

PART I

THE 'CHRISTUS ODIUM' VARIETY OF PENAL SUBSTITUTION
IN CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVE

The ‘Christus Odium’ Variety of Penal Substitution in Contemporary Perspective: A Brief Editorial Introduction

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Joshua R. Farris and S. Mark Hamilton have recently argued that the “Christus Odium” variety of penal substitution is an inappropriate model of the atonement both according to Scripture and theological reasoning.¹ They define their specific objection: “in some evangelical quarters, it is no longer enough to simply believe that Christ absorbed the wrath of God as a penal substitute. Some have recently gone so far as to claim that, as a penal substitute, Christ became the object of the Father’s perfect hatred.”² Farris and Hamilton, among other things, object to the notion that Jesus, the Son of God, was or ever could be hated by the Father. They term this view the “Christus Odium” view, which is a stronger variation of penal substitution view. As the editor of the journal that published Farris’s and Hamilton’s original article, I asked Owen Strachan (a member of our editorial board) if he would be interested in responding to their article, believing that this interaction would stir an interesting and productive conversation. Sometime thereafter we decided that this theological issue would make an excellent conversation at the annual meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society. The session included papers from Farris/Hamilton and Strachan, along with Thomas McCall, Derek Rishmawy, and Ryan L. Rippee.

As a result of this dialogue and exchange, *JBTS* is now publishing this symposium of papers, with added contributions from Ty Kieser. This symposium includes papers that cautiously push back against some aspects of Farris and Hamilton’s argument (Rishmawy and Kieser); others that explore the nature of the Father-Son relationship in the penal substitutionary atonement, both denying that the Father hated the Son at any point (Strachan and Rippee); Farris and Hamilton also provide a follow-up paper articulating more problems with the “Christus Odium” view. These papers and the larger conversation that this session provided make a significant contribution to the recent discussions about the validity of the penal substitution view of the atonement more broadly and the Christus Odium variety of penal substitution more narrowly.

1. Joshua R. Farris and S. Mark Hamilton, “This is My Beloved Son, Whom I Hate? A Critique of the Christus Odium Variant of Penal Substitution,” *Journal of Biblical and Theological Studies* 3, no. 2 (2018): 271–86.

2. Farris and Hamilton, “My Beloved Son,” 271.

The topic also closely intersects with a myriad of issues related to fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith, most prominently the Trinity, Christology, sin, humanity, and (of course) the atonement. The extensive and complex nature of this discussion is one of the reasons that theological reasoning in this area is so tricky.

The specific questions raised in this symposium are ones that need to be addressed for the sake of clarity and—we hope—sufficient unity in Christian doctrine by both students and scholars. Some of the most pressing and controversial questions include the following: What exactly did the Son of God, Jesus Christ, bear on the cross? Was it God's wrath? Was it specifically the Father's wrath? If it was God's wrath, then how can we express this notion without compromising the ecumenical and orthodox understanding of the Trinity and Chalcedonian theology? If it was the Father's wrath, then what becomes of the classical conception of the Trinity and various analogues of the doctrine, such as the inseparable operations of the Triune persons? Was there a "break" or "disruption" at that moment in time between the Father and the Son? If so, how do we express this "break" or "disruption" precisely? If the Son of God did not experience God's wrath on the cross, then how should we understand Jesus's cry of dereliction? And more broadly, how exactly does Jesus atone for our sins?

There are several possible answers and constructive solutions that might be made to the above questions. As a brief introduction, just a few possibilities to two of these questions will be addressed here. Regarding the question of whether or not the Son was the object of the Father's wrath, one might offer three possible answers: perhaps the Son was indeed the object of the Father's wrath; or perhaps instead he was the object of *God's* wrath, which includes his own wrath as the Son. Or alternatively, Jesus, in virtue of being the true and righteous human, having fulfilled the law, satisfied God and so the wrath of God upon him is no longer necessary. Jesus in each of these cases could be said to "satisfy" or "appease" the wrath of God: in the first two options, he satisfies or appeases the wrath of God by experiencing it and absorbing it; in the third option, one could say he satisfies or appeases the wrath of God in the sense that wrath no longer needs to be expressed to Jesus, since he is the true, righteous human. In this third option, this appeasement does not mean the Son actually experiences the wrath of God; rather, it means he satisfied it so it is no longer needed to be expressed towards him (and towards all those in him) as the righteous one.

Moving onto a related second question, if Jesus did indeed experience the wrath of the Father on the cross, did he also experience the Father's hatred or derision? One could respond affirmably or not. In the former case, the Father's wrath and hatred are seen as going hand-in-hand; in other words, because he experienced the wrath of the Father on this account, he also experienced his hatred. A proponent of this view might use Jesus's cry of dereliction as evidence ("My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Ps 22:1), taking God here to refer specifically to the Father. In the latter case, one could argue that while Jesus was the object of the Father's wrath, he was not the

object of the Father's hatred. Depending upon one's definitions, a distinction could be made. A proponent of this view might use Jesus' affirmation that the Father loves of him in his death ("For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again," John 10:17), also pointing out that his cry of dereliction is not directed at the Father but the Godhead more broadly ("My God, my God"), of which he is the second person. So, again, one could say that Jesus experienced the wrath of the Father (i.e., the punishment; bodily death), but not the Father's hatred. These possible answers are merely a beginning to this conversation, of course. There are other ways to address these questions and construct particular answers.

From this brief introduction, it is clear that these theological questions and potential solutions—like any theological doctrine—require careful definitions of terms (such as "forsakenness," "hatred," and "wrath"), precise attention to what the Bible means, and systematic, consistent thinking across adjacent doctrinal formulations (especially, the Trinity). As such, each article in this symposium approaches the topic in a unique way. There was no required methodology for papers nor a required list of issues to which to respond, since there are countless ways to do so. Each of the following papers, therefore, stands alone as a unique contribution. As far as the ordering of papers, as the moderator of the session, I decided to order this symposium in a similar way that the ETS session was ordered:

1. Joshua R. Farris and S. Mark Hamilton, "Which Penalty? Whose Atonement? Revisiting Christus Odium"
2. Derek Rishmawy, "A Less Odious Atonement Requires a More Classical God: Engaging Farris and Hamilton on Christus Odium"
3. Owen Strachan, "It Was the Will of the Father to Crush Him: The Day of Atonement and the Cross of Christ"
4. Ryan L. Rippee, "The Father's Love for the Son in Penal Substitutionary Atonement"
5. Ty Kieser, "Performing the Surgery, Saving the Patient: Reduplication, Proper Christological Predication, and Critiques of Christus Odium"

I would like to thank all the contributors for an engaging and thoughtful dialogue on this subject. It was a pleasure to organize and moderate this event and symposium. I hope that our readers find it helpful as they reflect on the meaning of the atonement and its interaction within other theological loci.

Which Penalty? Whose Atonement? Revisiting Christus Odium

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Abstract: So unreasonable is the idea that God the Father hated his Son in order to make atonement for the sin of humanity, it bedevils the mind to imagine anyone attempting reasoning out a theological defense for it. Nevertheless, the so-called Christus Odium variant of Penal Substitution has continued to garner support from when we first discerned its contemporary reappearance and waved the warning flag—initially in the form of a conference paper at ETS (2017) and eventually as an article in *JBTS* (2018) entitled, ‘This is My Beloved Son Whom I Hate?’ In *this* paper, we offer up a brief survey of some of the problems that Christus Odium presents, buffeting these problems with two historical accounts of Penal Substitution from John Calvin and Herman Witsius that directly warn against the Christus Odium variant. And then taking a cue from these historical sources, we break down the doctrine of Penal Substitution into some more manageable parts, in order to show that on a logically consistent understanding of this atonement theory, humanity is actually ultimately answerable to the moral law, and not God. The problem that this highlights for defenses made for standard accounts of Penal Substitution notwithstanding, we show that God can in no way hate his Son as a substitute for offenses that are not answerable to himself. The moral law is as inflexible as it is dispassionate in its demands and it is the moral law to which the Penal Substitution theory is accountable. Thus, if it is the moral law that humanity’s sin has offended, and if the Christus Odium variant is built upon the infrastructure of a Penal Substitution theory, then it looks like Christus Odium falls short of any coherent attempt to privatize a judicial matter that is clearly a public one.

Key Words: Calvin, Witsius, Penal Substitution, Christus Odium, private justice, broken trinity

Introduction: Whence Christus Odium?

The standard Penal Substitution theory of atonement is like a theological oasis for a majority of contemporary evangelicals. And yet, there are some among this group for whom this oasis is apparently not enough, having opted instead for the doctrinal mirage that we call the *Christus Odium* variant of Penal Substitution.

The Penal substitution theory says, roughly, that Christ dies in order to absorb the penal consequences of God's retributive justice precipitated by human sin, by his being treated by God as if he were those individuals to whom the debt of punishment were due. Historically speaking, this is the predominate, though not the only theory of atonement espoused by those of the Reformed tradition. The *Christus Odium* variant—a development that continues to gain ground among evangelicals—assumes the doctrinal infrastructure of Penal Substitution, but over-burdens explanations of several aspects of both the work Christ accomplishes and the manner in which he accomplishes it. This may explain, at least in part, why *Christus Odium* has hitherto remained largely undetected.¹

In our previous work, we identified three specific points of departure that the Christus Odium variant makes from the standard Penal Substitution theory. These include:

1. Exercises of divine retribution are equivalent the exercises of divine hatred.
2. Paying a debt of punishment, the Son becomes the object of the Father's hatred.
3. When Christ dies on the cross, the Son of God himself dies.

We first detected and later distilled these three propositions from reading a number of authors who—whether consciously or unconsciously, we do not know—appear to be committed to such a view. Abner Chou, for instance, boldly asserts that “The culmination to Jesus's time on earth was His death on the cross. . . . In that death the wrath of God was poured out on Christ, and the darkness exploded. In that instant God cursed Jesus, *putting Him in a position of absolute, perfect hatred. God hated Him and desired to make Him nothing.*”² David Allender and Tremper Longman argue similarly that “God chose to *violate* His Son in our place. The Son stared into the mocking eyes of God; He heard the laughter of the Father's derision and felt Him depart in disgust. . . . In a *mysterious instant*, the Father who loved the Son from

1. Christus Odium having gone largely undetected might also be explained by the evangelical (over) emphasis on Penal Substitution as equivalent to the gospel. So common has Penal Substitution language become among evangelicals, it seems probable that the uncommon language of Christus Odium would be introduced without detection.

2. Adam Setser, “Big Picture of God's Mission”(blog, July 25, 2015, <https://www.adamsetser.com/blog/2015/7/25/the-big-picture-of-gods-mission-a-concise-overview-of-the-entire-bible-by-dr-abner-chou>). See also Chou, “The King, the Curse, and the Cross: OT Intertextuality, Paul's Logic, and Justification,” unpublished paper, *Evangelical Theological Society*, 2010.

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all eternity turned from Him *in hatred*. The Son became *odious* to the Father.”³ It is from passages such as these that we went on to argue that in some quarters of evangelicalism, Christianity appears to have something of a new message, the simple logic of which goes like this—quoting Allender and Longman—“The Son became sin; the Father cannot look upon sin without hatred; The Son willingly took our place of condemnation—and for an instant the Son bore the *fury* of God.”⁴ This logic sounds oddly similar to the recent words of David Platt, who appears to be the most recent prominent evangelical to fall into this doctrinal pit. According to Platt,

The beauty of the cross is that when Jesus went to Calvary, He did not just pay the price for our lusting, our lying, our cheating, or whatever sin that we do—He stood in our place. *He took the holy hatred, holy judgment, and holy wrath of God that was not just due our sin but due us.* Jesus stood in our place and He took it upon Himself. So let us be very careful not to lean on comfortable clichés that sound good to us and rob the cross of its power.⁵

Notice that Platt is arguing that God hates sinners (not just their sin) and that in substituting himself for sinners (and not just their sin), Christ himself is hated by God’s “holy hatred.” This is apparently what he means when he says that “holy hatred . . . was not just due to our sin *but due to us.*” So, when Christ “stood in our place” he experienced God’s “holy hatred,” which, according to Platt’s logic, was a hatred for himself, that is, for his person (or at least his humanity) and not just for sins committed by humanity for which he was the representative. In other words, because Christ died for us (and not just for sin), and substituted himself for us (and not just our sin), according to Platt, he therefore suffers the hatred that God reserved for us.

When we first stumbled onto the *Christus Odium* variant, we thought it was isolated to a few disparate and relatively outlying evangelical voices. Learning that David Platt—again, someone who has a significant public evangelical platform (among Baptists anyway)—has recently joined the chorus of these voices, it may be that contemporary evangelicals have a much bigger problem on their hands than might have been at first thought.

Naturally, the next, most obvious question is to ask whether there is precedence in the tradition—the Reformed tradition, that is—for defending this doctrinal aberration. Was this what our theological forebears believed? For the sake of brevity, let us consider two straightforward examples of theologians who took pains to

3. Dan B. Allender and Tremper Longman, *In the Cry of the Soul: How Our Emotions Reveal Our Deepest Questions About God* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2015), 184–85 (emphasis added).

4. Allender and Longman, *In the Cry of the Soul*, 185 (emphasis added).

5. David Platt, “Does God Hate Sin but Love the Sinner,” *Radical*, April 8, 2019, <https://radical.net/does-god-hate-sin-but-love-the-sinner/> (emphasis added). Southern Baptist theologian Gregg Allison comes very close to affirming something similar concerning the Father pouring his wrath and derision on the Son in, “No Holy Spirit, No Penal Substitutionary Atonement,” *The Gospel Coalition*, June 25, 2019, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/role-holy-spirit-penal-substitutionary-atonement/>.

argue against the proposal that atonement was made in any way by God the Father *hating* his Son.

I. Who needs Tradition Anyway?

The Scriptures record unspeakably terrible things about what God has promised to those who at the consummation of all things will have ultimately rejected him. The language that the Scriptural authors use to describe these divine judgements varies in their dreadfulness from the awful thought of God's trodding them in his anger (Isa 63:3, ESV) to the even more frightening thought of Christ's "treading the winepress of the fury and wrath of almighty God" (Rev 19:15).

The illumination of these scriptural horrors appears perhaps in no greater detail and terror than in Jonathan Edwards's infamous sermon, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God" (1742). So abysmal was the scene at Enfield, Connecticut that Edwards was quite literally forced to stop preaching, what with the tears, moans, and apparently outright shrieks of the people—some actually pulling at his clerical robe, begging him to stop—for fear of their eternal condemnation.⁶ Here is a sermon that showcases

6. At one point in the sermon Edwards issues the following thought-provoking description of the wrath of God, and here we quote him at length: "Consider here more particularly several things concerning that wrath that you are in such danger of: *First*. [Consider] *Whose* wrath it is: it is the wrath of the infinite God. If it were only the wrath of man, though it were of the most potent prince, it would be comparatively little to be regarded. The wrath of kings is very much dreaded, especially of absolute monarchs, that have the possessions and lives of their subjects wholly in their power, to be disposed of at their mere will. *Proverbs 20:2*, 'The fear of a king is as the roaring of a lion: whoso provoketh him to anger, sinneth against his own soul.' The subject that very much enrages an arbitrary prince, is liable to suffer the most extreme torments that human art can invent or human power can inflict. But the greatest earthly potentates, in their greatest majesty and strength, and when clothed in their greatest terrors, are but feeble despicable worms of the dust, in comparison of the great and almighty Creator and King of heaven and earth: it is but little that they can do, when most enraged, and when they have exerted the utmost of their fury. All the kings of the earth before God are as grasshoppers, they are nothing and less than nothing: both their love and their hatred is to be despised. The wrath of the great King of kings is as much more terrible than theirs, as his majesty is greater. *Second*. [Consider that it is] the *fierceness* of his wrath that you are exposed to. We often read of the *fury* of God; as in *Isaiah 59:18*, 'According to their deeds, accordingly he will repay fury to his adversaries.' So *Isaiah 66:15*, 'For, behold, the Lord will come with fire, and with chariots like a whirlwind, to render his anger *with fury*, and his rebukes with flames of fire.' And so in many other places. So we read of God's *fierceness*. *Revelation 19:15*, there we read of 'the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of almighty God.' [These] words are exceeding terrible: if it had only been said, 'the wrath of God,' the words would have implied that which is infinitely dreadful; but 'tis not only said so, but 'the fierceness and wrath of God': [it is] the fury of God! the fierceness of Jehovah! Oh how dreadful must that be! Who can utter or conceive what such expressions carry in them! But it is not only said so, but 'the fierceness and wrath of *almighty God*.' As though there would be a very great manifestation of his almighty power, in what the fierceness of his wrath should inflict, as though omnipotence should be as it were enraged, and exerted, as men are wont to exert their strength in the fierceness of their wrath. Oh! then what will be consequence! What will become of the poor worm that shall suffer it! Whose hands can be strong and whose heart [can] endure? To what a dreadful, inexpressible, inconceivable depth of misery must the poor creature be sunk, who shall be the subject of this!" Jonathan Edwards, sermon "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God," July 8, 1741, Works of Jonathan Edwards collection 22:404–18.

the anger of God toward humanity. Upon reading it again, and thinking we might find *Christus Odium*-specific language, we found that those places where Edwards mentions the work of Christ in the sermon (or anywhere elsewhere for that matter, at least that we have found) say nothing about Christ's being *hated* by God with the contempt and derision in which he will send sinners who have rejected him to hell.

Why draw attention to this? Well, we draw attention to it because Edwards serves as an example of one who supposedly subscribes to the Penal Substitution theory, who edges more dangerously close to the possibility of saying something like *Christus Odium*—in a sermon entitled, “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God”, mind you—but does not. In other words, not even the fieriest of Puritans would be so bold as to suggest that God hated his Son and that this was a necessary constituent to his making atonement! Perhaps we have not gone to the source of this theory. Maybe we will find something different.

If the doctrine of Penal Substitution had its origin in Calvin, and it is a pretty good bet that it did, the fact that Calvin was already defending against this idea during his own lifetime says something about when a *Christus Odium*-like set of ideas might have first been proposed.⁷ The Son, according to Calvin, “always [does] those things that please Him,” and “[Christ] could not cease to be the object of the Father's love, and yet he endured his wrath. For how could [Christ] reconcile the Father to us, if he had incurred his hatred and displeasure?”⁸ Notice a subtle difference in what

7. Despite several recent and rather awkward attempts to forge a genetic link between contemporary evangelical articulations of this doctrine and the Fathers and Medieval Schoolmen, proponents of the Penal Substitution theory ought to be cautious when looking for the origin of this theory not to look much beyond the Reformation, particularly John Calvin. See for example, S. Jeffery, M. Ovey, and A. Sach, *Pierced for Our Transgressions: Rediscovering the Glory of Penal Substitution* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007). Of course, this has been recently and convincingly challenged in Adonis Vidu, *Atonement, Law, and Justice: The Cross in Historical and Cultural Contexts* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2014), 1ff. For an excellent treatment of the atonement in the patristic era, see, Ben Myers, “The Patristic Atonement Model,” in *Locating Atonement: Explorations in Constructive Dogmatics*, ed. Oliver D. Crisp and Fred Sanders (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015), 71–88. For more discussion on the history of the development of the penal substitution model of atonement in the Reformed tradition, see William G. T. Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology*, ed. Alan W. Gomes, 3rd ed. (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed), 451–55; Henrich Heppe, *Reformed Dogmatics*, trans. G. T. Thomson (London: Collins, 1950), 475–79ff; Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, Vol. 3, *Sin and Salvation in Christ*, ed. John Bolt, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2006), 455ff.

8. John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul to the Galatians and Ephesians*, trans. by William Pringle (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2005), 91–92. Two things are worth some additional note here. First, Calvin's proposal that “he endured his wrath” should not be misunderstood as that he endured divine hatred. Wrath is not equivalent to hatred so much as it is equivalent to the act of retribution. And the moral law merely requires transgressors to be punished, not hated. There is a marked difference between offending a piece of legislation that says transgressors will be punished for this or that and offending the legislator himself. The legislation (i.e. the moral law) is that to which humanity is accountable. Second, later in John 10.15 and 17, John records Jesus as saying, “I lay down my life for the sheep. . . . For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life, that I may take it again,” and in John 17.4, John records Jesus saying, “Father, I glorified thee on earth, having accomplished the work which you gave me to do.”

Calvin says and what the defender of *Christus Odium* affirms. Calvin does say that Christ endures the Father's wrath, but he distinguishes this from Christ taking on the displeasure and hatred of the Father (subtle though this may be in this one quote the difference, if it can be maintained, is an important one). While Calvin might have been the first to defend against something like what we are calling *Christus Odium*, he was not the last.

Dutch theologian Herman Witsius (1636-1708), for example, also considered "whether Christ was abominable to God on account of the sins which he had taken upon himself."⁹ His answer is quite revealing and worth rehearsing. He says,

[I]t is so far from being true that by the voluntary susception of our sins the love of God to him was any how diminished that on the contrary he never pleased the Father more than when he showed himself obedient unto death even the death of the cross. For this is that excellent, that incomparable and almost incredible obedience which the Father recompensed with a suitable reward of ineffable glory.¹⁰

Taking our cues from voices in the tradition like Calvin and Witsius,¹¹ in our previous work we warned that unchecked doctrinal development—better still, doctrinal *devolvement*—can be like a government program; once the people have it—and be assured, some already do—it is hard for them to imagine life without it. Taking another cue from what Tom McCall refers to as "broken trinity theology," we then went on to inventory and exposit a series of Christologically specific problems that advocates of *Christus Odium* ought to seriously consider as they think through just what Christ's work on the cross accomplishes.¹² Here we rehearse six such questions for you to consider which direction your atonement theory is going:

9. Herman Witsius, *Conciliatory or Irenical Animadversions on the Controversies Agitated in Britain Under the Unhappy Names of Antinomians and Neonomians* (Glasgow: W. Lang, 1807), 39.

10. Witsius, *Conciliatory or Irenical Animadversions*, 44.

11. Consider also the Swiss-Italian theologian Francis Turretin (1623-87), for instance, who when he speaks of Christ's endurance of what he calls the "punishment of desertion," says, "But as to a participation of joy and felicity, God suspending for a little while the favorable presence of grace and the influx of consolation and happiness that he might be able to suffer all the punishment due to us (as to the *withdrawal of vision, not as a dissolution of union*; as to the want of the sense of *divine love*, intercepted by the sense of the divine wrath and vengeance resting upon him, not as to a real privation or extinction of it.) And, as the Scholastics say, as to the 'affection of advantage' that he might be destitute of the ineffable consolation and joy which arises from a sense of God's paternal love and the beatific vision of his countenance (Ps 16); but not as to the 'affection of righteousness' because he felt nothing inordinate in himself which would tend to desperation, impatience or blasphemy against God." Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, ed. James Dennison Jr., trans. George Musgrave Giger (Philipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1992-1997), 14, Q. II, VI.

12. For more on "broken trinity theology," see: Thomas H. McCall, *Forsaken: The Trinity and the Cross, and Why it Matters* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012).

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1. We all believe the Apostle Paul's assertions that "Christ became a curse for us" (Gal 3:13). *But*, do you believe that Christ was himself cursed or do you believe that humanity's curse terminated on Christ?¹³ There's a difference.
2. We all believe that "The Word was God" and that "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:1, 14). *But*, do we believe that God hated the *Word* enfleshed?
3. We all (hopefully) believe with the Chalcedonian tradition that the Son was "truly God and truly man." *But* do we believe that in making atonement, God somehow despised the divine nature of his beloved Son?
4. We all likely conceive of Christ's work in terms of his passive and active obedience, that is, his doing what the law required and his suffering on the cross. *But*, do we believe that there was a point in Christ's life when God went from loving him to hating him? What is more, does the Scripture testify to this change in God? If it does—we would be hard-pressed to identify where—when would that have been, precisely?¹⁴
5. We all believe that "Christ died for the ungodly" (Rom 5:6). *But*, do we believe that it is metaphysically possible for one of the persons of the Godhead to somehow fall into non-being? Did Jesus's divine nature cease to be or change in some way?
6. We all believe "The Lord was pleased to bruise him" (Isa 53:10). *But*, do we believe that God was delighted/pleased to hate his one and only Son?

As *Christus Odium* continues to gain ground, there is one question that we keep coming back to that far out-weights the others, namely, *will anyone notice?*

13. It is not the case, recalling one of the statements at the beginning of this paper, that "God cursed Jesus, *putting Him in a position of absolute, perfect hatred. God hated Him and desired to make Him nothing*," Chou, *Big Picture of God's Mission*. Instead, see John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul to the Galatians and Ephesians*, trans. William Pringle (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 91–2. Interestingly, Calvin himself goes on to point to John 8:29, which says that the Son, "always [does] those things that please Him," and argues that, "[Christ] could not cease to be the object of the Father's love, and yet he endured his wrath. For how could [Christ] reconcile the Father to us, if he had incurred his hatred and displeasure." While a subtle difference as we noted earlier, if this distinction can be consistently maintained between God's wrath toward Christ as distinct from the Father's hatred and derision, then that is an important distinction indeed.

