

Correspondence with KH

March 5, 2017

KH commented on Atonement in Scripture: Why Trump and Cruz Are the Direct, Logical Result of American Evangelical Theology

Your article was quite demeaning to Trump evangelical voters, but I do not practice today's politically correct victimhood and will not stoop to lecturing you. I read your entire article to understand your basic "Hell aversive" views. I will trust that you are open minded enough to read my article in order to gain an alternative view. I started to describe myself, but I detest identity politics since there are no such distinctions in my primary identity in Christ.

A GODLY VOTING STRATEGY

THE IMPORTANCE OF VOTING

Voting is a civic responsibility in these United States because these votes select those who bear the sword of government (Rom 13:4). The election system is not perfect, but votes can and do have impacts as the hanging chad votes of Florida in the 2000 presidential election attest. God's plan is for mankind to have the dignity of choices (e.g., votes); otherwise we would be simply complex robots without moral responsibilities.

Jesus speaks strongly to the importance of decisions and choices with His parables of the cost of discipleship:

"For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it -- lest, after he has laid the foundation, and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish?' or what king, going to make war against another king, does not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? or else, while the other is still a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks conditions of peace. So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple. (Lk. 14:28-33 NKJ)

Of course Jesus is pointing to the penultimate decision of following Him as Lord and Savior.

Jesus has made an unspeakably tremendous sacrifice to allow our entrance into heaven. The seemingly greatest point of Godly wrath expressed in scripture is not toward specific sins of idolatry, lying, and the like. Rather the sin of choosing to reject the "blood-bought" ticket to heaven that His Son has already paid for. If Father God's wrath is brought to boil for this sin against the free gift of salvation, then do not earthly fathers have a similar right to express their wrath at lackadaisical voting behavior and lackadaisical concern for the constitution and all that it provides. See parenthetical inserts below.

Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant (defenders) by which he was sanctified (protected) a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace (freedom)? For we know Him who said, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. And again, "The LORD will judge His people." It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. (Heb. 10:29-31 NKJ)

Of course God is the final judge in these matters, but we can feel the electricity of wrath from these words. Since both Father God and fathers are quite angered when real sacrifices of blood are wasted, then let us examine a voting strategy worthy of this immeasurable treasure. By the way, if the thought of your women folk in burkas due to Sharia law or city mayors "giving rioters space to destroy" is not enough incentive to go vote, then check your pulse and your eternal destiny!

THE ERROR OF "LOW PROBABILITY" 3RD PARTY AND WRITE-IN CANDIDATES

In the above parable of discipleship Jesus refers to the building of a fortress tower, which for teaching purposes we can consider akin to a political party. Additionally, Jesus refers to a king's army of thousands, which for teaching

purposes we can consider akin to vote counts. Now if Jesus points us to the wisdom of not foolishly attempting to proceed with battle plans when we have neither viable fortress/party nor viable army/votes, but rather recommends “sending a delegation for terms of peace” to avoid war, then who are our modern day religious puritanical leaders to recommend pursuing a non-viable 3rd party, a write-in candidate, or simply a no vote. If your third party candidate was eliminated in the primaries, then is it not insanity to repeat this vote and expect different results?

There are those who recommend voting for 3rd parties or write-in candidates against Trump in order to “lose the current election, but shift the political base to win the next election”. Yet, these same people have just clearly witnessed in Trump the proper way to win in the next election (if they are so favored). Trump has started from ground level and defeated experienced candidates to form a “3rd party” within a hopefully reformed Republican Party. There is no need to lose this election by “cutting your nose off to spite your face”. Next season all Republicans can have equal opportunity to gather their own army/fortress funding. In fact, it is possible that in the next election the current Sanders voters will force the Clintons into a 3rd party reformed version of the Democratic party.

Our job this election cycle is per William F. Buckley “to elect the most conservative candidate who can win”. My initial candidate Huckabee quickly faded, my second candidate Cruz failed, and now my candidate is Trump. I do not begrudge the American people for not electing the best candidate (whoever that may be somewhere, someplace in this nation!). Rather, I respect God’s providential hand in all of man’s affairs and I cherish the voting rights and free speech that allow me to push the masses toward the lesser of two evils.

PERFECTION AS THE ENEMY OF THE GOOD

In 1971 my Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) instructor pronounced to us on day one that “war is an extension of the political process”. Today we may thank God that the political process within these United States is conducted by the ballot not the bullet. However, it is prudent and responsible for each of us to think of ourselves as citizen soldiers who have covenanted together to protect the common good.

Citizens and rulers are to limit evil against the common good. God, Himself, has often conducted warlike actions to limit evil against His people via Noah’s flood, the confusion of the Tower of Babel to prevent a monopolistic one world government, and even the conquering punishments of Babylon against a corrupt Jerusalem. In regards to voting the proverbial wisdom is to vote for the lesser of two evils, but rather than “candidate character only” as the criteria this is better expressed as voting to limit evil. It is a given fact that naïve Godly “do-gooder” people have been known to produce horrible social evils (e.g., Prohibition with its crime empowered consequence). Today we must ask ourselves “Is naïve immigration policy going to bring us Islamic terrorism and Latin American gang violence?”

The vote directly relates to the actions of an ongoing warfare to limit evil. One of the requirements for a Just War is that “there must be serious prospects of success”. This places the puritanical third-party write-in vote literally out of bounds as a proper use of the vote/sword for a Just War philosophy (i.e., they just cannot win). As an experienced engineer I know that often designs proceed forth even though they are less than optimum or flawed because the arrow of time continues onward. Hopefully, the next design benefits from past mistakes. Only immaturity and self-important pridefulness will continue to murmur once the concrete and steel are erected (i.e., the election is over - work with what is there).

I am reminded of the frustration of Lincoln with McClellan, the general that would not accomplish the battle mission unless everything was perfect to his liking where the selfish McClellan could not possibly lose. Lincoln had to dismiss him for Grant, a practical character, who got the job done. Let us give Trump a break about his locker room language and discourse. Too many times Christian missionaries have focused on the appalling habits of aboriginal cultures with their nakedness, odd habits, etc. Think of John the Baptist in camel hair and calling the Pharisees a brood of vipers – too bad they missed God’s plan because their pride was hurt. Trump has been running through the business jungle for years and he is a survivor. I wonder how our religious leaders would survive in the business world given a holier than thou penchant for using write-in candidates to duck reality. In the engineering profession we put “request-for-quotes” out and when only two respond we pick the one who will do the best -- RARE, EXTREMELY RARE is an executive so presumptuous they he decides to build his own candidate/company out of thin air to accomplish the task because he thinks the marketplace reality is too inferior for his taste. God help us if

our religious leadership “have gone in the way of Cain, have run greedily in the error of Balaam for profit, and perished in the rebellion of Korah.” (Jude 1:11 NKJ)

Is the appeal of liberal media attention for all who would split the Republican party (and evangelical voters) too attractive?

2016 CANDIDATE COMPARISONS

This article will not address all the past failures and dangers of Hillary Clinton as President, since the Clinton’s public record is extensive and very scary. One can compare them to the exploits of Ahab and Jezebel with her as his evil “fixer” (I Kings 16 - II Kings 9). In summary, we appear to be observing the parable of two sons in real time.

“But what do you think? A man had two sons, and he came to the first and said, ‘Son, go, work today in my vineyard.’ He answered and said, ‘I will not,’ but afterward he regretted it and went. Then he came to the second and said likewise. And he answered and said, ‘I go, sir,’ but he did not go. Which of the two did the will of his father?” They said to Him, “The first.” Jesus said to them, “Assuredly, I say to you that tax collectors and harlots enter the kingdom of God before you. For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him; but tax collectors and harlots believed him; and when you saw it, you did not afterward relent and believe him. (Matt. 21:25-32 NKJ)

Trump, as the first son, has a profane mouth that requires walking his comments backward sometimes, but Hillary, as the second son, says whatever her audience wants to hear only to deceive. The tax collectors and harlots are the evangelical working class and the Pharisees are the leftist leadership offended at Trumps comments. These modern day Pharisees strain at a gnat (e.g., his politically incorrect jokes) but swallow a camel (e.g. allowing unvetted Muslim immigration & abortion).

A BIBLICAL IMMIGRATION VIEW

Donald Trump’s immigration philosophy has more common Bible sense than many in church leadership. Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him; for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds. (2 Jn. 1:9-11)

In summary, if Christians are paying for the pulpit, they owe no voice to those who preach antichrist at the pulpit. Likewise, if Westerners are defending freedom, they owe no voice to sharia laws against freedom. If someone is a citizen of the state they are owed freedom of speech, but the state does not owe freedom of speech to non-citizens. If you blaspheme in my house I can have you removed; if you blaspheme in the street I may not like it but you are free to express yourself.

It is America’s prerogative to determine who they allow in their house -- I don’t know about you, but I do not allow people in my house who persist in disrespecting me and my values. I am more than happy to discuss whatever in public. I am more than happy to send money and missionaries to Muslim countries as long as the name of Jesus is proclaimed. However, one must ask why are we allowing those sworn by their Quran to abuse and kill us in our country? Because the president is a Muslim? Let us remind ourselves that Nehemiah, God’s great example of a Holy Spirit guided leader, did not rebuild the walls of Jerusalem for entertainment!

CONCLUSIONS

- Vote with an educated mind lest you incur the wrath of God
- Support whoever can best limit evil which is the primary purpose for government
- Vote only for candidates that have a “reasonable” chance of winning
- Vote for immigration policies that protect Godly culture against intrusions of the enemy

March 8, 2017

Mako,

I believe you will find the attached seminary presentation thorough and educationally informative as it compares various historical theologian's views and relates these views to pertinent scriptures.

Like you I have an engineering degree, but I also have a seminary degree which I recently completed at my retirement.

March 8, 2017

hi KH,

Thank you for offering this presentation. However, you misunderstand the ransom theory, and the early church, along with the atonement theology that was prevalent throughout the first millennium. For more church history and some biblical exegesis and systematic theology, please see <http://nagasawafamily.org/article-penal-substitution-vs-ontological-substitution-historical-comparison.pdf>.

For practical and biblical arguments for penal substitution and practical and biblical problems with penal substitution, please see <https://newhumanityinstitute.wordpress.com/2015/08/16/interpreting-jesus-and-the-atonement-why-it-matters-outline/>.

Warmly,
Mako

March 10, 2017

Mako,

Thanks for your article links. I will read many of them.

I must say that I am shocked at your excessive "identity politics" and anti-Trumpism. I would even like to ask you "Where does this animus come from? Something in your past?"

I must be the closest thing to the devil as an old retired white male southern Baptist evangelical with a seminary degree (plus an Oil & Gas industry consulting engineer). I would apparently make for a good candidate to be burned at the stake to solve all the world's social problems. Good thing I did not go to see Milo Yiannopoulos at Berkeley last month!

Do you have any such individuals like myself (who gladly voted for Trump over Hillary) to provide you with balance in your ministry? I ask because you seem to have at least a modicum of a gracious heart and one who would not want to slight a major demographic of the church without providing a bit of platform space to "defend ourselves with our view of Truth". Surely you would not want to be a modern day race monger who would keep your guilty scape-goat silenced behind stage!

Attached is an excerpt from my book about what I see as the "key Biblical analog" for what is occurring in the world today as the apostasy from the church is increasing.

I hope you will entertain a means to include the other side of the story as real "flesh & blood defenders" rather than as strawmen or the "theologically weaker" persons such as Donald Trump.

As food for thought - the Lord Jesus Christ did not outright condemn the slavery of his day, rather he showed His followers how to “go the extra mile” to be at peace with all men as much as possible -- would you condemn the Lord Jesus Christ by His approach to “social injustice”? Judas Iscariot did!

KH

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The Judas Iscariot Vote

Worship God; not Gov(ernment)

“If God can’t get it done with his church, then I will get it done with my political power!” Such is the heartfelt internal cry within so many of us.

Does that sound like a slap in the face of God or what?

Using the government to force people to pay for what some consider their “God given” rights removes 1) the dignity of the giver as well as 2) the glory of God to work in the spiritual lives of individual donors. Such mandated social engineering practices like Prohibition are fraught with pitfalls. Prohibition brought the Mafia to America, thus strengthening God’s enemies.

If mankind becomes dependent on “other mankind” to meet their needs, then does man have any further use for God? Shall we become as unbridled as Sodom & Gomorrah (Ezekiel 16:49) once we have all our needs met without God? Is dependence on God a bad thing that must be wiped from the face of the earth as being somehow the final plague of mankind? I think the socialist mindset will surprisingly answer “Yes” when taken to its full conclusion.

The efforts by social engineers to do more than the minimum government requirements truly represents the outgrowth of a “transference neurosis”. Certain individuals who during their formative years felt “out of control” due to abandonment by parents or who felt a burden of social outcasting due to inferiority complexes, etc. can become obsessed with having control over their lives and even control over the lives of others by extension of their overwhelming fears. Such individuals are prone to gravitate toward politics as the ultimate controller of life and security. Add a touch of narcissism developed from a parent who repeatedly stressed to a child their elite uniqueness relative to others and we have the set up for a Barack Obama political personality. (footnote: Lyle H. Rossiter, Jr. M.D., *The Liberal Mind- The Psychological Causes of Political Madness* (Free World Books, 2006))

God instituted government, but government is instituted to do only a few things:

- Protect the individual and society from physical oppression by the more powerful (i.e., military, police)
- Provide protection from monopolistic activities that thwart freedom, enterprise, and commerce (i.e., Tower of Babylon was man’s 1st attempt to monopolize/control mankind and his communication systems)
- Provide minimal administrative services (i.e., tax collection, notary services for contracts, prisons)
- Provide for the judicial system to implement criminal and civil restitutions and punishments
- Provide for the care/protection of those incapable mentally to make their own decisions (e.g., children, elderly, insane); however, this care and support is only provided as a last resort since it represents the removal of such citizen’s rights of freedom

Note the religious requirements relative to Israel’s special covenant with God are omitted here, since that is a separate religious subject matter.

Judas Iscariot: The Socialism Betrayer of Christ

Why do I bring the issues and discussion of social engineering into this discussion?

Because as we look to Judas Iscariot, as the archetype betrayer of Jesus Christ, it is not for the pleasure of wine, drugs, and drunkenness that he betrays Christ, it is not for jealousy of Christ abilities that he betrays Christ, it is not

for any type of adultery related intrigue that he betrays Christ, it is not because of a specific religious disagreement with Christ, rather we can see in Judas Iscariot the uncontrolled rejection of Christ because he did not direct His financial resources/gifts to the poor.

Just think Simon the Israeli nationalist zealot could have slit Jesus throat because he did not wipe out the Romans! Matthew, the tax collector, could have turned Jesus into the Roman authorities for a nice whistle blower bonus, if he failed to pay tax on the wealth donated to His ministry! James and John, the sons of Thunder, whose mother wanted them to be seated on the right and left hand of Jesus throne could have assassinated him when He refused! Peter could have knifed Jesus for calling Him a coward that would deny Him before all the other disciples! These disciples had all the bad habits of many church people today – can I hear an Amen! Yet – for all of their failings none but Judas Iscariot held on to his “disappointment with God” to the point of betrayal. How many people stay outside the bounds of God’s love because they are somehow, someway disappointed in God!

I find it interesting how many of those actually in poverty will live their life in contentment and with a full faith toward God; yet it is those who are empowered with wealth and status who are often more concerned than the impoverished. These faithless persons concern is not for the poor, rather it is the concern that they themselves will become the poor and thus “out-of-control”. Of course without wealth and without God, then this existence becomes death in their own eyes.

The original temptation in the Garden of Eden was all about control, all about being “like God”. The grasping to be God, the jealousy against One with a higher position is what caused Satan to be cast down from heaven in the first place.

I like Dr. D. James Kennedy’s definition for socialism, “Socialism is legalized plundering!”. God did not make us all the same and only an Anti-Christ government beast would try to make us all the same! My nightmare vision of socialism is a line of hundreds of people standing in the cold all waiting for hours on a mean-spirited bureaucrat at the end of the line who will issue size ten shoes to everyone no matter their foot size. I contrast that with a fully stocked Walmart in the USA and my choices are clear! How easy it is to forget that mankind has practiced free enterprise trade in villages of all cultures since the beginning of time--- without government interference!

Judas: Blinded by Social Inequalities

Below is a chronology of key events regarding Judas Iscariot through the gospels. I believe it is insightful to see how this anti-Christ among the disciples played out his life.

And being in Bethany at the house of Simon the leper, as He sat at the table, a woman came having an alabaster flask of very costly oil of spikenard. Then she broke the flask and poured it on His head. (Mar 14:3 NKJ)

Note that this critical event which will turn Judas against Christ occurs in Simon the leper’s house. It is interesting that Judas is listed as Simon’s son in the verse below. I wonder if Judas became passionate to the point of anger because at one time maybe he too was concerned that he may become a leper like Simon. Was this the reason for Judas having a “disappointment with God” attitude? Simon himself had a dismissive attitude toward Jesus (Luke 7:36-50). The fact that Simon is described as a leper and the fact that Israelites were prohibited from being in the house of a leper, then this further stresses the irony of a man healed from leprosy yet who fails to be thankful to the Healer. Jesus made a point of stressing how a foreigner Samaritan leper returned to thank Jesus for his healing (Luke 17:11-19), but the other nine did not thank Him. Simon by contrast was himself a Pharisee. When Judas saw the ointment poured out on Christ I wonder if he viewed that as his potential healing ointment (e.g., Obama healthcare) disappearing before his eyes?

We are all concerned about our health; the subject touches us all at a very personal level. Therefore, I intentionally focus toward this illustrative event that is recorded in the Bible which marks the emotions of the very man that betrayed Jesus Christ. Have we let our emotions similarly blind us?

Then one of His disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon’s son, who would betray Him, said, 5 “Why was this fragrant oil not sold for three hundred denarii (i.e., a year’s wages) and given to the poor?” 6 This he said,

not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the money box; and he used to take what was put in it. (Joh 12:4-6 NKJ)

But Jesus said, "Let her alone. Why do you trouble her? She has done a good work for Me. 7 "For you have the poor with you always, and whenever you wish you may do them good; but Me you do not have always. 8 "She has done what she could. She has come beforehand to anoint My body for burial. 9 "Assuredly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be told as a memorial to her." (Mar 14:6-9 NKJ)

Then Satan entered Judas, surnamed Iscariot, who was numbered among the twelve. 4 So he went his way and conferred with the chief priests and captains, how he might betray Him to them. 5 And they were glad, and agreed to give him money. 6 So he promised and sought opportunity to betray Him to them in the absence of the multitude. (Luk 22:3-6 NKJ)

Scripture clearly points out that Judas's concern for the poor went only as far as ensuring he received his elitist cut of the monies.

So the pointed questions for us today become, "Are we betraying Christ by aligning ourselves with those who feign a concern for the poor while benefiting themselves with financial and political power? Are we going to betray Christ and our obligations for individual giving by foisting upon others our obligations? Are we going to empower the very ones who would control us in their zeal to bypass God's workings in the heart? Will we allow politicians to show themselves superior to God by bringing "salvation" to the masses with the tax money plundered from others? It happened to Judas Iscariot who lived with Christ day by day!

The godless mock the church for its failures, but no one will go to Hell for their failures. God knows we will all fail; He intentionally has the back-up plan already established by Jesus Christ redeeming us on the cross. Only those who cannot confess their wayward path (i.e., sins) and will not change due to their selfish and prideful ways will be lost in Hell. In Revelation, the term beast in all its different manifestations of kingdoms, symbols, horns, and persons (i.e., Anti-Christ) is actually quite descriptive of a vast army of mindless government bureaucrats who do the bidding of the dragon (i.e., Satan), who have seared their consciences to the point that the burning and gassing of Jews or the beheading of Christians is of no concern.

Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, 2 speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron, (1Ti 4:1-2 NKJ)

Could we as Christians be so naïve, so conscience deadened that we would vote into power the government "beast" to dominate our lives? Would we sell our souls for a promised healthcare or other social program that our own forefathers lived happily without only a few decades ago? Will our forefathers look at us in disgust that we have sold the freedom they suffered for in exchange for a "magic government pill"? The sad thing is that the pill, the progress, the technical advancement came not from the government beast but from "the freedom our forefathers gave us from the beast". We were set free from feudal, elitist lords who would promise us protection, but steal our best hopes and dreams – have we returned to this slavery?

