

267 Please break free!

Have you had a chance to think about my two models?^[266] I framed them for explaining, ‘what the gospel is all about’, but we could say it’s ‘what God is all about’. It started as:

Model A: God is righteous and pure; we are sinners, separated from God; BUT God is also love; SO Jesus died on the cross to end that separation and bring us back to God.

Model B: God loves us, accepts us and offers us life; BUT sin is a fatal disease;^[266] SO Jesus died on the cross in our place to heal that disease and bring us back to God.

And we could condense it right down to:

*Model A: God is a **righteous judge** (who is also loving) and God finds a way to set things right.*

*Model B: God is **love** (and is also righteous) and so God does **whatever it takes** to set things right for each of us.*

In the early days of my writing odyssey, I discussed ‘the gospel’ with two rather conservative Christian friends,^[73,74] and I realised that penal substitution (PS) was why I had felt *so* unhappy in my faith – Model A in spades. One friend did admit that PS was ‘pastorally inappropriate, to say the least’ for certain people (e.g. those who were/are abused, like Sybil^[249,256]).

I’m now moving towards the idea that PS is just a *symptom of a deeper problem*: the Model A view of God is *fundamentally wrong* because it’s **not** how Jesus portrays his heavenly Father.

Jesus met lots of people, right? And the Gospel writers, after years of mulling it all over, selected certain incidents that they thought would best tell us what Jesus stood for, right?

The first three that came to my mind were the woman caught in adultery (a), the woman at the well (w) and Zacchaeus (z). All are Model B, through and through. The very fact that he talked to them, despite their being outcasts, shows love and acceptance: none would have felt condemned, especially (a), ‘I do not condemn you’; (w) was offered living water; and for (z) it was ‘**today** salvation has come to this house’ (even before Jesus had died).

We don’t know whether woman (a) followed Jesus’ urging to ‘leave your life of sin’, but if she realised that God really *was* like Jesus, and not the Pharisee-God, she’d have been powerfully motivated – by love. For (w) the result was a powerful calling to evangelism. And for (z) it was a conviction of sin (but as a *response* to God’s love), leading to a powerfully changed lifestyle.

God sets things right for each individual, as Jesus shows them God’s love and acceptance; should we not do the same for our friends and family?!

But what have we **always** been taught?! ‘We must preach the gospel, i.e. you’re a sinner, separated from God, but God loves you and Jesus died for you.’ No! We’ve been indoctrinated! Please break free! Change to Model B!