14. How far have we come from understanding, like Machen, that "every event of his life was a part of his payment of the penalty of sin, and every event of his life was a part of that glorious keeping of the law of God by which he earned for his people the reward of eternal life," J. Gresham Machen, "The Active Obedience of Christ," *God Transcendent* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1982), 191.

II. Which Penalty, Whose Atonement?

In our previous work we argued that even if the latter is the sub-structure for the former, the *Christus Odium* variant is not synonymous with the Penal Substitution theory. But because the lines between the variant and standard view are being increasingly blurred, there are some distinctions between the two that require some disentanglement. Specifically, we have to answer two questions. First, “which penalty are we talking about?” And second, “who is atonement being made for?” By answering these two questions we will see yet another set of reasons that the *Christus Odium* variant is fatally flawed.

Now, before we get to these questions, we first ought to level-set our discussion. So, if Penal Substitution is your preferred position, here is what you are buying into, minimally speaking:

- A. Christ’s atonement is necessary to his redemptive work.
- B. Christ’s death is sufficient to assuage divine retribution for all humanity.
- C. Christ dies as a penal substitute for individual persons.
- D. Christ dies in order to absorb the retributive (penal) consequences of divine justice precipitated by human sin, being treated by God as if he were those individuals to whom the punishment were due (i.e., the mechanism).
- E. Christ’s death pays a debt of punishment.
- F. Christ’s death is a vicarious sacrifice.

Now that we are all (hopefully) on the same page, let’s tackle the first question. Which penalty are we talking about when Christ made atonement? First and foremost, it is a penalty that issues from the demands of retributive justice.¹⁵ That is, it is a penalty for punishment’s sake. This should be straightforward enough. But, it may come as a surprise to some here that, strictly speaking, this punitive demand has as its source the moral law. In other words, on a coherent picture of Penal Substitution, sin’s offense is leveled against the moral law and not God himself.¹⁶ And this is a

15. William Ames offers a helpful distinction when he talks about two issuances (that is, punishment and restitution) of “Corrective Justice” (correcting the injustice of persons). First, he says that “punishment is an act of corrective justice by which penalty is inflicted on a violator of justice. The end should be the amendment or restraint of the offender, peace and admonition to others and the preserving of justice and God’s honor” (2.16.307). “Restitution,” by contrast “is an accord of corrective justice in which a person is given possession of something of his own which was unjustly taken away. Hence an act which calls for restitution is against justice strictly so-called and not only against love” (2.16.307), Ames, *The Marrow of Theology*, ed. John Dykstra Eusden (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1968).

16. It is a curious thing that supposed exponents of Penal Substitution, like Jonathan Edwards, for example, argue that “sin is of such a nature that it wishes ill, and aims at ill, to God and men, but to God especially. *It strikes at God*; it would, if it could, procure his misery and death. It is but

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problem facing all persons collectively, not as individuals, as it is so often thought to be the case.

Ironically, exponents of Penal Substitution make much of the fact that divine retribution for offenses against God are *private* legal affairs—that is, they are offenses against God *himself* by individual, morally responsible creatures, in contrast to say, a *public* offense, which is an offense against a society. You might be saying to yourself: “Didn’t King David say that it was against God and God alone that he had sinned (Ps 51.4)? Doesn’t this therefore fly in the face of the assertion that debts of punishment are paid to the moral law?” It is true that David did indeed reckon his sin to be an offense against God. It is not true what that sin was. So, the question is not whether it transgresses the categories that we have laid out. The question is whether your theory is compatible with the testimony of Scripture. If God is just and the justifier and not the moral law, and if the Penal Substitution theory is answerable to the moral law and not to God, then it looks like we might need to re-think our theory. But, we have just now seen that this is a contradiction in terms. The offense of sin does not take anything intrinsic or essential to God away from God. He himself is not at a loss because of sin. If penal offenses are both criminal and punishable, they are not, strictly speaking, private or individual so much as public or societal affairs that are punishable by the authority of a law, not an individual lawmaker.

Think of the difference between district or civil court trial versus those tried in a criminal court. We’ve discussed this example before, but because this concept of public versus private offenses and their relation to the Penal Substitution theory continues to trip people up, it is worth rehearsing once again. In a district court, someone might be sued, for example, for a breach of contract. Strictly speaking, this is not a *criminal* offense. This is a personal (and therefore private) offense—one person versus another (even another individual group, as in a class action lawsuit)—that is resolved by the *offending* party restoring or making reparation for the *offended* party. Criminal courts, by contrast, try criminal offenders. If someone is on trial for first degree murder, say, that person’s offense is, again, strictly speaking, not against the one they killed but against the laws of the society to which both parties have presumably assented and which demand that murderers pay a debt of punishment to *society* upon the commitment of such a crime; a debt of punishment that is paid

suitable that with what measure it meets, it should be measured to it again. ’Tis but suitable that men should reap what they sow, and that the reward of *every man’s hands should be given him*” (Jonathan Edwards, “The Necessity of Satisfaction” 1731, Work of Jonathan Edwards collection, 18:436). We say this is curious because, Edwards also goes on to claim that, “’tis requisite that sin should be punished, as punishment is deserved and just, therefore the *justice of God obliges him to punish sin*: for it belongs to God as the supreme Rector of the universality of things, to maintain order and decorum in his kingdom, and to see to it that decency and right takes place at all times, and in all cases. *That perfection of his nature whereby he is disposed to this, is his justice; and therefore, his justice naturally disposes him to punish sin as it deserves*. The holiness of God, which is the infinite opposition of his nature to sin, naturally and necessarily disposes him to punish sin. Edwards, “Necessity of Satisfaction,” 18:437 (emphasis added).

by incarceration or in some states, death. Notice that the intention of this debt of punishment that a murderer faces is not restorative. That is, nothing is truly restored to the family who loses a loved one. The criminal (rather than the civil) court, and the laws that it upholds, determine guilt and execute punishment. In this way, murder, or any such criminal offense, is a public matter between the murderer and the society (and the laws they agree to uphold) at large, not between the murderer and the one that was murdered. Criminal proceedings carry no legal freight in a civil courtroom. If someone is convicted of fraud, they pay damages to the one defrauded, but no one who is convicted of fraud is executed as a penal consequence of civil proceeding.

So, what does all this mean? Well, it means that if you are a Penal Substitution theorist, and you wish to make a coherent case for your theory, you ought to be making a case that people are accountable to the moral law.¹⁷ By limiting the scope of what Christ's atoning work accomplishes to the payment of a debt of punishment, Penal Substitution theorists limit the scope of the demands of the larger economy of divine justice. This explains retributive justice is virtually the only category of justice about which they have anything to say. Accordingly, Christ suffers a penalty, which means there must be a law by which to measure offenses; Christ suffers a loss of some sort instead of humanity suffering a loss; sin's offense is a criminal offense and therefore Christ suffers because he is counted as a criminal; if he is counted as a criminal and suffers loss, and he pays a debt of punishment on behalf of others, then, the debt he is paying is actually not for a private offense against God, requiring that something be restored to God. *Nothing is restored* to God (as in the examples given above concerning public versus private debts), in fact, on the Penal Substitution theory.¹⁸ Penal Substitution seems only to make provision for God to restore righteousness to humanity, leaving God dishonored and his Son bruised (as the prophet Isaiah says) and all of this being of no apparent benefit to himself.

If sin's offense is punishable (and thus criminal) it is not, strictly speaking, a private or individual offense against another individual, so much as it is a public or societal offense that is punishable by the authority of a system of laws—in this case, divine laws—and not an individual lawmaker (i.e., God). Murder, for example,

17. This begs some questions about the notion of the "suitable equivalent" argument. Based on the idea of a "status principle," Penal Substitution theorists argue that because God's glory is of infinite worth, and because sin is an offense against God, sin must be an infinite offense. But, if sin's offense is against the moral law, and God is not numerically identical to the moral law, can the moral law be said to be of infinite worth such that Christ's sacrifice must be of infinite worth. Or can what Christ offers to offset the demands of the moral law be a "suitable equivalent," and thus not a sacrifice of infinite worth?

18. No doubt, some will find the assertion that on Penal Substitution nothing is restored to God objectionable. However, the burden of proof is on advocates of this view, who limit Christ's atoning work to solving a purely retributive justice problem to show how Christ's sacrifice does anything *for* God. The mechanism itself does nothing for God, but one might argue that the results of what is effected in Christ's death does something for God.

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is not an offense against the one being murdered, strictly speaking.¹⁹ Nor is it an offense, directly or primarily, against the lawmaker who legislated that murder is a punishable offense. Murder is an offense against a law, primarily as discussed above, that says murder is wrong, and murderers are punished because they break the law.²⁰ This is not an insignificant detail.²¹ Indeed, this is the chief distinguishing detail that we most wish to draw attention to. In fact, the distinction that we raised above is an important one for making amends regarding the public nature of justice, which is a common distinction assumed in lawful cases. Hence, it is important that those who are conflating the public and private notions of justice concerning God spell out why they are doing so and how it is that Christ's atoning work satisfies the public aspect of justice and how that immediately and necessarily satisfies private offenses. For, by drawing attention to it, we effectively undercut (yet again) the idea that the Son was hated by God. How do we do this? We do this because the built-in mechanism of this theory of atonement precludes that God's anger is even involved in the payment of a debt of punishment. The moral law is not an agent that can magically become angry.²² The moral law is the expression of what the tradition calls, God's "relative rectitude." It is that by which God manifests the righteousness of his self-love, makes his moral perfection and holiness comprehensible to humanity, and threatens those who despise his general benevolence toward and authority over his rational creatures.²³ It is the

19. It is important to make some distinctions. Of course, it is true to say that there is an offense against persons when individuals harm others. That said, there is something fundamental to that which needs satisfying. The debt is to the moral law for which God establishes in providentially governing the world. To say that what is primarily satisfied is the payment from individuals to other individuals, that is, as a private affair, presumes modern sensibilities concerning sins, following Immanuel Kant. In other words, a contributing cause in the development of Christus Odium is this modern notion of sin in the hands of neo-Calvinists.

20. We need to say something like: It might be reasoned that murder is an offense against God himself because murder is the destruction of the divine image in which the Scripture says humanity is made. However, the whole idea of murder is predicated upon the issuance of a law that says murdering another human is something for which murderers will be held criminally liable. This is a problem for Penal Substitution, in particular, because while the Scriptures confirm that sin is an offense against God, the theory confirms—however much it goes misunderstood—that sin is an offense against the moral law.

21. For further details, see our work in Farris and Hamilton, "Atonement in the Reformed Tradition: A Plurality of Orthodoxy?" (forthcoming).

22. For a scriptural example of the distinction between laws, legislators, and agency, see S. Mark Hamilton "Jonathan Edwards, Anselmic Satisfaction, and God's Moral Government," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 17.1 (January 2015): 1–22.

23. For example, according to Edwards, "[The moral law] was the grand rule given to Adam; and the command of not eating the forbidden fruit was only given to try whether he would keep God's commands or no, to try whether he would be obedient to the law of nature, or moral law. As the moral law was the grand law given to the children of Israel in the wilderness, and is often called *THE LAW*, and is spoken of as *THE LAW* given to them, and the time of the giving of the Ten Commands is spoken of as the time of the giving the law, as if that had been the whole of the law given—and indeed, it was virtually so—and all those ceremonial laws that were added were only for the trial of their obedience to the great rules of this law, as particularly 'thou shalt have no other gods before me,' etc.: it was to try whether they would keep that moral law, the rules of which

moral law that is the measure of sin's offense, and it is to the moral law that man owes its debt of punishment. The moral law is a set of statutes whose requirements for paying a debt of punishment are not subject to incitements of anger. And this brings us to our second point.

A debt of punishment is quite different than a simple debt. It is astonishing just how many purveyors of this theory mishandle this distinction. Of course, Penal Substitution says that Christ paid a debt, but not just any kind of debt. Christ paid a debt of punishment.²⁴ Were it a simple debt, the creditor—the one to whom the debt is owed—should not incur a loss in the affair. If you buy a house, say, and you cannot pay your mortgage debt to the bank, the bank will take your house (and your investment with it). The bank will not suffer loss if things go south; they will take your house in order to be made whole. This is pretty straightforward. This is *not* what is going on where debts of punishment are concerned. Where debts of punishment are concerned, the *debtor* incurs the loss irrespective of the creditor being made whole.²⁵ This would be like saying that the bank has no interest in obtaining your house as of your inability to pay the note, the result of which is foreclosure; they only want you out on your duff (i.e., to suffer loss) whether the bank is made whole by its resale or not.²⁶

Bringing this back to the atonement, Penal Substitution theorists should be quite careful to argue that humanity owes a debt of punishment, that is, a debt for an offense that requires humanity (the debtor) suffer loss (i.e., be punished). The loss to be suffered by humanity for not being able to pay this debt is a loss of (spiritual) life. Accordingly, Christ pays this debt of punishment, so it is said, by absorbing the penalty that is charged to individual sinners by acting as their representative—Penal

required that they should love God with all their heart, with all their souls, and with all their mind, and all their strength, and regard his authority and glory, and submit themselves wholly to him, and yield themselves up to him, and obey and serve him as their God" ("Miscellanies" n. 884, *WJE* 20:144; see also "Blank Bible," *WJE* 24:702, 1125).

24. According to Francis Turretin, "The satisfaction here discussed, is not taken widely for a simple and indiscriminate reparation of injury (as when one purges and excuses himself to him who has suffered injury). Rather it is taken strictly for the payment of a debt, with which is paid what another owes and with which he satisfies the creditor or judge who requires the *debt of punishment*. . . . The satisfaction exacted by the justice of God principally demanded two things: 1) that it should be paid by the same nature which had sinned; 2) that nevertheless it should be of an infinite value and worth to take away the infinite demerit of sin" Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, ed. James Dennison Jr., trans. George Musgrave Giger (Philipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1992–1997), 2.14.1, 3, 7, 418, 421 (emphasis added).

25. David Lewis argues that, "In the case of a debt, what is required is that the *creditor* shall not suffer a loss. . . . Whereas in the case of a debt of punishment what is required is that the *debtor* shall suffer a loss" Lewis, "Do We Believe in Penal Substitution?" in *A Reader in Contemporary Philosophical Theology*, ed. Oliver D. Crisp (New York: T & T Clark, 2009), 329 (emphasis added).

26. For the sake of clarity, this is not what is going on when a bank forecloses on someone's property. There is not a punitive, but rather a commutative, angle in mortgage lending. For a more personal analogue than that of a house-deal gone wrong, see our "Capone Analogy" in Farris and Hamilton, "The Logic of Reparation: Contemporary Restitution Models of Atonement, Divine Justice, and Somatic Death," *Irish Theological Quarterly* 83, no 1 (Feb 2018): 62–77.

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Substitution does nothing toward restoring anything to God.²⁷ Again, what might come as a surprise to some is that the Penal Substitution theory is surprisingly anthropocentric in terms of its chief goal, in that the problem facing sinners is *not* a matter of their failed effort to restore anything to God, so much as it is with his law requiring that law-breakers suffer a penalty. What Christ is doing as penal substitute when he dies is, at least on a consistent understanding of the theory, solving a specifically punitive problem that hangs over the heads of humanity. This theory is not doing anything *for* God. The work of Christ on the Penal Substitution theory is to suffer loss by paying humanity's debt of punishment to the retributive justice demanded by the moral law. To owe God a debt of any other sort is to owe God for something that requires that God (the creditor) not suffer loss. So, how do this help us answer the question: "who is atonement being made for?" To put it differently, if humanity's debt of punishment is owed to the moral law and not to God, how can Christus Odium theorists say that Christ is satisfying the debt as if he is assuaging the holy hatred of God? To put it bluntly, they cannot. Again, this is because the moral law is not an agent that can get angry with anyone and the debt of punishment is owed to the moral law.

Concluding Thoughts

After rehearsing some of the reasons that we are even talking about Christus Odium today, we launched into some theological clarification in hopes that Penal Substitution theorists would not only come to terms with what they are actually committed to, but would see just how dangerous a piece of theology Christus Odium is to the evangelical Church. Put into numbered theses, this is what we warned against:

- A. Christ suffered a penalty for sins.
- B. The penalty for sins is a demand of the moral law.
- C. The moral law has no power of agency to become angered.
- D. Christ cannot be hated by the law.
- E. Christ was not hated by God.

As we have noted, Christus Odium overstresses certain categories within the structure of the Penal Substitution theory of atonement. And, it presses the boundaries of both

27. Restoring anything to God (or his moral law) is the work of a theory of atonement that we have proposed elsewhere, contra Penal Substitution. For more on such a theory, see Farris and Hamilton, "Reparative Substitution and the Efficacy Objection: Toward a Modified Satisfaction theory of Atonement," *Perichoresis* 15, no. 3 (2017): 98–111 and for a more recent and condensed sketch of this theory, see <http://blogos.wp.st-andrews.ac.uk/2018/09/11/why-so-dissatisfied-with-satisfaction-by-joshua-r-farris-and-mark-hamilton/>.

our doctrine of God and our doctrine Christ beyond that of orthodox teaching. Our consistent question to evangelicals is: Is *this* the doctrinal inheritance in the Reformed tradition for which we derive spiritual nourishment? Is believing *this* how you enjoy God? We have shown that there are not insignificant problems with this variant of Penal Substitution ones for which once they are clear cannot be taken seriously. While Christus Odium is a variant of penal substitution atonement, it is unclear to us that it is, in fact, the best or most likely true variant of the doctrine. With that in mind, let us press advocates of Penal Substitution to think more carefully about their own constructions of the doctrine and the doctrinal inheritance they have received.

The worries facing what we think are standard accounts of Penal Substitution notwithstanding, if this is the new evangelistic message, we no longer have good news; not when the Son is praised for being the object of the Father's derision. By our lights, the defender of Penal Substitution must reject this Christus Odium variant or—if odium is what Penal substitution actually is—consider taking up an alternative theory of the atonement altogether.

Christus Odium certainly preaches well when you have a pastor hungry to see sin dealt with appropriately and a congregation that could use a strong dose of holy fear. Maybe you thought before now that Christ's assumption of the full fury of God's wrath was simply Penal Substitution atonement. Maybe you have heard of Penal Substitution in various forms, but thought nothing of it. The nuances of the theory slipped by undetected. But, is this how we wish to see the gospel preached? Is it, in fact, the gospel itself as some would have you believe?

One might think that a way to salvage Christus Odium is to utilize analogical language in how we think about Divine attributes. In theological language, there are three ways to make sense of propositions that apply to God and his creatures, either analogically, equivocally, or univocally. The doctrine of analogy, as challenging as it is to define, is often used as a magic wand to make sense of complicated theology. At times, the doctrine of analogy is used as an odd route of justifying theological propositions that seem incompatible. In this case, this seems like a rather odd route to salvage an already bizarre doctrine. Can we really say that there is something adequate in conveying that God truly poured out his hate on the Son? *Why even go there?*

A Less Odious Atonement Requires a More Classical God: Engaging Farris and Hamilton on Christus Odium

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Abstract: Joshua Farris and Mark Hamilton have leveled a serious critique of the so-called Christus Odium variant of Penal Substitution in their article “This is My Beloved Son Whom I Hate?” *JBTS* (2018), wherein the Son is said to satisfy not only the justice, but specifically the hate of the Father. Farris and Hamilton raise a series of exegetical, dogmatic, and pastoral problems with it—and by extension raise issues with more modest forms of PSA. In this paper, I examine what form the doctrine might take in the context of a classical doctrine of God. First, I attempt to render an orthodox version by retrieving impassibility and analogy to reframe divine hate. I then deploy the doctrines of simplicity, inseparable operations, appropriations, and a Chalcedonian Christology to coordinate the relationship of Father and Son in the activity of satisfying that hate. If my proposal works—renders the Odium less odious—then it will show the same doctrine of God will preserve more modest versions of penal substitution from Farris and Hamilton’s critiques as well.

Key Words: atonement, analogy, impassibility, penal substitution, divine hate, inseparable operations.

Joshua Farris and Mark Hamilton have provoked this symposium by raising important questions around recent developments in Evangelical atonement theology. In their paper, “This is my Beloved Son Whom I Hate?” they single out a deleterious dogmatic development of the penal substitutionary understanding of Christ’s atoning work in Evangelical Theology (henceforth “PSA”). They have dubbed it the “Christus Odium” variant.¹ On this view, not only does the Son bear the judgment, punishment, and wrath of God on the cross, he must suffer the “hate” of the Father. On what they take to be the standard core of the doctrine, a PSA advocate affirms these 6 basic propositions:

1. Joshua R. Farris and S. Mark Hamilton, “This is My Beloved Son, Whom I Hate? A Critique of the Christus Odium Variant of Penal Substitution,” *Journal of Biblical and Theological Studies* 3, no. 2 (2018): 271–86.

1. Christ's atonement is necessary to his redemptive work.
2. Christ's death is sufficient to assuage divine retribution for all humanity.
3. Christ dies as a penal substitute for individual persons.
4. Christ is punished in our place. (One could revisit the theory and modify it by saying that Christ dies in order to absorb the retributive [penal] consequences of divine justice precipitated by human sin, being treated by God as if he were those individuals to whom the punishment were due) (i.e. the mechanism).
5. Christ's death pays a debt of punishment.
6. Christ's death is a vicarious sacrifice.²

They argue the Christus Odium variant goes further, however. Looking to popular theologians and other theological writers, we hear statements like, "God chose to violate His Son in our place. The Son stared into the mocking eyes of God; He heard the laughter of the Father's derision and felt Him depart in disgust. . . . In a mysterious instant, the Father who loved the Son from all eternity turned from Him in hatred. The Son became odious to the Father."³ Or more tamely, "If you see Jesus losing the infinite love of the Father, out of his infinite love for you, it will melt your hardness."⁴ Examining a few such statements, Farris and Hamilton have carefully synthesized and formulated four more propositions that they see Christus Odium advocates adding to the basic 6:

7. The demands of divine retributive justice \approx the exercise of divine wrath \approx the divine exhibition and human experience of divine hatred.
8. Paying the debt to retributive justice, the Son is (temporarily) hated by the Father.
9. The Son of God died on the cross, which was motivated by Fatherly hate.
10. The object of the atonement is Divine hatred.⁵

Farris and Hamilton have charged at length that this model suffers from a bevy of exegetical, doctrinal, and pastoral issues.

2. Farris and Hamilton, "My Beloved Son," 275.

3. Dan B. Allender and Tremper Longman, *In the Cry of the Soul: How Our Emotions Reveal Our Deepest Questions About God* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2015), 184–85 cited also on 272. It is worth registering that as a *theological* development, it should be clear that this is not some conscious program by theologians, but is a tendency being noted and systematized by Farris and Hamilton, culled to some degree from a grab-bag of theological writers, writing mostly in non-dogmatic contexts.

4. Timothy Keller, "If you see Jesus losing the infinite love of the father out of His infinite love for you, it will melt your hardness," Facebook, July 25, 2017, quoted in Mark Jones, "Tim Keller, the Cross, and the Love of God," The Calvinist International, July 27, 2017, <https://calvinistinternational.com/2017/07/27/tim-keller-the-cross-and-the-love-of-god/>.

5. Farris and Hamilton, "My Beloved Son," 276.

In this article, I will not be responding to Farris and Hamilton's extensive criticisms point by point, nor offering a counter-critique their own positive proposal for atonement theology. Instead, I will be mounting something of an apology of the Christus Odium view, not as my own, but rather in role of a public defender, assigned to a dubious defendant. In that role, I want to briefly explore the way a moderating pressure is exerted on this model when we set it within the context of the classical doctrine of God affirmed by the Western tradition. Consider this the sort of theological "what if" game played by Oliver Crisp in several chapters of his *Deviant Calvinism*, whereby we work through positions we do not hold as an exercise in charitable exposition, hoping to deepen our analysis in the process.⁶ To that end, I will first examine the issue of God's odium by reframing it in light of the doctrines of impassibility and analogy, as well as seeking to establish a scriptural pattern of identification of God's hate with God's retributive justice. Second, I will show the way a retrieval of the doctrines of simplicity, inseparable operations, appropriations, and the communication of operations can answer our trinitarian and Christological concerns. My aim is two-fold. First, by rendering the so-called Christus Odium view a bit less odious, I want to shore up the defenses around the more moderate versions of PSA, especially in those places where Farris and Hamilton's challenges might be similarly applied. Take it as an *a fortiori* defense of more moderate defendants, which seems appropriate as Farris and Hamilton's argument is something of a thin end of the wedge, laying the groundwork for a future prosecution. Second, my conviction is that "an account of God's atoning work in Christ will only be as convincing . . . as its operative doctrine of God."⁷ In which case, I hope the argument functions as an invitation to those holding to any form of PSA of the need to recover a classical doctrine of God.

