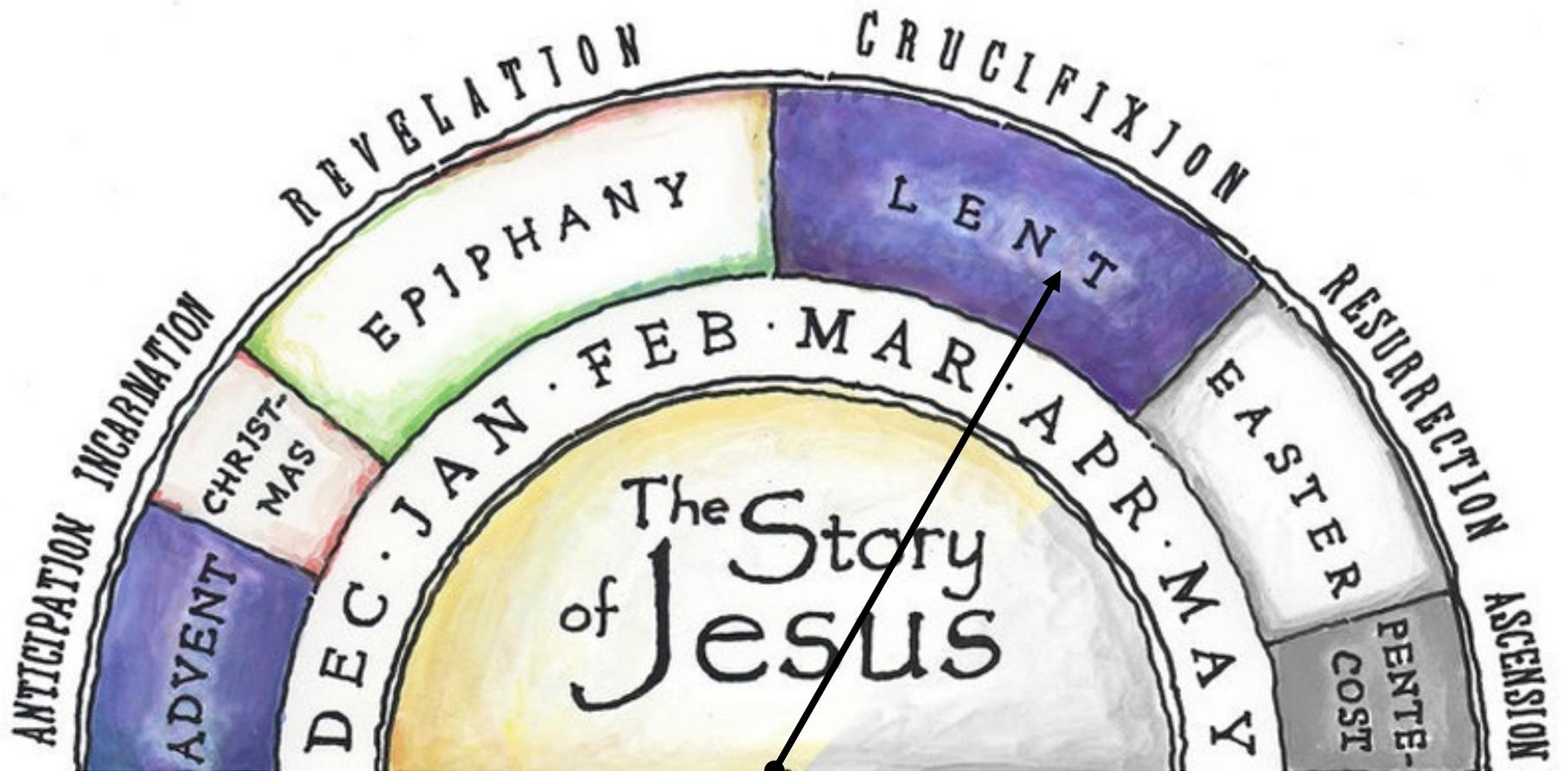


God of wilderness and water, your Son
was baptized and tempted as we are.
Guide us through this season,
that we may not avoid struggle,
but open ourselves to blessing,
through the cleansing depths of repentance
and the heaven-rending words of the Spirit.
Amen.

Opening Prayer

A decorative banner at the bottom of the page. It features a dark background with white geometric patterns, including a large 'X' shape. Overlaid on this are several hands in various colors (red, blue, green, purple) reaching out or holding each other. The text 'Opening Prayer' is written in white, bold, sans-serif font on the left side of the banner.

CHURCH CALENDAR



LAST TWO WEEKS

- Jesus is the Prince of Peace, not the God of War; we're not praying for Armageddon; we're working to expand the world's experience of God's kingdom
- Jesus dies as a ransom to DEATH, breaking the chains of our bondage to IT, NOT as a way to appease a wrathful God



HOLY
BIBLE

JOHN

1:29

The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"

THIS WEEK

- What's up with the whole sacrificial system, and Jesus being "the lamb of God"?
- If Jesus is a "sacrifice," what is being sacrificed, to whom, and for what purpose?
- How does understanding all this help our life of faith?