Socialism's Remorse

I wonder if Judas's intentions were up to a point noble, as if by forcing the hand of Jesus through betrayal that somehow Jesus would throw-off the corrupt Jewish leadership and defeat the Roman government to establish a golden millennial kingdom. Does not socialism seek to also force the hand of God to create a golden earthly kingdom? However, after Judas saw what he had done and how his one chance to "solve the world's problems" was gone, then he was overcome with sorrow. Instead of seeking God's forgiveness he commits suicide thus even in death giving Satan the victory in his life. He just did not understand God's grace through Jesus Christ!

Then Judas, His betrayer, seeing that He had been condemned, was remorseful and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, 4 saying, "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood." And they said, "What is that to us? You see to it!" 5 Then he threw down the pieces of silver in the temple and departed, and went and hanged himself. (Mat 27:3-5 NKJ)

It is important to note that we are all subject to Satan's temptation and deception in our thought life. Even Peter was rebuked by Jesus with the words "Get behind Me, Satan! For you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men." (Mar 8:33 NKJ) . The key difference is whether we hold onto these thoughts and thus make them our own or do we follow the admonitions of scripture "casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, (2Co 10:5 NKJ). However, Judas had made this plan of Satan literally part of his self-image. John 13:2 reports that the "Devil now having put into the heart of Judas Iscariot....." to betray Jesus.

Biblically speaking one can view our heart as literally our self-image, who we think we are. Obviously, Judas's betrayal of Christ was planned outside the obedience to Christ because he was disappointed in Christ; yet Christ knew! God for that matter knows all of our disappointments, yet it is in our worship of God in spite of the earthly challenges that most glorifies God and most profoundly refutes the key accusation of Satan that we serve God only for his benefits.

So Satan answered the LORD and said, "Does Job fear God for nothing? "Have You not made a hedge around him, around his household, and around all that he has on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. (Job 1:9-10 NKJ)

Satan, literally means accuser or adversary. If we worship God only for what He provides us (via some kind of divine socialist paradise), then I would ask "Of what value are we to God's glory in the heavenly court of judgment between God and Satan, the accuser of the brethren?"

March 10, 2017

Hi KH,

Thanks for your engagement with me and with these issues. I do have people in my life who disagree with me, and we have had seasons of very active dialogue. I appreciate knowing some things about you, but I do think we should be able to have a conversation because we believe the very nature of the gospel is at stake. I think it would be wisest to first focus on the main question at hand: Is penal substitutionary atonement true? You say yes. I say no. Everything else is the downstream implications of our different views of atonement. What do you propose we discuss first, in relation to that?

Best,
Mako

March 10, 2017

Mako,

I agree with addressing the PSA as a primary topic. I will provide an initial posit for you to consider before the weekend is over.

As iron sharpens iron, So a man sharpens the countenance of his friend. (Prov. 27:17 NKJ)

March 12, 2017

Mako,

I have read your paper on the early church fathers view of the atonement through the first 30+ pages of the Ireneaus portion and will continue to read the rest.

Even the presentation that I sent you earlier acknowledged that the penal substitution atonement was “lost” for the first 1000 years of church history. Luther even had to reawaken the church to “sola fidei” at the 1500s timeline.

I am focused on what the Biblical canon says and not concerned with what every church father has said (of which all seem to have some errors in judgment). Also, realize that similarly “speaking in tongues” has been buried in church history for millennium until some of the more recent Pentecostal awakenings of the early 1900s. I have attended Pentecostal churches for many years, but I notice that apparently the charismatic movement is not very welcome in the Orthodox community (yet Pentecostals were fully recognized by the National Association of Evangelicals in 1943). The baptism of the Holy Spirit with speaking in tongues is another topic you may be interested in discussing.

The attached research paper for my “Problem of Evil” seminary course is the clearest explanation I can offer as to why penal substitutionary atonement is correct and makes systematic theological sense. Literally, Jesus is most glorified by taking all of our sin debts upon Himself and God is most Just by meting out all of the penalty on either ourselves or Jesus due to our sins. I fear that our society of snowflakes cannot handle God’s holy wrath and their view of His wrath is becoming a deception to “impugn God’s character” (which is the mistake that doomed Satan also). Please comment on this research paper as you feel led.

As Christians we cannot be like Islam where Allah simply “claps his hands” and penalties magically disappear from the cosmic agenda - this is whimsical accounting in order for man to excuse the awfulness of his individual sins. The avoidance of the penal substitutionary atonement simply leads to the same deistic dismissal of truly costly sins that dishonor God without any real penalty. If there is no real cost and no real penalty to a law, then do not create a law!

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ,

KH

MA Christian Apologetics

No need of atonement based on the nature of Allah

The most emphatic and dominating feature of Islam's means of salvation depends in the arbitrary will of God. For this primary reason the Muslim sees no place, and no necessity, for any atonement.

a) God is Almighty – He does whatever He pleases, and is answerable to no one: 'He forgiveth whom He pleaseth, and He punisheth whom He pleaseth' (Al-Maidah 5:18)

b) God is Merciful – He forgives whomsoever He pleases: 'Allah forgiveth not that partners should be set up with Him; but He forgiveth anything else, to whom He pleaseth' (An-Nisa' 4:48)

March 11, 2017

Hi KH,

Again, thanks for your engagement. The first problem with the absence of penal substitution in the early church is a historical one. You claim that it was “lost.” How was it “lost”? Even PSA promoters Jeffery, Ovey, and Sach concede that the historical argument is a very important one. If PSA cannot be found in the early church, that is fatal for PSA, as a standalone point. The more you look at the sociology of the early church, the more and more weighty that becomes. On the one hand, penal substitution appears nowhere in the early church except perhaps Cyprian of Carthage in some limited form, despite the efforts of Jeffery, Ovey, and Sach to find it in someone else. Your own assessment is more candid, and more accurate: PSA is not there. But what does this mean? That it was “lost”? The line running from the apostle John to Polycarp of Smyrna to Irenaeus of Lyons, for example, consists of personal interactions, in communities, not a “telephone” game with one secret, whispered interaction per link in the chain. To suggest that Polycarp or Irenaeus “lost” penal substitutionary atonement somewhere along the line is tantamount to saying that you somehow “lost” the most important facts about your great-grandfather, despite your family being dedicated to passing down that information, both orally and in writing, while your family has repetitious, lengthy interactions around the dinner table, and while you have all kinds of relatives around you who will correct you if you get the smallest detail wrong.

On the other hand, ontological-medical substitution is taught consistently throughout the pre-Nicene and Nicene church. Even Origen of Alexandria and Gregory of Nyssa, who you oversimplify as merely teaching the “ransom from Satan” theory, taught medical-ontological substitution. They understood perfectly well from Scripture that our vulnerability to the demonic is rooted in our fallenness (Mt.12:43 - 45) exacerbated by sins like prolonged anger (Eph.4:26 - 27); so to solve the problem of our vulnerability, something in human nature needs to be healed, first in Jesus and then in us. So to characterize the early church as teachers of the “ransom” theory is shallow, and suggests willful ignorance. See T.F. Torrance’s *The Trinitarian Faith* for a very good summary of early church theological history. And that was in a time of the church’s rapid spread with a decentralized and non-hierarchical mode of governance. That is further evidence that penal substitution was not at the epicenter of Christian faith at all, and did not accompany the nearly instantaneous early consensus on the four Gospels, Acts, the Pauline and Petrine letters. Meanwhile, the early Christians demonstrated a strong commitment to disseminating not just the proto-canon, but also the medical-ontological substitution theory, from all the major independent centers of Christianity: Jerusalem, Antioch, Asia Minor (represented by Smyrna and then Constantinople), Alexandria, Rome, and Roman Gaul (represented by Lyons). So on a simple historical level, please explain how PSA was “lost.” And how exactly did MSA just happen to take its place?

Furthermore, the second challenge for PSA adherents when you read the early church theologians is their intellectual coherence in theology. The pieces fit. You seem eager to discuss all the related points that cluster around one’s theology of atonement, and you might find, as I did, that their intellectual coherence is formidable, especially Irenaeus and Athanasius, since a lot of their writings were preserved. For example, free will. I was glad to read your paper about open theism, and I agree. The early Christians believed very strongly in free will empowered by God’s grace (<http://nagasawafamily.org/article-free-will-in-patristics.pdf>). That is consistent with God being loving and free from external coercion, and also consistent with humanity made in God’s image as called to love while being free from external coercion, even from God. That is also consistent with God working by His word (Amos 3:7), in such a way that God declares that He will triumph over evil through the messiah, while necessarily inviting trust and response.

Not until Augustine did anyone argue for determinism of persons. And when Augustine did argue for double predestination, he got massive pushback. In this case, Augustine could not make the pieces fit. Determinism did not fit with Scripture or other pieces of Christian pastoral and theological conviction, like free will, God’s goodness and grace expressed towards all, the conviction that God’s Triune nature required God to love each person equally, etc. Given that Luther and Calvin drew most upon Augustine out of all the early church fathers, including his double predestination, that’s a huge strike against them. To try to make more pieces fit, they invented the theory of limited atonement, the unavoidable companion doctrine to penal substitution. Even Augustine didn’t believe in that, because he didn’t think God *had* to damn people. But Luther and Calvin supplied more pieces to try to make it fit: humans have no free will or inclination towards God (utter depravity); God’s way of expressing his sovereignty is monergic and unilateral; God has to express two faces in eternity (mercy and justice) and therefore must save some

and damn others; and the missing logical piece to explain why God would save some and not others: divine retributive justice.

One troubling weakness of PSA is that you have to posit that “retributive justice” (i.e. you hurt me, so I hurt you) is the highest form of justice in God, which is strictly incompatible with a Trinitarian conviction. If God is love, because He is Triune, then everything God does must flow from who God is. So where does this “retributive justice” come from in God, logically? Did God have “retributive justice” as an eternal attribute before creation? No: There was no one on whom He could pour out such an attribute. Did God acquire “retributive justice” as an attribute after creation, or the fall? No: Because God does not change in character, especially in response to sin. Did God express “retributive justice” as an expression of His love? No: The very idea that God would be “satisfied” by infinitely hurting people would negate the conviction that God is a loving being.

The only kind of justice that is compatible with an authentically Trinitarian understanding of God is restorative justice. God acts to restore the human being and also the relationships He intended, ultimately by burning away or cutting away (i.e. circumcising) sinfulness from the person, and insisting on our participation in that process. Restorative justice was what God demonstrated at the fall, when God exiled Adam and Eve to protect them from immortalizing sin in themselves, making the exile not retributive but restorative, precisely by symbolizing that the way back to life is through a fiery sword (which burns and cuts sinfulness away from people). Restorative justice was what God set up in the Jewish law, notably in Exodus 21 which directed offenders towards the healing of the injured party (<http://nagasawafamily.org/exodus.21.01-36.sg.pdf>). In other words, “an eye for an eye” does not mean retributive justice. The Jewish community has never understood it that way - they even made a joke out of it, hypothesizing that if a blind man injured the eye of a seeing man, that they could not blind an already blind man. Therefore, “an eye for an eye” referred to an outer limit of compensation or help that an injured party can request of the offender, to help with their healing or loss of livelihood. If I injure your eye, I become your second eye. It was a restorative justice paradigm. And when the church was closer to the Jewish community in the first few centuries, they also understood it that way.

And restorative justice fits perfectly with the biblical symbolic motif of fire being a refining fire to begin with, in every biblical book in which it appears. That is, “fire” in Scripture always begins as an expression of God purifying away the corruption of sin, in His call to the human being to participate in His restoration to what He originally wanted. Only later, after people reject God’s attempt to purify them, does “fire” become associated with pain, torment, and the feeling of destruction.

<http://nagasawafamily.org/pentateuch-theme-fire.sg.pdf>
<http://nagasawafamily.org/isaiah-theme-fire.sg.pdf>
<http://nagasawafamily.org/malachi-theme-fire.sg.pdf>
<http://nagasawafamily.org/matthew-theme-fire-and-darkness.sg.pdf>
<http://nagasawafamily.org/luke-theme-fire.sg.pdf>
<http://nagasawafamily.org/hebrews-theme-fire.sg.pdf>
<http://nagasawafamily.org/peter2-theme-fire.sg.pdf>
<http://nagasawafamily.org/john-revelation-theme-fire.sg.pdf>

An alcoholic facing an addiction counselor who calls him to surrender his addiction might receive that counselor as salvation, or as torment. It depends on the alcoholic’s choice. Therefore, your points about hell, in your paper, are well-taken. I, too, believe that the emotional quality of hell is torment. But just because an unrepentant person in hell experiences torment, doesn’t mean that God originally intended the fire as torment per se. God intended it as healing. The experience of torment has to be derived from a fully Trinitarian theology. In that framework, fire can only be an expression of God’s restorative justice, because the Triune God of love cannot logically be “satisfied” simply by punishing people, even if, and especially if, that punishment is infinite. If God is “satisfied” by acting that way, then God’s fundamental character cannot be defined as love. The critical aspect in medical-ontological substitution is that we recognize that the Sinai covenant, the Jewish law, and the Hebrew law-court are all manifestations of God’s restorative justice, not retributive justice. Therefore, the object of God’s wrath is not the personhood of the person, as it is in penal substitution. The object of God’s wrath is the corruption of sin within the person, precisely because it flows out of God’s love for the person.

Which brings us to how Christians express principles of justice in actual relationships and institutions where power is involved. Take slavery and abolition. You seem to be mistaken in your understanding of slavery in the New Testament. Since slavery of any type was not a relationship that God intended from creation, any form of slavery in the Old or New Testament was severely reshaped and restrained. Kidnapping someone into slavery was punishable by death in the Jewish law, for instance (Ex.21:16; Dt.24:7). It continued to be unacceptable in the New Testament (1 Tim.1:10; Rev.18:13; 1 Cor.6:10; 1 Th.4:6). That by itself ruled out the Trans-Atlantic slave trade. "Slavery" in the sense of debt-bondage was extraordinarily limited, as debts were simply forgiven either on a rolling seven year window (Dt.15) or on the fifty year fixed calendar (Lev.25). Children born to people who were in Hebrew "slavery" were not laborers, contracted or forced or otherwise. Since "slavery" in the OT was a contract of labor, not a ceding of ownership of one's body, only the one contracted was expected to work. See this paper to see what "slavery" really meant in both Old and New Testaments, and how God handled it: <http://nagasawafamily.org/article-slavery-in-the-bible.pdf>. If you'd like to see my best attempt at condensing church history on the issue of slavery and abolition, see: <http://nagasawafamily.org/article-slavery-and-christianity-1st-to-15th-centuries.pdf>. What we find is that Christians expressed "restorative justice" as a basic human rights posture as they addressed emperors and others with political power, especially around slavery and all the factors leading into and out of slavery. They weren't always consistent, but they were distinct and clearly recognizable as deriving their stances from the biblical conviction that every human being is made in the image of God, and that every relationship was meant to reflect God in some way - the God who wants to restore each person to His original vision in creation. The Southern Baptists were wrong in their denominational origin in being pro-slavery in the American context. They were correct to repent for it. But they have yet to repent of their adherence to "retributive justice" which keeps people incarcerated and indebted in ways that violate any respectable appreciation of the Old Testament, and grossly violates the ethic of forgiveness and restoration in the New Testament.

What I don't think you are recognizing is that Protestant theology and politics moved together. The magisterial Protestants were not just trying to recover the Bible. They were trying to build political regimes. Luther among the German princes. Zwingli in Zurich. Calvin in Geneva. Gustavus Vasa in Sweden. Etc. And one of the first things you do if you're building a political regime is give an explanation for why the regime can punish people, and the more severely it does so, the more it will have to justify that behavior. This is why most Protestants, especially those influenced by Luther and Calvin, believe in divine retributive justice. Protestants tend to believe that the Old Testament conveys "retributive justice," whereas Christ in the New Testament conveys "mercy." But that schema is a mistake. Gordon Conwell professor and PSA supporter Adonis Vidu admits that the Bible and the early church taught "restorative justice" in atonement and ethics, while Protestants switched to "retributive justice" is atonement and ethics. Penal substitution does not exist in the Bible, nor in the early church. It was invented by Luther and Calvin as they modified Anselm, to develop a divine "satisfaction of retributive justice" theory. So retributive justice has become one of the lynchpins in a "culture war" where American Protestant evangelicals believe they should re-enact the early Protestant regime-building. But if your theology of atonement is wrong, then your social ethics will tend to be wrong as well.

I don't want to rush ahead into "identity politics" or "Judas Iscariot as socialist" or "Christianity and Islam" and so on. So I'll stop there for now and let you respond.

Best,
Mako

March 15, 2017

1st & 2nd paragraph response

When I say "lost" I think you should understand it as a lack of "pastoral balance". I am sure that societal and personal healing from sin provided by Jesus' death provided a better speaking platform for salvation during the pagan Roman era than a rip-roaring "hellfire & damnation" sermon. This should serve us as a reminder to focus on scripture and beware of cultural limitations/biases. As an engineer I believe whole heartedly in the 14 billion year age of the universe, but this subject is controversial and therefore often difficult to find a church audience because it

is controversial. If I may comment, your ministry seems to be long on what the early church fathers said and short on scripture - remember even Ireneaus pointed to:

Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree"), (Gal. 3:13 NKJ)

I believe you have misapplied this scripture and put your words in Ireneaus' mouth. Note that when Adam first became a man he was not under a curse just because he was in the flesh (which is Greek agnostic derived thinking!) similarly Jesus was a man of sinless flesh because He never succumbed to temptations of the flesh. The curse came on the cross as testified by "My God, My God why have you forsaken me?" and of course its linkage with the "hangs on a tree".

And Jesus becoming a man is only a secondary aspect of the saving grace, since what is emphasized is His violent death for us, such as:

"the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." (Rev. 13:8 NKJ)

3rd & 4th paragraph response

We are in agreement, but note that "open theism" is regrettably marginalized if not considered heretical in my Southern Baptist circles. This Greg Boyd open theism view was a major contributor to my revised theodicy just 2 years ago.

5th paragraph response

There was no need for "forgiveness" in the eternal Trinity, yet forgiveness flows from Love once free will agents are created. Forgive appears in my Bible 53 times.

There was no need for "wrath" in the eternal Trinity, yet wrath flows from Justice once free will agents are created. Wrath appears in my Bible 198 times!!!!.

We as free will agents love God's forgiveness, but hate His wrath -- yet they are both mandatory!

6th & 7th paragraph response

I certainly champion with you restorative justice while mankind is alive on earth. However, as scripture says:

And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment, (Heb. 9:27 NAS)

Death is designed by God to limit mankind's "capabilities" to commit evil. Therefore death is prophylactically restorative for the believers, but not the unbelievers except as a means to limit their eternal punishment. Scripture says that they will be punished based on their works:

The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.
(Rev. 20:13-15 NKJ)

Additionally, the one view we have into the rich man in Hades (Luke 16) indicates nothing restorative for him - no water, no apologies to God, a failed attempted manipulation of Abraham, only torment!

ISIS and its many affiliates are candidates for the end times worshipers of the beast and thus we can see the unashamed release of wrath due to the Justice of God

“he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb.

11 “And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name.” (Rev. 14:10-11 NKJ)

Even the saints in heaven who have gone before us call for vengeance and God promises Justice will come:

When He opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held. And they cried with a loud voice, saying, “How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?” Then a white robe was given to each of them; and it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they were, was completed. (Rev. 6:9-11 NKJ)

There is no restorative Justice after death!

Paragraph on slavery

The slavery political compromise that the USA founding fathers made ultimately led toward 600,000 dead in a war to make all US citizens legally equal. What I find destructive is how certain public figures harp on mistakes 250-150 years ago because they want to bring American exceptionalism down; yet they are rather mute about announcing 1) the practicality of Jesus not banning slavery and 2) the continued Muslim sex slavery of women and boys, etc.

The Angola prison in Louisiana used to be one of the most dangerous prisons in the USA. Today, it is much better and thanks to the Southern Baptist there are annual graduation rates of 20+ inmates from my own alma mater New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary due to on-line studies and inmate chaplains, etc. I did 5 years of Monday night volunteer chaplaincy at New Orleans Central Lock-up. You seem to be judge, jury, and prosecutor in regards to determining who is practicing “restorative vs retributive justice”? What are your concerns about “restoration” for the victims - first?

Paragraph on political regimes

I cannot speak to past political/church history, but I am skeptical of your assessments which seem biased. However, I am completely amazed that any Bible believing so-called Christian would vote for Hillary Clinton who is an abortionist, politically corrupt with foreign donations, married to a pervert, lied to our faces about Benghazi, endangered our national security with her email server cover-ups, and on it goes.