What Does It Mean for God to Hate? A Classical Approach

According to the Scriptures, it is clear that the Lord does, indeed, hate some things: the practices of the pagans (Deut 12:31), their idols (Deut 16:22), robbery and wrongdoing, the opposite of justice, which he loves (Isa 61:8), the pride of Jacob and his strongholds (Amos 6:8), even poor Esau is hated, while Jacob is loved (Rom 9). Our initial question, then, is not whether God hates, but what does it mean for God to hate? Having a clear definition of terms seems crucial to understanding the claim that on the cross, God hated the Son, and how that ought to be distinguished from his

6. Oliver D. Crisp, *Deviant Calvinism: Broadening Reformed Theology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2014). I think especially of his treatment of Eternal justification and Libertarian Calvinism as illuminating theological thought experiments with positions he admittedly does not affirm.

7. Ken Oakes, "The Divine Perfections and the Economy: The Atonement," in *Theological Theology: Essays in Honor of John Webster*, ed. R. David Nelson, Darren Sarrisky, and Justin Stratis (New York, NY: Bloomsbury, 2015), 243.

wrath and retributive justice. This immediately raises the issue of divine emotions, or rather, with the tradition, divine affections.

On a more classical view developed by the Western tradition and summarized by that most excellent compendium of Christian Doctrine, the Westminster Shorter Catechism, God is “a Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth.”⁸ God’s unchangeability, or immutability, has typically included his impassibility as a corollary.⁹ On this classic understanding, Israel’s God is not subject to passions—irrational movements of the mind or will, overwhelming his rational judgment of persons, situations, and so forth. This does not mean he is “emotionless” in the modern sense, but rather that he has no passive passions. He does have active *affections*, which are rational and moral valuations of persons and states of affairs consistent with the perfection of his own unchanging knowledge, being, and character.¹⁰ Of course, our knowledge of such affections is colored by our own finite and fallen faculties. We cannot know God in himself of ourselves and so as Bavinck instructs us, “God has to come down to the level of his creatures and accommodate to their powers of comprehension.”¹¹ In divine revelation in nature and especially Scripture, the Infinite God makes himself known by taking up the finite conceptualities, experiences, and language of creatures in order to address them.¹² From thence, it follows that our knowledge of him is accommodated as well as analogical—possessing a similarity within an even greater dissimilarity, given God’s infinity.¹³ And this includes our knowledge of

8. “Probably the best definition of God ever penned by man,” according to the unbiased opinion of Presbyterian theologian Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology, Volume 1: Theology* (repr. 1979; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1871), 367. On the definitional issue, contemporary philosopher of religion Brian Leftow says most “of classical theism’s concept of God unfolds from the claim that is the ultimate reality,” which that implies he is a *se*, simple, immaterial, not spatially extended, without accidents, immutable, impassible, eternal, necessary, omnipresent, and in possession of a perfect intellect, will, power, and goodness. Leftow, “God, concepts of,” in *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Taylor and Francis, 1998), accessed April 1, 2020, <https://www.rep.routledge.com/articles/thematic/god-concepts-of/v-1/sections/classical-theism>

9. “It should . . . be noted that divine impassibility is a logical consequence of divine immutability. If God is ontologically unchangeable, then, by definition, he is equally ontologically impassible, for to undergo inner emotional changes of state would render him ontologically mutable.” Thomas J. Weinandy, *Does God Suffer?* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2000), 38n22.

10. On the distinction between affections and passions, see Anastasia Scrutton, “Emotion in Augustine of Hippo and Thomas Aquinas: A Way Forward for the Impassibility Debate?” *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 7, no. 2 (April 2005), 169–177.

11. Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, vol. 2, *God and Creation*, ed. John Bolt, trans. John Vriend. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2004), 110.

12. “For who even of slight intelligence does not understand that, as nurses commonly do with infants, God is wont in a measure to ‘lisp’ in speaking to us? Thus such forms of speaking do not so much express clearly what God is like as accommodate the knowledge of him to our slight capacity. To do this he must descend far beneath his loftiness.” John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), 1.13.1, page 121.

13. “Because between the Creator and the creature there cannot be a likeness so great that

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his affective life. This is all rather intuitive. As Tertullian reminds the Marcionites who object to God's wrath as an irrational passion, we must not "from things human form conjectures about things divine," but instead "[d]istinguish the substances, and assign to each its own sensations, as diverse as the substances demand." Our thoughts about God's wrath, and arguably, his hate, must be disciplined not by their corrupt form found in man's corrupt substance, but rather taken in a mode which is proper to the "incorruptibility of the divine substance."¹⁴ In other words, if we say God is angry, we have to say he "is angry after his own divine fashion" and not import sin or finitude into it.¹⁵ Likewise, with his hate.

The Post-Reformation Reformed Scholastics are a good place to look for reflection on Scriptural depictions of divine hate carried out under such strictures. Taking up the *odio dei*, Benedict Pictet says it is an affection that "denotes 1) the disapprobation of sin, 2) the purpose of punishing the sinner, 3) a withholding of those blessings that flow from his goodness."¹⁶ Edward Leigh says it is "an act of the Divine will, declining, disapproving, and punishing of evil."¹⁷ Importantly, this is similar to James Ussher's understanding of the affection of wrath or anger when attributed to God in Scripture. He says that it is:

Not any passion, perturbation, or trouble of the mind as it is in us, but this word Anger when it is attributed to God in the Scriptures signifieth three things.

[1] First, a most certain and just decree in God to punish and avenge such injuries as are offered to himself, and to his Church; and so it is understood, John 3. 36. Rom. 1. 18.

[2] Secondly, the threatening these punishments and revenges, as in Psal. 6. 1. Hos. 11. 9. Jonah 2. 9.

[3] Thirdly, the punishments themselves, which God doth execute upon ungodly men, and these are the effects of his anger, or of his decree to punish them; so it is taken in Rom. 2. 5. Mat. 3. 7. Eph. 5. 6.¹⁸

the unlikeness is not greater." *Lateran Council IV*, Canon 2, last revised January 20, 2021, <https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/basis/latran4.asp>

14. Tertullian, *The Five Books Against Marcion*, trans. Marc Evans, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972), Bk. 2, ch. 16, 131, http://www.tertullian.org/articles/evans_marc/evans_marc_06book2_eng.htm

15. Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Remythologizing Theology: Divine Action, Passion, and Authorship* (Cambridge University Press, 2010), 403.

16. Benedict Pictet, *Theologie Chrétienne*, II.vii.8, cited in Richard Muller, *Post-Reformation, Reformed Dogmatics: The Rise and Development of Reformed Orthodoxy, ca. 1520 to ca. 1725*, vol. 3, *The Divine Essence and Attribute* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2003), 586.

17. Edward Leigh, *A Treatise of Divinity* (London, 1646), II.viii; cited in Muller, *Post-Reformation*, 586.

18. James Ussher, *A Body of Divinity: Or, the Sum and Substance of Christian Religion*, 8th ed.

These definitions are typical. For the scholastics, then, to speak of the wrath or hate of God is to speak of God's opposition to sin, his will to execute judgment, and the enactment of punishment itself. Indeed, commenting on Habakkuk 1:13 ("thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity"), John Owen directly equates the two, saying the "prophet here ascribes to God the greatest detestation, and such an immortal hatred of sin that he cannot look upon it, but, with a wrathful aversion of his countenance, abominates and dooms it to punishment."¹⁹ Hate seems to be simply an intensification of wrath, a more vehement form of expressing God's steady, constant, unchanging opposition to sin. Importantly, they are corollary affections to God's justice and holiness and should be in no way taken as passions disturbing the divine blessedness or immutability—God does not "move" from hate to love, in that sense, even in his exercise of wrath.²⁰ Another way of putting it is that for the Post-Reformation Scholastics, the language of wrath and hate are analogical

(London: 1702), 63.

19. John Owen, *A Dissertation on Divine Justice, Or The Claims of Vindictory Justice Asserted* (London: L.J. Higham & J. Murgatroyd, 1780), 3.1, page 39. Having written the bulk of the paper, I found this pertinent treatment by Petrus van Mastricht confirming this sort of analysis relating hate and wrath as well as the analogical interpretation given this affection: "Yet there is . . . also in God a hatred or aversion, first to sinners (Rom. 9:13), then to sin (Ps. 5:4–5). Its affection is nothing but an adverse will (Hab. 1:13; Isa. 1:15), and its effective operation, withdrawal (Isa. 59:2), punishment (Ps. 5:5–6), and all that commonly flows from the affection of hatred in men, but without disturbance or change in God. Therefore, it considers the sinner, and him alone, especially the obstinate sinner, inasmuch as in his torment and destruction, God is said to rejoice (Deut. 28:63; Prov. 1:26). It considers him on account of sin alone, because sin is repugnant to God's nature, his law, his honor (Ps. 45:7). And thus, finally, it considers the sinner to this end, to torment him (1) in general, by all his judgments (Deut. 28:15), all the way to the end (Ps. 11:5–6); in specific, (2) by horrors of conscience (Prov. 17:22); (3) by every sort of death (Gen. 3:3; Rom. 5:14); indeed (4) by the cursed death that fell on his own Son (Gal. 3:13; Rom. 8:32); and finally, (5) by the eternal condemnation of the reprobate sinner himself (Heb. 10:26–27). But because hatred in God concerns his avenging justice, in this topic it will suffice to have touched upon it." van Mastricht, *Theoretical-Practical Theology, Volume 2: Faith in the Triune God*, trans. Todd M Rester and Michael T. Spangler, ed. Joel R. Beeke, (Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage Books, 2019), 1.2.17.XI, page 352.

20. Owen confirms this in saying, "There is nothing that God hates but sin; and because of sin only other things are liable to his hatred. In what sense passions and affections are ascribed to God, and what he would have us to understand by such a description of his nature and attributes, is known to everybody. But of all the affections of human nature, hatred is the most restless and turbulent, and to the person who is under its influence, and who can neither divest himself of it nor give a satisfactory vent to its motions, the most tormenting and vexatious; for as it takes its rise from a disagreement with and dislike of its object, so that its object is always viewed as repugnant and offensive, no wonder that it should rouse the most vehement commotions and bitterest sensations. But God, who enjoys eternal and infinite happiness and glory, as he is far removed from any such perturbations, and placed far beyond all variableness or shadow of change, would not assume this affection so often, for our instruction, unless he meant clearly to point out to us this supreme, immutable, and constant purpose of punishing sin, — as that monster whose property it is to be the object of God's hatred, that is, of the hatred of infinite goodness, — to be natural and essential to him." Owen, *Dissertation*, IV.III, pages 122–23. For a discussion of the same issues in Calvin, see Steven J. Duby, "The Cross and the Fullness of God: Clarifying the Meaning of Divine Wrath in Penal Substitution," *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology* 29, no. 2 (2011): 165–76.

ways of speaking of the retributive dimension of God's justice in an affective register, as a matter of his will, inclination, and action connected to his moral character. It is to speak to the personal involvement of God in his justice and to rule out any reification of a divine law or an enactment of divine justice divorced from the will and character God. To satisfy the hatred of God is to satisfy his wrath, which is an affective way of speaking about the satisfaction of his justice—at least for *some* of the post-Reformation scholastics.

Of course, there is question about whether any of this is Scriptural. Farris and Hamilton have called into question the formula “The demands of divine retributive justice \approx the exercise of divine wrath \approx the divine exhibition and human experience of divine hatred.”²¹ Well, it seems there is at least a relationship between the demands of retributive justice and the exercise of divine wrath in Scripture. Consider the LORD's words by the mouth of Ezekiel:

Therefore thus says the Lord God: Because you are more turbulent than the nations that are all around you, and have not walked in my status or obeyed by my rules, and have not even acted according to the rules of the nations that are all around you, therefore thus says the Lord God: Behold, I, even I, am against you. And I will execute judgments in your midst in the sight of the nations... Thus shall my anger spend itself, and I will vent my fury upon them and satisfy myself. And they shall know that I am the LORD—that I have spoke in my jealousy—when I spend my fury upon them. (5:7-8, 13)

‘The end is now upon you,
and I will unleash my anger against you.
I will judge you according to your conduct
and repay you for all your detestable practices.
I will not look on you with pity;
I will not spare you.
I will surely repay you for your conduct
and for the detestable practices among you. (7:3-4)

So I will pour out my wrath on them and consume them with my fiery anger, bringing down on their own heads all they have done, declares the Sovereign Lord. (22:31)

21. “What all this means is that at some point the idea of Christ's paying a debt of punishment for sin metastasized into the idea that being liable to punishment is equivalent to a payment of a debt owed to violent divine anger for sin” (Farris and Hamilton, “My Beloved Son,” 279). Curiously, as carefully as everything else is outlined, I could not actually find any place where they properly define God's wrath, anger, or retributive justice so as to clearly delineate these realities in such a way as to rule out any close identification.

I will carry out great vengeance on them and punish them in my wrath. Then they will know that I am the Lord, when I take vengeance on them. (25:17)

In Ezekiel, then, there is a clear conceptual and linguistic collocation of the judgment and punishment of God with the wrath and anger of God. For God to punish and judge sin is for him to execute, expend, and pour out his wrath and anger.²² The operation of judgment is the operation of wrath.²³ They are two sides of the same coin, speaking of the same reality in a different idiom. Or rather, they are dimensions of the same, simple reality.²⁴ It is not hard to find this same, rough, equation throughout the prophets and Scripture as a whole. More directly pertinent to our argument, we might turn to Paul, for whom (on a traditional, Reformed reading of Romans 3:23-26) Christ is set forth as a “propitiation” (v. 25), with its relation to the notion of “appeasing” God’s wrath (1:18; 2:5, 8; 3:5), as a solution to the problem of God’s justice.²⁵ The passage is shot through with legal terminology and a legal logic whereby God can be just and the justifier of the ungodly, having properly (i.e., justly,

22. Commenting on Ezekiel 5:13, Daniel I. Block notes that “[t]here powerful phrases are strung together to portray a deity totally consumed by fury and determined to vent his anger in full measure.” There is a clear link between giving vent to his fury and Yahweh having been “appeased.” This is no purposeless venting of divine displeasure, however, but one explicitly linked to Israel’s idolatrous disobedience. It is a just desert. Daniel I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel, Chapters 1–24*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1997), 210–11.

23. Using a different philosophical framework, Kevin Kinghorn and Stephen Travis have recently argued that wrath should be construed as “a pattern of action” in ways that recall scholastic language about the operation of wrath. See Kinghorn and Travis, *But What About God’s Wrath? The Compelling Story of Divine Anger* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2019), 20.

24. For a fuller, contemporary account rooting God’s wrath in God’s righteousness, see Jeremy J. Wynne, *Wrath Among the Perfections of God’s Life* (London: T & T Clark, 2010).

25. For instance, Charles Hodge, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (Philadelphia: William S. Martin, 1851), 74–85.

punitively) dealt with sin in the death of Christ.²⁶ To suffer the justice of God is to suffer the wrath of God and vice versa.²⁷

26. It is worth noting that closer attention to the exegesis of someone like Hodge begins to form a partial answer Farris and Hamilton's rather odd charge that penal substitution (of whatever sort, both odious and otherwise) is "anthropocentric in terms of its chief goal," insofar as it "does nothing toward restoring anything to God." At least, by comparison with their own reparative model which sees Christ satisfying God's rectoral justice, repairing the breach against his own honor through his obedient, supererogatory work of self-offering (Joshua Farris and Mark Hamilton, "Which Penalty? Whose Atonement? Revisiting Christus Odium," Paper presented at the 71st Annual Meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society, San Diego, CA, November 2019). This remark misses the mark in a number of ways. First, it seems to confuse the atonement's chief, immediate beneficiary (humanity receiving pardon), with the atonement's chief goal (God receiving glory). Second, as Hodge notes, while "the death of Christ answers a great number of infinitely important ends in the government of God," such as the manifestation of God's wisdom, reconciliation between Jew and Gentile, and so forth, but "the end here specially mentioned" is a radically theo-centric one, which is "to declare his righteousness" (*Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 79). Because in the past, he had "in his divine forbearance passed over former sins" (3:25), Hodge says it "became necessary that there should be this exhibition, because God had overlooked and pardoned sin from the beginning" but now in the present moment we see "the vindication of the character of God in passing by former sins, and in passing by them now" through their forgiveness (80). Even more recently, N. T. Wright, *The Letter to the Romans*, The New Interpreter Bible Commentary, vol. 10 (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2002), 472–73, says, "In particular, God has passed over . . . left unpunished, acts of sin committed in former times. God . . . had been forbearing, patient, unwitting to foreclose on the human race in general or Israel in particular . . . Whatever Paul is saying in the first half of v. 25, it must be such as to lead to the conclusion that now, at last, God has punished sins as they deserved." In just this way, God shows himself just in keeping his word to punish sin even as he redeems sinners. This is another way in which God's honor, his rectoral justice, is upheld: his failure to exercise retributive justice in the past had called his rectoral justice into question. In the execution of God's justice, the debt of punishment flowing from God's laws, lies the vindication of God's own Name, his justice as the King, lawmaker, and judge of the earth to which he has (at least) bound himself by covenant (Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, Vol 2: 222, 227). This is another reason Farris and Hamilton's attempt to press a major distinction between satisfying the moral law over and against God is overblown (n.p). It depends on a bizarre reification of the law that does not sufficiently account for God's role as author and enforcer of the law as the divine Rector over all things, such that an offense against the law is an offense against God which is simultaneously public and personal, not merely private and commercial. This is especially the case if it considered that in his role of the Rector of the whole world, his rule is aimed at the common good and end of the whole universe, which is actually God's own glory (John Owen, *Dissertation*, 17.XVI, page 261). From another angle, one possible way of overcoming the dichotomy between pure reparative and retributive theories is to recognize in Christ's obedience unto retributive death that satisfies God's retributive justice a positive will to honor God, simultaneously satisfying his rectoral justice in the sense Farris and Hamilton suggest. In fact, it is arguable the classic Reformed distinction between Christ's active and passive obedience, his law-keeping and penalty-suffering, answers both dimensions of God's justice.

27. There is also generally a challenge to the idea that the Bible anywhere expresses the thought

In this light, one can see the way a proponent of *Christus Odium* might retrieve impassibility and analogical predication, as well as this pattern of Scriptural identification between hate, wrath, and retributive punishment to explain their position. On this read, satisfying the “hate” of God is tantamount to satisfying God’s moral law, wrath, and justice and need not be seen as a radical development, but rather a less familiar way of talking about what many have been saying all along. Of course, it seems obvious that retrieving these strictures might also (and probably should) begin to chasten an advocate’s willingness to use such heavily psychologized descriptions of divine hate in the first place, but we’ll put that to the side for now.²⁸ At this point, we must turn from question of what is the divine hate, to the question of who is suffering the divine hate.

Who Does the Triune God Hate?

Turning to the all-important Trinitarian and Christological matters, Farris and Hamilton raise a series of questions with respect to just how this momentary “hatred” of the Son by the Father is supposed to work.²⁹ On the one hand, if it is understood as an intra-trinitarian event between divine persons, that seems to split the Trinity, which is repugnant. On the other hand, if the hate is directed at the Son’s humanity (body and soul, or soul, or just body), that may threaten Nestorianism. Briefly, let us stipulate at the outset the same sort of classical doctrine of God we have been expounding so far. On that view the immutable, impassible, and *a se* God is also the perfectly simple Triune God, whose being admits of no parts, composition, or division.³⁰ In which case, we can quickly dispense with some of the more fanciful “broken Trinity” options whereby the Father and the Son are at loggerheads in the cross, yet remain united by means of the Holy Spirit functioning as a divine bungee cord holding them together.³¹ Of necessity, that puts us somewhere in the

that Jesus bore the wrath of God or was in any way suffering the punishment of God. Two texts that are often overlooked in this regard, which *prima facie*, can be read to the contrary. First, there are Jesus’s words in the Garden, “My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will” (Matt 26:39). This is arguably the cup of God’s wrath, the bowl from God’s hand that sets men to stagger (Ps 60:3; 75:8; Isa 51:17, 22, 23; Jer 25; Ezek. 23:33 15; Obadiah 16). Second, Romans 8:3 says he made Christ an offering for sin and “condemned sin in the flesh.” Whatever happened in the flesh of Christ, it was a condemnation of sin. This is the legal action of God, performed in and upon Christ, the Son in the flesh he assumed.

28. Skillfully avoiding the Scylla of depersonalizing wrath and the Charybdis of undue “anthropopathization” of wrath, see Thomas McCall, *Forsaken: The Trinity and the Cross, and Why it Matters* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012), 79–90.

29. Farris and Hamilton, “My Beloved Son,” 280–83

30. Steven J. Duby, *Divine Simplicity: A Dogmatic Account* (London: T & T Clark, 2016).

31. Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom: The Doctrine of God*, trans. Margaret Kohl (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1993), 82: “The Holy Spirit is therefore the link in the separation. He is the link joining the bond between the Father and the Son, with their separation.” Or Graham Cole, who more modestly suggests as a theologoumenon that possibly it was the Spirit who “kept the

Derek Rishmawy: *A Less Odious Atonement Requires a More Classical God* neighborhood of a “Chalcedonian” solution, with God’s “hate” being exercised in or upon the divine Son’s human nature. In order to work this out, we must briefly set out several classical trinitarian and Christological desiderata.

First, the doctrine of God we have been assuming so far goes hand-in-hand with affirming the inseparability of trinitarian operations *ad extra*. As Augustine succinctly put it, “just as the Father and the Son and Holy Spirit are inseparable, so they work inseparably,” in the economy of creation and redemption.³² In which case, any work the Father works, the Son and Spirit are working as well, per the unity and simplicity of the divine nature.³³ With this in mind, affirming the inseparability axiom means any exercise of divine wrath or hate will not only be that of the Father, but also of the Son and the Spirit, of necessity.

Second, we should attend to related developments of the doctrine of inseparability via reflection on the triune character of divine agency, trinitarian appropriations, and the *terminus operationis*, present in Augustine and the Cappodocians, but refined especially by Thomas and later Reformed theologians such as John Owen. Essentially, while every economic act of the Trinity is undivided, the action is not flat, or unipersonal. Instead, just as the persons subsist in the one divine essence in modally distinct ways, just so their agency from the one divine essence in the economy reflects a trinitarian taxis—an order whereby the persons are distinguishable, though not divisible—in the one work in a way fitted to their eternal trinitarian taxis.³⁴ As Gregory of Nyssa says, “there is one motion . . . which proceeds from the Father, through the Son, to the Spirit.”³⁵ Each indivisible work proceeds “from” the Father, “through” the Son, “in” the Spirit”, or originates with the Father, is executed through the Son, and perfected by the Spirit.³⁶

triune Godhead from imploding—as it were—when the barrier of sin went up between the Father and the Son.” Cole, *He Who Gives Life: The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007), 167.

32. Augustine, *The Trinity*, trans. Edmund Hill, ed. John E. Rotelle (New York: New York City Press, 1991), 1.7. pages 70–71.

33. Adonis Vidu, “The Place of the Cross Among the Inseparable Operations of the Trinity,” in *Locating Atonement: Explorations in Constructive Dogmatics*, ed. Oliver Crisp and Fred Sanders (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015), 21–42.

34. John Webster, “Trinity and Creation,” *International Journal of Systematic Theology*, vol. 12, no. 1 (2010): 4–19, esp. 16–17; see also, Gilles Emery, *The Trinitarian Theology of Saint Thomas Aquinas*, trans. Francesca Alan Murphy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 349, “The three persons act inseparably, in virtue of their common divine nature, and the whole Trinity is the source of their works. But each person acts within the distinct mode of his relationship to the other persons within the common actions.”

35. Gregory of Nyssa, “An Answer to Ablabius: That We Should Not Think of Saying There Are Three Gods,” in *Christology of the Later Fathers*, ed. Edward R. Hardy (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1954), 262.

36. Basil the Great, *On the Holy Spirit*, trans. Stephen Hildebrand (New York: St. Vladimir’s Press, 2011), 16, 37–40; Calvin, *Institutes*. I.13.20, page 144; Emery, *The Trinitarian Theology of Saint Thomas Aquinas*, 349–56.