In sacrifice and offering you have not delighted, but you have given me an open ear. Burnt offering and sin offering, you have not required. Then I said, "Behold, I have come; in the scroll of the book, it is written of me: I delight to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart."

HOLY
BIBLE

PSALM

40:6-8

*For You do not desire sacrifice,
or I would bring it; You take no pleasure
in burnt offerings. The sacrifices of God
are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite
heart, O God, You will not despise.*

HOLY
BIBLE

PSALM

51:16-17

*The multitude of your sacrifices—
what are they to me?” says the LORD.
“I have more than enough of burnt offerings,
of rams and the fat of fattened animals;
I have no pleasure
in the blood of bulls and lambs and goats.
When you come to appear before me,
who has asked this of you,
this trampling of my courts?*

HOLY
BIBLE

ISAIAH

1:11-12

*Stop bringing meaningless offerings!
Your incense is detestable to me.
New Moons, Sabbaths and convocations—
I cannot bear your worthless assemblies.
Your New Moon feasts and your appointed
festivals I hate with all my being.
They have become a burden to me;
I am weary of bearing them.*

HOLY
BIBLE

ISAIAH

1:13-14

*For on the day that I brought your ancestors out of the land of Egypt, **I did not speak to them or command them concerning burnt-offerings and sacrifices.** But this is what I commanded them, saying, ‘Obey My voice, and I will be your God, and you shall be My people. And walk in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well with you.’”*

NRSV

HOLY
BIBLE

JER

7:22-23

HOLY
BIBLE

JER

7:22

*For when I brought your ancestors
out of Egypt and spoke to them,
I did not **just** give them commands
about burnt offerings and sacrifices...*

NIV

HOLY
BIBLE

JER

7:22

*For I did not speak to your fathers,
or command them on the day that
I brought them out of the land of Egypt,
concerning burnt offerings and sacrifices.*

NASB

HOLY
BIBLE

JER

7:22

For in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, I did not speak to your fathers or command them concerning burnt offerings and sacrifices.

ESV

HOLY
BIBLE

JER

7:22

*For I spake not unto your fathers,
nor commanded them in the day
that I brought them out of the land
of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings
or sacrifices...*

KJV

HOLY
BIBLE

JER

7:22

The Message from God-of-the-Angel-Armies, Israel's God: 'Go ahead! Put your burnt offerings with all your other sacrificial offerings and make a good meal for yourselves. I sure don't want them! When I delivered your ancestors out of Egypt, I never said anything to them about wanting burnt offerings and sacrifices as such.

MSG

HOLY
BIBLE

JER

7:22

Add your burnt offerings to your sacrifices, eat meat. Because I didn't speak with your ancestors or order them on the day I got them out of (Egypt) regarding matters concerning burnt offerings and sacrifice.

TFT

HOLY
BIBLE

JER

7:22

*For when I brought your ancestors
out of Egypt and spoke to them,
I did not **just** give them commands
about burnt offerings and sacrifices...*

NIV

*Shall I come before (the Lord) with
burnt offerings, with calves a year old?
Will the LORD be pleased with thousands
of rams, with 10,000 rivers of olive oil?
Shall I offer my firstborn for my transgression,
the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?
He has shown you, O mortal, what is good.
And what does the LORD require of you?
To do justice, and to love mercy,
and to walk humbly with your God.*

**HOLY
BIBLE**

MICAH

6:6-8

*I hate and despise your religious festivals;
your assemblies are a stench to me.
Even though you bring me burnt offerings
and grain offerings, I will not accept them.
Though you bring choice fellowship offerings,
I will have no regard for them.
Away with the noise of your songs!
I will not listen to the music of your harps.
But let justice roll on like a river,
righteousness like a never-failing stream!*

HOLY
BIBLE

AMOS

5:21-24

*For I desire mercy, not sacrifice,
and acknowledgment of God
rather than burnt offerings.*

HOLY
BIBLE

HOSEA

6:6

While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew's house, many tax collectors and sinners came and ate with him and his disciples. When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" On hearing this, Jesus said, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

HOLY
BIBLE

MATT
9:10-13

For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: to an unknown god. So, you are ignorant of the very thing you worship — and this is what I am going to proclaim to you. The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by human hands.