Apparently, there is a tremendous amount of deception and stirring up of envy in the world whose attitude is “if I can’t get where you are, then I will bring you down to where I am”. Greed, power, pride have a few slightly redeeming attributes, but envy has nothing redeemable about it (e.g., Cain & Able are the 1st example of death by envy)

My concern is that these political (& religious) deceptions from intellectuals will lead to uncontrolled street violence which has already occurred on various campuses controlled by leftist (not by conservatives for sure!). I did not trust Obama when he was elected, but I hoped for the best - today I cannot think of one decision that he made that was good. I spoke against him at every opportunity, but I certainly never destroyed! What has the Left created -- 10,000,000 Judas Iscariots! When Judas saw that his attempt to manipulate the hand of God had turned into violence, then he hung himself (Matt 27:5).

Mako - you are a talented person who will succeed at whatever you put your mind to. You have no need to be constrained by your political/religious affiliations --- so get it right!

Peace & joy in the Holy Spirit,

KH

March 16, 2017

Hi KH,

The idea that the early Christians 'lost' PSA out of a lack of pastoral balance is your hypothesis, for which you still need to offer quite a bit of proof. Here is some of the counterevidence against it. Models of divine retributive penalty and justice resonated throughout Greek and Latin cultures. Think of Zeus punishing Prometheus by eternal liver-ripping in Hesiod's Theogony, the eternal boulder rolling of Sisyphus in Hades, etc. not to mention the classical Greek myth of Tartarus as the place of penalty for the overthrown titans. On the Latin side of things, there was the system of merit and demerit (which regained popularity in the 12th century in Western Europe, and influenced Western law and theology, again setting the stage for Calvin and penal substitution, since Calvin's legal background was on Latin forms of penalty). It would have fit the pagan mind very well if the Christians spoke the language of penal substitution and offered the Christian God to them in the same retributive framework, and by raising the stakes to infinite retribution at that.

But instead, the early Christians rejected that entire framework for exactly the same reason you're so concerned about: to not give in to cultural limitation and bias. Read Adonis Vidu, Atonement, Law, and Justice. It simply was not part of the apostolic mind. The heritage of the Hebrew Scriptures prevented the apostles and the early church from capitulating to that Greek and Latin cultural pressure.

Speaking of which, have you read what I have written about Scripture? On my blog, there is more than ample engagement with Scripture, not merely the early church. Please explain your objections to my exegesis of circumcision as the controlling motif of salvation, the Jewish Temple sacrifices especially Leviticus 16, the serpent Moses put on the pole in Numbers 21 especially as coordinated with John 3 and Galatians 3, Isaiah 53 and its use of the scapegoat motif flowing out of Leviticus 16, and all the ways the New Testament incorporates those Scriptures.

So for instance, your claim that Jesus' quotation of Psalm 22:1 refers to divine abandonment or punishment of some sort does not fit with the meaning of Psalm 22 itself, nor the role of Psalm 22 in the life of David, nor Jesus' use of the David story as a way to explain his own story.

Any serious attempt at explaining what was happening must also explain why Luke and John do not record Jesus' quotation of Psalm 22:1, and whether Luke and John express any hint of a 'separation' between Jesus and the Father. They don't seem to. In fact, John records this statement of Jesus, which indicates that while the disciples abandoned Jesus, the Father never did: 'Behold, an hour is coming, and has already come, for you to be scattered, each to his own home, and to leave Me alone; and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me.' (John 16:32) That statement alone should suffice as evidence to reject any theory involving Jesus being Father-forsaken or God-forsaken.

In Matthew and Mark, Jesus' quotation of Psalm 22:1 fits into the sustained parallel between David's pre-enthronement story and Jesus' pre-enthronement story. Like David (1 Sam.16), Jesus was anointed king (at his baptism) while others reigned. Like David (1 Sam.17), Jesus defeated a 'Goliath' (Satan in the wilderness). Like David (1 Sam.21ff.), Jesus had to build a kingdom of his own in the wilderness. Like David, Jesus was pushed into the hands of the Gentile enemies of Israel. David did feel extremely vulnerable among the Gentiles, and penned Psalm 22 as part of that experience. But David did not believe that God had forsaken him in an absolute sense. What he meant was, 'Why have You forsaken me to the Gentiles?' Gentile enemies are named in Psalm 22:6 – 18. David still experienced God as accessible, which he states in Psalm 22 itself: 'You are He who brought me forth...upon You I was cast from birth; You have been my God from my mother's womb; be not far from me, for trouble is near...' (Ps.22:9 – 11). David still experienced God as loving and protecting him, as having His face turned toward him with favor: 'For He has not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; nor has He hidden His face from him' (Ps.22:24). Also, David understood the Holy Spirit to be God's anointing upon him to be king (1 Sam.16:13), and he knew that God's Spirit still rested upon him (cf. Ps.51:11 was the only time he expressed uncertainty about that anointing). Finally, we believe that God's Spirit spoke through David, even in the season of feeling forsaken to hostile Gentile kings. Put another way, Psalm 22 is in the canonical Bible which is believed to be inspired, in which David is said to speak prophetically by the Spirit (Acts 2:29 – 30). So how could God's Spirit have forsaken David in an absolute sense while he spoke and wrote Psalm 22:1? Such a notion defies exegesis and

our doctrine of inspiration. David did not actually speak of an absolute abandonment by God in Psalm 22, when we take the whole context of Psalm 22 into account in our exegesis, and also when we take Psalm 22 in the context of David's life into account in our exegesis.

Moreover, Jesus had been making allusions to the early life of King David throughout his ministry, because of the social, political, and theological similarities between David's pre-enthronement experience and his own. Jesus saw a more sustained comparison between himself and the early, pre-enthronement King David. After being anointed by God as king at his baptism, Jesus was being pursued by hostile opponents: the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Herodians (Mt.9:3 – 5; 9:11 – 13; 9:34; 'in the midst of wolves' in 10:16; 11:16 – 24; 12:2; 12:14 – 15; 12:24; 14:1 – 2; 15:1; 16:1 – 12). King David, after being anointed by Samuel as king, was pursued by hostile opponents, too: King Saul and his henchmen, the false leaders who would soon be dethroned by David. Jesus, while being pursued, is a king-in-exile, avoiding the capital, staying in the wilderness, building up a loyal group of followers. That is exactly what King David did (1 Sam.21 – 22ff.). To feed his followers, Jesus allowed them an exception to the standard Sinai laws about the Sabbath. To feed his followers, David made an exception to the standard Sinai laws about the bread of the tabernacle. As part of this act, Jesus said that he is greater than the temple-presence of God, and that his disciples are therefore in the presence of God (Mt.12:5 – 6). When David entered the tabernacle-presence of God (1 Sam.21), he discovered that, in some sense, the rules were different. Jesus and his disciples eat on a day that is 'holy,' which is similar to how David and his men ate bread that is 'holy' from the tabernacle.

When the Pharisees challenged Jesus about allowing his disciples to pick grain on the Sabbath, Jesus retorted with that story of David: 'Have you not read what David did when he became hungry, he and his companions, how he entered the house of God, and they ate the consecrated bread, which was not lawful for him to eat nor for those with him, but for the priests alone?' (Mt.12:1 – 4) Jesus was not just finding a clever textual proof-text for his actions. By referring to David, Jesus was making a political point to the Pharisees, a point about who was really king and who was not, about who would be vindicated and who would not.

Then, Jesus' bread multiplication miracles triggered in Jewish minds thoughts of David's kingship. They saw in this act Jesus' claim to David's throne, and tried to make him king by force (Jn.6:14 – 15). That is a very specific reaction. Jesus was gesturing once again towards the incident of David pursued into the tabernacle-presence of God. But instead of taking five of the twelve loaves of bread (Lev.24:5) and leaving seven behind, as David did, Jesus went in reverse order. He took five loaves of bread, fed those following him in the wilderness, and made twelve basketfuls of bread (Mt.14:13 – 21). In other words, he returned and amplified David's action, to show he was the heir of David, the greater David. Just to round out the allusion for his disciples, Jesus performed a second miracle with bread soon afterwards. He took seven loaves of bread, which the disciples must have been sure to note, fed another large crowd in the wilderness, and made seven large basketfuls of bread leftover (Mt.15:29 – 39). He perfects and elevates what David left remaining, or perhaps undone. And Jesus did this on a mountain (15:29), to position himself as the new temple-presence of God, not on Mount Zion in the temple in Jerusalem as King David envisioned (2 Sam.7), but in a human body which could make of any mountain a site of the now dynamic presence of God (Mt.17:1 – 13; 28:16 – 20).

For support, see scholars as diverse as literary scholars Mark Drury, 'Mark,' edited by Robert Alter and Frank Kermode, *The Literary Guide to the Bible* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987), p.414 – 416; N.T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God* (Minneapolis, MI: Fortress Press, 1992), ch.13; Jerome H. Neyrey, *Honor and Shame in the Gospel of Matthew* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998), p.156 – 161; Matthew Skinner, *The Trial Narratives: Conflict, Power, and Identity* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010), p.37 – 39.

Therefore, Jesus' quote of Psalm 22:1 is not for himself, but for the criminals crucified on either side of him. In Matthew and Mark, these two men expressed disbelief that the Messiah could ever be treated this way, least of all crucified by the very Gentile powers holding Israel captive. Wasn't the Messiah supposed to be victorious over the Gentiles? But Jesus was pointing out to them that King David was exposed to great danger in his early life, too, prior to being enthroned. And if David was forsaken by God to the Gentiles, the much greater heir of David could also be forsaken by God to the Gentiles, and in a much greater way. Like David, Jesus still lived in the power of the Spirit of God, even while quoting Psalm 22:1. Jesus is communicating that he will be enthroned and vindicated, just as David was, because like David, he has never lost his anointing to be king. And Jesus' anointing is the Holy Spirit, the very bond of love between Father and Son.

Finally, if I am correct in perceiving a literary chiasm running through Matthew's Gospel as a whole (<http://nagasawafamily.org/matthew-chiasm.pdf>), then the baptism of Jesus (Mt.3:13 – 17) – his symbolic dying and rising – parallels his actual dying and rising in his death and resurrection (Mt.27:52ff.). And if that is the case, then God's quotation of Psalm 2:7, 'You are my Son,' from the coronation Psalm spoken over the kings of Judah, parallels Jesus' own use of Psalm 22:1, which is Jesus' confident claim to the throne of David. His confidence was based on his consistent, lived parallel to the pre-enthronement life of David, the hunted king in the wilderness. And since this literary parallel between Psalm 2 and Psalm 22 seems compelling, even without the weight of the chiasm behind it, then I once again propose that the anointing of the Holy Spirit in Jesus' baptism and blessing of the Father must have been the constant reality in Jesus' life, without exception. If David never lost his anointing to be king, then we can say with confidence that Jesus never lost his anointing to be king, either, and Jesus' anointing was in fact the Spirit of God. Therefore, the Trinitarian disclosure of Father, Spirit, and Son revealed in Jesus' baptism was not momentary. Quite to the contrary, it was the hidden, spiritual stability throughout Jesus' entire life. Ergo, Jesus never faced a closed, silent heaven, even on the cross. At every moment on the cross, and especially as he was finally putting to death the corruption of sin lodged in his human nature, Jesus heard the blessing of his ever-constant, ever-loving Father, who never abandoned him (John 16:32), as always saying: 'This is My Son, in whom I am well pleased.' To the anointing song of Psalm 2, Jesus' parallel announcement to others was Psalm 22, 'Like David was, I am the hunted king in exile, on my way to the throne. But God is still with me.'

Stepping back from Jesus' experience surrounding Psalm 22:1 to the implications for the character of God, we can therefore say this: The Father, or God, never abandoned Jesus or 'punished' Jesus, as penal substitution theory requires. Instead, we find the very opposite in medical substitutionary atonement, and in the early church where no one believed in the 'broken Trinity' view (see Thomas H. McCall, *Forsaken: The Trinity, the Cross, and Why It Matters*), not to mention when we use the most up-to-date tools of literary exegesis and intertextuality. As the wilderness temptation and the Garden of Gethsemane stories indicate, at the very moment when Jesus needed the strength and love of the Father the most – at his crucifixion and death – the Father was there with him and for him through the bond of the Spirit. The Father spoke a word of blessing and identity, gave the Spirit without measure, strengthened Jesus supernaturally, and gave Jesus the conviction to be victorious over sinfulness all the way to the end. The wrath of God did not pass from the Father upon the Son. It was not an inner-Trinitarian rupture of their relationship. No, but rather this: Not upon the Son but within the Son. Not the Father's wrath alone but the Son's and Spirit's wrath as well. The Son's wrath against the corruption of sin within his own humanity was the wrath of his Father empowered by the purifying fire of the Holy Spirit. Not a divided Trinity but a united Trinity. The united Trinity poured out divine wrath upon the corruption of sin in the humanity of Jesus (Romans 8:3; 6:6), expressed in the will of Jesus to be faithful. It is first and foremost 'the faithfulness of the Son of God' which expresses the faithfulness of God (Rom.3:21; Gal.2:20, KJV). In Jewish idiom, what was needed in the salvation of humanity was circumcision of heart (Dt.30:6; Rom.2:28 - 29). For Jesus to save the fallen humanity that he had taken to himself in his incarnation, he needed to fight it successfully, and then cut something away from himself through his death and resurrection. Hence, Jesus circumcised his own heart ('the circumcision of Christ' in Colossians 2:12), by condemning sin in his own flesh (Rom.8:3), thereby becoming able to share his Spirit with us (Rom.8:4 - 11), and becoming 'the source of salvation' (Heb.5:7 - 10).

Going further, your claim that Galatians 3:13 refers to a penal substitution curse is an inaccurate reading of how Paul actually read Deuteronomy 21 and the rest of the Torah. It is not the act of hanging someone on a tree that curses the person. Rather, the person has cursed himself beforehand, through his own disobedience, and hanging his body on a tree merely exposes that to the public. The Deuteronomy law is grounded upon the Genesis account of the corruption of sin in humanity, and the internalization of a cursed existence. Adam and Eve corrupted and cursed themselves, seen by their inability to bring forth life (human and garden) without pain (Gen.3:16 – 19). Cain corrupted and cursed himself even further, and the ground cursed him, since he could no longer fruitfully work the ground on account of his sin (Gen.4:11-12). But notice: The ground was not cursed for anyone else, only Cain. Or, alternatively, due to the ambiguity in the Hebrew grammatical construction, the ground did not curse anyone else, only Cain. Which either way means that Cain cursed his own human nature by his sin. Then in Genesis 6:5-6 and 8:21, God diagnoses the human heart as corrupted by their violence, which required the cleansing of the land by the waters of the flood. Once again, since circumcision of the heart was the dominant motif of salvation in the Hebrew Scriptures (Dt.10:16; 30:6), while circumcision of the penis was the dominant motif of participation in the covenant, which laid the groundwork for that understanding (Gen.17), the idea is being expressed that the judgment of God is directed at something within the human person, but not at the human person per se. If you'd like to count the

number of times circumcision appears as a word in the Bible, we can do that, but even more important than word-occurrence is the covenantal practice: Circumcision marked every male in Judaism, and therefore served as an outward symbol of inward mark of salvation (Dt.30:6; Rom.2:28 – 29; Col.2:12).

Hanging on a tree merely identifies who had already been laboring under a cursed mode of life (fallenness), or living in a cursed manner (active sinfulness); it didn't enact a new curse upon the person per se. Furthermore, the hanging on a tree corresponds with the motif of Moses lifting the bronze serpent on the pole as the device that identified the poison (curse) within the Israelites. The symmetry is important. So the link you suggest between Psalm 22:1 and Galatians 3:13 evaporates. And now you have to link Galatians 3:13 to Numbers 21 and John 3 instead. These are healing and medical motifs that are clustered together, not penal ones.

Meanwhile, we benefit by reading Galatians 3:13 with Irenaeus, Athanasius, Ambrose of Milan, and John Chrysostom, because they recognize that the 'he became' passages (flesh in Jn.1:14, sin in 2 Cor.5:21, poor in 2 Cor.8:9, cursed in Gal.3:13, human in Phil.2:7) are to be read together, and refer to the incarnation, not the crucifixion. For it was at the incarnation that the Son of God took to himself fallen humanity, the same humanity that each Israelite and each human being had, which needed some kind of spiritual surgery (circumcision) to be performed upon it. That is what Paul meant that 'he became a curse for us.' It fits the negative meaning of 'born of woman, born under the Law' in Galatians 4:4. To be 'born of woman' is to be unclean, as Job attests: 'How then can a man be just with God? Or how can he be clean who is born of woman?' (Job 25:4).

I'm glad you believe in open theism, but you must be aware that penal substitution does not leave a logical place for free will, or a logical connection with it. That is because PSA requires the companion doctrine of limited atonement. If God decided how much wrath to assign to Christ, then God also chose how many people and who among all people would be saved. Which then requires the Augustinian version of double predestination. Thus, human free will does not logically fit in the theological system you are trying to maintain. By contrast, MSA expressly rejects limited atonement, and Augustinian double predestination.

<https://newhumanityinstitute.wordpress.com/2015/08/17/interpreting-jesus-and-atonement-practical-issue-1-does-god-love-your-non-christian-friend/>. <https://newhumanityinstitute.wordpress.com/2015/08/19/interpreting-jesus-and-atonement-practical-issue-3-is-god-partly-evil/>.

Regarding hell, you have not responded to my exegesis of the motif of fire from a biblical studies perspective, nor have you responded to my question about the character of God from a systematic theology perspective. Quoting Hebrews 9:27 merely raises the point on which we agree: There is indeed a judgment involved. But you have not explained why your interpretation of that judgment as coming from a supposedly retributive justice of God is the correct one. I already commented on Luke 16, Revelation 20, about what fire and torment mean there, in the links I provided previously. The divine activity (not attribute) of wrath and judgment is always targeting the corruption of sin within the person. It is not targeted at the person per se. Hence, regarding Luke 16: Even if we temporarily set aside the possibility that Jesus was *not* speaking of an afterlife per se, but was merely speaking in those terms to denote the dramatic shift which would happen to the Jewish leaders after the fall of Jerusalem, which I think is more likely. Notice in Luke 16 that the rich man still wants to make Lazarus a servant, an errand boy, just as the rich man treated him in life. Something has hardened in the rich man. But the reality is that Lazarus is not to be made into that. The flame is there, and the chasm is depicted, because the rich man's wish and prejudice cannot be carried out. So the basic paradigm of medical substitutionary atonement and divine restorative justice can easily be preserved here: The wrath of God is still not targeting the personhood of the rich man. It is targeting the idolatry and sin. Not only that, you have to take the motif of fire in Luke – Acts as a whole literary theme. Thus, fire starts out positive, in conjunction with the baptism of the Holy Spirit (Luke 3). Its fundamentally positive function of cleansing is continued at Pentecost with the tongues of fire, making each disciple a mini-Mount Sinai, as Pentecost commemorated the giving of the Law at Sinai (Acts 2).

So, too, Revelation 20. Fire is fundamentally a positive motif, connected with Jesus' person (Rev.1) because Jesus is now dressed in the fiery sword motif of Genesis 3:24. He is now the way back to the Garden of Eden. Jesus offers goods cleansed and refined by fire (Rev.3:18). The 'pure gold' which is strangely, simultaneously clear 'like transparent glass' (Rev.21:18, 21) can only be a motif of gold and glass that has passed through fire and been cleansed of all impurities. Thus, there is no problem saying that something has hardened in people who continue to resist Jesus, while Jesus continues to call them to repent, thus producing the symbol of fire which signifies the experience of torment for them. There absolutely is divine restorative justice after death. God will deny an

alcoholic the alcohol to which they addicted themselves. And He will not stop calling out for him to be healed by receiving the healed, new humanity of Jesus by the Spirit. It is precisely His restorative love which will be received as torment. But the fact that they will experience it as torment can coexist perfectly with God being restorative.

On American slavery, you grieve the loss of 600,000 lives in the American Civil War, which I do as well. I assume you also grieve the loss of millions of lives due to slavery per se. I certainly do. But your omission of that is rather surprising in this context. Did you read my papers on slavery in the Bible, and slavery in the 1st to 15th centuries of Christian faith? The glaring problem is that Christians throughout northern and northwestern Europe had already abolished slavery in keeping with biblical teaching, prior to the Trans-Atlantic slave trade. So the fact that Christians re-accepted that form of slavery was ethically wrong and also heretical.