Third, the tradition has typically spoken of the idea of appropriations—the idea that some names, attributes, or activities of the Trinity *ad extra* can be particularly appropriated or assigned to persons of the Trinity because of the language of Scripture, or because there is a notional affinity fitting to the person and revelatory of their personal property in the eternal taxis.³⁷ As John Webster clarifies,

... of each divine work we need to say (a) that it is absolutely the work of the undivided godhead; (b) that each person of the godhead performs that work in a distinct way, following the manner and order of that person's hypostatic existence; and (c) that particular works may be assigned eminently to one person, without rescinding absolute attribution to the undivided Trinity and without denying that the other two persons also participate in that work in the distinct modes proper to them.³⁸

As *fons*, for instance, creation is fittingly appropriated to Father, though he creates through the Son and the Spirit. Relevant to our purposes, it is worth noting that Post-Reformation scholastics such as Petrus Van Mastricht regularly attributed the activity of judgment to the Father, “insofar as in the economy the Father is the governor, lawgiver, judge, and avenger of laws, and in addition insofar as he is the benevolent caretaker of the whole household,” even if it is the one judgment of the Godhead.³⁹

Extending the doctrine of appropriations, the tradition also saw that some works *terminate* upon particular persons in ways that are fitting to their trinitarian relations—i.e., the missions of Christ and the Spirit from the Father are fitting extensions *ad extra* of their processions *ad intra*.⁴⁰ Thomas explicitly affirms a distinction between the principle of the action, the divine nature itself, and the term of the action in the unique person of the Son in the incarnation.⁴¹ Here the Father, Son, and Spirit are at work, so to speak—there is only one “*opera dei essentialia*”—yet only the Son

37. Richard A. Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics: The Rise and Development of Reformed Orthodoxy, ca. 1520 to ca. 1725*, vol. 4, *the Triunity of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003), 267–74.

38. Webster, “Trinity and Creation,” 16.

39. Petrus van Mastricht, *Theoretical-Practical Theology*, 1.2.25.II.B.1, page 528. Thanks to Scott Swain for suggesting this reference. Compare also Pictet: “The Father in the work of salvation is considered as the supreme Judge, who directs all things, who requires satisfaction, who receives it from the one he sent to procure it, and who, to sum up all in a word, maintains the majesty of the Godhead, for which reason he is sometimes called God in contradistinction from the other persons,” *Theol. Chr.*, II.xiv.1 cited in Muller, *Post-Reformation*, 4:270.

40. In B. Hoon Woo, *The Promise of the Trinity: The Covenant of Redemption in the Theologies of Witsius, Owen, Dickson, Goodwin, and Cocceius* (Gottingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2018), see especially 91–108 for a lucid discussion of the *terminus operationis*. Thanks to Mark Jones for this reference.

41. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* IIIa, q. 3, a. 4, co and r.1. Kyle Claunch has similarly discerned an operative distinction between the “principle” and the “subject” of a divine act in the way Augustine and Owen speak of the matter. Kyle Claunch, “What God Hath Done Together: Defending the Historic Doctrine of the Inseparable Operations of the Trinity,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 56, no. 4 (2013):781–800, especially. 797.

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becomes incarnate by assuming human nature to himself.⁴² Or again, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit sanctify believers, but it is the Spirit who indwells them as the *terminus operationis*. In this way, we see another way of distinguishing persons and distinct personal acts, which are nevertheless not violations of the inseparable activity of the one God.

Finally, we come to think in more directly Chalcedonian terms with Reformed teaching on the communication of operations, or “the ‘sharing’ of the two operations of the two natures of Christ in the Savior’s mediatorial work.”⁴³ Looking to Scripture’s confession that Jesus Christ is the one mediator between God and man (1 Tim 2:5), the Reformed tradition affirmed that Jesus is our mediator *as* God and man: the atoning efficacy of Christ’s death has always been dependent on Christ’s having been our mediator according to both natures. As Francis Turretin has it, “each nature contributing what is its own—the human indeed the substance of the work (or passion); the divine, its infinite value and price.”⁴⁴ This judgment depends on Chalcedon’s affirmation that the assumption of human nature by the particular person of the Son happened “*inconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably*” and “the distinction of natures being by no means taken away by the union, but rather the property of each nature being preserved, and concurring in one Person and one Subsistence, not parted or divided into two persons, but one and the same Son, and only begotten, God the Word, the Lord Jesus Christ.”⁴⁵ Furthermore, the Son’s humanity is enhypostatic and anhypostatic, having no independent existence apart

42. See the classic introduction of Augustine, *The Trinity*, 1.2.7, pages 70–71: “The purpose of all the Catholic commentators I have been able to read on the divine books of both testaments, who have written before me on the trinity which God is, has been to teach that according to the scriptures Father and Son and Holy Spirit in the inseparable equality of one substance present a divine unity; and therefore there are not three gods but one God. . . . It was not, however, this same three (their teaching continues) that was born of the virgin Mary, crucified and buried under Pontius Pilate, rose again on the third day and ascended into heaven, but the Son alone. Nor was it this same three that came down upon Jesus in the form of a dove at his baptism, or came down on the day of Pentecost after the Lord’s ascension, with a roaring sound from heaven as though a violent gust were rushing down, and in divided tongues as of fire, but the Holy spirit alone. Nor was it this same three that spoke from heaven, You are my Son, either at his baptism by John 1:11) or on the mountain when the three disciples were with him (Mt. 17:5), nor when the resounding voice was heard, I have both glorified it (my name) and will glorify // again (Jn 12:28), but it was the Father’s voice alone addressing the Son; although just as Father and Son and Holy spirit are inseparable, so do they work inseparably.”

43. Steve J. Duby, “Atonement, Impassibility, and the *Communicatio Operationem*,” *International Journal of Systematic Theology*, vol. 17, no. 3 (2015): 286.

44. Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, ed. James Dennison Jr., trans. by George Musgrave Giger (Philipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1992–1997), 14, Q. II, V, page 380. Or again, Wilhelmus à Brakel says, “It was an infinite person who suffered according to his human nature, and thus his suffering was of infinite efficacy and value, ‘having obtained eternal redemption for us’ (Heb. 9:12).” Brakel, *The Christian’s Reasonable Service*, vol. 1, *God, Man, and Christ*, trans. Bartel Elshout, (Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage Books, 1992), 482.

45. The Definition of Chalcedon, Oct. 22, 451, in *The Creeds of Christendom with a History and Critical Notes*, vol. 2, *The Greek and Latin Creeds, with Translations*, ed. Philip Schaff (Harper & Row, 1877). <https://ccel.org/ccel/schaff/creeds2/creeds2.iv.i.iii.html>.

from the Word and the Word himself being the only subject of Jesus's activities.⁴⁶ This grounds the doctrine of the *communicatio operationem* whereby we might truly confess according to Scripture that in the death of the Son "God purchased the church with his blood" (Acts 20:28).⁴⁷ Because of this the Son acting in and through his human nature it is still *the Son* acting. When looking to the cross, then, we must be able to say the divine Son suffered these things because Jesus *is* the divine Son. But we also have to say the Son suffered according to, or by virtue of, his human nature.⁴⁸ For according to our prior affirmations, by his divine nature he is impassible. In sum, if we speak of the Son suffering death, the consequences of sin or judgment, or God's abandonment, or even hate, we speak truly of the suffering of the Son, but we inevitably are speaking according to his human nature.

Admittedly, this generates some paradoxical affirmations. Calvin's comments in *The Institutes* are instructive here. On the one hand he clearly affirms, "Yet we do not suggest that God was ever inimical or angry toward him. How could he be angry toward his beloved Son, "in whom his heart reposed" [cf. Matt. 3:17]? How could Christ by his intercession appease the Father towards others, if he were himself hateful to God?" At the same time he goes on to affirm that Christ "bore the weight of divine severity, since he was 'stricken and afflicted' [Isa. 53:5] by God's hand, and experienced all the signs of a wrathful and avenging God."⁴⁹ Calvin also clarifies that

46. DUBY, "Atonement," 291–92; see also, Stephen Wellum, *God the Son Incarnate: The Doctrine of Christ* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 316–28.

47. This is standard, Reformed reading since Calvin: "But because the speech which Paul useth seemeth to be somewhat hard, we must see in what sense he saith that God purchased the Church with his blood. For nothing is more absurd than to feign or imagine God to be mortal or to have a body. But in this speech he commendeth the unity of person in Christ; for because there be distinct natures in Christ, the Scripture doth sometimes recite that apart by itself which is proper to either. But when it setteth God before us made manifest in the flesh, it doth not separate the human nature from the Godhead. Notwithstanding, because again two natures are so united in Christ, that they make one person, that is improperly translated sometimes unto the one, which doth truly and in deed belong to the other, as in this place Paul doth attribute blood to God; because the man Jesus Christ, who shed his blood for us, was also God. This manner of speaking is called, of the old writers, *communicatio idiomatum*, because the property of the one nature is applied to the other. And I said that by this means is manifestly expressed one person of Christ, lest we imagine him to be double, which Nestorius did in times past attempt; and yet for all this we must not imagine a confusion of the two natures which Eutychus went about to bring in, or which the Spanish dog, Servetus, hath at this time invented, who maketh the Godhead of Christ nothing else but a form or image of the human nature, which he dreameth to have always shined in God." Calvin, *Commentary upon the Acts of the Apostles*, vol. II, ed. H. Beveridge (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2005), 256–57.

48. For the value of the language of speaking "in virtue of", see Daniel Treier, "Incarnation," in *Christian Dogmatics: Reformed Theology for the Church Catholic* ed. Michael Allen and Scott R. Swain (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2016), 216–42.

49. Calvin, *Institutes*, II.16.11. Tim Keller draws attention to this balance in Calvin himself. Keller, "Calvin on 'He Descended Into Hell'" Reformedish (blog), July 31, 2017, <https://derekkrishmaw.com/2017/07/31/calvin-on-he-descended-into-hell-guest-post-by-tim-keller/>. See also Paul Dafydd Jones, "The Fury of Love: Calvin on the Atonement," in *T & T Clark Companion to Atonement*, ed. Adam J. Johnson (London: T & T Clark, 2017), 213–35, who speaks to duality of both Christ's inherent worthiness in God's sight and his suffering under the weight of divine

he suffered that severity of judgment in both body, but especially soul: “Christ’s body was given as our price of our redemption, but . . . he paid a greater and more excellent price in suffering in his soul the terrible torments of a condemned and forsaken man.”⁵⁰ This is especially evident in the torment and agony he endures in the Garden (sweating blood) and his words from the cross.⁵¹ Calvin says this would have been shamefully weak if Christ was tortured “by the dread of common death.”⁵² Indeed, it was precisely in the face of this that Christ honors God most in conquering the fear of the execution of this awful wrath he was enduring, trusting him and obeying him in the middle of its “acute agony.”⁵³ There is a dual affirmation here of the absolute love of God for the Son while at the same time, he suffers the operation, the activity, and experience of God’s terrible judgment and wrath in his human body and soul.⁵⁴

severity against sin, especially 220–24.

50. *Institutes*, II.16.10. In the same section he avers, “If Christ had died only a bodily death it would have been ineffectual. No—it was expedient at the same time for him to undergo the severity of God’s vengeance, to appease his wrath and satisfy his just judgment.”

51. It is worth noting that this need not be taken to indicate that Christ’s atoning sufferings were restricted to his time in the garden, or the cross itself. Herman Witsius argues extensively against a contemporary opinion that only the sufferings in the garden and the cross itself were part of Christ’s satisfaction. Instead, he argues for the position of Heidelberg Catechism Q. 37, that Christ’s satisfactory sufferings occurred “during his whole life on earth, but especially at the end, Christ sustained in body and soul the wrath of God against the sin of the whole human race.” Importantly, he sees all of those sufferings as an expression of God’s wrath, though just as God shows forbearance to sinners in this life, so throughout his life Christ experienced relief from the pains of the burden of sin, a sense of God’s favor alongside the judgment, until the time came for him to drink the fullness of the cup of wrath. Herman Witsius, *The Economy of the Covenants Between God and Man*, in 2 vols., trans. William Crookshank (Repr. 1822; Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage Books, 2010), Bk. II, Chap. VI. Vol. 1, pages 210–234. The whole section goes a long way towards answering the series of questions posed by Farris and Hamilton about timing and intensity of Christ’s endurance of the “hate” or “wrath” of God (Farris and Hamilton, “My Beloved Son,” 281–82).

52. *Institutes*, II.xvi.12. I take this to be particularly perceptive of Calvin. Consider, for example, the death of the Maccabean martyrs who were reported to go to their fate boldly (2 Maccabees 7), or historical examples of physical bravery such as St. Polycarp of Smyrna, or Ridley and Latimer. Christ’s anxiety and anguish in the Garden indicate an anticipation of some experience far worse than beatings and physical death, cruel as they were. Incidentally, this seems to confirm all the more that Francis Turretin’s scholastic formulation of the “punishment of desertion” Christ experienced (*Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, 2:14. Q. 11, XXII, pages 434–35) can be read as consistent with Calvin’s own view of what was going on. In which case, “losing the infinite love of the Father” (Keller) can easily be seen as a preacher’s colloquial translation of a point going back at least to Calvin.

53. Terretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, II.xvi.12, page 519. Commenting on John 10:17, “for this reason the Father loves me,” he further writes, “There is, indeed, another and a higher reason why the Father loveth the Son; for it was not in vain that a voice was heard from heaven, This is my beloved Son, in whom the good-pleasure of God dwells, (Matt. 3:17; 17:5.) But as he was made man on our account, and as the Father delighted in him, in order that he might reconcile us to himself, we need not wonder if he declares it to be the reason why the Father loveth him, that our salvation is dearer to him than his own life.” John Calvin, *Commentary on the Gospel according to John*, trans. W. Pringle (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2010), 409.

54. One more witness to an approach like this comes from Shedd. Drawing a distinction between the operation and emotion of wrath, he argues that though, “the Father ‘smote,’ ‘wounded’,

If Calvin seems to be speaking in paradoxes, it is just because he seeks to honor the mystery of an atonement that would require the mystery of the Incarnation.

With these doctrinal threads briefly laid out, we can begin to weave them together and suggest that a “Christus Odium” defender could defend the orthodoxy of the proposal by saying something along the lines of:

When we say that on the cross “the Father hated the Son” we confess an operation and execution of judgement and hate that must be conceived along the constrained, analogical lines consistent with divine perfection. We also confess it is the hate of the one, undivided, Triune God, Father, Son, and Spirit, per divine simplicity and the inseparable operations axiom. And yet, again, that triune agency is not flat. The operation of judgment or hate is particularly appropriated to the person of the Father, even though it is also the avenging hate of Son and Spirit, as it is that of the Godhead. Furthermore, while the act of making satisfaction via the work of the Redeemer is the one work of God, per considerations regarding appropriation, the term of operation, and the communication of operations, we can say it is particularly the divine Son who is the subject of this act and so can be said to suffer the judgment/hate of God the Father in the cross in his human suffering in body and soul. In that sense, one might say that on the cross the Son endured the hate of the Father. Even still, while he endured that hate, he was nevertheless beloved and well-pleasing to the Father.

Conclusion

At this point, several questions remain. First, in order to demonstrate this formulation is not merely special pleading, it would be helpful to think through other of what Thomas Weinandy has called Christ’s “saving acts.” These are “the human acts of the Father’s Son, human acts performed in communion with the Holy Spirit”, where this sort of fancy trinitarian and Christological footwork is necessary.⁵⁵ Second,

and ‘bruised’ the Son, he felt no emotional anger toward the person of the Son. The emotional wrath of God is revealed only against personal unrighteousness, and Christ was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. The Father smote his ‘beloved Son, in whom he was well pleased’ (Matt. 3:17). At the very instant when the Father forsook the Son, he loved him emotionally and personally with the same infinite affection with which he had loved him ‘before the world was.’ When it is said that Christ experienced the ‘wrath of God,’ the meaning is that he experienced the judicial suffering caused by God. The ‘wrath’ of God in this instance is not a divine emotion, but a divine act by which God the Father caused pain in Jesus Christ for a particular purpose. This purpose is judicial and penal, and therefore make be called an act of wrath. ‘The wrath of God is his will to punish’ (Anselm, *Why the God-Man* 1.6). In Rom. 13:4 the infliction of suffering by the magistrate upon the criminal is denominated an act of ‘wrath’: ‘He is the minister of wrath.’ But the magistrate has no emotional anger toward the criminal.” W. G. T. Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology*, 3rd ed., ed. Alan W. Gomes (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 2003), 718–19.

55. Thomas G. Weinandy, *Jesus Becoming Jesus: A Theological Interpretation of the Synoptic Gospels* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2018), xvii–xx. I’m thinking

Derek Rishmawy: *A Less Odious Atonement Requires a More Classical God*

we inevitably need to touch on issues of Christ's vicarious representation and the imputation of humanity's sin to Christ.⁵⁶ What account of Christ's role as our mediator enables him to stand in our stead as a Surety?

We might also ask whether the position just articulated is even the *Christus Odium* view Farris and Hamilton have set their sights on. I concede it modifies it in several important respects. As I noted, my point is not to promote the *Christus Odium* view as it comes across in some of the more aggressive quotes Farris and Hamilton have culled. Pastors and preachers ought to be aware that things can be misconstrued in doctrinally and spiritually harmful ways. Taking care to stick more closely to the formulations of Scripture—that tends to be far more modest—in our preaching and popular contexts is wise. Avoiding an overly-psychologized conception of wrath and recognizing its relationship to satisfying the claims of justice can help avoid painful psychological triggers for church members dealing with trauma.⁵⁷ In fact, this is what we have seen retrieving these classical categories allows *Christus Odium* advocates to do. And if they can have this sort of benefit on the most odious form of the doctrine, it is even more surely the case with the moderate forms of penal substitution more broadly held. In which case, Farris and Hamilton's worries present Evangelicals with little impetus to cast aside our atonement theology for another doctrinal formulation and every reason to recover a classical doctrine of God instead.

Indeed, this is not only a project for the academic in the seminary classroom, but pastor in the parish. It is true, the pulpit is not the lectern. Nevertheless, throughout Christian history pastors have been the public theologians in their local congregations.⁵⁸ Gregory's *Theological Orations on God and Christ* come to us from his pulpit ministry. The same is true of Thomas Watson's *Body of Divinity*. Pastors are called to do many things, but teaching and preaching sound doctrine are chief among their duties (1 Tim 4:13-16). They are called to teach the "whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:27), not only its full redemptive-historical, but dogmatic sweep. Evangelicals are known of their emphatic focus on preaching the cross of Christ,

specifically of acts such as the Son's being conceived in the womb of Mary, or performing miracles, or casting out demons "by the Holy Spirit," all of which might serve as useful proving grounds for these principles.

56. On which, see the useful survey of options around punishment, imputation, and representation in William Lane Craig, *The Atonement* (Cambridge University Press, 2018), 53–83.

57. Incidentally, exploring the cross in relation to justice—especially retributive justice—is a helpful apologetic commendation of the doctrine in the current climate as well. Though, this is an angle that just might tell against any sort of reparative accounts that pits itself against a penal account as an alternative instead of as a complement. It seems those accounts specifically miss the benefit of penal substitution to claim the matter of "sins" as well as "sin" is dealt with. The claim of retribution or "vindicatory" justice is precisely the vindication of God's righteousness, which includes the affirmation of the victims of injustice throughout history (Ps 96; Jer 5:27–29; Mic 2:1–3). For a contemporary example, see Fleming Rutledge, *The Crucifixion: Understanding the Death of Jesus Christ* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2015), 106–45.

58. Kevin Vanhoozer and Owen Strachan, *The Pastor as Public Theologian: Reclaiming a Lost Vision* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2015).

displaying Christ crucified before the spiritual eyes of its congregations (Gal 3:1). And rightly so. But unless it is set against the doctrinal backdrop of the triune God at work in the cross, the picture becomes muddled through myopic distortion.⁵⁹

59. On this sort of “emphatic Evangelicalism,” see Fred Sanders, *The Deep Things of God: How the Trinity Changes Everything* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 14–20.

It Was the Will of the Father to Crush Him: The Day of Atonement and the Cross of Christ

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Abstract: The cross of Christ is a scandal, a mystery, and for Christians, an object of wonder. Even today, after millennia of reflection upon the crucifixion, theologians and pastors still probe the atonement, debating and discussing numerous elements of the cross-work of Christ: how wrath is borne, whether sin is forgiven, and what precisely transpires when the Son cries out that he is “forsaken” of the Father. This article will argue not that the crucifixion involved the “breaking” of the Trinity, for this is metaphysically and ontologically impossible, nor that the Father “hated” the Son at Calvary. This article contends amidst a range of views that there is nonetheless real interruption of communion between the Father and Son during his agonizing cross-work. Because the Father “crushes” the Son under the weight of his wrath against sin, we know divine rescue and forgiveness, learning from the atonement of Christ the distinctive beauty of biblical love, a love foreshadowed in the Day of Atonement in older times. This article is thus an exercise in threefold theological construction: it is a work of exegetical theology unto biblical theology unto the overarching synthetic conclusions of systematic theology.

Key Words: atonement, wrath, cross of Christ, forsaken, justice of God, holiness, righteousness, Day of Atonement

The cross of Christ is a scandal, a mystery, and for Christians, an object of wonder. Even today, after millennia of reflection upon the crucifixion, theologians and pastors still probe the atonement, debating and discussing numerous elements of the cross-work of Christ: how wrath is borne, whether sin is forgiven, and what precisely transpires when the Son cries out that he is “forsaken” of the Father. While this moment is wrapped in the mists of Trinitarian personal relations, it is the argument of this author that the bearing of divine wrath by Christ entails that something unique unfolds at Calvary in the relationship between the Father and the Son.

This article will argue not that the crucifixion involved the “breaking” of the Trinity, for this is metaphysically and ontologically impossible, nor that the Father “hated” the Son at Calvary. These points stated, this article contends amidst a range of views that there is nonetheless real interruption of communion between the Father and Son during his agonizing cross-work. Because the Father “crushes” the Son

under the weight of his wrath against sin, we know divine rescue and forgiveness, learning from the atonement of Christ the distinctive beauty of biblical love, a love foreshadowed in the Day of Atonement in older times. The cross emerges from this study not merely as a means by which God can love sinners, but as the center of a divine grand strategy to overcome perfect justice in order to communicate perfect love.

In order to make this case, this paper will delve into the Day of Atonement in the Old Testament. To understand New Testament atonement, that is, we do well to understand Old Testament atonement. This accords with a broader inerrantist (and sufficientist) evangelical method.¹ Our first reference in any biblical doctrine is not philosophical discussion, cultural backgrounds, or extra-textual sources, nor is it an appeal to human reason and standards of human wisdom. That which *first* frames our understanding of the atonement of the new covenant is the atonement ceremony of the old covenant. Accordingly, in the first section of this paper, we chart this course. We make three points from the Day of Atonement, chronicled in Leviticus 16-17. We then offer three systematic considerations that help us understand the ultimate Day of Atonement, mysterious and wondrous and terrible as the crucifixion of Christ is.

The Day of Atonement as the Background of New Testament Atonement

I. The Context of the Day of Atonement

Leviticus 16:1 shows that the ceremony to unfold is not structured to make abstract atonement. This day is *לְפָנֵי יְהוָה*, “before the Lord” (v. 1).² So too will the Lord appear in the cloud above the mercy seat (v. 2). The context of the Day of Atonement removes any doubt from the modern reader’s mind that this ceremony is disconnected from divine prerogatives. Instead, God himself is overseeing this day. Nadab and Abihu made the terrible mistake of thinking that their offerings would pass muster, but it would not. This is because every sacrifice was before the Lord. Though a formal ceremony, atonement in biblical terms is inescapably personal, and God is the party who must be propitiated by it, lest just judgment flow from heaven itself.

Unlike the unrighteous “worship” of Nadab and Abihu, the Day must be conducted according to God’s decree. Jeffery, Ovey, and Sach note that “God’s wrath must be overcome in order to draw near to him . . . only by performing the sacrifices in the correct manner is this possible.”³ Instead of “strange fire” (Lev 10:1), which represents all our efforts to improve on God’s appointed worship, the Lord frames

1. If “sufficientist” is not a technical theological term, it ought to be.

2. The ESV is used throughout this article, as it is here.

3. Steve Jeffery, Michael Ovey and Andrew Sach, *Pierced for Our Transgressions: Rediscovering the Glory of Penal Substitution* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007), 47.

the Day that will display covenant love. Love, we learn here, is no saccharine affair; it is not a mere sentiment, and it is anything but an affirmation of human identity in self-chosen form. Love entails death, this text teaches us. In order for God to draw near to his people, blood must flow.