HOLY
BIBLE

ACTS

17:23-25

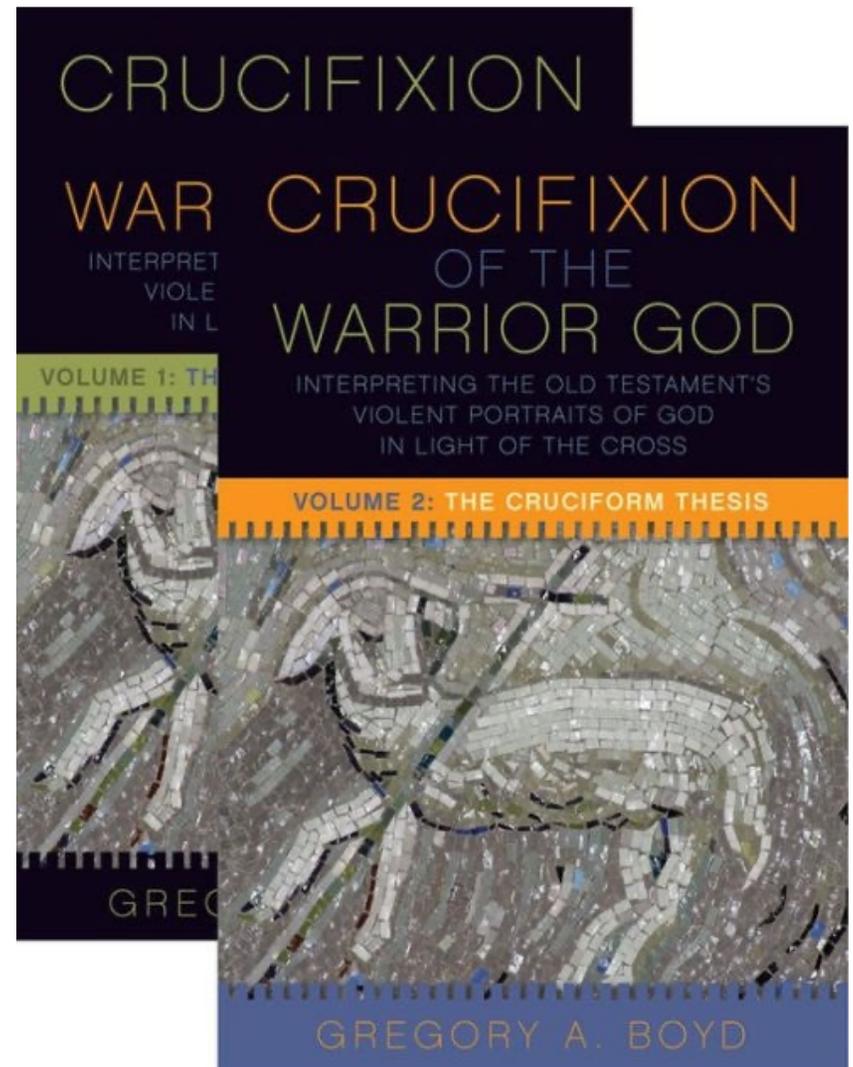
*And He is not served by human hands,
as if God needed anything. Rather,
He himself gives everyone life
and breath and everything else.*