Imagine if the U.S. had not been founded on the Protestant heresy of being pro-slavery! Imagine if the American colonists were not tainted by the motivation of preserving slavery as they read the signs of the times and knew that the British were going to abolish slavery soon. Imagine if the American colonists had stayed part of the British Empire, at least until the Brits had abolished slavery without a British Civil War, not least because all English speaking Christians outside the U.S. were absolutely clear that the Bible did not support Trans-Atlantic slavery.

So you are mistaken about Jesus not banning slavery out of ‘practicality,’ while in the same breath you are referring to the Trans-Atlantic slave trade and American slavery. Jesus did already ban that form of slavery. He did that in his pre-incarnate form while guiding the Israelites. He did that through the Jewish law: Exodus 21 limits various forms of indenture and upholds the human rights of people while indentured, Leviticus 25 declares the jubilee freedom principle and land restoration principle, Deuteronomy 15 limits debt-service to a rolling 7 year calendar, Deuteronomy 23:15-16 commands Israel to *help* runaway slaves escape. The incarnate Jesus just took over from Jewish law, intensified debt-forgiveness principles and other practices which impacted how Christians engaged with the forms of slavery in the Greco-Roman world, and he assumed that the Jewish law position would be carried over into the church. And the church carried out his teaching. If you wish to maintain your position, kindly show me where my exegesis is wrong.

You might also acknowledge that, in my paper on slavery in the Bible, I did amply point out what happened with the historic and modern Islamic slave trade. Furthermore, if you’re interested, I’ve put together even more facts about that: <http://nagasawafamily.org/article-slavery-in-islam.pdf>. And I’ve taught that on various college campuses. So I will ignore point 2 in your comment, ‘What I find destructive is how certain public figures... are rather mute about announcing... 2) the continued Muslim sex slavery of women and boys, etc.’ Whatever ‘certain public figures’ you’re referring to, it doesn’t pertain to me.

I appreciate knowing about your ministry in Angola prison. I’m not sure I understand your question, though. I’m glad to engage here, but kindly rephrase.

As for ‘American exceptionalism,’ where is that in the Bible? This goes far beyond conservative vs. liberal sympathies towards policies. American exceptionalism is rooted significantly on the attempt to read ‘America’ back into the narrative of Israel, specifically via John Winthrop’s covenant theocracy model and his attempt to step back into the moment of Israelite history narrated by Deuteronomy and Joshua. That was wrong. We simply do not live in that part of the biblical story. And we cannot duplicate the ‘covenant’ Mosaic Israel had with God. That was strictly forbidden by Moses when he said ‘no other nation’ (e.g. Dt.11), and also Jesus when he said his teaching and his mission surpassed that of the Mosaic period (e.g. Mt.19:3 – 12; 28:16 – 20), and also Paul when he said that Jewish Christians are still part of the church as Jewish Christians, not to be displaced by Gentile Christians trying to read themselves into the Old Testament and therefore displace them hermeneutically (e.g. Rom.9 – 11). Evangelical historian Mark Noll, in his book *America’s God*, has more than adequately shown why the idea of ‘covenant’ could not be maintained in the United States.

I am also concerned about liberal universities, as that is a primary mission field for me. I have spoken up when university figures or culture become so leftist that they do not tolerate anything beyond their self-affirming statements. But notice that Geert Wilders in the Netherlands has led a populist movement from the right which defends ‘socialism’ (defined more as strong safety net, strong family supports, environmentalism, pro-labor, etc.) and women’s reproductive rights, in the name of Christianity and against Islam. That helps to provoke a deeper question: Why are you so convinced that Christianity and ‘socialism’ cannot go together?

And your use of Judas Iscariot as a 'socialist' is both biblically and historically incorrect. Judas Iscariot claimed to be following the precedents set by Jewish law about giving to the poor (John 12), although privately he was pilfering the purse. If you want to criticize the Jewish laws as being overly compassionate to the poor, I suppose you can take that up with God. Judas wanted to personally profit off of betraying Jesus to the Jewish leaders, which is a capitalist motivation. He also seems to have wanted to buy his own land (Acts 1), also a capitalist motivation funded by his embezzling money from the purse. But given his remorse about how that turned out, it seems very likely that Judas wanted to force Jesus' hand to act, and thus have to use his miraculous powers to lead a military revolution against the Romans after all, and inaugurate a military messiahship. Thus, Judas privately behaved more like a capitalist, not a socialist, in his personal financial dealings. And Judas seemed to buy into the Zealot ideology that Jewishness was an ethnicity, not a multi-ethnic faith as it was in the Old Testament and as Jesus wanted to reinvigorate it (Luke 4:14 – 30). So Judas was on the alt-right of his day, buying land in anticipation of a military engagement with foreigners and hardening religious lines into an ideology of blood, race, and soil. Seems to me that you have Judas Iscariot quite wrong. In reality, Judas is much closer to... well, shall we say Richard Spencer? Steve Bannon? Donald Trump?

You assert, 'I am completely amazed that any Bible believing so-called Christian would vote for Hillary Clinton who is an abortionist, politically corrupt with foreign donations, married to a pervert, lied to our faces about Benghazi, endangered our national security with her email server cover-ups, and on it goes.' The issue of abortion is one that is worth a very long discussion, and suffice to say here that I do not line up with Hillary's stated position. But on those other issues, I don't see why you think that makes your point. If you don't like Clinton's political corruption with foreign donations into her charity foundation, then how do you deal with Trump's political corruption with foreign powers and his business interests and lack of disclosure? How do you deal with the fact that Trump is not married to a pervert but is a pervert himself? How do you deal with his many lies right to our faces? How do you deal with his endangering our national security with his administration's use of private email servers, hiring of foreign agents (Mike Flynn), engagement with the Russian ambassador and lying about it, and so on? If Hillary was a terrible choice for those reasons, how has Trump been any better? If you had left it at 'abortion,' I would understand. But since you brought in those other factors, why do you think Trump is better by your own criteria?

If you are concerned about 'uncontrolled street violence,' I think the far bigger danger over 'liberal universities' is automation. Automation is going to lead to millions of people – especially men – losing their jobs. The technology around self-driving cars alone is probably going to leave 5 million men unemployed. All that data was in front of Trump voters while he scapegoated trade deals and immigrants. Yet Trump undermines unions and working class wages, seems eager for the taxpayer to bail out big banks all over again, etc. Alas.

Best,
Mako

March 17, 2017

Mako,

I thoroughly read your entire 91 page "book". I hope as a theologian that you appreciate when another theologian reads your work; I know that I do.

Throughout the book there is a much repeated attempt to say that Jesus had "sinful flesh". This stems from a misapplication/extrapolation/error for the verse:

For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son *in the likeness of sinful flesh*, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, (Rom. 8:3 NKJ)

Adam had perfect flesh when created, but of course he with only the "character/essence of man" allowed sin to enter his flesh (blaming Eve, poor disciplinarian for Cain & Able, and who knows what else). Sin attacks our

fleshly weaknesses and one could say inhabits those “rooms” of our life where the Holy Spirit is excluded from (e.g., pornography, gluttony, etc.) By contrast Jesus, the perfect man, who has the “character/essence of God” was able to refuse all temptations via His Divine character; therefore, NO SIN ever indwelt the body, mind, or flesh of Jesus Christ. Jesus was innocent before the eyes of God (e.g., the spotless lamb for sacrifice) from incarnation to the point of death -- then the prophecy was fulfilled:

He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a *lamb* to the slaughter, And as a sheep before its shearers is silent, So He opened not His mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment, And who will declare His generation? For He was cut off from the land of the living; For the transgressions of My people He was stricken. And they made His grave with the wicked-- But with the rich at His death, Because He had done no violence, Nor was any deceit in His mouth. Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief. When You make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, And the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in His hand. He shall see the labor of His soul, and be satisfied. By His knowledge My righteous Servant shall justify many, For He shall bear their iniquities. Therefore I will divide Him a portion with the great, And He shall divide the spoil with the strong, Because He poured out His soul unto death, And He was numbered with the transgressors, And He bore the sin of many, And made intercession for the transgressors. (Isa. 53:8-12 NKJ)

When Isaiah 53 is viewed with Jesus Christ as the Lamb of God (e.g., 20+ verses with Lamb in Revelations not to mention the symbolism of Passover, etc.) then penal substitution is clearly God’s plan.

Mako - you spent 91 pages talking against penal substitution and you failed to present the verses of Isaiah 53 once! If this was your PhD dissertation and I was your professor I would tear the paper up and make you start over. This is kind of like the Mormon experience where they tell you they are Christian and never mention their beliefs in a Mother Goddess and other strange stuff!

Hi KH,

The idea that the early Christians ‘lost’ PSA out of a lack of pastoral balance is your hypothesis, for which you still need to offer quite a bit of proof. Here is some of the counterevidence against it. Models of divine retributive penalty and justice resonated throughout Greek and Latin cultures. Think of Zeus punishing Prometheus by eternal liver-ripping in Hesiod’s Theogony, the eternal boulder rolling of Sisyphus in Hades, etc. not to mention the classical Greek myth of Tartarus as the place of penalty for the overthrown titans. On the Latin side of things, there was the system of merit and demerit (which regained popularity in the 12th century in Western Europe, and influenced Western law and theology, again setting the stage for Calvin and penal substitution, since Calvin’s legal background was on Latin forms of penalty). It would have fit the pagan mind very well if the Christians spoke the language of penal substitution and offered the Christian God to them in the same retributive framework, and by raising the stakes to infinite retribution at that.

But instead, the early Christians rejected that entire framework for exactly the same reason you’re so concerned about: to not give in to cultural limitation and bias. Read Adonis Vidu, Atonement, Law, and Justice. It simply was not part of the apostolic mind. The heritage of the Hebrew Scriptures prevented the apostles and the early church from capitulating to that Greek and Latin cultural pressure.

Romans & Jews understood law certainly, life for life, eye for eye. Paul is clearly for penal substitution (Gal 3:13) where “he became a curse for us”. He became a curse on the tree not before; he became poor as an earthly man from Nazareth but he was not cursed because he was sinless. For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich. (2 Cor. 8:9 NKJ)

Speaking of which, have you read what I have written about Scripture? On my blog, there is more than ample engagement with Scripture, not merely the early church. Please explain your objections to my exegesis of circumcision as the controlling motif of salvation, the Jewish Temple sacrifices especially Leviticus 16, the serpent

Moses put on the pole in Numbers 21 especially as coordinated with John 3 and Galatians 3, Isaiah 53 and its use of the scapegoat motif flowing out of Leviticus 16, and all the ways the New Testament incorporates those Scriptures.

So for instance, your claim that Jesus' quotation of Psalm 22:1 refers to divine abandonment or punishment of some sort does not fit with the meaning of Psalm 22 itself, nor the role of Psalm 22 in the life of David, nor Jesus' use of the David story as a way to explain his own story.

Since mankind often dies via savage rape and apparent abandonment by God (e.g., ISIS victims), then would not Jesus also have to suffer the same abandonment and torture to suffer the same temptations as we? Yes - he did! Please see my attached presentation on the Trinity. Note Jesus is a separate person from God. They share many attributes as listed, but Jesus (in order to be a man) could not have omniscience & omnipotence. Rather all the miracles and insights that Jesus had were empowered via the Holy Spirit. You and I as men are also to live moment by moment empowered/comforted by the Holy Spirit!

Your comparative analysis of David and Jesus is insightful (show bread/loaves & fishes), since you pick up on various details of fulfillment that Jesus/scripture is laying down as clues.

Any serious attempt at explaining what was happening must also explain why Luke and John do not record Jesus' quotation of Psalm 22:1, and whether Luke and John express any hint of a 'separation' between Jesus and the Father. They don't seem to. In fact, John records this statement of Jesus, which indicates that while the disciples abandoned Jesus, the Father never did: 'Behold, an hour is coming, and has already come, for you to be scattered, each to his own home, and to leave Me alone; and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me.' (John 16:32) That statement alone should suffice as evidence to reject any theory involving Jesus being Father-forsaken or God-forsaken.

Yes - the Father was with Jesus at the Cross and in Hades meting out the penal substitution! Think about it - if one of your children harm your other child, then it is your responsibility to mete out the "penalty" on that sinful child, right? Additionally, I think back to when my 1 year old only son was suffering dehydration from a virus - I allowed the doctors to insert an IV in his leg and the screaming torture of my little boy almost made me want to burst into the room to stop the procedure, but I did not because "that is the law" for hospitals. I was there, but I had to let the necessary procedure happen - he was most certainly crying "Daddy why have you forsaken me?" God can handle questions; however, it is a sin to accuse God!

In Matthew and Mark, Jesus' quotation of Psalm 22:1 fits into the sustained parallel between David's pre-enthronement story and Jesus' pre-enthronement story. Like David (1 Sam.16), Jesus was anointed king (at his baptism) while others reigned. Like David (1 Sam.17), Jesus defeated a 'Goliath' (Satan in the wilderness). Like David (1 Sam.21ff.), Jesus had to build a kingdom of his own in the wilderness. Like David, Jesus was pushed into the hands of the Gentile enemies of Israel. David did feel extremely vulnerable among the Gentiles, and penned Psalm 22 as part of that experience. But David did not believe that God had forsaken him in an absolute sense. What he meant was, 'Why have You forsaken me to the Gentiles?' Gentile enemies are named in Psalm 22:6 - 18. David still experienced God as accessible, which he states in Psalm 22 itself: 'You are He who brought me forth...upon You I was cast from birth; You have been my God from my mother's womb; be not far from me, for trouble is near...' (Ps.22:9 - 11). David still experienced God as loving and protecting him, as having His face turned toward him with favor: 'For He has not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; nor has He hidden His face from him' (Ps.22:24). Also, David understood the Holy Spirit to be God's anointing upon him to be king (1 Sam.16:13), and he knew that God's Spirit still rested upon him (cf. Ps.51:11 was the only time he expressed uncertainty about that anointing). Finally, we believe that God's Spirit spoke through David, even in the season of feeling forsaken to hostile Gentile kings. Put another way, Psalm 22 is in the canonical Bible which is believed to be inspired, in which David is said to speak prophetically by the Spirit (Acts 2:29 - 30). So how could God's Spirit have forsaken David in an absolute sense while he spoke and wrote Psalm 22:1? Such a notion defies exegesis and our doctrine of inspiration. David did not actually speak of an absolute abandonment by God in Psalm 22, when we take the whole context of Psalm 22 into account in our exegesis, and also when we take Psalm 22 in the context of David's life into account in our exegesis.

David felt as if God had abandon him, but God did not abandon him.

Moreover, Jesus had been making allusions to the early life of King David throughout his ministry, because of the social, political, and theological similarities between David's pre-enthronement experience and his own. Jesus saw a more sustained comparison between himself and the early, pre-enthronement King David. After being anointed by God as king at his baptism, Jesus was being pursued by hostile opponents: the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Herodians (Mt.9:3 – 5; 9:11 – 13; 9:34; 'in the midst of wolves' in 10:16; 11:16 – 24; 12:2; 12:14 – 15; 12:24; 14:1 – 2; 15:1; 16:1 – 12). King David, after being anointed by Samuel as king, was pursued by hostile opponents, too: King Saul and his henchmen, the false leaders who would soon be dethroned by David. Jesus, while being pursued, is a king-in-exile, avoiding the capital, staying in the wilderness, building up a loyal group of followers. That is exactly what King David did (1 Sam.21 – 22ff.). To feed his followers, Jesus allowed them an exception to the standard Sinai laws about the Sabbath. To feed his followers, David made an exception to the standard Sinai laws about the bread of the tabernacle. As part of this act, Jesus said that he is greater than the temple-presence of God, and that his disciples are therefore in the presence of God (Mt.12:5 – 6). When David entered the tabernacle-presence of God (1 Sam.21), he discovered that, in some sense, the rules were different. Jesus and his disciples eat on a day that is 'holy,' which is similar to how David and his men ate bread that is 'holy' from the tabernacle.

When the Pharisees challenged Jesus about allowing his disciples to pick grain on the Sabbath, Jesus retorted with that story of David: 'Have you not read what David did when he became hungry, he and his companions, how he entered the house of God, and they ate the consecrated bread, which was not lawful for him to eat nor for those with him, but for the priests alone?' (Mt.12:1 – 4) Jesus was not just finding a clever textual proof-text for his actions. By referring to David, Jesus was making a political point to the Pharisees, a point about who was really king and who was not, about who would be vindicated and who would not.

Then, Jesus' bread multiplication miracles triggered in Jewish minds thoughts of David's kingship. They saw in this act Jesus' claim to David's throne, and tried to make him king by force (Jn.6:14 – 15). That is a very specific reaction. Jesus was gesturing once again towards the incident of David pursued into the tabernacle-presence of God. But instead of taking five of the twelve loaves of bread (Lev.24:5) and leaving seven behind, as David did, Jesus went in reverse order. He took five loaves of bread, fed those following him in the wilderness, and made twelve basketfuls of bread (Mt.14:13 – 21). In other words, he returned and amplified David's action, to show he was the heir of David, the greater David. Just to round out the allusion for his disciples, Jesus performed a second miracle with bread soon afterwards. He took seven loaves of bread, which the disciples must have been sure to note, fed another large crowd in the wilderness, and made seven large basketfuls of bread leftover (Mt.15:29 – 39). He perfects and elevates what David left remaining, or perhaps undone. And Jesus did this on a mountain (15:29), to position himself as the new temple-presence of God, not on Mount Zion in the temple in Jerusalem as King David envisioned (2 Sam.7), but in a human body which could make of any mountain a site of the now dynamic presence of God (Mt.17:1 – 13; 28:16 – 20).

For support, see scholars as diverse as literary scholars Mark Drury, 'Mark,' edited by Robert Alter and Frank Kermode, *The Literary Guide to the Bible* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987), p.414 – 416; N.T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God* (Minneapolis, MI: Fortress Press, 1992), ch.13; Jerome H. Neyrey, *Honor and Shame in the Gospel of Matthew* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998), p.156 – 161; Matthew Skinner, *The Trial Narratives: Conflict, Power, and Identity* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010), p.37 – 39.

Good Davidic comparisons and insights.

Therefore, Jesus' quote of Psalm 22:1 is not for himself, but for the criminals crucified on either side of him. In Matthew and Mark, these two men expressed disbelief that the Messiah could ever be treated this way, least of all crucified by the very Gentile powers holding Israel captive. Wasn't the Messiah supposed to be victorious over the Gentiles? But Jesus was pointing out to them that King David was exposed to great danger in his early life, too, prior to being enthroned. And if David was forsaken by God to the Gentiles, the much greater heir of David could also be forsaken by God to the Gentiles, and in a much greater way. Like David, Jesus still lived in the power of the Spirit of God, even while quoting Psalm 22:1. Jesus is communicating that he will be enthroned and vindicated, just as David was, because like David, he has never lost his anointing to be king. And Jesus' anointing is the Holy Spirit, the very bond of love between Father and Son.

As persons in Hades are bereft of the Holy Spirit's empowerment/comfort so to Jesus, the cursed, would have not had the presence of the Holy Spirit in Hades as the Father was meting out the penal substitution.

Finally, if I am correct in perceiving a literary chiasm running through Matthew's Gospel as a whole (<http://nagasawafamily.org/matthew-chiasm.pdf>), then the baptism of Jesus (Mt.3:13 – 17) – his symbolic dying and rising – parallels his actual dying and rising in his death and resurrection (Mt.27:52ff.). And if that is the case, then God's quotation of Psalm 2:7, 'You are my Son,' from the coronation Psalm spoken over the kings of Judah, parallels Jesus' own use of Psalm 22:1, which is Jesus' confident claim to the throne of David. His confidence was based on his consistent, lived parallel to the pre-enthronement life of David, the hunted king in the wilderness. And since this literary parallel between Psalm 2 and Psalm 22 seems compelling, even without the weight of the chiasm behind it, then I once again propose that the anointing of the Holy Spirit in Jesus' baptism and blessing of the Father must have been the constant reality in Jesus' life, without exception. If David never lost his anointing to be king, then we can say with confidence that Jesus never lost his anointing to be king, either, and Jesus' anointing was in fact the Spirit of God. Therefore, the Trinitarian disclosure of Father, Spirit, and Son revealed in Jesus' baptism was not momentary. Quite to the contrary, it was the hidden, spiritual stability throughout Jesus' entire life. Ergo, Jesus never faced a closed, silent heaven, even on the cross. At every moment on the cross, and especially as he was finally putting to death the corruption of sin lodged in his human nature, Jesus heard the blessing of his ever-constant, ever-loving Father, who never abandoned him (John 16:32), as always saying: 'This is My Son, in whom I am well pleased.' To the anointing song of Psalm 2, Jesus' parallel announcement to others was Psalm 22, 'Like David was, I am the hunted king in exile, on my way to the throne. But God is still with me.'