But God does draw near: “I will appear in the cloud over the mercy seat,” so it is truly God, not man, who presides over this holy ceremony (v. 2). Aaron, the high priest, is an attendant unto the divine at this righteous event. Clothed in simple garb, he must cleanse himself to the utmost in order to perform his duty (vv. 3-5).⁴ This is because of the high stakes of this ceremony; it is also because the Lord is present at this ceremony. As Wenham says,

On this one day the high priest enters the “other world,” into the very presence of God. He must therefore dress as befits the occasion. Among his fellow men his dignity as the great mediator between man and God is unsurpassed, and his splendid clothes draw attention to the glory of his office. But in the presence of God even the high priest is stripped of all honor: he becomes simply the servant of the King of kings, whose true status is portrayed in the simplicity of his dress.⁵

See verses 6-10:

[6] “Aaron shall offer the bull as a sin offering for himself and shall make atonement for himself and for his house. [7] Then he shall take the two goats and set them before the LORD at the entrance of the tent of meeting. [8] And Aaron shall cast lots over the two goats, one lot for the LORD and the other lot for Azazel. [9] And Aaron shall present the goat on which the lot fell for the LORD and use it as a sin offering, [10] but the goat on which the lot fell for Azazel shall be presented alive before the LORD to make atonement over it, that it may be sent away into the wilderness to Azazel.

These are two uses of the aforementioned construction *לִפְנֵי יְהוָה* “before the Lord,” and two of *לַיהוָה אֶתְּקַדֵּר*, “for the Lord,” language which shows us what we noted above: God is presiding over the Day of Atonement. He is the greater Abraham, and he is instituting the system that will lead to the death of the Greater Isaac.⁶ We could extract much from this passage alone, but must simply note the following before hastening along: whatever we make of this cultic event, it is God’s idea. God has

4. “Ezekiel (9:2–3, 11; 10:2, 6–7) and Daniel (10:5; 12:6–7) describe angels as dressed in linen, while Rev. 19:8 portrays the saints in heaven as wearing similar clothes.” Gordon J. Wenham, *Leviticus*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1979), 230.

5. Wenham, *Leviticus*, 230.

6. Jeremy Treat cites work that allows this connection. See Jeremy Treat, *The Crucified King: Atonement and Kingdom in Biblical and Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2014), 61–62. Treat leans on Dempster for this profitable—and necessary—linkage. See Stephen Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty: A Biblical Theology of the Hebrew Bible*, New Studies in Biblical Theology (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003), 85.

called for it. God structures it. It pleases God. It satisfies God. This is how God wants to deal with sin; it is his idea, not man's. In the discussion that follows, we must remember this—not only in Leviticus 16, but all of Scripture, and all of Christian doctrine, and all of Christian ministry. Atonement flows from this bloody stream.

II. The Effect of the Day of Atonement

After making atonement for himself through the killing of a bull (vv. 11-14), Aaron then cleanses the Holy Place (vv. 15-19). He kills a goat as a sin offering and sprinkles the blood on the mercy seat, enabling entrance into the holy of holies. The significance of this moment in the cultic calendar is great: a holy priest enters the holy place on behalf of the holy people in order to restore fellowship with the holy God.⁷ Yet though we learn a great deal from these preparations about the importance of absolute purity and holiness as the precedent for atonement, we have not yet reached the apex of the Day's events. Without the spotlessness (in relative terms) of the priest and the place, propitiation for sin will not occur. The people and the priest himself stand as "unclean" due to their "transgressions" and "sins" (v. 16).⁸ Blood cleanses and consecrates the setting of atonement (v. 19).

After this, Aaron brings before the people a live goat, and confesses over it "all the iniquities of the people of Israel, and all their transgressions, all their sins" (v. 21). He transfers in symbolic terms this body of wickedness to the goat and sends it into the wilderness. The goat bears "all their iniquities on itself to a remote area," signifying the total transfer of unrighteousness to it.⁹ This act renders the people cleansed, righteous, holy, and atoned for (v. 22).¹⁰ The goat is sent to a land "cut off," a phrase with tremendous spiritual significance.¹¹ The place is not merely remote, in

7. Wenham makes clear that holiness is the chief category marker of this entire ceremony: "The uncleanness that affects every man and woman to a greater or lesser degree (see Lev. 11–15) pollutes the sanctuary. These atonement-day rituals make the impossible possible. By cleansing the sanctuary they permit the holy God to dwell among an unholy people (vv. 16-17; compare with Isa. 6:3ff.; Ps. 15; 24:3ff)." Wenham, *Leviticus*, 236–7.

8. Sklar notes that the covering of sin extends to especially heinous sins: "included sins against the Lord for which sacrificial atonement was not normally an option, namely, sins of *rebellion* (*pēsa'*), a strong word used elsewhere to describe rebelling against a superior (Exod. 23:21) and thus well understood to refer to the 'high-handed' sin of Numbers 15:30-31." Jay Sklar, *Leviticus*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentary (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2014), 212.

9. As will be obvious, the goat is not guilty; it is the people who are guilty, and so the scapegoat is bearing "their guilt," that is, the guilt of Israel. See J. Alan Groves, "Atonement in Isaiah 53," in Charles Evan Hill and Roger R. Nicole, eds., *The Glory of the Atonement: Biblical, Theological & Practical Perspectives* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2004), 78.

10. The goat was sent out before all the people, as Sklar points out: "Unlike the rites within the Most Holy Place, this rite was performed in full view of all the Israelites, who could watch the goat – laden with their sin – disappear into the wilderness, never to return (cf. Ps. 103:12)." Sklar, *Leviticus*, 212. This is a representational atonement; the Day of Atonement is effectual for the community, but only the blood of Christ actually washes sinners clean. It is "impossible" for animal blood to cover the wicked (Heb 10:4).

11. As Sklar shows, "The word for 'cut off' (*gezera*) is built on a root used elsewhere to

other words; it is a place of cursing, for as Jeffery, Ovey, and Sach show, to be cut off “from the camp of Israel was to experience God’s punishment for sin.”¹²

Someone could respond to this presentation of old covenant atonement by noting that it seems rather fragmented compared to new covenant atonement. This is actually a crucial truth. In the old covenant, there are numerous bulls, several goats, and different chronological moments that together accomplish a provisional—and only a provisional—covering of Israel’s sin.¹³ We learn from Leviticus that the Day of Atonement includes numerous elements that is in aggregate one festival of sacrifice. John Stott notes of the sacrifices referenced above, for example, that “the two together are described ‘as a sin offering’ in the singular (v. 5).”¹⁴ Stott clarifies this typological reality: “The author of the letter to the Hebrews has no inhibitions about seeing Jesus both as ‘a merciful and faithful high priest’ (2:17) and as the two victims, the sacrificed goat whose blood was taken into the inner sanctuary (9:7, 12) and the scapegoat which carried away the people’s sins (9:28).”¹⁵

These cultic elements honor and satisfy the Lord, but also point ahead to the need for a sacrifice that brings complete and efficacious atonement. In the new covenant, there will not be several beings that spill blood; there will not be different points at which atonement occurs for one group or person but not others. One sacrifice, one act of bloodshed, will cover the guilty and assuage the Father’s wrath. We recall that the entire old covenant Day is “before the Lord”; so the new covenant Day will be “before the Lord,” and bring to completion the propitiatory worship that was begun in Israel’s time. The death of Christ will go up before the Lord as a *προσφορὰν καὶ θυσίαν τῷ Θεῷ εἰς ὁσμὴν εὐωδίας*, “a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God” (Eph 5:2). The new covenant sacrifice will unite all these creatures, all these elements, all these desperate needs, all this provision for distinct sins in just one act of one person, the God-man.

III. The Day of Atonement Points us to the Power of the Blood

Lest we misunderstand the ceremony and think that we may emphasize any one of the accomplishments entailed therein, Leviticus 17:10-12 draws our attention to the overarching agent of atonement: blood.

describe people being cut off from worship at the temple (2 Chr. 26:21, NASV), from life (Lam. 3:54), or from the Lord himself (Ps. 88:5).” Sklar, *Leviticus*, 212.

12. Jeffery, Ovey, and Sach, *Pierced for Our Transgressions*, 49.

13. This can only be a provisional covering, for after all, a goat bears the people’s sin. But here we must point out that we should not trip over the identity of the sin-bearer, but rather see substitution highlighted in this passage. “The natural reading in this case is that the animal bears the sin and guilt of the people *in their place* and they are thereby released from this burden.” Jeffery, Ovey, and Sach, *Pierced for Our Transgressions*, 50.

14. John Stott, *The Cross of Christ* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1986), 144.

15. Stott, *Cross of Christ*, 144.

¹⁰ “If any one of the house of Israel or of the strangers who sojourn among them eats any blood, I will set my face against that person who eats blood and will cut him off from among his people. ¹¹ For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it for you on the altar to make atonement for your souls, for it is the blood that makes atonement by the life. ¹² Therefore I have said to the people of Israel, No person among you shall eat blood, neither shall any stranger who sojourns among you eat blood.

What precisely is solved by this moment in Israel’s existence on an annual basis? It is this: the “souls” of the covenant people have atonement (v. 11). This is why the ceremony occurs. It is so that the people may live before the Lord and not die.¹⁶ But in order for this to happen, death must take place, blood must be shed, for it is the blood that makes atonement (v. 11).¹⁷ Blood in Israelite religion is holy; blood gives life; blood washes clean.¹⁸ Blood represents the very life of the animal, showing us that the Israelites need a substitute sacrifice for their failure to keep the law. Their failure, like the Day itself, is comprehensively *before the Lord*. Atonement must thus occur, for the law is broken and the people are unholy. One must stand in for the nation.

This tells us the following: 1) God is holy; 2) sin offends God directly; 3) if man is to live before God, sin must receive atonement; 4) atonement of the divinely-desired kind necessitates death; 5) death demands blood, the life of the sacrifice; 6) blood frees the soul as atonement comes to glorious completion.¹⁹

A Theology of Atonement Driven by the Day of Atonement

Thus far we have traced the workings of the levitical Day of Atonement. Our purpose was to better understand the cross of Christ, and the holy prerogatives behind it, through its thematic type. We may now transition to three observations for a broader

16. Emile Nicole comments helpfully on the connection between “ransoming” and purification: “in *kipper* rites, purification cannot be disconnected from compensation: through compensation given to God, purification and forgiveness were granted.” Nicole, *Glory of the Atonement*, 48.

17. “The poured-out life (Hebrew *dam*) of the sacrificial victim is substituted for the life of the worshipper.” Emile Nicole, “Atonement in the Pentateuch,” in *The Glory of the Atonement: Biblical, Theological and Practical Perspectives*, ed. Charles Evan Hill and Roger R. Nicole (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2004), 40.

18. See Sklar on this count: “In short, the animal’s lifeblood was accepted as the ransom payment in place of the offeror’s: it served as a mitigated penalty on the offeror’s behalf, graciously accepted by the Lord (the offended party), in this way rescuing the offeror (the offending party) from due punishment and restoring peace to the relationship between the sinner and the Lord.” Sklar, *Leviticus*, 220–21.

19. Wenham draws attention to the “ransom” language used in verse 11: “11c could be paraphrased ‘the blood ransoms at the price of life.’ In other words the ransom price for man’s life is not a monetary payment (as in Exod. 21:30) but the life of an animal represented by its blood splashed over the altar. Because animal blood atones for human sin in this way, it is sacred and ought not be consumed by man.” Wenham, *Leviticus*, 245.

theology of atonement and the God who makes atonement, the third of which constitutes the lengthiest discussion of this article.

I. The Day of Atonement is both a Joyful and Dreadful Day

It is a day on which God signals that he loves his covenant people, but also that the extension of his love requires the satisfaction of his perfect justice. It is thus a day of great rejoicing, but also the soberest possible recognition. Love is real; love is active, reaching down from heaven in terms that please God; but love is costly, very costly, and calls the people to realize just how unloveable they truly are. Stott says it well: “It cannot be emphasized too strongly that God’s love is the source, not the consequence, of the atonement.” He continues the point, a needed one: “If it is God’s wrath which needed to be propitiated, it is God’s love which did the propitiating.”²⁰ It is not that God’s character changes in the atonement, but rather that his dealings with us change. The atonement thus reveals both the dread nature of divine justice and the exalted character of divine love.

II. The Day of Atonement Satisfies the Wrath of God

We will learn this from other texts more explicitly, but here this truth is displayed implicitly. The very requirements of death in various forms and times on the Day of Atonement make painfully clear that this is not a ceremony in which God hands out favor like Halloween candy, but a day on which he calls his people to account. He holds them responsible, fully and terrifyingly responsible, for their sin. He demands the death of numerous animals; he sends the sin-bearer into the wilderness in order to have fellowship with his people.

We cannot underplay the deeply *personal* nature of the Day of Atonement. Our age will tempt us to do so, for it is an age that has not only lost sight of the rightness of retributive justice, but has lost sight of the God who has created the world and rules all things. In calling for atonement, God is not simply rebalancing the scales of justice; he is not disclosing an interest in arbitrary standards of right and wrong. The Day of Atonement is not upholding a law code in the sky; the Day of Atonement is satisfying God (in provisional but meaningful form). As some atonement theories comprehend, God’s honor has been besmirched by sin, yes. But more than this, God himself has been wronged, God himself has been blasphemed, God himself is rightly burning against sin.²¹

20. Stott, *Cross of Christ*, 174.

21. Roger Nicole makes this point in his discussion of expiation versus propitiation: “Yet sooner or later the question must arise: ‘Who requires expiation or purification, and why?’ If the answer be ‘God does, in the exercise of his righteousness,’ we are back to the traditional view, entirely consonant with the carefully avoided term ‘propitiation.’” Roger Nicole, “C. H. Dodd and the Doctrine of Propitiation,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 17, no. 2 (1955): 149. There simply is no way to avoid the uncomfortable biblical reality that it is a holy personal God who judges

My remarks here speak to the idea of “reparative atonement.” This model was recently proposed by Joshua Farris and S. Mark Hamilton, who sum their view up as follows:

Christ bears or absorbs no penalty on this theory, thus it is not to be confused with penal substitution. Rather, the mechanism of atonement is the restoration of divine honor (i.e., a commercial framework, which highlights the King in relation to his kingdom) where the earth is conceived as God’s kingdom and wherein the moral law functions, not the assumption of a debt of punishment or chance for God to dole out his wrath on Christ for sin. On reparative substitution it is the love of Christ for his Father that is the primary motive in his making atonement. Through Christ’s death the [sic] God’s honor is publically restored. What does reparative substitution do then? It restores to God the glory that was taken from him, who, as the apostle says, graciously “passed over former sins,” the result of which was his willingness to be dishonored for a time. Then came the fullness of time. What does reparative substitution do for humanity? It defers divine retribution until all moral accounts will be settled. It fixes both the private and public problems that humanity faces for having transgressed God’s rectoral justice.²²

The proponents of this view are surely correct that God’s honor is besmirched by sin. We made just such an observation with regard to the Lord destroying Nadab and Abihu for their strange fire. Yet we cannot fail to observe that the Day of Atonement reveals much more than a God whose honor needs balm. As we have observed in several places, blood was required for sin. For the priest even to offer sacrifice, atonement for sin had to be made. Then, the scapegoat representatively received all the sin of the nation and was sent off into the darkness. This entails that God’s honor is restored in some form, yes, but much more that the burning anger of the Father against sin is assuaged and absorbed in full by the Son. Is divine honor addressed in the cross? It certainly is. But much more is transpiring, namely, in Christ’s death the demands of God’s holy justice are met by God’s holy love through the cursing of a spotless being. Through the cross, the wrath of God is satisfied; the people are shown to be washed and pardoned.

Yes, the Day of Atonement sets the terms for what follows, and shows us the categories of biblical salvation in its objective dimension: a wronged God who

sin, not an abstract standard. My thanks to Jeffery Moore for this citation and broader research assistance.

22. Joshua R. Farris and S. Mark Hamilton, “This is My Beloved Son, Whom I Hate? A Critique of the Christus Odium Variant of Penal Substitution,” *Journal of Biblical and Theological Studies* 3 no. 2 (2018), original article copy. This article was to form the basis of a 2019 ETS session with Tom McCall, Farris and Hamilton, Ryan Rippee, Derek Rishmawy, and me. In the actual session, discussion centered more in the dynamics of the Godhead in substitution, hence my more extended interaction with McCall to come (much as the thoughtful case by Farris and Hamilton deserves treatment).

demands perfect righteousness in order to enjoy covenant fellowship with his people. Until righteousness is proffered, until an acceptable sacrifice is presented, the wrath of God burns against the people. God is not only dishonored (as he surely is in extremity). No, the dishonoring of God entails the awakening of the just wrath of God. This is not a general wrath; it is a terrifyingly particular and precise wrath against individual evildoers. So it is that the people, led by the high priest, sacrifice animals because they have personally offended and wronged the personal covenant God of Israel.²³ But here we see the wonder of biblical atonement. The same God who is wrathful against sin is the God who sets up an entire system of atonement in order to mediate love to his covenant people.

These words bear on perpetual discussions about divine justice. Even today, long after being soundly refuted by the church fathers, we hear Marcionite theology promoted as a sound doctrine of God. We cannot fail to observe that a fuller reading of the Day of Atonement refutes Marcionite theology in deeply ironic terms.²⁴ The very Day that features the expression of divine justice is the Day that reveals the depths of divine love.²⁵ It is thus an error of the most profound kind to read the Day

23. As I have noted earlier, it is divine wrath that it is the ultimate “problem” in all this—not in an immoral sense, but in a logistical sense. How will wrath be overcome? Reparative atonement recognizes the prerogatives of a divine being, but concentrates them in the concept of honor. It thus shows a skewing toward categories that the human mind and heart can accept. But Scripture teaches us that divine wrath is our foremost problem. Because of sin, “the wrath of God is coming” (Col. 3:5–6). There is a future “day of God’s wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed” (Rom. 2:5). See Jeffrey, Ovey, and Sach, *Pierced for Our Transgressions*, 296–300.

24. The irony goes deep here. Cutting out the doctrine of penal substitutionary atonement may play well with our sanitized, justice-soft, God-distrusting age. But removing this doctrine, grounded in a major way in the old covenant Day of Atonement, from our theology ends up making divine love considerably less consequential. This is precisely the move that is made against PSA and its advocates; the cross, it seems, becomes far too bloody and wrath-involved. But the costly nature of the cross is exactly what shows just how deep divine love is. Factor such considerations in when you read Marcionlike presentations such as that found in Andy Stanley, *Irresistible: Reclaiming the New that Jesus Unleashed for the World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2018), 161–63, 223.

25. As I have written previously, Stanley as one very prominent recent example contrasts theology proper—God himself—in the old covenant and new covenant. The Jewish God was “holy” and “separate” and “unapproachable” but the God of John was “love” (Stanley, *Irresistible*, 223). The old covenant God “reserved” his love “for his covenant people” unlike the new covenant God. The critique does not lessen in intensity as the book goes on. The Old Testament God “got so angry” that he drowned the Egyptians (251). He and his prophets demonstrated “righteous anger,” which “is a thing,” Stanley avows, only “as long as we hover over the Old Testament anyway” (251). Unlike the jealous and angry OT God and his wrathful people, “New covenant folks don’t get angry at lost things” (254). This polemic fails to see the point that we are at pains to stress here and throughout this article: it is precisely the holy “Jewish” God who meets the terms of his “righteous anger” by the sacrifice of the Son he loves. The fact that the Father loves the Son he lays on the altar makes the sacrifice infinitely more wondrous (and more mysterious to the natural human mind). For more critique of Stanley’s unbiblical framing, see Owen Strachan, “We Have No Divided God: A Review of ‘Irresistible’ by Andy Stanley,” Center for Public Theology, October 15, 2018, accessible at <https://cpt.mbts.edu/2018/10/15/we-have-no-divided-god-a-review-of-irresistible-by-andy-stanley/>.

of Atonement in Marcionite terms as a sign of the vindictive, bloodthirsty deity of the Old Testament.²⁶

Leviticus 16-17 show us that this God is perfectly holy, yes, but that this God has gone to great lengths to forgive, cleanse, and draw near to his people. He does not do so once; he does not do so every 500 years. He does so annually, repeatedly, over and over again. The Day of Atonement surely shapes our understanding of God's character, and definitely reveals the awful nature and terrible cost of sin. But to stop at this point, and to focus only on the conditions of theistic holiness, is to miss something very near to the entire point of this ceremony. The Day of Atonement is not ultimately a celebration of retribution. It is ultimately a celebration of salvation. Standing behind this salvation—and what a costly salvation it is—is love, everlasting love, love planned as an outpouring before the foundation of the world.

III. The Older Day of Atonement Informs the Greater Day of Atonement

Though God has been wronged, he makes an abundant way back into his favor. We have seen that on the Day of Atonement, this way comes through the sin offering of a spotless sacrifice and then the transfer of sin to a goat. This goat is set apart and then sent away. It is not received back into fellowship. It is not welcomed with loving affection. It is sent far from the covenant people, made a curse for them.

To make a final extended connection, if we are paying attention to the Day of Atonement, we gain needed perspective on the work of Christ. The Father does not hate his Son any more than he hates Aaron, the bulls, or the climactic goat. But he does hate sin. He hates it to the uttermost. Yet his is not a spasmodic hatred like ours.²⁷ He acts to meet the demands of his perfect justice by giving us the purifying grace and total righteousness of his Son.²⁸ To do so, he does not hate the Son; but he does, in loving us, place him on the altar, and the Son is slain for us. In terms that

26. Nor are we forced into a false choice between reparative atonement featuring the unbroken love of the Father and Son or penal substitutionary atonement. As we shall see, the cross of Christ is like the Day conducted in a grand campaign of love, and the Father does not cease to love the Son even as he does pour out his just wrath on the Son at Calvary, a sentence and punishment that leads to temporary interruption of fellowship or communion between the Father and the Son. False choices are a perennial problem in theology, and this is one we should avoid at all costs.

27. Stott's distinction of divine and human anger helps us understand how God can be angry in such a way that we should want him to be angry: "God's anger is absolutely pure, and uncontaminated by those elements which render human anger sinful. Human anger is usually arbitrary and uninhibited; divine anger is always principled and controlled. Our anger tends to be a spasmodic outburst, aroused by pique and seeking revenge; God's is a continuous, settled antagonism, aroused only by evil, and expressed in its condemnation." Stott, *Cross of Christ*, 105–6.

28. John Murray threads the needle nicely on this count: "The propitiation of the divine wrath, effected in the expiatory work of Christ, is the provision of God's eternal and unchangeable love, so that through the propitiation of his own wrath that love may realize its purpose in a way that is consonant with and to the glory of the dictates of his holiness." John Murray, *Redemption Accomplished and Applied* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1955), 31–32.

challenge human comprehension, this giving of the Son comes from the God—a giving unto death—who loves his obedient, self-sacrificing Son. This is a unique event, one without parallel in the annals of human history. In sending his Son to the cross, a sending that promises death, the Father expresses love of the deepest kind. This is Fatherly love for sinners, yes, but love as well for the submissive Son who dies. In John’s Gospel, Jesus explicitly connects the Father’s love and his death: *For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again* (John 10:17).

This means that, drawing from the Day of Atonement, the Father does require blood for a sin offering even as he sends the Son into the wilderness of death, a place where the Father does not go. He does pour out all his wrath on his Son, his only Son, until his bruised, broken, and bleeding Son hangs lifeless on a cross. This is not hatred, for hatred would entail the breaking of intratrinitarian love, but it is the accomplishment of a sentence of death.²⁹ This is, I believe, where we do well to locate the “dereliction” of the Son: the judicial sentence handed down by the Father against his Son on behalf of the covenant people of God. Forsakenness is not found in an aggrieved affection or a ruptured Godhead. Forsakenness is located first in the fact that at Calvary, the Father transfers the guilt of his people to Christ, the ultimate scapegoat, and thus pours out his wrath upon him.³⁰ Secondly, from this penal act comes real temporary interruption of fellowship or communion between the Father and Son. Even as he cries out about his forsakenness, the Son actually dies at the cross, the culmination of the sentence upon him.

This view is distinct from some evangelical accounts of the Son’s forsakenness.³¹ Some, for example, emphasize the intensity of the Father’s negative emotion toward Christ. Essentially, the Father hates sin, and since the Son bears sin, the Father hates Jesus at the cross.³² This argument is less a dogmatic argument than a textual one, for it intends to do justice to the full force of the language that issues from Jesus’s lips.

29. As I will note below, Christ tells his disciples that the Father “loves” him expressly because he obediently submits to the Father’s will and dies on the cross. The entire enterprise of the cross, then, is anchored in intratrinitarian love: “For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again” (John 10:17).

30. The usage of legal language is vital to understanding this forsakenness. Herman Bavinck, for example, contrasts “subjective” and “objective” forsakenness, and notes that Christ redeemed us “from the curse of the law” in accomplishing this objective work. Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics: Sin and Salvation in Christ* 3, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006), 389, 392.

31. This includes what has been called *Christus Odium*, a curious title.

32. This is essentially where R. C. Sproul—a faithful and insightful exegete throughout his life and ministry—is: “Once Christ had . . . volunteered to be the Lamb of God, laden with our sin, then He became the most grotesque and vile thing on this planet. With the concentrated load of sin He carried, He became utterly repugnant to the Father. God poured out His wrath on this obscene thing. God made Christ accused for the sin He bore. Herein was God’s holy justice perfectly manifest. Yet it was done for us. He took what justice demanded for us.” R. C. Sproul, *The Holiness of God* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1985), 158.