HOLY
BIBLE

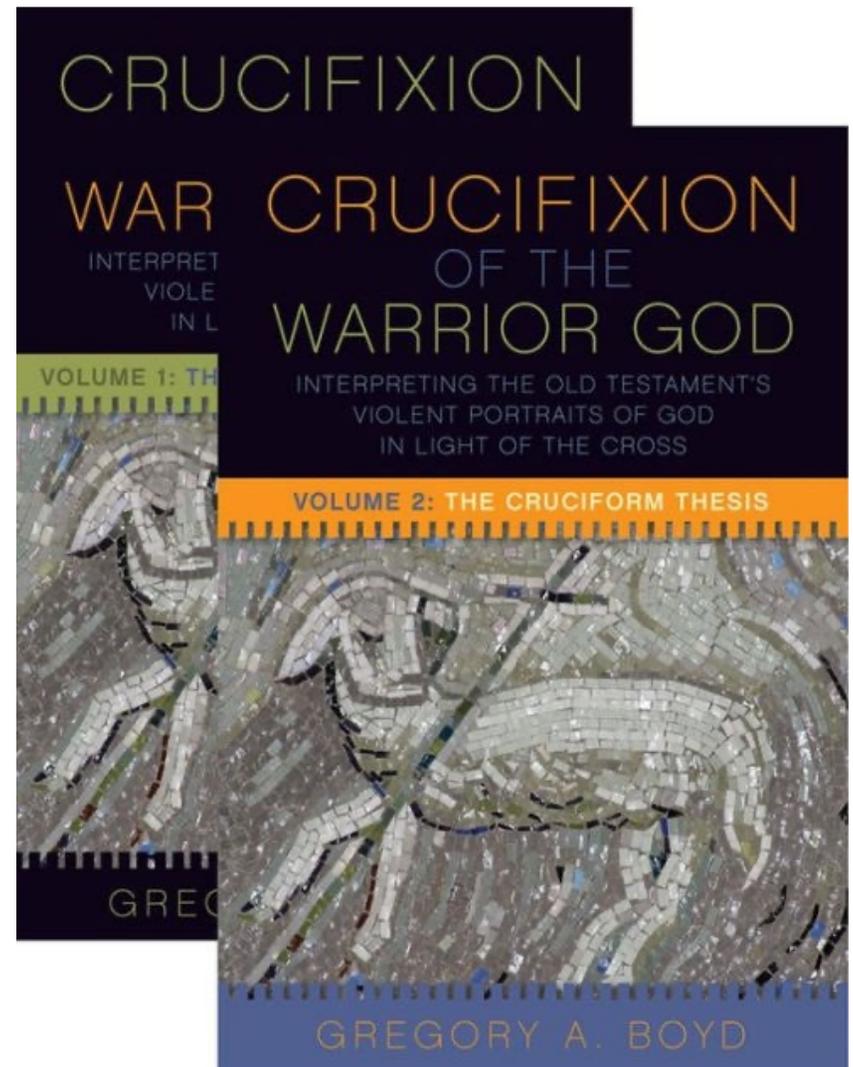
ACTS

17:23-25

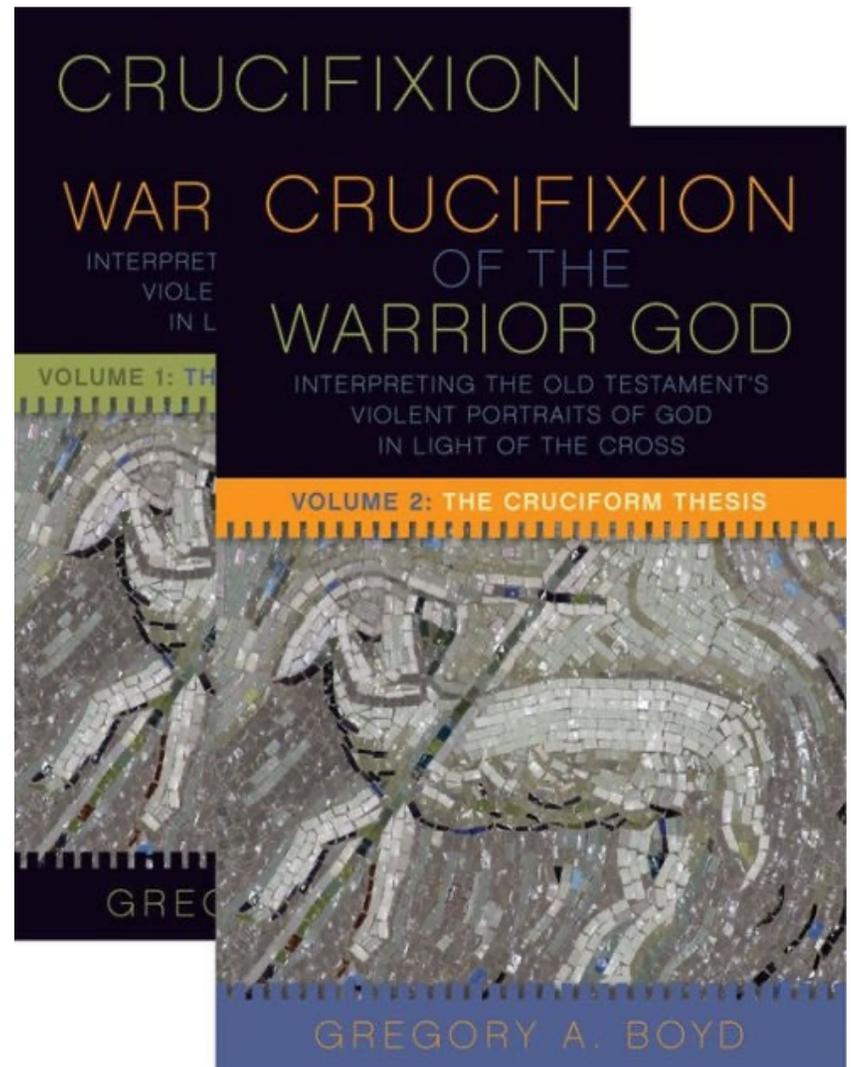
(This shift in the text) within the canon illustrates that the biblical understanding of faith does not rule out calling long-established traditions – including biblical traditions – in to question.