David was never cursed other than with violence in his own family due to his failure with Bathsheba (which temporarily cost him his kingly throne).

Stepping back from Jesus' experience surrounding Psalm 22:1 to the implications for the character of God, we can therefore say this: The Father, or God, never abandoned Jesus or 'punished' Jesus, as penal substitution theory requires. Instead, we find the very opposite in medical substitutionary atonement, and in the early church where no one believed in the 'broken Trinity' view (see Thomas H. McCall, *Forsaken: The Trinity, the Cross, and Why It Matters*), not to mention when we use the most up-to-date tools of literary exegesis and intertextuality. As the wilderness temptation and the Garden of Gethsemane stories indicate, at the very moment when Jesus needed the strength and love of the Father the most – at his crucifixion and death – the Father was there with him and for him through the bond of the Spirit. The Father spoke a word of blessing and identity, gave the Spirit without measure, strengthened Jesus supernaturally, and gave Jesus the conviction to be victorious over sinfulness all the way to the end. The wrath of God did not pass from the Father upon the Son. It was not an inner-Trinitarian rupture of their relationship. No, but rather this: Not upon the Son but within the Son. Not the Father's wrath alone but the Son's and Spirit's wrath as well. The Son's wrath against the corruption of sin within his own humanity was the wrath of his Father empowered by the purifying fire of the Holy Spirit. Not a divided Trinity but a united Trinity. The united Trinity poured out divine wrath upon the corruption of sin in the humanity of Jesus (Romans 8:3; 6:6), expressed in the will of Jesus to be faithful. It is first and foremost 'the faithfulness of the Son of God' which expresses the faithfulness of God (Rom.3:21; Gal.2:20, KJV). In Jewish idiom, what was needed in the salvation of humanity was circumcision of heart (Dt.30:6; Rom.2:28 - 29). For Jesus to save the fallen humanity that he had taken to himself in his incarnation, he needed to fight it successfully, and then cut something away from himself through his death and resurrection. Hence, Jesus circumcised his own heart ('the circumcision of Christ' in Colossians 2:12), by condemning sin in his own flesh (Rom.8:3), thereby becoming able to share his Spirit with us (Rom.8:4 - 11), and becoming 'the source of salvation' (Heb.5:7 - 10).

After Jesus' penal substitutionary atonement he could preach to demonic spirits that God's justice had been satisfied so that He can justly redeem mankind:

For it is better, if it is the will of God, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil. For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit, by whom also He went and preached to the spirits in prison, who formerly were disobedient, when once the Divine longsuffering waited (1 Pet. 3:17-20 NKJ)

Barring a "penal substitutionary atonement" for mankind by Jesus would have allowed the demonic accusers to mock God's character by saying "You're not just for letting man off the hook and you're not loving for punishing

only us demons". The only act that keeps any individual man from arriving at the same destination as the devils is their failure to trust in Jesus Christ as Lord.

Going further, your claim that Galatians 3:13 refers to a penal substitution curse is an inaccurate reading of how Paul actually read Deuteronomy 21 and the rest of the Torah. It is not the act of hanging someone on a tree that curses the person. Rather, the person has cursed himself beforehand, through his own disobedience, and hanging his body on a tree merely exposes that to the public. The Deuteronomy law is grounded upon the Genesis account of the corruption of sin in humanity, and the internalization of a cursed existence. Adam and Eve corrupted and cursed themselves, seen by their inability to bring forth life (human and garden) without pain (Gen.3:16 – 19). Cain corrupted and cursed himself even further, and the ground cursed him, since he could no longer fruitfully work the ground on account of his sin (Gen.4:11-12). But notice: The ground was not cursed for anyone else, only Cain. Or, alternatively, due to the ambiguity in the Hebrew grammatical construction, the ground did not curse anyone else, only Cain. Which either way means that Cain cursed his own human nature by his sin. Then in Genesis 6:5-6 and 8:21, God diagnoses the human heart as corrupted by their violence, which required the cleansing of the land by the waters of the flood. Once again, since circumcision of the heart was the dominant motif of salvation in the Hebrew Scriptures (Dt.10:16; 30:6), while circumcision of the penis was the dominant motif of participation in the covenant, which laid the groundwork for that understanding (Gen.17), the idea is being expressed that the judgment of God is directed at something within the human person, but not at the human person per se. If you'd like to count the number of times circumcision appears as a word in the Bible, we can do that, but even more important than word-occurrence is the covenantal practice: Circumcision marked every male in Judaism, and therefore served as an outward symbol of inward mark of salvation (Dt.30:6; Rom.2:28 – 29; Col.2:12).

Hanging on a tree merely identifies who had already been laboring under a cursed mode of life (fallenness), or living in a cursed manner (active sinfulness); it didn't enact a new curse upon the person per se. Furthermore, the hanging on a tree corresponds with the motif of Moses lifting the bronze serpent on the pole as the device that identified the poison (curse) within the Israelites. The symmetry is important. So the link you suggest between Psalm 22:1 and Galatians 3:13 evaporates. And now you have to link Galatians 3:13 to Numbers 21 and John 3 instead. These are healing and medical motifs that are clustered together, not penal ones.

When the serpent was alive it was normal; when symbolically killed and lifted on a pole it was cursed. Jesus was alive as a normal Spirit-filled man (who was of course sinless); when actually killed and lifted on a pole He was cursed.

Meanwhile, we benefit by reading Galatians 3:13 with Irenaeus, Athanasius, Ambrose of Milan, and John Chrysostom, because they recognize that the 'he became' passages (flesh in Jn.1:14, sin in 2 Cor.5:21, poor in 2 Cor.8:9, cursed in Gal.3:13, human in Phil.2:7) are to be read together, and refer to the incarnation, not the crucifixion. For it was at the incarnation that the Son of God took to himself fallen humanity, the same humanity that each Israelite and each human being had, which needed some kind of spiritual surgery (circumcision) to be performed upon it. That is what Paul meant that 'he became a curse for us.' It fits the negative meaning of 'born of woman, born under the Law' in Galatians 4:4. To be 'born of woman' is to be unclean, as Job attests: 'How then can a man be just with God? Or how can he be clean who is born of woman?' (Job 25:4).

For it was at the incarnation that the Son of God took to himself humanity - NOT fallen humanity!

I'm glad you believe in open theism, but you must be aware that penal substitution does not leave a logical place for free will, or a logical connection with it. That is because PSA requires the companion doctrine of limited atonement. If God decided how much wrath to assign to Christ, then God also chose how many people and who among all people would be saved. Which then requires the Augustinian version of double predestination. Thus, human free will does not logically fit in the theological system you are trying to maintain. By contrast, MSA expressly rejects limited atonement, and Augustinian double predestination. <https://newhumanityinstitute.wordpress.com/2015/08/17/interpreting-jesus-and-atonement-practical-issue-1-does-god-love-your-non-christian-friend/>. <https://newhumanityinstitute.wordpress.com/2015/08/19/interpreting-jesus-and-atonement-practical-issue-3-is-god-partly-evil/>.

My paper pointed out that Jesus provided UNLIMITED atonement; therefore, when men refused to accept the “salvation ticket” to heaven that has already been fully paid for by Jesus then God the Father is extremely wrathful. Thus these unbelievers suffer the penalty that Jesus has already paid - they are fools who then can never pay this enormous bill. Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace? (Heb. 10:29 NKJ)

Regarding hell, you have not responded to my exegesis of the motif of fire from a biblical studies perspective, nor have you responded to my question about the character of God from a systematic theology perspective. Quoting Hebrews 9:27 merely raises the point on which we agree: There is indeed a judgment involved. But you have not explained why your interpretation of that judgment as coming from a supposedly retributive justice of God is the correct one. I already commented on Luke 16, Revelation 20, about what fire and torment mean there, in the links I provided previously. The divine activity (not attribute) of wrath and judgment is always targeting the corruption of sin within the person. It is not targeted at the person per se. Hence, regarding Luke 16: Even if we temporarily set aside the possibility that Jesus was *not* speaking of an afterlife per se, but was merely speaking in those terms to denote the dramatic shift which would happen to the Jewish leaders after the fall of Jerusalem, which I think is more likely. Notice in Luke 16 that the rich man still wants to make Lazarus a servant, an errand boy, just as the rich man treated him in life. Something has hardened in the rich man. But the reality is that Lazarus is not to be made into that. The flame is there, and the chasm is depicted, because the rich man’s wish and prejudice cannot be carried out. So the basic paradigm of medical substitutionary atonement and divine restorative justice can easily be preserved here: The wrath of God is still not targeting the personhood of the rich man. It is targeting the idolatry and sin. Not only that, you have to take the motif of fire in Luke – Acts as a whole literary theme. Thus, fire starts out positive, in conjunction with the baptism of the Holy Spirit (Luke 3). Its fundamentally positive function of cleansing is continued at Pentecost with the tongues of fire, making each disciple a mini-Mount Sinai, as Pentecost commemorated the giving of the Law at Sinai (Acts 2).

So, too, Revelation 20. Fire is fundamentally a positive motif, connected with Jesus’ person (Rev.1) because Jesus is now dressed in the fiery sword motif of Genesis 3:24. He is now the way back to the Garden of Eden. Jesus offers goods cleansed and refined by fire (Rev.3:18). The ‘pure gold’ which is strangely, simultaneously clear ‘like transparent glass’ (Rev.21:18, 21) can only be a motif of gold and glass that has passed through fire and been cleansed of all impurities. Thus, there is no problem saying that something has hardened in people who continue to resist Jesus, while Jesus continues to call them to repent, thus producing the symbol of fire which signifies the experience of torment for them. There absolutely is divine restorative justice after death. God will deny an alcoholic the alcohol to which they addicted themselves. And He will not stop calling out for him to be healed by receiving the healed, new humanity of Jesus by the Spirit. It is precisely His restorative love which will be received as torment. But the fact that they will experience it as torment can coexist perfectly with God being restorative.

There is absolutely no restorative justice after death - are you grasping for straws because you apparently do not want to confront those weak in the faith with Jesus as Judge? To me this indicates the cowardliness of your anti-PSA stance -- which plays better with effeminate audiences as “A GOD OF LOVE” while for masculine audiences the “GOD AS JUSTICE” receives a better welcome. Of course God is both Love and Justice and we must rightly divide the Word for all of our audiences.

The final eternal Hell (not Hades which is a temporary abode until the Judgment) will be torment and the absolute silencing of anything that attempts to express evil - think of Satan, et. al. frozen in torment with no medium or means to express their blasphemies forever & ever.

Anyone who has rejected Moses’ law dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace? For we know Him who said, “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,” says the Lord. And again, “The LORD will judge His people.” (Heb. 10:28-30 NKJ)

Does not “restorative justice” taken to its logical conclusion result in universal salvation? Yes/No

On American slavery, you grieve the loss of 600,000 lives in the American Civil War, which I do as well. I assume you also grieve the loss of millions of lives due to slavery per se. I certainly do. But your omission of that is rather surprising in this context. Did you read my papers on slavery in the Bible, and slavery in the 1st to 15th centuries of Christian faith? The glaring problem is that Christians throughout northern and northwestern Europe had already abolished slavery in keeping with biblical teaching, prior to the Trans-Atlantic slave trade. So the fact that Christians re-accepted that form of slavery was ethically wrong and also heretical.

I only comment on things I disagree with or provide compliments, etc. elsewhere.

Of course slavery is not “ideal” and if necessary then the Hebrew Bible is the righteous standard. I say this because if our culture returns to the dark ages due to war, etc., then slavery is better than killing all captives or executing those in debtors prison, etc. Our modern age tends to have a moral superiority complex that makes their eyes bug out when certain ancient practices are not condemned forevermore, yet we abort babies in the womb???

Imagine if the U.S. had not been founded on the Protestant heresy of being pro-slavery! Imagine if the American colonists were not tainted by the motivation of preserving slavery as they read the signs of the times and knew that the British were going to abolish slavery soon. Imagine if the American colonists had stayed part of the British Empire, at least until the Brits had abolished slavery without a British Civil War, not least because all English speaking Christians outside the U.S. were absolutely clear that the Bible did not support Trans-Atlantic slavery.

I have already agreed that slavery was an ethical compromise by the founding Fathers, but going backwards to old issues is marginal at best (I am probably descended from Viking or Viking slaves given the name, but I haven't yet sued Norway for reparations). Please review the attached presentation on “The End of Racism” which I compiled from Dinesh D'Souza's book titled by the same name. This book was a New York Times bestseller in 1994 when it came out and he does very thorough research of slavery and racism throughout history with commentary and legal decisions well documented. Additionally, he looks at IQ, school testing, cultural effects, and political leader statements. Basically, if you want to talk through the racism issues of today then this book puts it all on the table and thus I have summarized it for discussion.

So you are mistaken about Jesus not banning slavery out of ‘practicality,’ while in the same breath you are referring to the Trans-Atlantic slave trade and American slavery. Jesus did already ban that form of slavery. He did that in his pre-incarnate form while guiding the Israelites. He did that through the Jewish law: Exodus 21 limits various forms of indenture and upholds the human rights of people while indentured, Leviticus 25 declares the jubilee freedom principle and land restoration principle, Deuteronomy 15 limits debt-service to a rolling 7 year calendar, Deuteronomy 23:15-16 commands Israel to *help* runaway slaves escape. The incarnate Jesus just took over from Jewish law, intensified debt-forgiveness principles and other practices which impacted how Christians engaged with the forms of slavery in the Greco-Roman world, and he assumed that the Jewish law position would be carried over into the church. And the church carried out his teaching. If you wish to maintain your position, kindly show me where my exegesis is wrong.

I agree with Jesus' slave principles as you have described -- the only point I was making is that Jesus did not give a fiat statement “If you have slaves you are a sinner!” which apparently is the liberal intellectual mantra of today.

Read the New Testament book of Philemon - did Paul condemn the slaveholder (Philemon) or the slave (Onesimus) who were both Christians?

For perhaps he departed for a while for this purpose, that you might receive him forever, no longer as a slave (Onesimus) but more than a slave-- a beloved brother, especially to me but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord. (Phlm. 1:15-16 NKJ)

You might also acknowledge that, in my paper on slavery in the Bible, I did amply point out what happened with the historic and modern Islamic slave trade. Furthermore, if you're interested, I've put together even more facts about that: <http://nagasawafamily.org/article-slavery-in-islam.pdf>. And I've taught that on various college campuses. So I will ignore point 2 in your comment, ‘What I find destructive is how certain public figures... are rather mute about announcing... 2) the continued Muslim sex slavery of women and boys, etc.’ Whatever ‘certain public figures’ you're referring to, it doesn't pertain to me.

Good - I am glad you are exposing how Islam is imprisoning young girls as sex slaves, rather than letting them go.

I appreciate knowing about your ministry in Angola prison. I'm not sure I understand your question, though. I'm glad to engage here, but kindly rephrase.

What do you recommend for "victim restoration" justice?

As for 'American exceptionalism,' where is that in the Bible? This goes far beyond conservative vs. liberal sympathies towards policies. American exceptionalism is rooted significantly on the attempt to read 'America' back into the narrative of Israel, specifically via John Winthrop's covenant theocracy model and his attempt to step back into the moment of Israelite history narrated by Deuteronomy and Joshua. That was wrong. We simply do not live in that part of the biblical story. And we cannot duplicate the 'covenant' Mosaic Israel had with God. That was strictly forbidden by Moses when he said 'no other nation' (e.g. Dt.11), and also Jesus when he said his teaching and his mission surpassed that of the Mosaic period (e.g. Mt.19:3 – 12; 28:16 – 20), and also Paul when he said that Jewish Christians are still part of the church as Jewish Christians, not to be displaced by Gentile Christians trying to read themselves into the Old Testament and therefore displace them hermeneutically (e.g. Rom.9 – 11). Evangelical historian Mark Noll, in his book America's God, has more than adequately shown why the idea of 'covenant' could not be maintained in the United States.

I do not have any beliefs that the USA replaces Israel. I just think that the USA has been the best example of a culture of freedom, high standard of living, opportunity, etc. The envy of others who would tirelessly work to denigrate the USA is not of God.

I am also concerned about liberal universities, as that is a primary mission field for me. I have spoken up when university figures or culture become so leftist that they do not tolerate anything beyond their self-affirming statements. But notice that Geert Wilders in the Netherlands has led a populist movement from the right which defends 'socialism' (defined more as strong safety net, strong family supports, environmentalism, pro-labor, etc.) and women's reproductive rights, in the name of Christianity and against Islam. That helps to provoke a deeper question: Why are you so convinced that Christianity and 'socialism' cannot go together?

People either depend on God or government. If the government becomes their "nanny state" then they have no use for God --- (e.g., European socialism). People should look to families & churches who they can communicate eye-to-eye with --- not government (which when given enough control will inevitably put a gun to your head with its demands). Why should I tax others to enforce my charitable obligations?

And your use of Judas Iscariot as a 'socialist' is both biblically and historically incorrect. Judas Iscariot claimed to be following the precedents set by Jewish law about giving to the poor (John 12), although privately he was pilfering the purse. If you want to criticize the Jewish laws as being overly compassionate to the poor, I suppose you can take that up with God. Judas wanted to personally profit off of betraying Jesus to the Jewish leaders, which is a capitalist motivation. No this is typical of elitist socialist bureaucrats who find cushy jobs on tax payer money\$. He also seems to have wanted to buy his own land (Acts 1), also a capitalist motivation funded by his embezzling money from the purse.

No - the priests bought the land with Jesus' blood money to give salvific relief to their "social consciences".

Then Judas, His betrayer, seeing that He had been condemned, was remorseful and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood." And they said, "What is that to us? You see to it!" Then he threw down the pieces of silver in the temple and departed, and went and hanged himself. But the chief priests took the silver pieces and said, "It is not lawful to put them into the treasury, because they are the price of blood." And they consulted together and bought with them the potter's field, to bury strangers in. Therefore that field has been called the Field of Blood to this day. (Matt. 27:3-8 NKJ)

But given his remorse about how that turned out, it seems very likely that Judas wanted to force Jesus' hand to act, and thus have to use his miraculous powers to lead a military revolution against the Romans after all, and inaugurate a military messiahship. Thus, Judas privately behaved more like a capitalist, not a socialist, in his personal financial

dealings. And Judas seemed to buy into the Zealot ideology that Jewishness was an ethnicity, not a multi-ethnic faith as it was in the Old Testament and as Jesus wanted to reinvigorate it (Luke 4:14 – 30).

You are speculating out of thin air - this may have been true for Simon the Zealot, but he did not betray Jesus.

Peter was the militaristic one who cut the ear off of a Temple guard.

So Judas was on the alt-right of his day, buying land in anticipation of a military engagement with foreigners and hardening religious lines into an ideology of blood, race, and soil. Seems to me that you have Judas Iscariot quite wrong. In reality, Judas is much closer to... well, shall we say Richard Spencer? Steve Bannon? Donald Trump?

Judas Iscariot feigned concern for the poor, was an admin bureaucratic thief, and betrayed Christ for political manipulation & power -- straight out of the Sal Alinsky play book (Obama/Hillary)

Think about it - the betrayal could have been by Peter, Simon, the sons of Zebedee, but nope it was the one whose last recorded word to Jesus was ranting against the Lord of the Universe about "giving to the poor"

You assert, 'I am completely amazed that any Bible believing so-called Christian would vote for Hillary Clinton who is an abortionist, politically corrupt with foreign donations, married to a pervert, lied to our faces about Benghazi, endangered our national security with her email server cover-ups, and on it goes.' The issue of abortion is one that is worth a very long discussion, and suffice to say here that I do not line up with Hillary's stated position. But on those other issues, I don't see why you think that makes your point. If you don't like Clinton's political corruption with foreign donations into her charity foundation, then how do you deal with Trump's political corruption with foreign powers and his business interests and lack of disclosure? How do you deal with the fact that Trump is not married to a pervert but is a pervert himself? How do you deal with his many lies right to our faces? How do you deal with his endangering our national security with his administration's use of private email servers, hiring of foreign agents (Mike Flynn), engagement with the Russian ambassador and lying about it, and so on? If Hillary was a terrible choice for those reasons, how has Trump been any better? If you had left it at 'abortion,' I would understand. But since you brought in those other factors, why do you think Trump is better by your own criteria?