Those who make this argument tend to be strong advocates of penal substitutionary atonement. They generally emphasize that Christ as the sin-bearer is seen exclusively by the Father in those terms; therefore, as the Father's anger burns against sin, the Father's anger burns in a personal sense against Christ.³³

Other renderings go the opposite way. They portray Christ's cry of forsakenness in primary terms as, interestingly, a cry of affirmation of the Father's love (drawing on the broader context of Psalm 22). The argument here is a dogmatic one, for the Father—so the thinking goes—cannot break fellowship with his Son. Thus, at Calvary, when he cries out about forsakenness, the Son is not actually indicating that he and the Father are in any way cut off as he suffers and dies.³⁴ Instead, though he does indeed feel his life ebbing away, he voices Psalm 22, a citation that includes the full context of the Psalm (extending to the affirmation that “he has not hidden his face from him” in verse 24). In this way the Son signals that he and the Father are united and communing in his life as in his death.³⁵

What exactly this entails for penal substitutionary atonement is not clear; advocates of this view tend to be less clear about how exactly atonement covers sinners, and whether the Father is wrathful against sin at all.³⁶ The difficulty with what “forsakenness” means is, after all, traditionally connected for PSA advocates to the Son bearing the Father's wrath. But if the Son is not legally bearing the Father's wrath, it is not immediately necessary—so the argument seems to go—that the Father “forsake” the Son in some way, for there is nothing occurring in the life of the

33. See, for example, the comments of Herman Witsius: “Since there is an exchange of persons between Christ and believers, and since the guilt of our iniquities was laid upon him, the Father was offended and angry with him. Not that he was ever moved with any passion against him, which is repugnant in general to the perfection of the Divine nature, under whatever consideration: neither that he was by any means offended at him, much less abhorred him, so far as he was considered in himself, for so he was entirely free from all sin; but as considered in relation to us, seeing he was our surety, carrying our sins in his own body.” Witsius, *Conciliatory or Irenical Animadversions on the Controversies Agitated in Britain*, trans. Thomas Bell (Glasgow: W. Lang, 1807), 46–47. My thanks to Joseph Randall for this citation, and for a stimulating discussion on the theme of this article.

34. For Tom McCall, “the cry of dereliction means that the Father abandoned the Son to this death at the hands of these sinful people, for us and our salvation.” Thomas H. McCall, *Forsaken: The Trinity and the Cross, and Why It Matters* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012), 47.

35. This is an argument to weigh carefully. We surely do need to consider the context of biblical quotations and citations in interpreting them. However, if the broader context seems to reverse the point signaled in the actual quotation, we run into obvious difficulty, for we cannot thus read texts in their initial positive (or negative) sense. Carson comments here: “though OT texts are frequently cited with their full contexts in mind, they are never cited in such a way that the OT context effectively annuls what the text itself affirms. . . . It is better to take the words at face value: Jesus is conscious of being abandoned by his Father. For one who knew the intimacy of Matthew 11:27, such abandonment must have been agony.” D. A. Carson, *Matthew*, in *Expositor's Bible Commentary: Matthew and Mark* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1984), 647.

36. This is where McCall is; he questions the idea of the wrath of the Father and of the wrath of God in several places in his book *Forsaken* (see 45–46, 80, 82–83).

Son at Calvary that requires the Father to turn his face away from the Son bearing sin in fulfillment of the Father's will.³⁷

One can hope that we can give an account of the cross based on the Day of Atonement that does justice to both Scripture and dogmatics. We need to handle with great care here, but knitting the typological Day and the anti-typological Day helps us make sense of the intratrinitarian dynamics of the cross. The scapegoat sent into the wilderness clearly bore the punishment of God for sin. The scapegoat thus suffered under a judicial sentence, a sentence that rendered it forensically guilty in place of the Israelite community. At the cross, so too did Christ suffer under a judicial sentence, albeit one inexpressibly worse than the prior one. The first scapegoat bore representative wrath for sin, but could not cleanse the guilty. Christ, however, bore the actual wrath of God and drank the cup for all God's elect. He became sin for us, not in an ontological sense—he remained himself—but in a judicial sense (2 Cor 5:21). He took our place. He carried our curse. He died under our legal sentence, the sentence we deserved but he did not.³⁸

This helps us navigate tricky waters. On the one hand, we face the issue of the Father possibly “hating” the Son in an emotional and affective way. On the other, we confront the possibility of only a supposed forsakenness, leaving us with a clouded vision of the cross. Again, we are in the realm of the high and the holy here, peering into things that are very nearly too great for us. Nonetheless I do think that we have a sensible way to frame the intratrinitarian dynamics of the cross. I am not personally convinced that the Father hates the Son at Calvary, nor do I find it optimal to say that the Father and Son are “estranged” (for this word could imply hostility of some kind). Christ cries out ἦλὶ ἦλὶ, “My God, my God” in voicing his dereliction, after all (Matthew 27:46). But we must also note that Jesus did not quote a Psalmic verse affirming his Father's immediate care for him as he died; rather, he cried out that he was σαβαχθά, interpreted by Matthew as ἐγκατέλιπες, “forsaken.”

Keeping each of these two sides in mind, I suggest we do best to locate Christ's “dereliction” primarily in the sentence under which he dies, a sentence that leads to his actual physical death; secondarily in the interruption of earthly communion

37. McCall, as one example, affirms propitiation but—citing T. F. Torrance—denies that God can be “acted upon” by any priestly human sacrifice (*Forsaken*, 110). In my reckoning, this confuses the very nature of propitiation, and removes the “before the Lord” context of the typical Day of Atonement and the anti-typical Day of Atonement.

38. John Gill directly connects the cry of forsakenness to this legal verdict: “Wherefore he made not this expostulation out of ignorance: he knew the reason of it, and that it was not out of personal disrespect to him, or for any sin of his own; or because he was not a righteous, but a wicked man, as the Jew blasphemously objects to him from hence; but because he stood in the legal place, and stead of sinners: nor was it out of impatience, that he so expressed himself; for he was entirely resigned to the will of God, and content to drink the whole of the bitter cup: nor out of despair; for he at the same time strongly claims and asserts his interest in God, and repeats it; but to show, that he bore all the griefs of his people, and this among the rest, divine desertion.” John Gill, “Matthew 27:46,” *Exposition of the Bible*, accessible at <https://www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/gills-exposition-of-the-bible/matthew-27-46.html>.

(or fellowship) as Jesus hangs on Roman wood, interruption that culminates in the death of the man Christ Jesus.³⁹ If death is not an interruption of communion, after all, what is?⁴⁰ In this framing, the Father does not hate the Son, as we are at pains to say. The divine bond of the Trinity is not broken at Calvary. But the Father does genuinely judge the Son, and the Son's experience of his judgment is real, terrible, and unique. This is because the Son undergoes the fate of the guilty at the cross. For the first and only time in the life of the Godhead, the Son is unrighteous in forensic terms at the bar of God's justice, and the Son loses his life at Calvary. Not permitting this threefold recognition of forsakenness (judicial guilt leading into interruption of communion which culminates in physical death) in the doctrine of Christ means that we fail to do justice to the warp and woof of Scripture. Indeed, if we do not watch ourselves, the incarnation itself could seem to trouble a certain pristine metaphysics, one that is more analytic than biblical.

The "forsakenness" of the cross proceeds from the fact that the Son of God is judged guilty at Calvary. Like Abraham loading his son onto the altar, the Father sends his Son to the cross in place of the sinner. This corollary passage can inform our understanding of the sacrifice of the greater Isaac. Jesus takes on our judicial sentence; in the cosmic courtroom of God's justice, he is rendered condemned in our place. He has thus become the true and greater scapegoat. He is sent into the wilderness, sentenced to banishment, for us.

It seems clear in this instance that, even as the Son is upholding the universe per his unbroken and unbreakable divine nature, he is also taking on the full wrath of God, and is thus experiencing the interruption of the communion with the Father that he has enjoyed throughout his incarnation. This interruption, in fact, culminates in the tragedy of his death.⁴¹ While there is admittedly some mist that shrouds our finite human conception of this holy moment, we are not without resources. In my reckoning, we can make greater sense of the intratrinitarian dynamics of the cross by understanding Gethsemane better. Luke's Gospel tells us that before the cross, an angel strengthens Jesus after he prays to the Father in Gethsemane (Luke 22:43). This angel, we cannot help but infer, ministers to Christ due to the express command

39. On this point, McCall and I agree: "His Father did indeed leave him to die, and could have rescued him; Jesus could have been spared the terrible humiliation, agony and death. The Father could have done so, but he did not. Jesus was abandoned—the Father abandoned him to this death, at the hands of these sinful people, for us and our salvation." McCall, *Forsaken*, 44.

40. There is a lively and needful debate over what exactly "forsakenness" means, as is already clear. Leon Morris speaks without qualification of the interruption of communion as I have here: "When we put such passages of Scripture together, it seems that in the working out of salvation for sinners the hitherto unbroken communion between the Father and the Son was mysteriously broken." Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1992), 721–22. Morris also uses the language of "abandonment."

41. John Owen suggests such an interpretation when he writes that the Son was "destitute of comfort so far as to cry, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' Ps. xxii.1" Owen, *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1999), 56–57

of the Father. So, it seems, that the Father aids Christ throughout the entirety of his earthly life—even in nightmarish Gethsemane—but does not extend such help to Jesus in his crucifixion. We know from the direct witness of the four Gospels that the Father does not explicitly answer Jesus’s cries with either speech or an angel at Calvary. On the cross, Jesus is dying as a curse; he is bearing the Father’s wrath; he is, spiritually speaking, walking in the shadowlands, cut off from the camp, and unto death he receives no known help from heaven (unlike his prior experience).⁴²

We are studying things that are nearly too great for us. To be quite honest, there is no precise analogy we may draw from our context to Christ’s cry of dereliction. This is a unique event, uniquely terrible in experience and uniquely wonderful in effect. The love of the Father for the Son, and the Son for the Father, is not beyond logic (as if it is illogical or insensible) but it is surely supralogical. It is beyond our facts and theorems. In this particular moment in the life of the Father and the Son, we witness a Father who sends his Son to the cross to die in our place, just as we witness a Son who cries out to his Father in agony. The Son trusts his Father and prays several times to his Father on the cross, showing that the Godhead is not severed. Yet the Son also hangs as a sin offering to the Father, his travail unrelieved and his cries not explicitly answered.⁴³ The lack of a response from the Father matters, because our first burden in building doctrine is to take the actual biblical data and work with it, not to conform it to any greater extrabiblical standard.⁴⁴ The speech we hear from Christ, and the lack of speech from the Father, thus must have first priority in shaping our conception of the “forsakenness” Jesus experiences at Calvary.

At this point we must observe that the Father not only *lets* his Son die; he *commissions* him to die, and orchestrates this death according to his sovereign “hand and plan” (Acts 2:23-24). This death is in direct fulfillment of Isaiah 53, at text that

42. Stephen Wellum affirms that the Godhead is fully intact at Calvary, but also that Christ’s bearing of sin causes a temporal change in personal relations: “As Jesus pays the ransom price needed to redeem us, he commits his spirit into the hands of his Father, as he deliberately dies, and with normal personal relations restored between the Father and Son—‘Father, into your hands I commit my spirit’ (Luke 23:46).” Wellum, *Christ Alone: The Uniqueness of Jesus as Savior*, 5 Solas Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2017), 208–9. Wellum’s nod to “normal personal relations” matches what I am articulating in this article. The “forsaking” of Christ entails not just his actual expiration, but comprehends the fullness of his agonized dying at Calvary.

43. While not embracing a “broken Trinity” perspective (like the mainstream of Reformed and evangelical commentators), Stott puts it as strongly as any: “So then an actual and dreadful separation took place between the Father and the Son; it was voluntarily accepted by both the Father and the Son; it was due to our sins and their just reward; and Jesus expressed this horror of great darkness, this God-forsakenness, by quoting the only verse of Scripture which accurately described it, and which he had perfectly fulfilled, namely, ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’” Stott, *Cross of Christ*, 81.

44. We must first do business with the actual text before us. In this and all our theology, our method must be firstly exegetical. For systematic theology to have any weight, it must first be exegetical theology. This entails that the actual words and citations of a given text shape our theology, even as we necessarily read all Scripture as a whole. There is surely a cyclical reality in play here, but it must always be one that does business with the actual grammar and syntax of a given passage first.

tells us several vital truths about the Father and the suffering servant. The atonement sacrifice was “stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted” (v. 4); “the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all” (v. 6); notably, “it was the will of the LORD to crush (כָּרַס) him; he has put him to grief” (v. 10). None of these formulations explicitly indicate that the Father despises the Son at the cross. But neither do these texts suggest that the Father held back his wrath from the Son. At the grammatical level, Motyer offers both “willed” and “delighted” as capturing the Father’s mindset in “crushing” the sacrifice: “Just as Cyrus ‘fulfilled all the Lord’s will and pleasure’ in the restoration of Jerusalem (44:28), so the heart of God is revealed in his delight, even at such cost, in finding and providing a guilt offering.”⁴⁵

The witness of Isaiah 53, a witness that syncs elegantly with Leviticus 16-17, is that God himself puts the suffering servant “to grief.” He not only grudgingly does so; he gladly sends the servant to die. Because God acts, laying all the sin of his people on the Son, the Son is crushed, left in grief, and smitten by God. These words come to fruition, painful fruition, at Calvary. The Son prays to the Father, but as one example, the “listen to my beloved Son” of the transfiguration does not occur in the crucifixion accounts of the Gospels. Instead, the Son is lifted up to die, and no intervention or strengthening word comes from the heavens. All this is because the Son has become a guilt offering and a scapegoat for us. His ontology is not changed; he dies as the Son. But he is reckoned unrighteous so that his church would be reckoned righteous.

This moment does not break intratrinitarian dogmatics, but it does definitely inform and stretch and shape them. Logic alone, reason alone, cannot guide us here. At Calvary, the greater Abraham does not attack the greater Isaac. He is not a deity enraged by his Son who demands his Son’s blood to placate his uncontrollable anger. The Son is loved by the Father expressly because he lays down his life in obedient submission. But in this episode the Father does something he has never done: he pours out all his just wrath against sin on Christ. He binds the greater Isaac, and he plucks no ram from the thicket. The greater Isaac suffers, and bleeds, and dies by the Father’s perfect will. This is because there is a greater plan at work, a plan orchestrated by the Father to make a people for himself by the blood of his Son and the agency of the Spirit. This sacrifice is called by Paul “a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God,” revealing that the death of Christ pleased the Father (Eph 5:2).⁴⁶

45. J. Alec Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah: An Introduction and Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993), 438.

46. The words of John Piper are helpful on this count: “This explains the paradox of the New Testament. On the one hand, the suffering of Christ is an outpouring of God’s wrath because of sin. But on the other hand, Christ’s suffering is a beautiful act of submission and obedience to the will of the Father. So Christ cried from the cross, ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’ (Matthew 27:46). And yet the Bible says that the suffering of Christ was a fragrance to God. ‘Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God’ (Ephesians 5:2).” John Piper, *The Passion of Jesus Christ: Fifty Reasons Why He Came to Die* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004), 23.

The redemptive plan covered here will mean that the Father can justly give “every spiritual blessing” to his church (Eph 1:3).⁴⁷ This is how he will grant us an inheritance in the heavenly places (1:3-14).⁴⁸ Ephesians 1 is thus greatly important for our broader comprehension of the intratrinitarian love and redemptive love displayed at Calvary. Love, we learn, is not occasional or isolated; the greatest love there is flows from a grand campaign, a plot from before the ages, a rescue mission enacted before any human will or intuition existed.

But this love is not the love that we might expect of God. The love of God given to us is dependent upon the clearing of the Father’s wrath. It is not as if the Father is merely an aggrieved bystander here, and the Son shoulders the load of salvation in order to woo back the Father. No, three times in Ephesians 1 Paul zeroes in on the Father’s will as the impetus of our salvation, our blessing, our iron-clad eschatological hope (Eph 1:5, 9, 11).⁴⁹ Per verse 10, the Father’s “plan” proceeds according to his will, a will that Son and Spirit assent to, wholly affirm, and obey in the perfect pre-temporal expression of joyful submission. You could say it this way: before time itself, the Father game-plans to overcome his own perfectly just anger against sin. This, and no other, is the fullest expression of divine love for sinners, a love that takes shape in the Father’s will and plan before the foundation of the earth, a love that drive the Son to die for sinners in perfect obedience to the Father, a love that sends the Spirit into our hearts as the inrushing manifestation of divine possession.

Here we recall our earlier response to those who would argue that divine justice cancels divine love, and who would suggest that the existence of divine wrath in our theological categories crowds out room for genuine love. Love, we hear from many cultural angles today, has no contact at all with anger. One who is loving effectively cannot be angry. But in Scripture and scriptural theology (and any sound systematic theology built upon exegetical theology firstly and biblical theology secondly), the love of God solves the problem of the wrath of God. Love emerges in cosmically beautiful yet alien fashion, for the Father who loves his Son crushes his Son in order to love the elect chosen as a people unto himself. There is elegant symmetry between Testaments on this count; Scripture speaks with one voice here. Just as we observed

47. Thielman notes that the Father’s agency is in view in the early portions of this section of Ephesians. Frank Thielman, *Ephesians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2010), 37–39.

48. See Matthew Barrett here: “The incarnate Son voluntarily submits Himself to the preordained purpose of the Father, as evident in Jesus’s Gethsemane prayer, and the Father in turn approves the work of the propitiation that His Son accomplishes, most visibly manifested when He raises Him from the dead, thereby vindicating His Son and justifying His work of atonement (Rom. 4:25).” Barrett, “In Our Place: The Atonement,” in *High King of Heaven: Theological and Practical Perspectives on the Person and Work of Jesus*, ed. John A. MacArthur (Chicago: Moody, 2018), 134.

49. For more on this section in Ephesians and the Father’s saving will, see Ryan L. Rippee, *That God May Be All in All: A Paterology Demonstrating That the Father Is the Initiator of All Divine Activity* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2018), 68, 129.

earlier that the Day of Atonement should best be understood as a work of love (that perfectly meets the terms of God's holiness), so we should understand the cross in still greater terms of a broader plan of divine kindness, affection of the strongest kind. Divine love meets the terms of divine justice. The cross is the greater Day of Atonement, the Day when this love is truly secured, for redemption of the elect is once and for all time accomplished.

How distinct such love is from worldly love, which is essentially uninhibited emotional affirmation of the other without any conditions.⁵⁰ Per the terms of the Creator-creature distinction, God's love is not our love (the natural man's love, that is).⁵¹ Just as God is altogether distinct from man, separated by an infinite ontological gap, so God's love is altogether distinct from man's love. It is not as if the Father's love shown in Christ's death and secured by the Spirit is just like human love, but with a redemptive twist. The Father's love *is* love, and though humanity assumes we love in the same way, we do not.⁵²

This discussion of the finer points of the cross thus has direct bearing on our evangelism, apologetics, and discipleship. If those outside the church (or even those inside it) protest that love by definition should not include such realities as Fatherly crushing of the Son, wrath, and intratrinitarian forsaking of any kind, we must respectfully counter that love has no ultimate definition outside of biblical categories. Love is what God says it is; love is what the Godhead gives us, the three persons working jointly to fulfill the Father's perfect plan. Love that is weak is man-defined love, often emotionally grounded; love that is strong, infinitely strong, does not dissipate under even the worst circumstances, judicial sentencing of the Son that leaves the Son guilty on behalf of sinners. Intratrinitarian love does not barely endure during the atonement; the expansive love of the Godhead is *defined* by the holding together of divine love even through the worst possible event, an event in which one member of the Trinity puts another to grief as the three members work together to fulfill the Father's will (see Eph 1:5, 9, 11 once more).⁵³

50. Love per the older film *Love Story* means "never having to say you're sorry" (so you're good just the way you are); love in modern pop music form means "I'd never ask you to change" per Bruno Mars and "I can't change" (and am loved for it) per Macklemore. These citations—no doubt unanticipated by some scholars—give us a passing sense of our culture's definition of love as affirmation, positively, and the absence of any change agenda, negatively. Biblical love, suffice it to say, is altogether different.

51. On this essential doctrine, taught from the Bible's first chapter by the fact of divine creation, see Cornelius Van Til, *An Introduction to Systematic Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1967), (1974–57).

52. This is true even as an unsaved father's love for his child is nonetheless, per God's common grace, actual love. It is not, however, ultimate love; it is not the love we desperately, the love that forgives and cleanses the guilty.

53. On the matter of inseparable operations, see Augustine: "just as Father and Son and Holy Spirit are inseparable, so they work inseparably" (*De Trinitate*, 1991, 1.7). This does not in any way indicate or necessitate a blurring of personal relations and roles, whether before the earth's foundation or after it, but it does mean that the three persons of the Godhead—our theological

This is high and holy territory. There is no human corollary here; this is a unique moment that must define human understanding of God, not vice versa. The Father who wishes to exalt his Son is the Father who designs a plan that features exaltation by crucifixion. This is how the Father ultimately shows his Son to be the only being worthy of his exaltation: he sends him as a sacrifice and a scapegoat for the elect. The Son obediently washing the church clean renders him the indisputable Alpha and Omega, the one who not only creates the heavens but creates a new humanity. The Father loves the Son in exalting him, an end obtained by his holy immolation under Fatherly condemnation of a judicial kind. The Son loves the Father in obeying him, an end obtained in peak form by the willingness to bleed to the last drop. Thus we may say that the Father's exaltational love for his Son means that he sends his Son into the darkest darkness, a darkness unrelieved by immediate Fatherly help, and that the Son's love for the Father means that he willingly goes there.

To bring all the threads of this lengthy discussion together, the Father loves the Son but crushes him, loves the Son but makes him a sin offering, loves the Son but finds him judicially guilty on behalf of the church. The stakes are high on all counts here. To lose sight of the Father's love for the Son at Calvary means that we lose sight of the essential nature of the Father-Son relationship, a love that predates all time and history and never blinks out. But to lose sight of the Father's judging and crushing of the Son at Calvary per explicit biblical witness (Isa 52:10) means that we lose sight of the awful uniqueness of Jesus's death. At Calvary, under divine sentencing, he prayed to the Father, confessed his forsakenness, committed himself into the Father's hands, and expired.⁵⁴

Conclusion

At Calvary, Jesus cries out that he is forsaken by the Father. We have made the case for understanding this forsakenness in a threefold sense. Firstly, his forsakenness is located in the Father's transfer of his people's guilt to Christ, the ultimate scapegoat.⁵⁵ Secondly, from this penal act comes real temporary interruption of fellowship

term for the three divine persons is after all *Trinity*, signaling unified threeness—shares perfect unity, a unity that manifests in the perfect execution of the will of God.

54. B. B. Warfield focuses in his commentary on this scene on the Son's "desolation" almost unto "despair" (and calls Christ's cry one of "desertion"), but notes this above all: "If he cried out in his agony for deliverance, it was always the cry of a child to a Father whom he trusts with all and always, and with the explicit condition, Howbeit, not what I will but what Thou wilt. If the sense of desolation invades his soul, he yet confidently commends his departing spirit into his Father's hands (Lk. xxiii. 46)." Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield, *The Person and Work of Christ* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 1906), 33.

55. The usage of legal language is vital to understanding this forsakenness. Herman Bavinck, for example, contrasts "subjective" and "objective" forsakenness, and notes that Christ redeemed us "from the curse of the law" in accomplishing this objective work. Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics* 3:389, 392.

or communion between the Father and Son, for the Father cannot look upon evil (Hab 1:13). Thirdly, the man Christ Jesus dies at the cross, the culmination of the sentence upon him. At no point in the making and execution of this redemptive plan, though, were the Father and Son hatefully opposed to one another. The work that accomplished redemption was one work, and it was driven by the otherworldly wisdom and insight of the first person of the Godhead, and it was secured by the obedient sacrifice of the second person, who offered his life in the power of the third person (Heb 9:14).

We have heard it said that in the atonement, mercy and justice kiss. This is true, and it is similarly true that at the atonement, uninterrupted Fatherly love and judicial Fatherly condemnation meet. Indeed, this is love of a most transcendently unique character, love of the most costly kind—love that means that the Father does not rush to the aid of his beloved, but that he crushes him, lays all our iniquities on him, and allows his blood to flow without interruption. The Father loves the Son even in sending him to the cross, but in this instance and this instance alone in history, the well-loved Son must bear the terrible weight of the Father's justice. Never before and never since has this occurred; truly, the Son was given as a substitutionary sacrifice for us, placed as in the ancient Day "on the altar to make atonement for your souls, for it is the blood that makes atonement by the life."