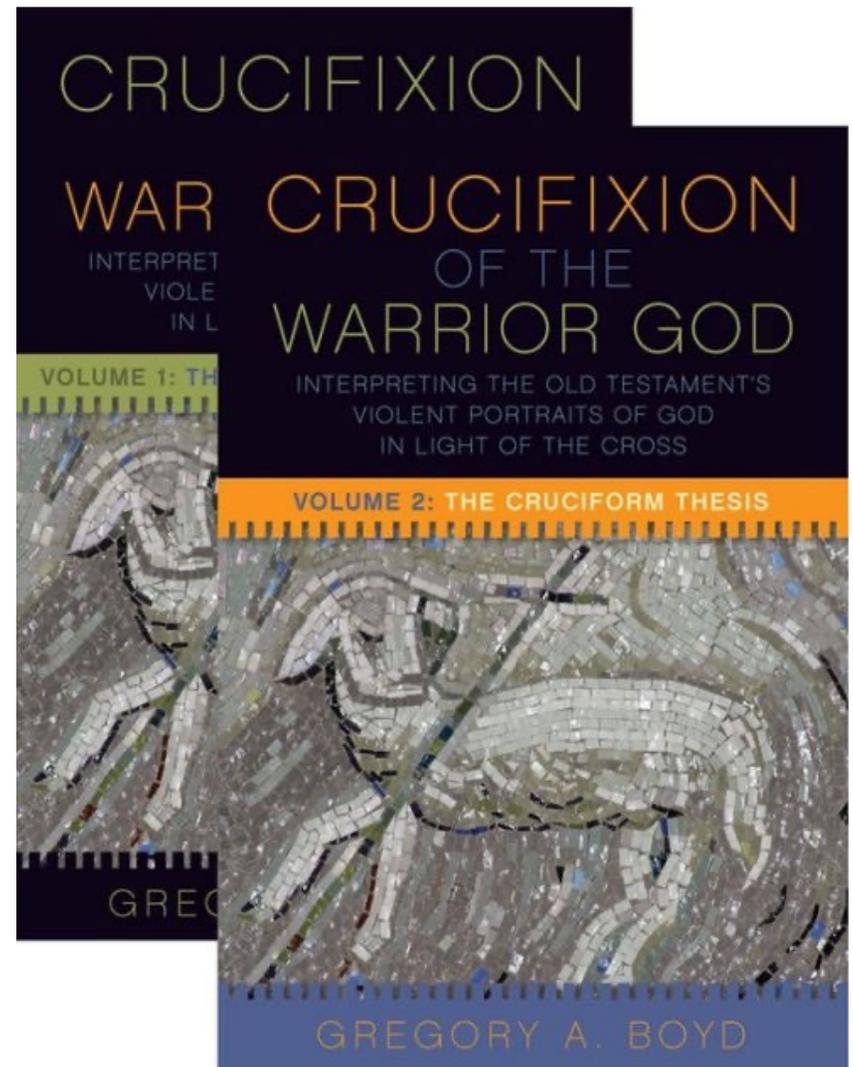
At one point Origen writes, “Since the Jews loved sacrifices (being) accustomed to them in Egypt...God permits them to offer them to himself...” Origen, like other Christian thinkers of the time, did not believe that animal sacrifices were God’s idea (but) since this is how people viewed him, this is what got recorded...



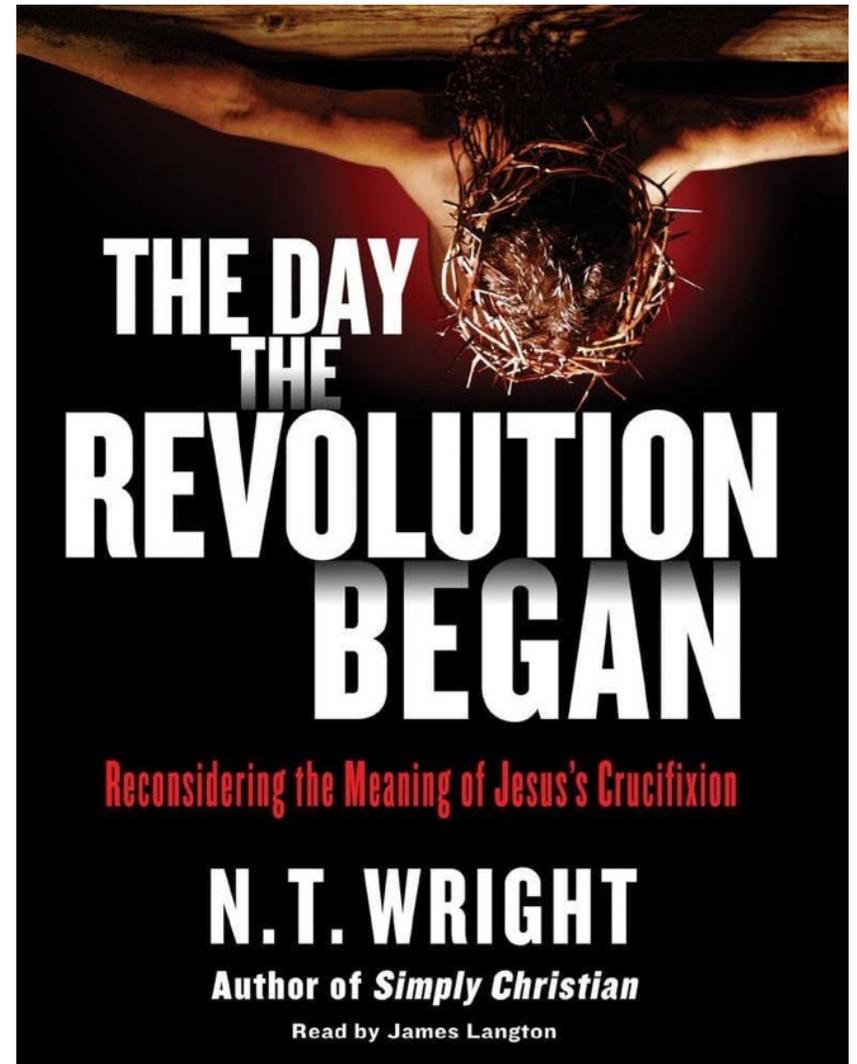
Origen regarded it as a serious mistake to think that Jesus just became “the Lamb of God” when he was sacrificed on the cross, (for) while the cross most clearly manifests Jesus as the sacrificial Passover Lamb, Origen viewed his entire life as illustrating this truth... So, too, Torrance writes:



“...it was his whole life, and above all that life poured out in the supreme sacrifice of death on the cross, that made atonement for sin (and in that regard) we must think of the whole incarnate life of the Son of God right from the very beginning.”