I will just leave it at abortion, the killing of the innocent by one party, which speaks volumes.

If you are concerned about 'uncontrolled street violence,' I think the far bigger danger over 'liberal universities' is automation. Automation is going to lead to millions of people – especially men – losing their jobs. The technology around self-driving cars alone is probably going to leave 5 million men unemployed. All that data was in front of Trump voters while he scapegoated trade deals and immigrants. Yet Trump undermines unions and working class wages, seems eager for the taxpayer to bail out big banks all over again, etc. Alas.

Keep in mind that Trump is a billionaire who did not have to run as President to save our country; we serve a God who was infinitely better off in heaven who did not have to come save the world. The leftist & media are crucifying the Trump and the world crucified the Christ!

Best,
Mako

P.S. I am praying that you unaffiliate yourself from your present theological/political situation and that you find a better balanced theological persuasion.

March 21, 2017

Hi KH,

I'm grateful that you gave the early church material a read. I admire your stamina. And again, I am grateful for your engagement. However, I'm going to ask again that you try to substantiate your claim that the early church "lost" penal substitution, despite Greek and Roman cultures virtually begging them to retain or create a retributive justice Christian equivalent out of cultural connection point, and cultural bias. How they managed to not do this, and how they spontaneously replaced it with medical substitution (supposedly) without an organizational hierarchy, apparently remains beyond your ability to explain. I think the more you try to substantiate your claim with the supporting disciplines of history and sociology, the more you will find that you won't be able to do it. That has rather big implications.

You claim that the Jewish Old Testament background provided divine retributive justice as a backdrop, which was supposedly forgotten by the early church. But the ethics of Israel were restorative, not retributive. Even their experience of God's anger and discipline was just part of the overall experience of restorative justice because it affirmed the covenant and brought them historically closer to the incarnation of Jesus. You rehearse "an eye for an eye" but I've already given exegetical notes to Exodus 21 along with the history of Jewish interpretation on that principle which does not agree with your interpretation in the slightest. Simply repeating your point is not sufficient here.

Before you accuse me of being light on biblical exposition, please pay attention to the fact that I referred you to my many exegetical pieces on the blog. They especially relate to the Old Testament. Your questions and objections have been more than amply anticipated. And the later blog articles on politics refer to the earlier exegetical offerings. For ease of reference, I'm putting the links into this email for you:

Here is my exegesis of Isaiah 53, along with another critical incarnation-related passage from Isaiah 58-59, which is important because Paul quotes from Isaiah 59 in Romans 11.

<https://newhumanityinstitute.wordpress.com/2015/12/10/atonement-in-scripture-isaiah-53-part-1/>
<https://newhumanityinstitute.wordpress.com/2015/12/11/atonement-in-scripture-isaiah-53-part-2/>
<https://newhumanityinstitute.wordpress.com/2015/12/12/atonement-in-scripture-isaiah-53-part-3/>
<https://newhumanityinstitute.wordpress.com/2015/12/13/atonement-in-scripture-isaiah-53-part-4/>
<https://newhumanityinstitute.wordpress.com/2015/12/14/atonement-in-scripture-isaiah-53-part-5-atonement-and-social-justice-are-one/>

<https://newhumanityinstitute.wordpress.com/2015/12/23/atonement-in-scripture-temple-sacrifices-and-a-bloodthirsty-god-part-1/>
<https://newhumanityinstitute.wordpress.com/2015/12/24/atonement-in-scripture-temple-sacrifice-and-a-bloodthirsty-god-part-2/>
<https://newhumanityinstitute.wordpress.com/2015/12/25/atonement-in-scripture-temple-sacrifices-and-a-bloodthirsty-god-part-3/>
<https://newhumanityinstitute.wordpress.com/2015/12/26/atonement-in-scripture-temple-sacrifices-and-a-bloodthirsty-god-part-4/>
<https://newhumanityinstitute.wordpress.com/2015/12/29/atonement-in-scripture-circumcision/>
<https://newhumanityinstitute.wordpress.com/2015/12/31/atonement-in-scripture-circumcision-and-passover/>
<https://newhumanityinstitute.wordpress.com/2016/01/02/atonement-in-scripture-christ-as-passover-in-1-corinthians/>
<https://newhumanityinstitute.wordpress.com/2016/01/03/atonement-in-scripture-christ-as-passover-in-johns-gospel/>
<https://newhumanityinstitute.wordpress.com/2016/01/05/atonement-in-scripture-the-bronze-serpent-and-passover-part-1/>
<https://newhumanityinstitute.wordpress.com/2016/01/06/atonement-in-scripture-the-bronze-serpent-and-passover-part-2/>
<https://newhumanityinstitute.wordpress.com/2016/01/19/atonement-in-scripture-the-tabernacle-and-the-priests/>

Here is the "scapegoat" series, in which I provide both exegetical work and also comparative theology and politics, including material on the temple sacrifices, the covenant interactions between God and Israel throughout the Old Testament, Romans, and Colossians, all of which you have not engaged:

<https://newhumanityinstitute.wordpress.com/2016/02/12/atonement-in-scripture-donald-trumps-scapegoating-and-the-myth-of-retributive-justice-part-1/>
<https://newhumanityinstitute.wordpress.com/2016/02/15/atonement-in-scripture-donald-trumps-scapegoating-and-the-scapegoating-of-the-black-community/>
<https://newhumanityinstitute.wordpress.com/2016/02/18/atonement-in-scripture-what-lynching-torture-scapegoating-have-in-common-penal-substitution/>
<https://newhumanityinstitute.wordpress.com/2016/02/22/atonement-in-scripture-why-penal-substitution-is-a-gateway-drug-to-right-wing-extremism/>
<https://newhumanityinstitute.wordpress.com/2016/02/29/atonement-in-scripture-why-evangelicals-scapegoat-gays-muslims-etc/>
<https://newhumanityinstitute.wordpress.com/2016/03/05/atonement-in-scripture-why-trump-and-cruz-are-the-direct-logical-result-of-american-evangelical-theology/>
<https://newhumanityinstitute.wordpress.com/2016/04/28/atonement-in-scripture-a-neuroscientific-reason-for-why-retributive-justice-is-from-the-fall-and-penal-substitution-is-immature/>

The Son's Assumption of Fallen or Unfallen Humanity

Meanwhile, your interpretation of Romans 8:3 is both incorrect and irrelevant to the point at hand. It is irrelevant because medical substitutionary atonement can stand up perfectly well in a slightly different form than the one I prefer. Some people do shift the atoning cleansing of the human nature of Jesus, from his active obedience accomplished as a human process throughout his lifetime and crucifixion, over to an instantaneous event at his conception/incarnation. In fact, some Eastern Orthodox theologians believe that very thing, and there are some Christian leaders from early church history who seemed to believe that (starting with Tertullian, and perhaps Augustine). Yet, that still makes the overall objective in atonement, the cleansing of Jesus' humanity from fallenness, accomplished by Jesus, just in a different way. And even with this variation, medical substitutionary atonement can still be true, and still draws on much more biblical support than penal substitution.

However, I am persuaded that you are incorrect on exegetical grounds, and your suggestion that Isaiah 53 provides support for your position on Romans 8:3 is not at all self-evident. Your assumption that "lamb" language refers to an already purified human nature from Jesus' conception is faulty.

Hebrews in general explores the humanity of Jesus, and Hebrews 4:15 says that he "has been tempted in all things as we are, yet [was] without sin." That last phrase is critical to think through. If Jesus did not have a fallen human nature, but only a pre-fallen Adamic human nature, then he was not actually tempted in all things "as we are." A temptation exists when something outside of me appeals to something inside of me. But if I have no desire for, or liking for, chocolate (say), then you could put all the chocolate you want in front of me - and I won't be tempted by it. So if Jesus did not have a fallen human nature, it's doubtful that he would even be tempted at all. And it would completely remove Jesus from being a source of pastoral comfort to us if he did not experience the same temptation we did. The whole point of Hebrews is that Jesus knows what it's like to be us. So Jesus was without sin in the sense of being without guilt. But Hebrews agrees with Romans 8:3 in the sense that Jesus did indeed have the same humanity we do, which made him "as we are."

Furthermore, Hebrews 5:7 says that Jesus "became perfect." You say above, however, that "Adam had perfect flesh when he was created." You seem to argue that Jesus must have assumed a human nature that was like Adam's before he fell. In which case, he would be "perfect" from conception. But that is not in agreement with Hebrews 5:7. Jesus *became* perfect through his life, death, and resurrection, and he could only share his resurrected humanity by his Spirit after his death and resurrection. That is the real reason why the lamb and other sacrificial animals had to be perfect in their own physically unblemished way -- they pointed to the moral quality of Jesus' full human life as he made personal choices to obey the Father. And the lifeblood of the animal served as God's gift to the one who was offering the animal, to provide life to Israel. But you completely neglect how the animal sacrifices, which were uncorrupted as you observe, since animals did not fall into sin, were paired with the Jewish priesthood whose humanity was corrupted, and that pairing is inseparable in biblical imagery, not least in Hebrews. Jesus was the true sacrifice and the true priest, and even the true tabernacle who was cleansed by his own lifelong obedience culminating in his self-sacrifice (Hebrews 7 - 10). This is preceded by the discussion about the true humanity of Jesus as high priest in Hebrews 4 - 5, who was not born "perfect." The insight of Hebrews means that Jesus' perfection was gained through a hard-won personal battle stretching over a lifetime, since he had an imperfect

human nature to start with. If Jesus was perfect already from birth, then he could have shared his Spirit without going through the cross and resurrection. But John's Gospel says he could not have done that, in John 7:37-39, for example.

Moreover, there is the meaning of the phrase "in the likeness of." Since you read my material on the early church, you would know that the phrase "in the likeness of" sinful flesh in Romans 8:3 means something much stronger than "in the superficial appearance of, only." Note that Paul uses the very same phrase in Philippians 2:7, where he says that the Son was made "in the likeness of" men. So now, are you going to propose a gnostic interpretation of Philippians 2:7 and claim that Jesus was only "in the superficial appearance of, only, but not the real substance of men"? Hopefully not. That's because you can't make the exact same phrase mean one thing in Philippians 2:7 and quite a different thing in Romans 8:3. This is the same author discussing the same subject. Furthermore, Paul, with his roots as a Jewish theologian, knows that the phrase "in the likeness" comes from Genesis 1, where image and likeness are first introduced. It denotes "real participation in," and becomes connected to Genesis 2 where God invites humanity to eat from the tree of life and have real participation in His life in a much deeper way than how humans were created initially. So back to Paul's usage of that phrase. Just as Jesus really became human and really participated in humanness according to Philippians 2:7, he really became sinful flesh and really participated in the same stuff we are according to Romans 8:3. If you choose to continue denying that the Son took to himself "sinful flesh" as in "fallen humanity," please explain why the phrase "in the likeness of" means one thing in Philippians 2:7 and quite another in Romans 8:3?

I absolutely agree with you when you insist on Jesus' innocence in terms of his activity - thoughts, emotions, deeds, words. He was sinless in the active sense. But you are making the assumption that having a fallen humanity automatically means that Jesus must have sinned actively, which is not true. Fallenness is a condition, which pertains to human nature generally. It is not the same as guilt, which pertains to human persons as we live and act and make specific choices freely. With the exception of coveting, which Paul treats with special interest in Romans 7:14 - 8:4, I am guilty for things that you are not, and vice versa, because the sinful flesh in which we both share does not predetermine our individual choices. If that is true for our humanness, again, with the exception of coveting, it is also true for Jesus. He could share in sinful flesh without being predetermined to actively sin, especially because in Romans 7 - 8, Jesus won the deep battle against coveting that none of us could win.

In Romans 7:14 - 25, Paul distinguishes between the "I myself" and "the sin which indwells me." The latter, he calls "flesh" and "sinful flesh" in 8:3. In medical substitutionary atonement, and in the specific expression of it which I prefer, which includes Jesus' lived human obedience as part of the cleansing and atoning process, Jesus specifically did what "the Law," that is, the Sinai covenant, could not do, weakened as it was by the flesh of Israel. What did the Law call for? Yes, of course, obedience to the commandments, in particular the tenth commandment against covetousness which Paul said nailed him. But the Sinai covenant called for Israel to circumcise their hearts (Dt.10:16). That is, to return their human nature back to God in a restored and healed condition after being shaped by the commandments, and etching the commandments onto their own hearts. Paul affirms that this was the goal of the Sinai covenant in Romans 2:28-29. Yet the Israelites could not do it. Only Jesus did.

Hence, the phrase "pistis christou" is translated by KJV as "the faithfulness of Christ," denoting his lifelong struggle to be obedient to the Father, and live out all the commandments of the Sinai covenant. That phrase appears in the critical junctures of Romans 3:22 and Galatians 2:20. The phrase "pistis Christou" should not be translated "faith in Christ," as it is in many English translations, including NKJV. It should be the "faithfulness of Christ" because Jesus clearly stepped into the role of Israel, fulfilled Israel's side of the covenant through his own faithfulness, and therefore fulfilled God's side of the covenant, too, because Jesus as the true Israel was God doing to the humanity of Israel what they could not do for themselves. Hebrews 12:2 speaks of this same basic idea as Jesus being the "perfector of faith" itself, not just the perfector of deeds. Paul is arguing in Romans that God really has been faithful to His covenant with Israel (Rom.1:16 - 17; 9:1 - 11:36). God's righteousness is not simply a moral standard in the abstract, but specifically His faithfulness to His covenant with Israel (Rom.3:1 - 8). And God's righteousness is actually the faithfulness of Jesus (Rom.3:21 - 22). Your theory of Jesus taking pre-fallen Adamic humanity means that Jesus did not actually fulfill the Sinai covenant, because Adam, especially pre-fallen Adam, wasn't even within the Sinai covenant. So once again, if Jesus did not actually share in Israel's sinful flesh, then God was not actually faithful to the Sinai covenant, and He was not faithful to Israel. He would have just ignored and bypassed the Sinai covenant arbitrarily.

Also, there is Romans 6:6 and the surrounding logic of dying and rising with Christ. Jesus put to death “the old self.” He did this for his own humanity, so that we could participate vicariously in his triumphant obedience and victory over sin. If Jesus did not have a sinful, fallen humanity, which he successfully fought and within which he had a personal victory over sin, how could he then help us? If his humanity was already somehow perfect and pristine, he would have no real point of contact with us. He would not have an “old self” to put to death from which point we could share in his death and resurrection. If Jesus did not have a true union with us in the depths of our fallenness, we could have no true union with him.

The Cross, Psalm 22, and the Trinity

Thank you for acknowledging that Jesus’ quotation of Psalm 22:1 has to do with his appeal to the David story. (Incidentally, David was cursed with more than just violence within his family - his throne and all his heirs were cursed with warfare upon them from outside their family, related to their rule and governance, in 2 Sam.12:10, something Jesus had to also resolve - but I don’t think this is a major point here).

You use one metaphor to say the Father was present with Jesus and to Jesus, paying out the penal substitution penalty:

“the Father was with Jesus at the Cross and in Hades meting out the penal substitution! Think about it - if one of your children harm your other child, then it is your responsibility to mete out the “penalty” on that sinful child, right?”

Later on, you insist on this again:

“As persons in Hades are bereft of the Holy Spirit’s empowerment/comfort so to Jesus, the cursed, would have not had the presence of the Holy Spirit in Hades as the Father was meting out the penal substitution.”

But surprisingly, you then switch metaphors and recall your son in the doctor’s office undertaking treatment for a condition while you as his father are present and authorizing the doctor to administer the treatment.

“Additionally, I think back to when my 1 year old only son was suffering dehydration from a virus - I allowed the doctors to insert an IV in his leg and the screaming torture of my little boy almost made me want to burst into the room to stop the procedure, but I did not because “that is the law” for hospitals. I was there, but I had to let the necessary procedure happen - he was most certainly crying “Daddy why have you forsaken me?”“

You use this metaphor to suggest that the Father allowed others to act upon Jesus, and by this you hope to explain what Jesus meant when he said he was forsaken by God. In other words, you resort to a medical, healing analogy where no one is actually behaving in a way that can be said to be an expression of retributive justice, and no one is paying out a legal penalty. But in your analogy, the father is not the doctor. In your analogy, the doctor is present to Jesus inflicting a painful treatment while the Father looks on, and in that sense “forsakes” the Son. So who and what does the doctor represent, in this analogy? Someone or something who is not God? Or an aspect of the Father which expresses a penal, spiritual wrath while another aspect of the Father can be said to keep his hands clean?

Perhaps you are attempting to explain how Jesus could both be aware of his Father’s presence (John 16:32) and yet lament that God had forsaken him (Psalm 22:1). So your proposal is to suggest that the Father was personally punishing Jesus “meting out the penal substitution” and thus Jesus was aware of that. And also, you suggest, as I do but in a different way, that Jesus’ cry of forsakenness had to do with the Father letting others act upon him to cause him pain.

Your juxtaposition of these metaphors leave large exegetical and logical questions which are common in PSA. The basic question is still rooted in the PSA-produced tension between divine presence (John 16:32) and supposedly divine absence (Psalm 22:1 as quoted by Jesus). Which was Jesus’ experience? The ambiguity comes in because, in the PSA understanding, forsakenness would seem to be the punishment itself. But that only increases the difficulty in connection with John 16:32: Is punishment the result of divine presence or divine absence?

I notice that Jesus did not say, “My God, my God, why are you present and assailing me?” Or, “Why are you present and tormenting me?” Or, “Why are you present and burning me inside with hellfire?” But that is what is required by penal substitution as you are expressing it. How else could the Father mete out the penalty for sin except directly and personally? If, in your first analogy above, the Father relates to Jesus as the punisher of “the sinful child.” Although Jesus is at that point a substitute for others, nevertheless the Father must be doing it directly and personally. Anything else would be inconsistent with the divine retributive justice theory PSA requires.

So what does Jesus’ quotation of Psalm 22 indicate about his experience of God? Here is where we differ, despite your appreciation of my treatment of the quote. Simply quoting Galatians 3:13 is not enough to interpret Psalm 22, especially when you are not at all engaging the Torah background to “cursedness,” and especially “cursedness as self-harm,” which include the first times the word ‘cursed’ appears in Genesis. You fault me for not engaging with Scripture, and prematurely so, but you, meanwhile, have only replied with analogies rather than exegesis to my observations about (1) Psalm 22 itself as an entire literary composition, (2) Psalm 22 in the life of David, and (3) the life of David as re-narrated and deployed by Jesus. In Psalm 22, David did not “feel” forsaken by God in an absolute sense, so the problem was not with his subjectivity. You say, “David felt as if God had abandoned him, but God did not abandon him.” That’s not what Psalm 22 says. Once again, David consciously saw God’s face and knew God’s presence and knew God’s anointing by the Spirit, during his whole life and during the whole Psalm. David was only complaining about why God had made him specifically physically vulnerable to the Gentiles. So to make Jesus out to be saying something that does not even correspond with David’s intent or experience does violence to the way Jesus respectfully deployed the David story throughout the Gospel accounts. It also does violence to the way the New Testament respects the Old Testament contexts from which it quotes. Simply put, Jesus’ quotation of Psalm 22:1 does not indicate an experience of the Father’s absence. Actually, it is part of the Father’s appeal, through Jesus, and by the Spirit, to the criminals crucified on either side of Jesus. The Trinity was united in witness.

Then we look at John’s Gospel, and the problem for you and for PSA advocates only deepens, and quickly. Basic exegesis of John 16:32 tells us that Jesus’ experience of the Father’s presence in John’s Gospel was good and comforting, not punitive and tormenting. That is true in the immediate context of the verse, where Jesus says that the disciples will abandon him, which will be painful for him, presumably. The significance of Jesus’ contrast is precisely that it is a contrast of what this will mean emotionally for Jesus: The Father will neither abandon him, nor cause him pain. Then, even the cross narrative of John’s Gospel makes the Son’s union with the Father and witness to the Father unbroken: Jesus says “I am” three times in John 18:1 - 11 because “I am” is the name of God revealed to Moses back in Exodus; Jesus organizes his spiritual family for his biological mother and disciple, as God would organize a family by declaring what bonds exist; Jesus says “It is finished” like God declared the creation complete in the Sabbath; Jesus is in complete control of when he actually gives up his life, as he said in John 10:18 where he says that his authority to do so comes from the Father. John even omits the Gethsemane narrative so as to not even give any possibility to the reader that we should read the cross narrative as a narrative of divine opposition between Father and Son. The Gethsemane story should not be interpreted that way in the first place, since the Father strengthens Jesus, and Jesus’ resolve holds to receive it. Nevertheless, John the author leaves out that story, perhaps to eliminate the possibility that it would be read that way.