Owen Strachan: *It Was the Will of the Father to Crush Him*

The Father’s Love for the Son in Penal Substitutionary Atonement

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Abstract: In what Joshua Farris and S. Mark Hamilton label the *Christus Odium* variant of penal substitutionary atonement, the Son becomes the object of the Father’s perfect hatred on the cross. However, within a penal substitutionary model of the atonement, when propitiation was made, did it necessitate that the Father hates the Son? No, on the contrary, a biblical model of penal substitutionary atonement is the most glorious display of the Father’s love for his Son in the Spirit. The Father’s eternal plan of the atonement is rooted in his love for the Son and brings him great pleasure in accomplishing his purpose at the cross. The Father sent the Son, empowered by the Spirit to be a penal substitutionary sacrifice so that those worshippers would not only see the glory of the Father in the face of Christ, but would experience the Father’s love in the Son by the indwelling Spirit. Further, the Father hates sin but cannot hate his Son, and so was greatly pleased that the Son laid down his life and took it up again, accomplishing redemption and propitiation and reconciliation as the perfect sacrifice for sin. For only as a substitute can he actually pay for sins, bring real forgiveness and make peace.

Key Words: penal substitution, Father’s wrath, atonement, work of Christ, Father’s love, forgiveness

In his first epistle, the Apostle John employs a contrast between light and dark to demonstrate that all that is good and true and righteous comes from and is defined by God: “This is the message we have heard from him [the Son] and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all” (1 John 1:5). In contrast, the fallen sinner is said to be “walking in darkness” (1 John 1:6), and yet a way is made for any of us in the darkness to come to the light: “the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin” (1 John 1:7). John then anticipates a further scenario. What happens when we who are in the “light” commit an act of sin? Do we return to the darkness? No, John argues for “we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world” (1 John 2:1–2).

John is getting at the heart of the atonement, when he explains that the Father, who is “light,” who is holy and righteous, enables a way for those in the “dark” to be

with him; namely, through the “advocacy” of the Son, who is also “righteous” (2:1). Furthermore, the Son’s advocacy is more than that of mere lawyer arguing our case. He is the one who “propitiates” the righteous requirement of the Father’s character (his wrath towards sin, e.g., Rom 1:18) through his own blood (1:7), thus forgiving sinners and cleansing them from all sin.¹

Later in the letter, John returns to the idea of “propitiation” (1 John 4:10), distinguishing it from the pagan understanding of his own day, which meant placating or appeasing an angry Deity. It is not, then, that the Father is unwilling, and the Son wins him over (and somehow, along the way, the Spirit is uninvolved or forgotten). Rather, John considers it as a fundamental description of the Father when he says, “love is from God” (1 John 4:7) and “God is love” (1 John 4:8, 16).² This loving Father defines the meaning of love at the cross (“In this is love”) by sending his the Son of his love in the Spirit to be the “propitiation for our sins” (1 John 4:10).³ Thus, according to John, the Father’s love flows from the divine nature and motivates his plan for those in the “dark” to come to the “light.” The Father conceives a way to “propitiate” this righteous requirement of his own nature, exhibited in wrath toward sinners who transgress his law.

The question under discussion is, “At the cross, when propitiation was made, did it mean that the Father hated the Son?” Dubbed *Christus Odium*, the affirmative argues that yes, the Father hated the Son since he was “forsaken of God” (Matt 27:46), identified with the cursed (Gal 3:13), with the lawless (Isa 53:12), and with sin itself (2 Cor 5:21). Nevertheless, the implication that the Father hated the Son at the cross is problematic for a number of reasons: it undermines divine simplicity, misunderstands the unity of the divine will residing in the nature, denies the reality of inseparable operations, and most importantly, has no basis in Scripture.

One further question, if acceptance of penal substitutionary atonement may lead to the teaching that the Father hated the Son at the cross, does this mean we need to rethink the nature of substitution or take up another alternative? No. The excesses or homiletical emphases of some does not undermine the validity of the biblical teaching on penal substitutionary atonement.

The goal of my paper, then, is not to simply answer the question, “How can the Father love the Son in penal substitutionary atonement?” Rather, it is to argue that penal substitutionary atonement is the most glorious display of the Father’s love for

1. See Colin Kruse’s discussion of ἱλασμός (*hilasmos* “propitiation”) and its cognates where he concludes: “What this suggests is that the notion of atonement in the OT is best understood comprehensively to include both the cleansing and forgiveness of the sinner, and the turning away of God’s anger.” Colin G. Kruse, *The Letters of John*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 76.

2. The context makes clear that θεός (*theos* “God”) is not in the generic or a reference to the Trinity because this same God “sent his Son into the world” (v. 9) “to be the propitiation for our sins” (v. 10). Furthermore, he has given “his Spirit” (v. 13).

3. The Spirit is the “Spirit of truth” (1 John 4:6) who testifies of the work of Christ (1 John 4:2) and confirms its reality to our hearts (1 John 4:13).

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his Son in the Spirit. For the Son's sake, then—that is, in order to place his Son's glory on display and make his pleasure for the Son public—he sent the Son to be a substitutionary sacrifice, satisfying the righteous requirement of his holy character (the wrath of God, arising from his outraged holiness), forgiving an infinite debt, and reconciling a people to be his glorious inheritance in Christ by the Spirit.

The Father's Plan is Rooted in His Love

The plan of salvation played out on the stage of creation is an overflow of the *Father's* eternal love for the Son in the Spirit. From all eternity, this love has been eternally and perfectly poured out on the Son (John 3:35; 5:20; 10:17; 15:9-10; 17:24). Reciprocally, the Son loves the Father (John 14:31), and though no mention is made of the Father or Son's love for the Spirit or the Spirit's love for Father and Son, the fruit of the Spirit is love (Gal 5:22), and the Spirit is the one who makes known the Triune God's love (Rom 5:5; 15:30). Furthermore, a fundamental part of the Christ's atoning work is so that all those who believe in Christ might participate in the intra-trinitarian fellowship of love that existed "before the foundation of the world" (John 17:22-24).

In the Incarnation

In the incarnation, the eternal love of the Father for the Son has gone public (1 John 4:9) by the Spirit. The angel explains to Mary, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High [the Father] will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God" (Luke 1:35). Then, in the life and ministry of Jesus, the Father pours out his Spirit on the Son (Matt 3:16-17; 12:18; Luke 3:22; 4:18-19; Acts 10:38), so that the Son can perform the Father's works (John 5:19; 10:32-33) and speak the Father's words (John 12:49-50).⁴

The Father makes his love public at both the baptism and transfiguration of Jesus. He told the witnesses, "You are/This is my beloved Son, with you/whom I am well-pleased" (Mark 1:11; 9:7; cf. Matt 3:17; 17:5; Luke 9:35; 2 Pet 1:17-18). Further, John

4. In John's Gospel, the works of the Father through the Son circle around seven specific signs. They are: (1) water changed to wine (John 2:1-11), (2) healing of the nobleman's son (John 4:46-54), (3) the healing of the man at the pool (John 5:1-18), (4) the feeding of the five thousand (John 6:1-14), (5) walking on the water (John 6:16-21), (6) healing of the blind man (John 9:1-41), and (7) raising of Lazarus (John 11:1-44). Regarding these signs, Nicodemus tells Jesus, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him" (John 3:2). Morris affirms that the signs not only point to the Father but originate with him as well. "Perhaps it would be true to say that where John sees miracles from one point of view as σημεῖα (semeia "signs"), activities pointing people to God, from another he sees them as ἔργα (erga "works"), activities that take their origin in God. Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 612. These signs were worked out in the sovereign, providential timing of the Father (John 9:3), and in response to Jesus's prayer (John 11:21-22, 41-42). Therefore, the works testify that the Father has sent the Son (John 5:36-38; 10:25) and that the Father and Son are one (John 10:37-38).

teaches that the Father gave to the Son the “Spirit without measure” (John 3:34),⁵ and so too, the Father is always with him (John 8:29; 16:32). Thus, the Son laid aside his own will to do the will of the Father (John 6:38), to accomplish his work (John 4:34; cf. Heb 3:1-6), and to “always do the things that are pleasing to him” (John 8:29). In short, Jesus said, “but I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father” (John 14:31; cf. John 15:10).

Jesus even rebukes his enemies for not understanding the purpose of the incarnation: The Father, Son, and Spirit, working their plan of salvation, giving life and exercising judgment so that “all may honor the Son, just as they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him” (John 5:23). Therefore, in Jesus’s glorification of the Father, the Father glorified the Son (John 8:49-50, 54-55). Furthermore, and most important for our discussion, the mutual glorification and honor of Father and Son arising from their mutual love culminates in the work of the cross (John 12:28; 17:1).

In the Crucifixion

In the crucifixion of Jesus, the Father gives the Son to be the Savior of the world by making him to be a penal substitutionary sacrifice for his elect. To be sure, what we are not saying is that Jesus, who is full of love, offered himself in such a way to placate the Father, who is full of wrath. On the contrary, both Father and Son in the Spirit are united in divine love and holiness to satisfy the righteous requirement of their divine nature.

Therefore, the suffering and shame was not purposeless, a mere accident of history (Matt 26:53-54); it happened for a reason. In sending the Son, the Father fulfills his “plan and foreknowledge” (Acts 2:23; cf. Acts 4:28), delivering him up to death to be a sin offering (Mark 10:45; 2 Cor 5:21; Rom 8:32).⁶ Furthermore, the Son also offered himself up (John 10:17-18) through the anointing ministry of the Holy Spirit (Heb 9:14), which he received from the Father.⁷

As a result of the cross, the Father condemned sin (Rom 8:3), and as the “Lamb of God” (John 1:29, 36), he is the gift provided by the Father in order to “take away the sin of the world” (John 1:29).⁸ This the Father does by putting his Son forward

5. Grammatically, the one who gives the Spirit could be understood as the Son; however, verse 35 makes it clear that the Father, who gives all things to the Son, is the one who gives the Spirit. See D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991), 212.

6. The use of ὑπέρ (*hyper* “on behalf of”) is used often to speak of substitutionary atonement (e.g., John 11:50; 15:13; Rom 5:6, 1 Cor 11:24; 15:3; 2 Cor 5:14; Gal 1:4; 2:20; 3:13; Eph 5:2, 25; 1 Thess 5:10).

7. Consistent with inseparable operations and divine simplicity.

8. Substitutionary atonement is often criticized in Johannine studies; nevertheless, it is the teaching of Scripture. For a defense of substitutionary atonement in the Gospel of John, see Charles A. Gieschen, “The Death of Jesus in the Gospel of John: Atonement for Sin?” *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 72, no. 3 (July 1, 2008): 243–61; and George Leonard Carey, “The Lamb of God and Atonement Theories,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 32 (January 1, 1981): 97–122.

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(as I argued in the introduction) as a means of propitiation (Rom 3:25).⁹ Thus, as the Son is “lifted up” (John 8:28), he fully satisfied the Father’s righteous requirement through drinking the “cup that the Father has given [him]” (John 18:11; cf. Mark 10:38).¹⁰ Peter Bolt, in *The Cross from a Distance*, connects the imagery of the cup of wrath with Isaiah’s servant of the Lord. He writes,

Just before the final servant song, in which the servant dies a sacrificial death, we read that Israel has drunk the cup of God’s wrath to the dregs, and this cup will be handed to Israel’s tormentors (51:17, 22). Isaiah’s next chapter shows that it is the servant’s death that has exhausted the cup of God’s wrath on behalf of Israel. Jesus now [Mark 10:38] predicts that, as the servant of the Lord, he will drink the cup of God’s wrath.¹¹

At the cross, the Son was suffering the wrath and judgment of the Father as an offering for sin. How then can the Son experience the Father’s wrath but not his hatred? Are wrath and hatred synonymous? No. Because Christ “became a curse” (Gal 3:13), because the Father made him to “be sin” (2 Cor 5:21) and sent him “for sin, [the Father] condemned sin in the flesh” (Rom 8:3). His wrath and judgment towards sin was satisfied in the substitutionary work of Christ on the cross. Nevertheless, in those same passages, the Father cannot hate his Son because the Son is the perfect one who “knew no sin” (2 Cor 5:21) and who came in the “likeness of sinful flesh” (Rom 8:3). Thus, the Father’s motivation to send the son to the cross as a penal substitutionary sacrifice bearing the Father’s wrath was love, not hate.

And though Christ experienced “forsakenness” on the cross (Matt 27:46; Mark 15:34), it was not an absolute abandonment to outer darkness but rather the feeling of Christ in his humanity after nine hours on the cross that his Father had abandoned him. Even the Son’s expression cannot be understood to be an absolute statement for he calls the Father, “My God” and was confident of the Father’s loving care: “For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again” (John 10:17). He was able to pray as he breathed his last words, “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit” (Luke 23:46). The Son’s entrusting of his spirit to the Father reveals the fact that the outpouring of the Father’s wrath is not an act of love ontologically, but rather an act of perfect just wrath in the context of a loving plan to reconcile sinners to himself.

9. Again, the Father himself here takes the initiative to send the Son to be the means of satisfaction. See Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament 6 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1998), 191–92. For a thorough lexical and theological treatment of ἱλασμός (hilasmos “propitiation”), see Leon Morris, *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1955), 155–74.

10. The Old Testament allusions associate the cup with suffering and with the wrath of God the Father (Ps 75:8; Isa 51:17; Jer 25:15; Ezek 23:31–33). The book of Revelation has similar connections (Rev 14:10; 16:19), which fit well with the doctrine of propitiation.

11. Peter G. Bolt, *The Cross from a Distance: Atonement in Mark’s Gospel* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004), 67.

The Father's Plan Brings Him Pleasure

Because the Father's plan of salvation is motivated by his love, it brings him good pleasure to design his plan for the ages (Eph 1:5).¹² Paul writes to the Ephesians that the mystery of the Father's will is "according to *his* purpose, which *he* set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him [the Son], things in heaven and things on earth [emphasis mine]" (Eph 1:9-10). In other words, the great pleasure of the Father is to sum up all things in his Son. Later, Paul writes that the Father achieves his plan in Christ (Eph 3:11), and to the Colossians, Paul reiterates that the Father's mystery is Christ (Col 2:2) and the glorious riches of this mystery is Christ in the saints, the hope of glory (Col 1:26-27). Thus, there will be no corner of the world or feature of heaven where Christ's honor and glory will not reach. This is why the crucifixion cannot be discussed apart from the resurrection and exaltation of the Son.

In the Resurrection and Exaltation

It brought the Father great pleasure to raise the Son up from the dead, exalting the Son to his throne as king and high priest. That the Father accepted the Son's substitutionary sacrifice is demonstrated in the resurrection (Acts 2:24, 32; 3:15; 4:10; 5:30; 10:40; 13:30, 33-35; 17:31; Gal 1:1; 1 Thess 1:10; 1 Cor 15:15; 2 Cor 4:14; 2 Cor 13:4; Rom 6:4; 10:9; Col 2:12; Heb 5:7; 13:20; 1 Pet 1:21). Further, Peter writes that the Father not only raised him from the dead but also "gave him glory" (1 Pet 1:21). Therefore, as a part of the resurrection, the Father publicly revealed Christ to be his Son (Rom 1:4),¹³ and Jesus, as the Christ, lives by the power of the Father (2 Cor 13:4), and lives to honor and glorify him (Rom 6:10).¹⁴

Thus, the Father desires to placard his Son in the Spirit before the world as a demonstration of his lavish love and faithfulness to his promises. It is no surprise that in the throne room of heaven the continuous response of the heavenly court is unceasing worship of the Father and the "Lamb" (Rev 5:13-14).¹⁵ The "Lamb" language rings throughout the pages of Scripture. From the lamb slain at Passover

12. The Father's plan is rooted in his love, which brings him εὐδοκία (eudokia "purpose") (1:5). Translated as "purpose" in the ESV, it is used in connection with the Father's will and as Clinton Arnold says, it "refers to the pleasure and delight in one's heart that forms the basis for decision making and action," and is therefore better translated "good pleasure." See Clinton E. Arnold, *Ephesians*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary Series on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 83.

13. ὀρίζω (horizo) can mean "appointed," but better to mean "marked out" or "designated." I have translated it above as publicly revealed.

14. See Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996), 379.

15. The Spirit is, of course, included since he is represented by the "seven spirits" (Rev 3:1; 4:6) bringing the Son's message to the churches: "let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches" (Rev 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22).

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(Exod 12:1–14) as a redemption (e.g., Exod 6:6; 13:13, 15; 15:13; Deut 7:8), to the Levitical sacrifices of sin and burnt offerings and the ritual of the Day of Atonement (Lev 16). From the prophetic promise of a Messiah who will be “like a lamb that is led to the slaughter” (Isa 53:7), redeeming his people (Isa 35:9; 41:14; 43:1, 14; 44:22, 23, 24; 45:13; 51:11; 52:3; 62:12; 63:9) by the substitution of himself (Isa 53:4–5), to the cry of John the Baptist, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). Jesus is the one who by his blood ransomed a people from “every tribe and language and people and nation” (Rev 5:9).

This reality answers the question, “Why was it the will or good pleasure of the Father to crush him” (Isa 53:10)? Did the Father take some sadistic pleasure in pouring out his wrath upon the Son? No. The Father and Son knew that the “offering for guilt” that “[bore] their iniquities” would result in “offspring” who would be “accounted righteous” and he would “see and be satisfied” (Isa 53:10-11). To use the language of John’s Gospel: The Father has a people he gives to his Son (John 6:37; 10:29; 17:2, 6, 9, 24; 18:9). Furthermore: (1) All that the Father gives the Son will come (John 6:37), (2) the Son knows them (John 10:27), (3) they will never be snatched out of the Father or Son’s hands (John 10:28-29), (4) it is for the purpose of seeing the Father’s character (John 17:6),¹⁶ (5) they will be with the Son and see the Father’s love and generosity toward the Son (John 17:24),¹⁷ (6) none will be lost (John 18:9), nor will they be left as orphans since they will be indwelt and empowered by the Holy Spirit (John 14:16-18).

The will of the Father who sent the Son, then, is that he would lose “nothing” of all that he has given to the Son (John 6:38-40). Because of the Father’s love for the Son in the Spirit, Jesus can tell Nicodemus that the Father in this way “loved the world, that he gave his only son” (John 3:16). John, later reflecting on this love in 1 John 3:1 calls his readers to consider the greatness of the “kind of love” the Father has bestowed, which is exhibited in their adoption as his children through Christ by the Spirit. It is why for all eternity, all “blessing and honor and glory and might” are forever due the one “who sits on the throne” and “the Lamb” (Rev 5:13), and why it brings great pleasure to the Father to see all things summed up in his Son, the one “who did not come to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45).

D. A. Carson captures it well in his *The Difficult Doctrine of the Love of God*:

Thus, when we use the language of propitiation, we are not to think that the Son, full of love, offered himself and thereby placated (i.e., rendered propitious) the Father, full of wrath. The picture is more complex. It is that the Father, full of righteous wrath against us, nevertheless loved us so much that he sent his Son. Perfectly mirroring his Father’s words and deeds, the

16. To manifest the Father’s name is to reveal his character. Carson, *John*, 558.

17. Köstenberger, *John*, 501.

Son stood over against us in wrath—it is not for nothing that the Scriptures portray sinners wanting to hide from the face of him who sits on the throne *and from the wrath of the Lamb*—yet, obedient to his Father’s commission, offered himself on the cross. He did this out of love both for his Father, whom he obeys, and for us, whom he redeems. Thus God is necessarily both the subject and the object of propitiation. He provides the propitiating sacrifice (he is the subject), and he himself is propitiated (he is the object). That is the glory of the cross.¹⁸

Here then is the heart of the argument. The eternal love of the Father for the Son in the Spirit produced a plan for redemptive history that would bring all honor and glory to the Father and Son by the Spirit. In order to redeem a multitude of worshippers, the Father sent the Son, empowered by the Spirit to be a penal substitutionary sacrifice, enduring the wrath of God so that those worshippers would not only see the glory of the Father in the face of Christ, but would experience the Father’s love in the Son by the indwelling Spirit. Further, the Father hates sin but cannot hate his Son, and so was greatly pleased that the Son laid down his life and took it up again, accomplishing redemption and propitiation and reconciliation as the perfect sacrifice for sin. For only as a substitute can he actually pay for sins, bring real forgiveness and make peace.

18. D. A. Carson, *The Difficult Doctrine of the Love of God* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2000), 72.

Performing the Surgery, Saving the Patient: Reduplication, Proper Christological Predication, and Critiques of *Christus Odium*

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Abstract: In response to the christological objections to *Christus Odium* raised by Farris and Hamilton, this article argues that *Christus Odium* cannot be ruled out on christological grounds. Further it shows that if these christological objections stand, then there would be adverse implications for other views of the atonement, including more historic and classical theories. So instead of objecting to *Christus Odium* on christological grounds, this article suggests that the discussion be relocated into the dogmatic sphere of the doctrine of God and seek to clarify the definition and nature of divine “hatred.”

Key Words: Christology, Hypostatic Union, Atonement, Reduplication, Divine Justice

In two recent articles, Joshua R. Farris and S. Mark Hamilton weave a strong “cautionary tale”¹ against a view of the atonement, which they consider a sub-set of penal substitution, called “*Christus Odium*.” We might analogically imagine their theological argumentation like those of surgeons excising a tumorous theory that has attached itself to the body of Christ. In most places I materially agree with Farris and Hamilton about the diagnosis of *Christus Odium*. However, I worry that their critiques not only cut out the tumor (*Christus Odium*), but may also damage a vital organ of the body (Christological predication), an organ that is necessary for the health of other actions of the body (other atonement models).²

Here I will argue from the foundation of conciliar Christology in order suggest that Farris and Hamilton’s attempt to critique *Christus Odium* on christological grounds (i.e., denying the *possibility* of the position on the basis of the hypostatic union) “cuts” too far and has adverse consequences on more minimalistic accounts of the atonement.³ This argument will first narrate their christological concerns,

1. Joshua R. Farris and S. Mark Hamilton, “This is My Beloved Son, Whom I Hate? A Critique of the *Christus Odium* Variant of Penal Substitution,” *Journal of Biblical and Theological Studies* 3 (2018): 286.

2. In order to demonstrate this last point, I will draw from Patristic, Reformation, and modern atonement models.

3. Conciliar Christology designates the christological affirmations of the first seven ecumenical

then defend (in contrast to Farris and Hamilton) the christological possibility of *Christus Odium*, and finally conclude by suggesting a relocation of the discussion away from the locus of Christology into the spheres of the doctrine of God and terminological clarity.

The “Christological Problems”

This section will briefly present the Christological problems that Farris and Hamilton perceive to be inherent in *Christus Odium*. Their presentation and definition of *Christus Odium* is, indeed, dependent upon these christological problems. They define *Christus Odium* as a position that is constituted by the following claims (quoted as they appear in both pieces):

“This is My Beloved Son, Whom I Hate?” ⁴	“Which Penalty, Whose Atonement?” ⁵
The demands of divine retributive justice ≈ the exercise of divine wrath ≈ the divine exhibition and human experience of divine hatred.	Exercises of divine retribution are equivalent to the exercises of divine hatred.
Paying the debt to retributive justice, the Son is (temporarily) hated by the Father.	Paying a debt of punishment, the Son becomes the object of the Father’s hatred.
The Son of God died on the cross, which was motivated by Fatherly hate.	When Christ dies on the cross, the Son of God himself dies.
The object of the atonement is Divine hatred.	

Farris and Hamilton say that these claims raise “a set of Christological concerns,”⁶ which they narrate in their longest section in the 2018 article and name in the 2020 article. The ones which we will focus on here are their concerns about (1) Christ as the “object of the Father’s hate” and (2) the possibility of the Son dying on the cross.

creeds and their appropriation by the patristic, medieval, and Reformation theologians. For a historical narration of this development see Brian E. Daley, *God Visible: Patristic Christology Reconsidered*, Changing Paradigms in Historical and Systematic Theology (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018).

4. This column is drawn from Farris and Hamilton, “My Beloved Son,” 276.

5. This column is drawn from the beginning portion of Joshua R. Farris and S. Mark Hamilton, “Which Penalty, Whose Atonement? Revisiting *Christus Odium*” (paper presented at the 2019 National Meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society, San Diego, CA, November, 2019).