(The moment when Jesus sacrifices all and bears the sin of the world is when) a new sort of power (was) let loose upon the world, and it (was) the power of self-giving love. This is the heart of the revolution that was launched on Good Friday.



**HOLY
BIBLE**

REV

5:5-6

*See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah,
the Root of David, has triumphed...
Then I saw a Lamb, looking
as if it had been slain, standing
at the center of the throne...*

HOLY
BIBLE

REV

19:11, 13

And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and wages war. He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood...

The lamb of God is soaked in his own blood as he rides into battle (in Rev 19). This lamb wages war not by shedding the blood of others, but by shedding his own blood on behalf of others. And those who comprise the lamb's army fight the same way.



GREG
BOYD

John (the Revelator) understands the sacrificial Lamb to be the definitive expression of God's true character. (John's vision of the Lamb demonstrates that) God's control over the universe is exemplified in the sacrificial, suffering work of the Lamb, not in coercive domination...



GREG
BOYD

...the primary way the Lamb overcomes Satan and his violent regime throughout Revelation is by bearing witness to God's true self-sacrificial character and mode of governing the world, and thereby bearing witness against the serpent's deceptive assaults on God's character that go all the way back to the garden and that have...



GREG
BOYD

...held humanity captive ever since. (And) as numerous scholars have argued, John's transformation of the Lion of Judah into the sacrificial lamb constitutes "the central reversal in his apocalypse," for it anchors most of John's other symbolic reversals...Once the Lion has been revealed (as) Lamb, we never again see Christ referred to as Lion (but as Lamb 27x more!)



GREG
BOYD

HOLY BIBLE

HEB

10:1-3

The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming—not the realities themselves. For this reason, it can never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship. Otherwise, would they not have stopped being offered?...But those sacrifices are an annual reminder of sins. It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

HOLY
BIBLE

HEB

10:5-7

Therefore, when Christ came into the world, he said:

“Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me; with burnt offerings and sin offerings you were not pleased.

Then I said, ‘Here I am—it is written about me in the scroll—I have come to do your will, my God.’” Psa 40:6-8

HOLY
BIBLE

HEB

10:8-10

First, he said, “**Sacrifices and offerings, burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not desire, nor were you pleased with them**”—though they were offered in accordance with the law. Then he said, “**Here I am, I have come to do your will.**” He sets aside **the first** to establish the **second**. And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

SO, WHAT'S THE POINT?

- The sacrificial system wasn't God's idea, and God didn't need or require Jesus' blood sacrifice
- Jesus' entire life is the sacrifice that takes away our sin and sets things right between God and humanity, not by assuaging God's wrath, but by revealing God's love



The depth of love one has for the beloved can be measured by the sacrifice the lover is willing to make for the beloved.