And John’s emphasis throughout his Gospel is how the Son always reflects the Father, in the Spirit, in an unbroken unity. In fact, Jesus said that the Father did not judge anyone, and instead entrusted all judgment to the Son (John 5:29). That includes the question of whether the Father judged the Son himself. The Father did not judge anyone, period. Including the Son. The Son judged the flesh in himself (John 1:14; 3:14-15), by the power of the Spirit to express the will of the Father. Thus, Jesus was also not speaking of the Father being one step removed from him while the Jewish and Roman leaders beat him and administered pain upon him. That is what your analogy of being at the doctor’s office with your son suggests. But by offering that story in that way, you are misrepresenting the actual relationships here.

KH, your assertion that “Jesus is a separate person from God” is deeply, deeply problematic. It is so problematic that it completely calls into question your self-designation as a theologian, because you just placed yourself outside of the bounds of orthodox Christian Trinitarian theology. For the Nicene Creed says that Jesus is “homoousios” with the Father, meaning sharing the same essence and substance and mind. Perhaps you meant to say that Jesus is a separate divine person from the Father and the Holy Spirit, but when we say that, we also must say that the three persons constitute the very reality of God and the nature of the relations within God, which simultaneously requires

us to speak of the unity of the divine persons at all times. Jesus is not separate from God in the slightest. Jesus was never without the Holy Spirit at any time, contrary to your unnecessary and unfounded assertion that he went to Hades without the Holy Spirit. You say, "As persons in Hades are bereft of the Holy Spirit's empowerment/comfort so to Jesus, the cursed, would have not had the presence of the Holy Spirit in Hades as the Father was meting out the penal substitution." But Paul says, "the Lord is the Spirit" in 2 Cor.3:18. That's a powerful statement of participation, if not identity. So how would "the Lord" Jesus not "have had the presence of the Holy Spirit" when Paul says he actually "is the Spirit"? And John says that the Spirit is how the Son is eternally in the Father and the Father is eternally in the Son, in John 14:16-20, because the Spirit is how the Son and Father come to live in and with the believer in John 14:21ff.; etc.

You raise the question of divine omniscience in your ppt, but there are ways of handling that question other than placing those attributes with the Father but not shared with the Son and the Spirit. Perhaps you're thinking about the Scriptures concerning the Father by his authority setting in place certain events, like the precise day of the fall of Jerusalem, or of Jesus' second coming (e.g. Mt.24:37; Acts 1:7), but statements like those can and should be understood as the Father setting the divine action plan based on receiving the appropriate human responses and activities, which laid/lays somewhere in the future in an open ended way. But it is not as if the Father knew/knows something cognitively while the Son did/does not. Also in your ppt presentation, you indicate the Father alone as the creator, and not the Son and Spirit. But the Son and Spirit are also named as creator in Scripture (creation is "by him and through him" in Col.1:15 - 17; Rom.11:36; 1 Cor.8:6; cf. Gen.1:1 - 2) and in the Nicene - Constantinopolitan Creed, which again stresses the unity of the divine persons in all the activities of God in creation. The symmetry of how God made all creation "by the Son, through the Son, for the Son" is repeated in how God redeems by and through the Son: There is no division between them, in disposition or in mental state or in emotional experience, including at the cross. If Jesus is separate from God, as you claim, then Jesus cannot reveal God, nor can he bring us to God. Only God can reveal God. And only God can bring us to God. Your comments show why penal substitution brings you just one short step away from outright Arianism.

Galatians 3:13 and the Meaning of the Curse

Please explain what the word "curse" means in Genesis 3:14 (serpent), 3:17 (ground), and 4:11 (Cain's ability to cultivate the ground). Because you are ignoring the way the Pentateuch itself describes "cursedness." Both in terms of people and in terms of the imagery of the snake. And because the Pentateuch came before Paul and Galatians, as Paul demonstrates by his quotation of Deut.21:22 - 23, he is relying on your ability to read the Pentateuch first, before you say right off the bat that Galatians 3:13 refers to a PSA curse.

Regarding the imagery of the snake, your claim that the snake was only cursed when it was hoisted on the pole seems to ignore how the Pentateuch uses the image of the snake. The first incident is the fall of Genesis 3, where the snake-serpent image is cursed in principle. The notion of snake venom is implicit in the fall - where human beings now have a poison inside us because we have taken something into ourselves that we should not have. The second incident is the first plague on Egypt, where the snake image is used to symbolize the power of Pharaoh holding Israel captive. God delivers the first generation of Israelites out from that serpentine power. The third incident is the snake on the pole in Numbers 21. God has to heal the second generation of Israelites of the venom, because snakes have bitten them because of their faithless resistance and grumbling. But you suggest that the snake was understood "neutrally" before it was hoisted on the pole? No, the snake was already understood to be a cursed thing, long, long before Moses put it on a pole.

Not only is there a literary relationship happening as we read the Pentateuch, but there was the immediate issue: If you were an Israelite in that desert, you and your community had just lapsed into unbelief, which was itself cursed, and those snakes were biting and killing you to make the point of it. Wouldn't you have cursed the snakes as they bit you? Wouldn't you have believed that the snakes were cursed, not when Moses hoisted one on a pole, but as they all bit you?

These two posts refute your handling of the bronze serpent story and its connection to Galatians 3:13 – please read and comment

<https://newhumanityinstitute.wordpress.com/2016/01/05/atonement-in-scripture-the-bronze-serpent-and-passover-part-1/>

<https://newhumanityinstitute.wordpress.com/2016/01/06/atonement-in-scripture-the-bronze-serpent-and-passover-part-2/>

And as a reminder, the Deuteronomy law is grounded upon the Genesis account of the corruption of sin in humanity, and the internalization of a cursed existence. Adam and Eve corrupted and cursed themselves, seen by their inability to bring forth life (human and garden) without pain (Gen.3:16 – 19). Cain corrupted and cursed himself even further, and the ground cursed him, since he could no longer fruitfully work the ground on account of his sin (Gen.4:11-12). But notice: The ground was not cursed for anyone else, only Cain. Or, alternatively, due to the ambiguity in the Hebrew grammatical construction, the ground did not curse anyone else, only Cain. Which either way means that Cain cursed his own human nature by his sin. All this happened before anything was put on a tree. Hanging on a tree merely identifies who had already been laboring under a cursed mode of life (fallenness), or living in a cursed manner (active sinfulness); it didn't enact a new curse upon the person per se.

So the connection between self-cursing and God's deliverance/redemption as healing of the self reposes on a medical analogy, not a penal analogy. Your phrase "law of the hospital" is a confusion of categories. Even on a basic human level today, medical procedures are grounded in an understanding of who and what we are. So also the Bible sees God's laws as rooted in who we are according to being God's creation. The Scriptures call God's laws a wisdom tradition.

The Jewish wisdom tradition understood human nature and God's commandments to be perfectly fitted to each other from creation: Both flow from God's wisdom (e.g. Prov.8:22 – 23). And this is why Psalms 19 and 119 say, "The laws of God makes the heart rejoice" and so on. There is a good fit between us and God's commands. To suggest otherwise means that God commands things that are strangely inappropriate for His creation, or that God made the creation in some way that is disconnected from His commandments and moral character. Either hypothetical case would boggle the Jewish mind. The corruption of sin does not alter the basic categories of creation. However much we now face sinful desires in ourselves that resist God, a situation acknowledged in the Psalms and supremely by Paul in Romans 7:14 – 25, that does not take away from the fact that we are already participating in God's wisdom – and therefore in God Himself, in some sense – by our very creation. If God's commandments cause the heart to rejoice (e.g. Ps.19:8, etc.), then the heart cannot be marred by sin beyond recognition. We may struggle to follow the commandments of God. Yet our struggles are framed by a prior assurance of God's love for us as Creator, a teleological hope in God's goodness to heal human nature as part of our destiny (e.g. Dt.30:6; Jer.4:4; 31:31 – 34; Ezk.36:26 – 36; etc.), along with joy in finding in ourselves a desire to follow those commands in the present, despite the resistance we also feel. That is arguably why Paul can speak of a true 'I myself' in contrast to the alien 'sin that indwells me' (e.g. Rom.7:18) in that convoluted passage and convoluted journey of self-diagnosis. What God commands of us might be challenging, in light of the fall, but it is appropriate for us. Why? Because by commanding us, God awakens and strengthens our truest desires – desires which linger on in us despite the fall by His persistent creational and providential love for us.

This is important because it serves to explain why God's justice is restorative, not retributive. If God's justice were retributive, as it is in PSA, then God would value His law more than His creation. And that is what is proposed in PSA: God "satisfies" Himself by pouring out His retributive wrath, either on Jesus for the sake of some, or on others directly. But that means, by definition, that God is content to merely express His retributive vengeance for the injuries He feels we have done to His holiness.

That's a problem because it doesn't fit with the Jewish wisdom tradition, expressed especially in Proverbs and Psalms. If God's creation is upheld by God's law, and both are united by the common factor of God's wisdom, then God cares about his law precisely because He loves us. So our sin is not merely the act of us willfully breaking God's will. It is self-harm. Breaking God's laws does violence to how we were created, and who we are. So God cannot possibly be "satisfied" in any sense by the mere meting out of a penalty for sin. God's love is for the restoration of His creation, all of it, because all of it was made by, through, and for the Son. If the Jewish wisdom tradition is true, then God's forgiveness of us is forgiveness from our own self-injury. We are the masterpieces that have damaged ourselves. So atonement must be medical, not legal, in nature. It must be restorative, not retributive, as its goal.

Coming back to your analogies. If you are willing to use medical, healing analogies like the story of you and your son, then why not go all the way? The Doctor is the Triune God, fundamentally different from His created human beings but still the archetype from which we are patterned. We are his patients, infected by a terrible disease. Some are in denial and thus, decline. Some resist treatment, thinking they might treat themselves. Some recognize the

sickness, but no one is able to follow the doctor's health regimen, even a focus group called Israel who got special attention -- they demonstrated a bit more health but in the end, only served to produce their own written agreement with the doctor's own diagnosis. So the Doctor becomes one of his own patients by becoming human and acquiring the disease. He is able to fight the disease, although it costs him terribly, and produce the antibodies in himself, even though he can only do so after a miraculous death and resurrection. But after that, he can share his victory over the disease by sharing those antibodies from within himself. Doesn't that summarize biblical history? Or Romans 7:14 - 8:11? Doesn't that line up how the commandments are good and ultimately for Israel's health, as Paul says? Or why our participation in our own healing and restoration is absolutely required?

Jesus' Descent to Hades in 1 Peter

Then, you seem to think that Jesus descended to Hades merely to taunt evil spirits. You seem to believe this based on 1 Peter 3:18-20. But Peter refers a second time to the same event in 1 Peter 4:6, "For the gospel has for this purpose been preached even to those who are dead, that though they are judged in the flesh as men, they may live in the spirit according to the will of God." The intended result of Jesus' descent into 'Hades,' as it were, is explained: that those human beings who lived before Jesus were judged in the flesh while they were alive and might choose spiritual life nevertheless upon meeting Christ. In other words, Jesus' proclamation to the dead was not simply to condemn them. He offered them a real choice to respond to him, and to 'live in the Spirit.' While I do not assume that all did choose Christ, the fact that Jesus did appear to them and preach to them is important for understanding the character of God.

The thematic and conceptual ties in 1 Peter are important. Peter parallels the proclamation that happened among the dead and the proclamation that happens among the living. He makes this parallel because he is reminding the suffering Christians that their proclamation must continue. Holding Jesus up as the example of one who proclaimed his gospel even unto his death means that God can certainly call Christians to do the same. Interestingly, Peter also has in mind the parallel between the effective ministry of the dying Christ and that of the Christians. Christ's suffering led to death, but his death only enhanced his ability to preach, this time to a new audience: the dead! Similarly, the Christians' suffering could lead to their death as well, but if they die virtuously, their death will further advance their proclamation among the living. Christians fearful of death might have argued that their removal from the world of the living would eliminate their testimony, thus making death a potential weakness in Peter's argument. Rather, virtuous death strengthens the argument. This is a challenging perspective for the suffering Christian, but a useful one if we ask God for the courage and strength to live in it.

If, as some argue, and as you seem to argue, Jesus' proclamation to the dead did not offer them a real choice to choose him, not only would exegetical violence be done to 4:6, but the larger parallel would be drained of its importance entirely. For if Jesus' death did not advance and further the proclamation of God's word and offer of salvation, then why bring it up at all? Jesus' death would not be an effective point of comparison; it would lose its significance towards inspiring Christians to suffer for the sake of greater Christian proclamation, even to death. Peter would then be made out to be a rather poor architect of ideas. But if Jesus' proclamation to the dead did offer them a real choice, then the link between 3:19 and 4:6 reads easily without any forced rupture, and the overall conceptual parallel between the proclamation of the suffering Jesus and that of suffering Christians remains intact, brilliant, and inspiring.

This insight from 1 Peter 3:18 - 20 and 4:6, taken together, once again affects how we read the Old Testament. Peter provides us with a bit of the back story to an Old Testament thread which the Old Testament itself did not. In the Old Testament, God responded to certain human choices by taking human life. Those acts include the flood of Noah (Gen.7 - 8), the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen.18), the slaying of the Egyptian firstborn (Ex.12), the death of Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu (Lev.10:1 - 3), the slaying of disobedient Israelites (Num.11:1 - 2), the earth opening under Korah and his rebellion (Num.16), the conquest of Jericho and the Canaanites (Gen.15:16 - 21; Josh.1 - 7), and the slaying of Uzzah who touched the ark of God (2 Sam.5). For those who believe in the penal substitution atonement theory and view God as a retributive western lawgiver, it is easy to claim that this portrayal reveals a God of meritocratic and punitive justice, whose mercy becomes all the more merciful when understood against the backdrop of God's absolute right to act this way.

This examination of 1 Peter 3:19 and 4:6 helps us understand Old Testament history in another way. It serves a secondary role in our ability to understand the character of God. God did not immediately consign to hell people whose lives He took in the Old Testament. God was not taking away all possibility of choice. Yes, they still had a

choice to receive Jesus, which was offered when Jesus descended into Hades after his death to make his proclamation there to them. When God took away people's lives in the Old Testament generally, He did so to protect Israel because He was committed to incarnating Himself among the Israelites. For without Israel, there would be no Jesus. So God had to protect Israel (or the early family of faith, like Noah's family and Abraham's family) from being killed by the violence of the pre-flood human culture, or the Canaanites, etc. He also had to encourage Israel to not completely defect from Him, so occasionally had to take some lives from within the community of Israel (e.g. challengers to Moses in Leviticus and Numbers; Uzzah when he touched the ark in 2 Samuel and treated it as a spoil of war, etc.). This explains at a stroke why God did not make the ground open up to stop the human sacrifice among the ancient Chinese, Mesopotamians, Aztecs, etc. on the one hand. If God were fundamentally retributive, in principle, that is the theodicy question you'd have to answer. And on the other hand, it also explains why God protected and defended the integrity of Israel as a community while still offering Himself to those individuals whose lives He took prior to Jesus' first coming.

While we are speaking of people's response to Jesus, let me revisit the topic of free will and open theism. You ask if medical substitution and restorative justice requires universal salvation/reconciliation. It does not. Because the nature of the atonement in MSA is understood as addressing the corruption of sin in each of us. It is a healing of human nature first in Jesus which then is offered to anyone and everyone. The issue is ontological, related to our being, and addressing the source of sinful behavior in each one of us. The issue is not about retributive punishment. So the puzzle pieces fit logically. MSA and restorative justice do not logically require that some people be damned either, because there is no attribute in God's character which must be expressed eternally by the punishment of some people in a retributive hell. But because each person is invested by God with free will about the ultimate ordering of their human nature and their ultimate relationship with God, we cannot say that salvation/reconciliation will be something everyone chooses. It is simply unknown.

By contrast, your commitment to penal substitution renders your commitment to unlimited atonement and free will and open theism fundamentally illogical and shaky. For example, well-respected evangelical scholar J.I. Packer, in his famous introduction to John Owen's *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ*, argues that penal substitution necessarily means limited atonement: '[John] Owen shows with great cogency that the three classes of texts alleged to prove that Christ died for persons who will not be saved (those saying that he died for 'the world,' for 'all,' and those thought to envisage the perishing of those for whom he died), cannot on sound principles of exegesis be held to teach any such thing; and, further, that the theological inferences by which universal redemption is supposed to be established are really quite fallacious... So far from magnifying the love and grace of God, this claim dishonors both it and him, for it reduces God's love to an impotent wish and turns the whole economy of 'saving' grace, so-called ('saving' is really a misnomer on this view), into a monumental divine failure. Also, so far from magnifying the merit and worth of Christ's death, it cheapens it, for it makes Christ die in vain. Lastly, so far from affording faith additional encouragement, it destroys the scriptural ground of assurance altogether, for it denies that the knowledge that Christ died for me (or did or does anything else for me) is a sufficient ground for inferring my eternal salvation; my salvation, on this view, depends not on what Christ did for me, but on what I subsequently do for myself... You cannot have it both ways: an atonement of universal extent is a depreciated atonement.'

How do you avoid Packer's conviction? In Packer's view, limited atonement is the inseparable – and for you and many others, the unwanted – companion to penal substitution. One reason for this is to avoid the double accounting problem: If Jesus took God's entire wrath against humanity at the cross, and then God poured out more wrath on the unrepentant in hell, would this not be a double accounting problem? On the other hand, we must also avoid the problem lurking at the other end of the PSA spectrum: If Jesus took all of God's wrath at the cross, then perhaps there would be no wrath leftover for unbelievers, so there would be no hell. Since most evangelicals believe Scripture teaches that there is a hell, and at least the possibility that there will be people in it, Jesus could not have taken all of God's wrath. If God introduces a whole new reason for dispensing a fresh batch of wrath, based on acceptance or rejection of Jesus, beyond whatever criteria existed before Jesus, then the claim that Jesus offers an already existing divine forgiveness becomes an irrelevant lie, and God's long prior relationship with Israel becomes suddenly unnecessary and cruelly arbitrary.

Another reason for the tight link between penal substitution and limited atonement is to assert that Christ's death was efficacious for procuring the salvation of some, lest Jesus be said to have died for no one in particular. Theoretically none at all might believe in Jesus in PSA. Hence, advocates of limited atonement like J.I. Packer prefer to call their conviction 'definite atonement.' The atonement - conceived of as legal pardon - must definitely

save some. It must be definite in order for it to be effective, although this assertion rests on the assumption that atonement consists of the satisfaction of a certain amount of divine retributive justice. People assume, mostly from reading the Old Testament through the lens of a western adversarial legal system (i.e. cultural bias), that God's wrath is directed at our personhood on judicial grounds, rather than being directed at the 'cancer' in our bodies on medical grounds; the Old Testament diagnosis of the human heart is that God needs to circumcise something off from it (Gen.6:5 – 6; 8:21; Dt.30:6; Jer.4:4) and change the heart (Ps.51:10; Jer.17:1 – 10; 31:31 – 34; Ezk.11:19; 36:26 – 36).

Also, some people stack up "attributes" of God in a way where those attributes are in conflict. John Piper says, 'God created the universe so that the full range of His perfections – including wrath and power and judgment and justice – will be displayed.' It follows that God's retributive justice-wrath-holiness is opposite His love-mercy-grace such that people receive either one or the other. Or, alternatively, you now seem willing to rely on concepts of masculinity and femininity, coordinating masculinity with divine retributive punishment and toughness, I suppose, and thus making that one aspect of God. But when we try to integrate all of God's characteristics into statements about Him as one being, we must conclude that, in models like those and models like yours, God is fundamentally two-faced, or arbitrary, at the core. That fundamental (mis)understanding of God's "full range of perfections" requires expression eternally, and therefore requires double predestination, limited atonement, no real human free will, no open theism. This means that God, before actually loving anyone in particular, decides who He will love and who will love Him back by His raw, arbitrary, and omnicausal will. That is all part and parcel logically with penal substitution. None of this would happen if you fundamentally understood the Trinity and how to start with God's nature as a Triune being.