6. Farris and Hamilton, “My Beloved Son,” 280.

They introduce the first of their christological questions by asking “who is hated”?⁷ They then offer two options: Christ’s human nature or his divine nature.⁸ They rightly dismiss the possibility of the Father hating the divine nature without delay. They then move on to question whether it would be possible for the Father to hate the human nature of Christ. On the basis of the doctrine of the *anhypostatic* humanity of Christ (which states that Christ’s humanity is not self-subsistent but rather subsists “in the person [hypostasis]” of the Son) they claim that the possibility of the Father hating the humanity of Christ without hating his divinity divides the person of Christ. Specifically, they say, “The problem for ‘*Christus Odium*’ is that Christ’s Divine and human natures are divided in a way that is not only unnatural, violating the Scriptural account of his representational work, but also violates traditional catholic Christology—something we think all should be loath to do.”⁹ The logic behind this concern seems to be: the Father cannot act toward Christ’s human nature in a way distinct from the Father’s actions toward Christ’s divine nature, at pains of Nestorianism.¹⁰

The second question that we will note here is the claim that “The Son of God died on the cross.”¹¹ They aver that such a claim “suggests a more fundamental belief that God himself can die, that is, cease to exist” and that “to make such a claim is to make a dangerous metaphysical misstep.”¹²

Farris and Hamilton suggest that the first question yields a “fractured picture” of Christology and the second constitutes “a significant problem for the *Christus Odium* variant.”¹³ Contrary to these two “christological concerns,” my contention is that these acts are *christological possibilities* and can only be ruled out if we relocate the discussion by clarifying the definition of “hate.”

Christological Possibilities

Rather than christological *problems*, I suggest that the two key claims of *Christus Odium* above are (minimally) *possible* for orthodox christological. This is not to defend the veracity of *Christus Odium*, but the *plausibility* of the *claims* of *Christus Odium*—claims that Farris and Hamilton reject on christological grounds. Specifically, my argument is that excluding the *possibility* of the Father acting in

7. Farris and Hamilton, “My Beloved Son,” 280.

8. Interestingly their 2020 paper seems to reject this dual possibility and assume that *Christus Odium* necessitates the belief that “God somehow despised the divine nature of his beloved Son” (Farris and Hamilton, “Which Penalty, Whose Atonement?”).

9. Farris and Hamilton, “My Beloved Son,” 281.

10. Farris and Hamilton, “My Beloved Son,” 281.

11. Farris and Hamilton, “My Beloved Son,” 281; “Which Penalty, Whose Atonement.”

12. Farris and Hamilton, “This is My Beloved Son,” 281.

13. Farris and Hamilton, “This is My Beloved Son,” 281–82.

diverse (seemingly incompatible) ways toward the incarnate Son¹⁴ and the possibility of the Son dying on the basis of Christology not only excludes *Christus Odium* but excludes other important soteriological claims from within the tradition.

My argument (for christological plausibility of the claims that God the Son can be the object of diverse predicates in his human and divine natures, and that God the Son dies) is based on a christological strategy of “reduplication,”¹⁵ that is, claiming that a predicate or operation belongs to Christ according to either nature but not the other.¹⁶ For example, Christ is immortal “as God” and mortal “as man.” Francis Turretin illustrates this mechanism by stating that for Christ “to be dependent and independent, finite and infinite belong to Christ in different respects; the former with respect to the human nature; the latter with respect to the divine.”¹⁷ While versions of this strategy have been critiqued in modern christological thought for its apparent contradiction (i.e., one subject who holds contradictory properties),¹⁸ another version of it has been successfully defended by Timothy Pawl. Pawl suggests that incompatible predicates of a single subject (like immutable and mutable) are non-contradictory if we understand Christ to be a single subject who (unlike all other subjects) exists in two distinct natures. So passibility and impassibility can cohere because Christ has a nature that is passible and Christ has a nature that is impassible. This is the same subject (Christ) who bears distinct predicates in each of his two natures.¹⁹ With this logical possibility the Reformed scholastics drew a distinction between “proper” and “improper” christological predication.²⁰ “Proper predication”

14. There are important qualifications of trinitarian actions upon the Son (e.g., appropriations, indivisible operations, and proper actions), but they go beyond the scope of my work in this article. See Gilles Emery, “The Personal Mode of Trinitarian Action in Saint Thomas Aquinas,” *The Thomist* 69 (2005): 31–77.

15. For an extended discussion and clarification on the function of reduplication, see Michael Gorman, *Aquinas on the Metaphysics of the Hypostatic Union* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 126–57; Paul Helm, *John Calvin’s Ideas* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 69–83. Historically, see this operative in Thomas Aquinas (ST III, Q. 16, A. 10) and John Owen, *Vindiciae Evangelicae*, *The Works of John Owen*, ed. William H. Goold, 24 vols. (Edinburgh: Johnston & Hunter 1850–1855), 12:66. Hereafter, WJO followed by volume name, number, and page number.

16. From my perspective this could apply to Christ in three ways: (1) as the grammatical subject of ontological predicates, (2) as the object of the acts of other persons/agents upon Christ, (3) as the agent of discrete acts. This article will focus on the first two.

17. Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, ed. James T. Dennison, trans. George Musgrave Giger, 3 vols. (Phillipsburg: P&R, 1992), II:13.vi.23.

18. Robin Le Poidevin, “Identity and the Composite Christ: An Incarnational Dilemma,” *Religious Studies* 45:2 (2009): 167–86; Richard Cross, *The Metaphysics of the Incarnation: Thomas Aquinas to Duns Scotus* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 177–78; Thomas Morris, *The Logic of God Incarnate* (Cornell University Press, 1986), 48–9.

19. See especially Timothy Pawl, *In Defense of Conciliar Christology: A Philosophical Essay*, *Oxford Studies in Analytic Theology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 157–62.

20. See Stephen R. Holmes, “Reformed Varieties of the Communicatio Idiomatum,” in *The Person of Christ*, ed. Stephen R. Holmes, and Murray A. Rae (New York: T & T Clark, 2005), 81; Thomas Joseph White, *The Incarnate Lord: A Thomistic Study in Christology* (Washington, D.C.: CUA Press, 2015), 249.

occurs when a predicate or action of Christ according to either nature is ascribed to him according to that same nature.²¹ For example, “the Word was God” (John 1:1) ascribes a divine predicate to Christ (i.e., “was God”) and designates him through a title of his divine nature (“the Word”). “Improper predication” occurs when a predicate or action is ascribed to Christ, yet it is only true according to a designation of the opposite nature.²² For example, Romans 9:5 states that Christ is descended from the patriarchs (i.e., a predicate of Christ according to human nature alone) and yet designates him as “God over all” (a title that is true of him according to his divinity). On the basis of proper and improper predication, the *christological* claims of *Christus Odium* are a possibility for orthodox Christology, and to deny these claims has adverse soteriological consequences.

Proper Predication: Christ as the Object of Distinct Divine Operations

The first putative problem that we will address is that the Son is the object of diverse actions according to either nature. Farris and Hamilton argue that Christ cannot be “hated” according to his human nature because it would introduce a fissure between it and his divine nature (which is “beloved”). However, conciliar Christology holds that the mere predication of diverse predicates or actions (even seemingly contradictory ones) need not constitute such a fissure and, indeed, this mode of predication is essential to the Christology of the ecumenical creeds and Scripture itself.

It is important that we affirm, from the beginning, that Christ is one “who” (person) subsisting in two natures (two “whats”). As Gregory of Nazianzus says, “the constituents of our savior are different ‘whats’ (ἄλλο καὶ ἄλλο) . . . but not different ‘whos’ (ἄλλος καὶ ἄλλος).”²³ Accordingly, whatever is true of either nature is true of the one person subsisting in both natures.²⁴ This allows the church, as in the Athanasian creed, to describe Christ as the object of distinct actions according to either nature:

21. Henk van den Belt et al., eds., *Synopsis Purior Theologiae; Synopsis of a Purer Theology: Latin Text and English Translation*, vol. 2, *Disputations 24–42*, trans. Riemer A. Faber, Studies in Medieval and Reformation Traditions, Texts, and Sources 8 (Boston: Brill, 2016), 85; see also John of Damascus, “Orthodox Faith,” in *Saint John of Damascus: Writings*, trans. by Frederic H. Chase Jr., FC 37 (Washington D.C.: CUA Press, 1958), III.15, 311; Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, II:13.vii.14–15.

22. van den Belt, *Synopsis of Purer Theology*, 2:87–89.

23. St. Gregory of Nazianzus, *On God and Christ: The Five Theological Orations and Two Letters to Cledonius*, trans. Lionel Wickham, Popular Patristics Series 23 (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimirs, 2002), 157; revised according to PG 37:180A.

24. This is most frequently seen in discussions of the communication of attributes. For a recent treatment of the communicatio in Reformation discussions, see Richard Cross, *Communicatio Idiomatum: Reformation Christological Debates*, Changing Paradigms in Historical and Systematic Theology (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019).

He is God from the essence of the Father,
begotten before time;
and he is human from the essence of his mother,
born in time;
completely God, completely human,
with a rational soul and human flesh;
equal to the Father as regards divinity,
less than the Father as regards humanity.²⁵

Here we see diverse predicates (equal and less than) of the one subject and that same person is the object of diverse actions (i.e., “begotten before time” and “born in time”).

This is true of human actions toward Christ—Christ is “seen with [human] eyes” and “touched” with human hands (1 John 1) according to his human nature (since his divine nature is invisible and incorporeal)—yet, this is also true of divine actions toward Christ. For example, Christ has “life in himself” (John 5:26) and is the “author of life” (according to his divine nature) yet is “raised from the dead” (Acts 3:15) according to his human nature. Christ is inherently the “radiance of God’s glory” (Heb 1:3) in his divine nature, yet is glorified by the Father (John 17:5) in his human nature.

In order to illustrate the diverse predicates of Christ, we can turn to a historic christological analogy. While all analogies are merely partial, imperfect representations of the *sui generis* hypostatic union, several analogies have been offered throughout the tradition.²⁶ One historically prominent illustration of reduplication and

25. Likewise, Constantinople II affirms the double nativity of Christ (begotten from eternity, born in time). Norman P. Tanner, ed., *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1990), 114.

26. On the very imperfect nature of christological analogies, see Donald Fairbairn, *Grace and Christology in the Early Church*, Oxford Early Christian Studies (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 118. One of the most prominent is the body/soul analogy (Thomas G. Weinandy, “The Soul/Body Analogy and the Incarnation: Cyril of Alexandria,” *Coptic Church Review* 17 [1996]: 59–66). While many thinkers historically used it to indicate the unity of action, it seems that the Reformed tradition often used it to distinguish between the immediate effects of the operations of the soul (for example, thinking) and the operations of the body (for example, digesting); see Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1981), 2:394–95; John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeil, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1960), II.14.1; Turretin, *Institutes*, II:13.viii.1; WJO, *Pneumatologia*, 3:101, 420.

diverse predication is the image of a single fire-sword—i.e., a burning iron sword.²⁷ A fire-sword subsists first, and primarily, in an iron nature that then assumes a fire nature into subsistence with itself without giving up any of its iron-ness. Upon this composition of the fire-sword, it has two distinct natures with distinct capacities, to burn and to cut; to be extinguished and to be sharpened. If the blacksmith douses the sword with water, we can say that the single sword was “extinguished” because the fire nature of the sword was put out (even though iron is in-extinguishable).

This mode of predicating discrete actions and attributes of Christ according to either nature is not only christologically plausible, but soteriologically essential. For example, Jonathan Edwards says,

If Christ had remained only in the divine nature, he would not have been in a capacity to have purchased our salvation. . . . For Christ merely as God was not capable either of that obedience or suffering that was needful. The divine nature is not capable of suffering, . . . neither is it capable of obedience to that law that was given to man. . . . Man’s law could not be answered but by being obeyed by man.²⁸

Edwards’s claim on the necessity of obedience (which is only possible for Christ *as a human*) for salvation is shared not only across the Reformed tradition,²⁹ but also among those who reject the imputation language of Edwards and instead suggest that Christ fulfills the plan for human Israel by retracing the failures “of Adam, a recapitulation or rerunning of the divine program for” humanity.³⁰ The theme of recapitulation has historic precedent in Irenaeus’s soteriology as well, whereby the Son of God take upon everyone essential to humanity in order to restore humanity back to God.³¹

To put it simply: if it is not possible for the One who is beloved in his divine nature to be “hated” (whatever that means) in his human nature *for christological*

27. John of Damascus, “Orthodox Faith,” III.15, 308; Maximus, “Disputatio,” (PG 91:337D–340A). WJO, *Christologia*, 1:230.

28. Jonathan Edwards, *A History of the Work of Redemption*, ed. John Frederick Wilson; The Works of Jonathan Edwards (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 9:295–96. See also, Calvin, *Institutes*, III.xi.9. Meritorious obedience as a soteriological category certainly precedes the Reformed tradition (Marilyn McCord Adams, *What Sort of Human Nature? Medieval Philosophy and the Systematics of Christology*, The Aquinas Lectures [Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1999], 96; Adonis Vidu, *Atonement, Law, and Justice: The Cross in Historical and Cultural Contexts* [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2014], 83–85), but it is particularly meaningful for the Reformed tradition.

29. D. Glenn Butner, *The Son Who Learned Obedience: A Theological Case Against the Eternal Submission of the Son* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2018), 104: calls this claim “widespread” in the Reformed tradition.

30. James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, Word Biblical Commentary 38A (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1988), 297; likewise, N. T. Wright, “The Letter to the Romans: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections,” in *The New Interpreter’s Bible: A Commentary in Twelve Volumes*, ed. Leander E. Keck, vol. 10 (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2002), 10:529.

31. See Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, ANF 1:448–56; Thomas F. Torrance, *The Trinitarian Faith: The Evangelical Theology of the Ancient Catholic Faith*, 2nd ed. (New York: T & T Clark, 2016), 162

reasons, then it is not possible for the one who has life in himself to be raised to life and it is not possible for the one who eternally breathes the Spirit be anointed by the Spirit. The problem with Christus Odium then is not the christological introduction of a fissure between Christ's two natures.

Improper Predication: "God the Son Dies"

The above argues for the possibility of diverse predicates to be attributable to Christ according to either nature. Farris and Hamilton's next objection goes beyond diverse predication of Christ, and focuses on a capacity or attribute in one nature being true of Christ when he is designated by a title of the other. Rather than suggesting that such a claim is metaphysically dubious,³² I suggest that this claim is part and parcel of affirming the atoning act of God in Christ on our behalf.

Farris and Hamilton first (rightly) claim that it is not possible for God the Son to die (according to his divine nature) when operating within the bounds of "catholic Christianity"³³ and biblical Christology (1 Tim 6:16). Yet they follow this claim up with two curious theological moves: (1) they define "death" as the cessation of existence and (2) they deny the union of God the Son with the body of Christ in the tomb. Both of these moves do not follow "catholic Christianity." However, if we do follow the tradition, then we will see that it is both christologically possible for "God the Son to die" (with appropriate specifications/qualifications) and soteriologically significant that this he did indeed do so.

Death for the vast majority of the Christian tradition has simply been the separation of the soul from the body.³⁴ For example, Gregory of Nyssa defines death as the "severance of the union of the soul and body" and then states that resurrection necessarily includes the "return, after they have been dissolved, of those elements [i.e., soul and body] that had been before linked."³⁵ Regardless of how one defines "soul" here, so long as there is some sort of an affirmation of the intermediate state, then this definition of death suffices.³⁶ Even if they intend "somatic death" to mean the cessation of bodily/neurological activity,³⁷ we are not discussing the "cessation of existence."³⁸

32. Farris and Hamilton, "Which Penalty, Whose Atonement," 7.

33. Farris and Hamilton, "My Beloved Son," 281.

34. Augustine, *The City of God XI–XXII*, trans. William Babcock (Hyde Park, NY: New City, 2013), XIII.2, XIII.6.

35. St. Gregory of Nyssa, "Great Catechism," *Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers*, trans. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, series 2, vol. 5 (Grand Rapids, MI: WM. B. Eerdmans, 1980) 5:489.

36. The affirmation of an intermediate state seems likely for these authors, see Joshua R. Farris, *The Soul of Theological Anthropology: A Cartesian Exploration* (New York: Routledge, 2017).

37. Farris and Hamilton, "My Beloved Son," 282.

38. There is debate in the tradition, however, on the *nature* of the soul's existence after death. Melissa Eitenmiller, "On the Separated Soul according to St. Thomas Aquinas," *Nova et Vetera* 17, no. 1 (Winter 2019): 57–91.

Upon this definition of death, the breadth of the Catholic and Protestant traditions affirm that God the Son remains united to his human body. For example, John of Damascus says,

And so, even though as man He did die and His sacred soul was separated from His immaculate body, the divinity remained unseparated from both—the soul . . . and the body. Thus, the one Person was not divided into two persons. For from the beginning both had existence in the same way in the Person of the Word, and when they were separated from each other in death, each one of them remained in the possession of the one Person of the Word.³⁹

Likewise, Owen says that “in his death the union of his natures in his person was not in the least impeached”⁴⁰ because the Father promised not to abandon his Holy One in death (Ps 16:10; Acts 2:31).

If God the Son remains united to his body, then there is certainly a sense in which we can strongly affirm that “God the Son died.” We can do this by means of improper predication. That is, God the Son is a title of Christ that is true of him according to his divine nature and the ability to “die” is a property of Christ according to his human nature. Because God the Son remains united to the soul *and the body* of his human nature, then we can rightly say “the soul of God the Son (i.e., the soul that is hypostatically united to him) is separated from the body of God the Son (i.e., the body that is hypostatically united to him)” —which is just longhand for “God the Son died.”

Indeed, this mode of predication seems to be the same kind of understanding present in 1 Corinthians 2:8 where the “Lord of Glory” is “crucified.” This does not entail that the omnipresent divine nature is spatially located on a piece of wood.⁴¹ Instead, it evidences the way we can name the person according to one nature and predicate a property or action of his according to another is valid but “improper.”

With the above clarifications, we can certainly (albeit improperly) affirm that “God the Son dies.” There is precedent for this claim even in the creeds: the Son was “crucified, and *died*, and was *buried*.” Here, God the Son is the subject of the predicates “died” and “was buried”—predicates that are true of Christ when his soul and body are separated and that body is laid to rest in Joseph’s tomb. Likewise, this claim permeates our worship. Isaac Watts sung, “When I survey the wondrous cross; on which *the Prince of glory died*.” Likewise, Charles Wesley extolled the church to behold the “Amazing love” of God and wondered “how can it be that Thou, *my God, shouldst die for me?*”

39. John of Damascus, “Orthodox Faith,” III.27, 332; Thomas Aquinas, *ST III*, Q. 50, A. 2. s.c.

40. WJO, *Pneumatologia*, 3:180

41. Chalcedon encourages the Christian to “consider what nature it was that hung, pierced with nails, on the wood of the cross.” Tanner, *Decrees*, 81.

The claim that “God dies” is not only biblically and creedally significant but also soteriologically significant. It is because God the Son “tastes death for everyone” (Heb 2:9) that through him God might give us victory “over sin and death” (1 Cor 15:57). Cyril of Alexandria summarizes the importance of God the Son dying:

For God was in humanity. He who was above all creation was in our human condition. . . . The immaterial one could be touched; he who is free in his own nature came in the form of a slave; he who blesses all creation became accused. . . . Life itself came in the appearance of death. All this followed because the body which tasted death belongs to no other but him who is the Son by nature.⁴²

Likewise, Anselm (upon whom Farris and Hamilton depend) affirms the logic of this position, that “dying” is God’s activity and is therefore predicatable of God: “If, therefore, . . . the heavenly city should have its full complement made up by members of the human race, and this cannot be the case if the recompense of which we have spoken is not paid, which no one can pay except God, and no one ought to pay except man: it is necessary that a God-Man should pay it.”⁴³

This subsection has argued that the second constitute claim of *Christus Odium* (i.e., that God the Son died) is not a christological problem. When added to the previous subsection, we can see that these “christological problems” are not all that problematic. What is more, if we define these claims as problematic, then we not only cut off the possibility of *Christus Odium* but also the soteriological significance built upon these christological claims.

Conclusion: Relocating the Discussion

This paper has argued that Farris and Hamilton’s rejection of *Christus Odium* on christological grounds neglects the plausibility of these claims within conciliar Christology and is too severe if we are to retain multiple soteriological conventions. So if the above claims are *christologically* plausible and that formal plausibility is soteriologically significant (i.e., to cut off that possibility through Christology would be to cut off several traditional soteriological claims), are we resigned to affirm *Christus Odium*? I suggest that the best way to remove the tumor without wounding the vital christological organs nearby would be to relocating the discussion into the locus of the doctrine of God—specifically by gaining terminological clarity on the meaning of divine “hate.” Such a relocation could deal with many of the concerns that Farris and Hamilton (and I) have with certain versions of *Christus Odium*, while

42. Cyril of Alexandria, *On the Unity of Christ*, ed. John Anthony McGuckin (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimirs Seminary Press, 2015), 61.

43. Anselm, “Why God Became Man,” in *The Major Works*, ed. Brian Davies and G. R. Evans (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 320.

still affirming the christological claims above. If the discussion is relocated to the sphere of divine hatred we might ask the following questions:

(A) What would it mean for God to “hate” in regards to divine impassible/passibility? Does hatred require a passible God? Might it be possible to use divine “hatred” in a way that is similar to divine “regret” or “grief” on a classical view of God?

(B) How do divine hatred and “pleasure in punishment” relate? Farris and Hamilton seem to think that a denial of the latter constitutes a denial of the former. However, (by way of objection) I can candidly admit that I *hate*(!) mice and yet, each time I hear a mouse trap snap and the demise of those infuriating creatures, I feel absolutely zero pleasure.

(C) If *Christus Odium* can answer A and B in a way that constellates divine affections and “hatred” under a classical doctrine of God, how would that relate to Farris and Hamilton’s affirmation that “the effects of the Father’s seeking restitution or pouring out his wrath [are] transferred from one class of people to a person”?⁴⁴ Could “hatred” be another way of speaking about this reality?

Finally, (D) might a more nuanced version *Christus Odium* define “hatred” and apply it to Christ in a way similar to John Owen’s concession below? He wonders:

“But it will be said that if our sins, as to the guilt of them, were imputed unto Christ, then God must hate Christ; for he hateth the guilty. I know not well how I come to mention these things, which indeed I look upon as cavils, But seeing it is mentioned, it may be spoken unto; and,—First, It is certain that the Lord Christ’s taking on him the guilt of our sins was a high act of obedience unto God, Heb. 10:5, 6; and for which the “Father loved him,” John 10:17, 18. There was, therefore, no reason why God should hate Christ for his taking on him our debt, and the payment of it, in an act of the highest obedience unto his will. Secondly, God in this matter is considered as a rector, ruler, and judge. Now, it is not required of the severest judge, that, as a judge, he should hate the guilty person As such, he hath no more to do but consider the guilt, and pronounce the sentence of punishment. But, Thirdly, Suppose a person, out of an heroic generosity of mind, should become an *Αντίψυχος* for another, for his friend, for a good man, so as to answer for him with his life, as Judah undertook to be for Benjamin as to his liberty,—which, when a man hath lost, he is civilly dead, and “capite diminutus,”—would the most cruel tyrant under heaven, that should take away his life, in that case hate him? would he not rather admire his worth and virtue? As such a one it was that Christ suffered, and no otherwise. Fourthly, All the force of this exception depends on the ambiguity of the word hate; for it may signify either an aversation or detestation of mind, or only a will of punishing, as in God mostly it doth. In the first sense, there was no ground why God should hate

44. Farris and Hamilton, “My Beloved Son,” 278.

Christ on this imputation of guilt unto him, . . . But for a will of punishing in God, where sin is imputed, none can deny it.”⁴⁵

Owen’s response to those who ask if the Father hated the Son strikes me as a helpful one. Even before answering the question he calls it “cavil” (i.e., a frivolous objection)—“why would one ever want to make such a claim” might be a valid translation of the subtext. When he does address the concern, he covers his christological bases and clarifies the nature of judgment. The difficulty he sees is in the ambiguity of the definition of “hate”—saying, in one sense it is utterly inappropriate, yet in another sense (i.e., when it is synonymous with the will to judge/punish justly) then it is plausible.⁴⁶ What Owen illustrates here is the possibility of relocating the discussion of *Christus Odium* into the realm of definitional clarity (rather than Christology). Upon this relocation, we can then discuss whether such a claim and such a definition are theological valuable.

The goal of this response has been to provide a counter-“cautionary tale.” That is, it warns that if Farris and Hamilton “cut out” the christological possibilities above along with *Christus Odium*, then the body may lose important organ function in surgery. While I commend their desire to defend the love of God in Christ, I worry that their exclusion of *Christus Odium* on christological grounds cuts away valuable theological goods. Consequently, I suggest that a reengagement of *Christus Odium* on terminological grounds has much more precision and avoids risk to the major christological muscles of atonement models.

45. WJO, *Justification*, 5:203–04.

46. God’s “hatred” of Esau may be illustrative here. God hated him (Rom 9:13) but blesses him.

Ty Kieser: *Performing the Surgery, Saving the Patient*