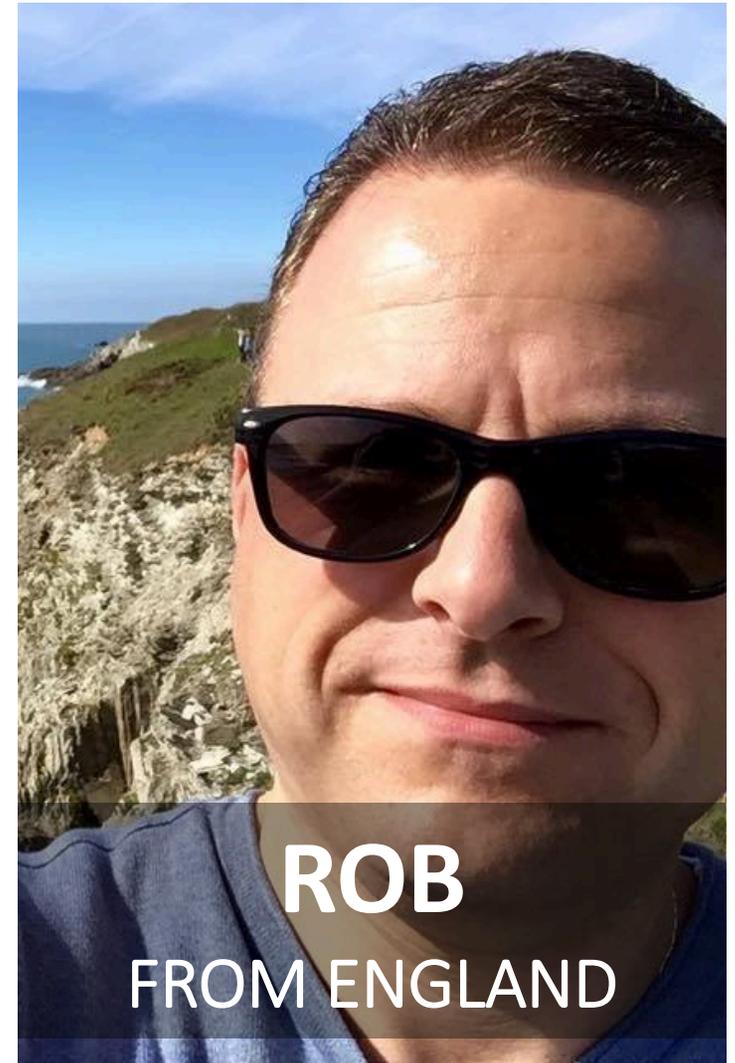


SO, WHAT'S THE POINT?

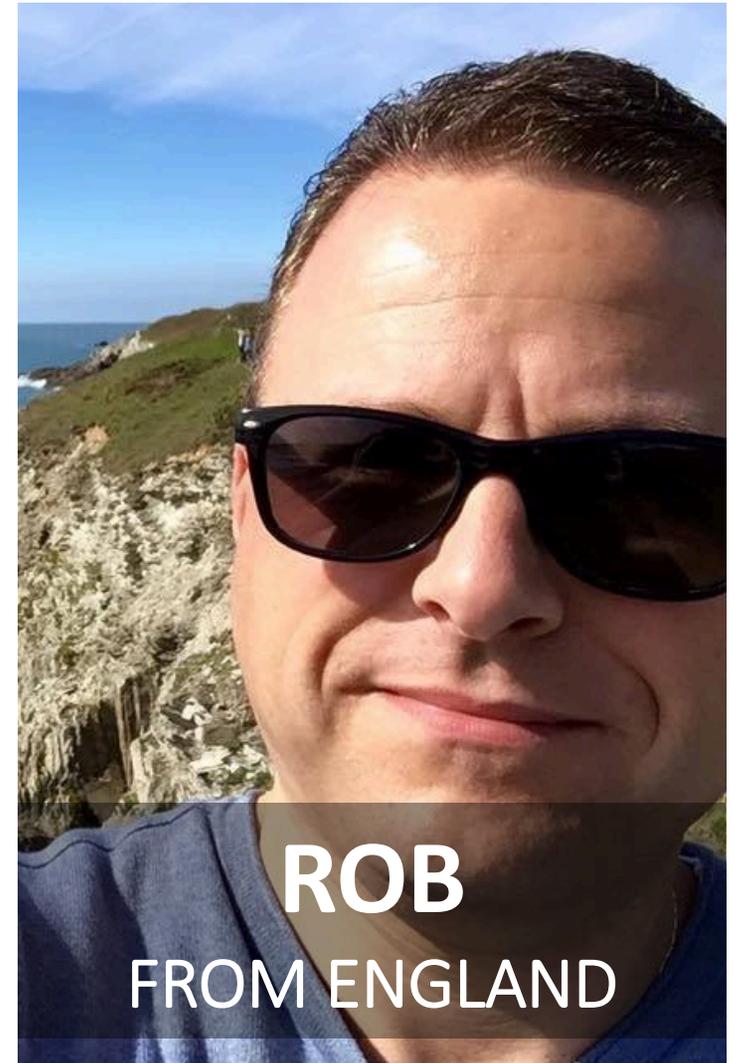
- There is a better, more beautiful vision of God that Christians across the world – and throughout history – have embraced, one that frees them to fully love and trust the goodness of God they see revealed in Jesus, and you're free to embrace it too!



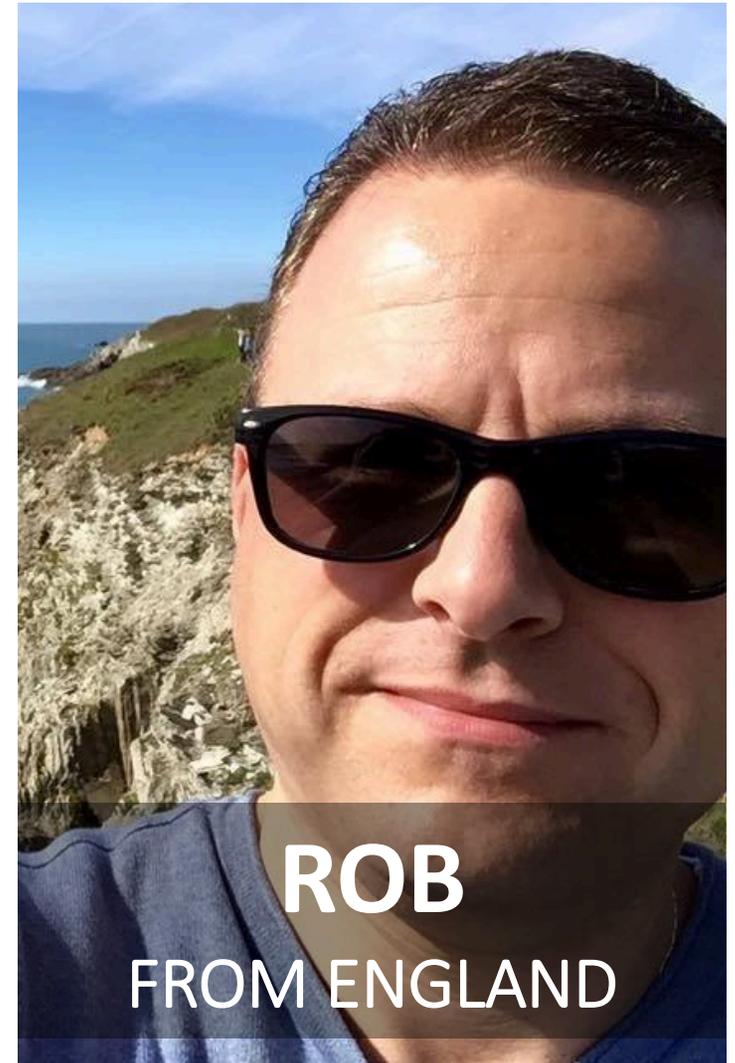
Accepting that God did not and does not require any kind of sacrifice is not something to be taken lightly. It goes against the grain of much of what is taught in churches around the world. It has serious implications. But these implications are, for me, overwhelmingly positive:



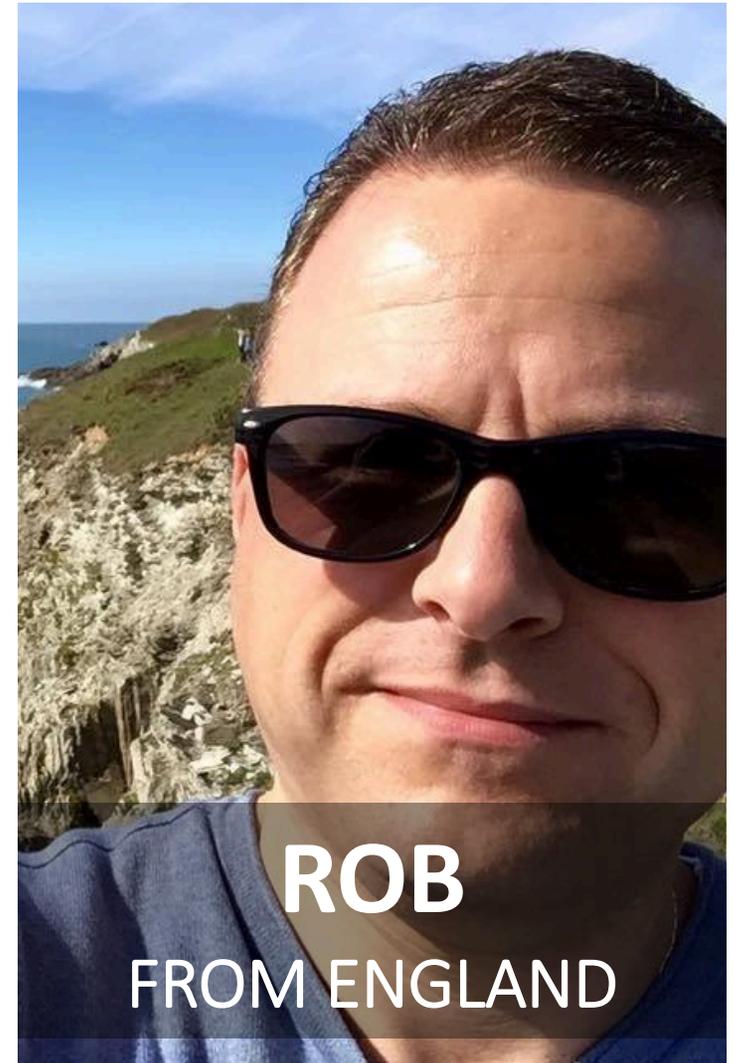
...suddenly I find that God is not obsessed with (appeasing) some abstract form of justice, but is in fact every bit as compassionate, merciful and forgiving as Jesus described (God) to be. And (God) asks us in turn to be just that compassionate, merciful, and forgiving towards others.



Our forgiveness was not and is not dependent upon Jesus' death. Jesus' death was necessary, not for God to be able to forgive us, but for us to be able to finally see – and be convinced – that God's only response to sin, however grievous, is “I forgive you”.



This is why, even as his executioners drove the nails into his hands, the prayer that fell from Jesus' broken lips was not a cry for vengeance, but a plea for forgiveness.



God of the covenant, in the glory of the cross
your Son embraced the power of death
and broke its hold over your people.

In this time of repentance,
draw all people to yourself,
that we who confess Jesus as Lord
may put aside the deeds of death
and accept the life of your kingdom.

Amen.

Closing Prayer

A decorative banner at the bottom of the page features a dark background with white line art of hands holding each other. Overlaid on this are several overlapping circles in red, green, blue, and purple, symbolizing unity and love.