Christian Ethics

On to Christian ethics, and slavery, and restorative vs. retributive justice in practice. You ask me whether Paul condemns "slavery" in Philemon as if I didn't already write about Philemon, and as if that question proves something. It proves nothing. That's like asking whether Paul would ever approve or condemn something so broad like "employment." Of course Paul is not going to condemn "slavery" carte blanche because "slavery" back then was multi-faceted. Just as "employment" today can involve child or adult labor, fair or unfair wages, coercion or voluntarism, safe and unsafe practices, sabbath rest or overwork, etc. "Slavery" back then had multiple routes into it, multiple reasons why a person would opt into it or flee it, multiple effects on the person, multiple vulnerabilities based on the behavior of masters. I already explained in my paper that what was important to the biblical writers is that, as they encountered slavery, they (1) condemned ways of entering it like kidnapping, being sold in a slave sale, birth to enslaved parents, etc. (2) delimited the only legitimate reasons as being voluntary, being there to pay off with labor a debt you owed personally to someone, or having to pay back 2 - 5 times the amount of something you stole based on Exodus 22, (3) limiting the power of masters to beat or threaten, (4) prescribing ways of exiting a term of service like 7 years (Dt.15) or the jubilee year on the fixed calendar (Lev.25) or, remarkably, just running away (Dt.23:15 -16). The end result was to make debt non-commodifiable; radically limit indebtedness which was the main driver of slavery in the ancient world; give human rights to people while they were enslaved, including rights of body, marriage and family. One commentator says that Jewish law made of slavery a voluntary institution because of the runaway law.

All of which means that the Trans-Atlantic slave trade was morally abhorrent and heretical. The psychology of criminality upon which racial slavery depended, along with the institutions that it has influenced (e.g. the "war on drugs" and the mass incarceration problem) and the attitudes it continues to fund, are still problems.

Thus, Dinesh D'Souza's book grossly oversimplifies racial issues down to "culture". While I do think there are struggles that urban black communities face, which are worth paying attention to (fatherlessness, substance abuse, normalization of a perpetual youth culture, etc.), taking a longer historical view is essential to addressing those issues. According to your summary of D'Souza, he does not seem to mention, for example, how the U.S. federal government set up the largest affirmative action program ever, in the post-WW2 era, under the guise of the GI Bill. The federal government sponsored white flight out into the suburbs, and denied black applicants mortgage loans. For at least a great many white families, this allowed them to build up equity in their homes to pay for their kids college tuition, pass down an inheritance, and even speculate on the real estate market. This created a segregated residential housing system that has served as the basis for a wealth accumulation system for some and not for others, very different public schooling experiences because public schools are funded largely by property taxes, different experiences for children and youth because of very different experiences of neighborhoods and physical separation

and parks and schools and gyms and adult availability, different tax revenue bases between cities and suburbs because cities were drained while white suburbs flourished, different experiences of policing because police could then treat communities very selectively for example with drug use (higher in white communities than in black, but easier to police in black communities because of geo), and virtually every problem which intersects with race as a factor. If you want to uphold the conservative principle of small, limited government, you have to denounce the GI Bill and American suburbanization as the precise opposite of that. If you want to uphold the principle of meritocratic-retributive justice in institutions, you have to denounce the same as entirely non-meritocratic in nature. If you want to uphold the Constitution, pay attention to how this massive government subsidy which created the white suburb was a violation of the 14th Amendment's equal administration of the law clause. See Douglas Massey, American Apartheid. Here's a good article focusing on California's housing market and racial discrimination (<https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2014/05/the-racist-housing-policy-that-made-your-neighborhood/371439/>). Here's a broader perspective (<http://www.epi.org/blog/from-ferguson-to-baltimore-the-fruits-of-government-sponsored-segregation/>). Revisit how the wealth gap is not the same as the income gap, and note how the wealth gap never closes (<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2017-02-08/the-big-reason-whites-are-richer-than-blacks-in-america>). Consider why the attempts of a conservative like Republican George Romney to undo residential segregation were shut down (<https://www.thisamericanlife.org/radio-archives/episode/512/house-rules>).

In the Old Testament, God treated land and family as bound up together (Leviticus 25), and every fifty years He pushed a reset button to re-gift the garden land back to every family. This was part of His partial restoration of the original garden picture, if Adam and Eve had never sinned and humanity was enjoying the spread of the garden in creation. Although livestock, clothing, currency, and other forms of wealth could be passed down as personal possessions, land was only stewarded by Israel; it was owned by God (Lev.25:23). Land was the most basic form of wealth, work, school, nutrition, sense of place and mental health. And God did not allow land to be part of the way that advantage and disadvantage were passed down to children and grandchildren. It didn't matter if parents were unfortunate, or if they were lazy. What did their kids do to deserve advantage or disadvantage? Nothing. But the bigger theological picture is that God looked at land as part of the garden arrangement that He always wanted to restore for humanity. It's just another way that God was showing that His justice is restorative. Thus, most importantly, consider why countries like Germany, Canada, etc. do not allow for real estate to be part of the speculative, debt-fueled market in the first place, as we do here in the US, but instead intelligently and humanely treat neighborhoods to be part of an investment in human capital, and smart and conservative financing as a cornerstone of a flexible, well-run labor market (<https://www.forbes.com/sites/eamonnfingleton/2014/02/02/in-worlds-best-run-economy-home-prices-just-keep-falling-because-thats-what-home-prices-are-supposed-to-do/#339f57266ad0>).

Nor does D'Souza mention that divorce rates spiked dramatically after WW2 and Vietnam because men came back from military service with PTSD. But in the white community, those divorce rates went back down, while in the black community, they did not. After Vietnam, it kept rising in the black community. See Donna Franklin, Ensuring Inequality: The Structural Transformation of the African-American Family. Families and communities that were already being systematically stripped of resources and supports can only sustain so much trauma. The projection of American "masculinity" abroad, by your own definition of "masculinity", is built on the crushing of minds and bodies and families of lots of people, but especially ethnic minority groups in the US in a disproportionate way. War is not a regular event of everyday life, and the cataclysmic effects of war on people cannot simply be chalked up to a "defective culture."

Nor does D'Souza mention how socialist-style entitlements are actually provided to middle-class and wealthy people, mostly white elites, in such a way that they can tout "hard work" and "meritocracy" and so deceive themselves about what is really going on: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/chrisladd/2017/03/13/unspeakable-realities-block-universal-health-coverage-in-the-us/#40c3ece5186a>. Keep in mind also all the tax loopholes, etc. granted to the wealthy and to corporations.

Nor does D'Souza explore what we are learning about epigenetics and other health impacts. Trauma is passed down from one generation to the next biologically, not just socially. So physical health and mental health outcomes and health-related stresses get placed on families already traumatized by historic injustice (<http://bigthink.com/big-think-mental-health-channel/mental-illness-in-black-america>; <http://discovermagazine.com/2013/may/13-grandmas-experiences-leave-epigenetic-mark-on-your-genes>;

life-passed-SPERM-affecting-mental-health-future-generations.html;
<https://www.theguardian.com/science/2015/aug/21/study-of-holocaust-survivors-finds-trauma-passed-on-to-childrens-genes>). That intergenerational inheritance builds up on top of already existing social stresses on the body's genetics (<https://acestoohigh.com/2016/08/10/childhood-trauma-leads-to-lifelong-chronic-illness-so-why-isnt-the-medical-community-helping-patients/>; <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/the-athletes-way/201404/social-disadvantage-creates-genetic-wear-and-tear>). And the health impact of racial dynamics not necessarily genetically, but generally on the body, is still significant (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=INc1a6u8yP4&list=PLEF0280B25D0841C4&index=3>).

The reason you haven't filed and can't file for reparations from your Viking ancestors is that you live in another country, and there isn't any meaningful way in which systems like housing, wealth accumulation, economic inheritance, marriage and divorce trends, and health outcomes are currently being affected by anything they did. But the reality you and D'Souza don't seem willing to acknowledge is that these systems are still here and are having a dramatic effect on people, in this country. Tell me how most middle class Americans afford to send their kids to college. Isn't it by leveraging the equity in their houses?

In light of this, your projection of "socialism" onto Judas Iscariot is not only inaccurate (and ill-defined, as I align with libertarian socialism which is a pro-market labor alternative which limits the fluidity of capital which even Adam Smith favored in corporate law), but completely irrelevant. The problems which I am pointing out (and which you and D'Souza overlook) are failures to live out the very principles which the right espouses. Your further suggestion that face-to-face accountability in family and church is the limitation on what God desires for organizations is not even affirmed by the case of Judas. Jesus was running a ministry, and launching his church, and Judas was the treasurer of this group of 13 men. So Judas did not represent anything near a government bureaucrat. Projecting that onto him has some accuracy in that of course government bureaucrats can do that, too, but it is inappropriate for you to suggest that it's limited to that sphere. He was carrying out a necessary function in any group, and in this case it was a small, voluntary church organization, not a government. Why do you not comment just as vigorously on how private profiteering is also present in families, family businesses, churches of all sizes, capitalist corporations, the subculture of America that is racially prejudiced, another subculture of America that is oblivious to systems, and government-corporate ties like the Trump family's promotion of the Trump "brand" while in office, Trump's obvious protection of Saudi Arabia and other Muslim countries which host his hotels, and Trump's violation of the emoluments clause? The problem represented by Judas Iscariot is much more universal and resists any kind of reduction to "this is the problem with socialism" or "the left." Transparency and accountability are the appropriate countermeasures for that, in every sphere. In corporations and government and democracy writ large, the solution is a matter of giving real organizational teeth (e.g. authority to fire people) and legal resources (e.g. real legal education and the ability to sue in court) to people while giving us laws that say, "You shall not lie; you shall not steal."

You seem to be asking a general question about restorative justice practices, and whether they are fair for victims. Since this is a concept used in cases ranging from classroom disruption to violent crime, I'll simply point to a few articles:

<http://www.nytimes.com/2013/01/06/magazine/can-forgiveness-play-a-role-in-criminal-justice.html>

<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2013/feb/25/norwegian-prison-inmates-treated-like-people>

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/nov/11/sweden-closes-prisons-number-inmates-plummets>

<https://www.usnews.com/opinion/knowledge-bank/articles/2016-04-08/public-charter-school-is-transforming-discipline-with-restorative-justice>

<http://www.nytimes.com/2013/04/04/education/restorative-justice-programs-take-root-in-schools.html>

<https://www.nytimes.com/2016/09/11/magazine/an-effective-ut-exhausting-alternative-to-high-school-suspensions.html>

In certain cases of violent crime, as the first article explores, there are possibilities for the victim and the offender need to agree to a certain kind of process. Restorative justice obviously does not remove the need for prisons. It just structures the consequences for a crime or injury differently, giving the victim more voice into what those consequences should be.

Lastly, you are resorting rather quickly to your own cultural bias and also to attacking supposed motivations that you think are there in me. Consider this paragraph of yours:

There is absolutely no restorative justice after death - are you grasping for straws because you apparently do not want to confront those weak in the faith with Jesus as Judge? To me this indicates the cowardliness of your anti-PSA stance -- which plays better with effeminate audiences as "A GOD OF LOVE" while for masculine audiences the "GOD AS JUSTICE" receives a better welcome. Of course God is both Love and Justice and we must rightly divide the Word for all of our audiences.

You are making a lot of mistakes here in this one paragraph. (1) You seem to think that in my preaching and teaching and writing, I somehow don't talk about Jesus as Judge. That's wrong. (2) You associate "cowardliness" and negative "effeminacy" with a theological position. Can you not develop your exegesis any further? Must you stoop to this level?

(3) Your concepts of masculinity and femininity come from your own cultural bias, not Scripture. Cultures that are more inclined to restorative justice practices (e.g. the Maori in New Zealand, various African cultures) also simultaneously have fairly challenging rites of passage as boys become men, so your assumption that restorative justice equates to femininity is also wrong. It's the hyper-individualism of white American culture that makes retributive justice seem right, because an individualistic framework upholds individual freedom and liberty as ideals, so retributive justice takes those things away. A more relational framework upholds other ideals for human life, therefore conceives of punishments and consequences more relationally also.

(4) You think that saying that God is about restorative justice is easy, apparently because you think being the offender in a restorative justice process is easier than just being punished. Many people who are offenders experience the demands of restorative justice to be harder than just being punished. They have to listen to injured parties until they empathize and internalize that pain. They have to take full responsibility for their actions. They have to publicly apologize to people and ask forgiveness. They may have to pay back people, or commit to a term of service in some way. Etc. As evidence, is it easy for alcoholics to stay sober as they resist their addiction and as they grieve the hurt they've caused their family and friends? Hardly. Yet that is the principle of restorative justice where we internalize the responsibility for all the damage we've caused, and work to undo it. That is the same principle in Jewish law, in the teaching of Jesus, and the character of God experienced as hellish for those who resist. And here's a good example: Restorative justice requires the repentance of the offender, in social practice and in theology. Retributive justice does not. A retributive "God" can be "satisfied" by "meting out the penalty" for sin. Repentance not required. And the most convoluted problem occurs when we imagine in a PSA framework that people in hell want to repent and be with God. There is no character-of-the-Trinity-based explanation offered for why God would continue to punish such people in a hell that is conceived of as a prison. Despite the many biblical statements that God desires the repentance of people, and does not rejoice in the death of people, PSA requires that there be a remarkable shift in the character of God. In a PSA hell, God now desires to punish people infinitely. And He absolutely, necessarily, rejoices in the death and suffering of people. His "satisfaction" depends on it.

Best,
Mako

March 27, 2017

Hi KH,
I'm grateful that you gave the early church material a read. I admire your stamina. And again, I am grateful for your engagement. However, I'm going to ask again that you try to

substantiate your claim that the early church "lost" penal substitution, despite Greek and Roman cultures virtually begging them to retain or create a retributive justice Christian equivalent out of cultural connection point, and cultural bias. How they managed to not do this, and how they spontaneously replaced it with medical substitution (supposedly) without an organizational hierarchy, apparently remains beyond your ability to explain. I think the more you try to substantiate your claim with the supporting disciplines of history and sociology, the more you will find that you won't be able to do it. That has rather big implications.

As mentioned before - the church teaching on speaking in tongues was lost to the church for many centuries, yet tongues & penal substitution are "base case" in the canonical scripture. My goodness the whole church at one time became Arians for a few years because of the influence of Constantine's son, but thank goodness Athanasius through suffering preserved the "true way". Church history is important, but not an absolute in the way that scripture is. Jesus canonized the Old Testament Himself when He said "not one jot or tittle shall pass away" (Matt 5:18), but He also commented that the Jews had made the law of no effect" (Mark 7:13). If you can't make your case with scripture which I consider myself fully competent in, then do not waste your time using the inferior reference of the fallible Early Christian Fathers.

You claim that the Jewish Old Testament background provided divine retributive justice as a backdrop, which was supposedly forgotten by the early church. But the ethics of Israel were restorative, not retributive. Even their experience of God's anger and discipline was just part of the overall experience of restorative justice because it affirmed the covenant and brought them historically closer to the incarnation of Jesus. You rehearse "an eye for an eye" but I've already given exegetical notes to Exodus 21 along with the history of Jewish interpretation (which I read) on that principle which does not agree with your interpretation in the slightest. Simply repeating your point is not sufficient here.

Here is a verse that links the wrath of God's vengeance & atonement:

"Rejoice, O Gentiles, with His people; For He will avenge the blood of His servants, And render vengeance to His adversaries; He will provide atonement for His land and His people." (Deut. 32:43 NKJ) Wow! No restorative justice here!

Before you accuse me of being light on biblical exposition, please pay attention to the fact that I referred you to my many exegetical pieces on the blog. They especially relate to the Old Testament. Your questions and objections have been more than amply anticipated. And the later blog articles on politics refer to the earlier exegetical offerings. For ease of reference, I'm putting the links into this email for you:

I read your 5 blogs below and was amazed at how fast you moved away from the obvious point of Jesus' propitiation/punishment by God. Whenever scripture excessively repeats itself it is making a very strong point so that WE DO NOT MISS THE POINT. How can God be more emphatic than the verses below!

He is despised and rejected by men, A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. 4 Surely He has borne our griefs And carried our sorrows; Yet we esteemed Him stricken, Smitten by God, and afflicted. 5 But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed. 6 All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. 7 He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, And as a sheep before its shearers is silent, So He opened not His mouth. 8 He was taken from prison and from judgment, And who will declare His generation? For He was cut off from the land of the living; For the transgressions of My people He was stricken. 9 And they made His grave with the wicked-- But with the rich at His death, Because He had done no violence, Nor was any deceit in His mouth. 10 Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief. When You make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, And the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in His hand. 11 He shall see the labor of His soul, and be satisfied. By His knowledge My righteous Servant shall justify many, For He shall bear their iniquities. 12 Therefore I will divide Him a portion with the great, And He shall divide the spoil with the strong, Because He poured out His soul unto death, And He was numbered with the transgressors, And He bore the sin of many, And made intercession for the transgressors. (Isa. 53:3-12 NKJ)

So when you MISDIRECT to "exile" out of thin air you have missed this emphatic point!

Additionally Jesus suffered for the whole world (past / present/ future) as John 3:16 says "world" not just "church".

Your reference to a Jewish assessment of Isaiah 53 makes me smile, since the classic Jewish answer to their suffering (after they have already missed Jesus the Messiah) is to think of themselves as the suffering servant of Isaiah 53 --- how arrogant to think of their nation (instead of God) as able to save the world with their suffering from anti-Semitism, etc. Here is my exegesis of Isaiah 53, along with another critical incarnation-related passage from Isaiah 58-59, which is important because Paul quotes from Isaiah 59 in Romans 11.

<https://newhumanityinstitute.wordpress.com/2015/12/10/atonement-in-scripture-isaiah-53-part-1/>
<https://newhumanityinstitute.wordpress.com/2015/12/11/atonement-in-scripture-isaiah-53-part-2/>
<https://newhumanityinstitute.wordpress.com/2015/12/12/atonement-in-scripture-isaiah-53-part-3/>
<https://newhumanityinstitute.wordpress.com/2015/12/13/atonement-in-scripture-isaiah-53-part-4/>
<https://newhumanityinstitute.wordpress.com/2015/12/14/atonement-in-scripture-isaiah-53-part-5-atonement-and-social-justice-are-one/>
<https://newhumanityinstitute.wordpress.com/2015/12/23/atonement-in-scripture-temple-sacrifices-and-a-bloodthirsty-god-part-1/>
<https://newhumanityinstitute.wordpress.com/2015/12/24/atonement-in-scripture-temple-sacrifice-and-a-bloodthirsty-god-part-2/>

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<https://newhumanityinstitute.wordpress.com/2015/12/26/atonement-in-scripture-temple-sacrifices-and-a-bloodthirsty-god-part-4/>
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<https://newhumanityinstitute.wordpress.com/2016/01/02/atonement-in-scripture-christ-as-passover-in-1-corinthians/>
<https://newhumanityinstitute.wordpress.com/2016/01/03/atonement-in-scripture-christ-as-passover-in-johns-gospel/>
<https://newhumanityinstitute.wordpress.com/2016/01/05/atonement-in-scripture-the-bronze-serpent-and-passover-part-1/>
<https://newhumanityinstitute.wordpress.com/2016/01/06/atonement-in-scripture-the-bronze-serpent-and-passover-part-2/>
<https://newhumanityinstitute.wordpress.com/2016/01/19/atonement-in-scripture-the-tabernacle-and-the-priests/>

Here is the "scapegoat" series, in which I provide both exegetical work and also comparative theology and politics, including material on the temple sacrifices, the covenant interactions between God and Israel throughout the Old Testament, Romans, and Colossians, all of which you have not engaged:

I have read a few of your scape goat blogs about Trump. In summary, Trump is just expressing facts so that we can work the problem, instead of Obama's political correctness which distorts the truth.

<https://newhumanityinstitute.wordpress.com/2016/02/12/atonement-in-scripture-donald-trumps-scapegoating-and-the-myth-of-retributive-justice-part-1/>
<https://newhumanityinstitute.wordpress.com/2016/02/15/atonement-in-scripture-donald-trumps-scapegoating-and-the-scapegoating-of-the-black-community/>
<https://newhumanityinstitute.wordpress.com/2016/02/18/atonement-in-scripture-what-lynching-torture-scapegoating-have-in-common-penal-substitution/>
<https://newhumanityinstitute.wordpress.com/2016/02/22/atonement-in-scripture-why-penal-substitution-is-a-gateway-drug-to-right-wing-extremism/>
<https://newhumanityinstitute.wordpress.com/2016/02/29/atonement-in-scripture-why-evangelicals-scapegoat-gays-muslims-etc/>
<https://newhumanityinstitute.wordpress.com/2016/03/05/atonement-in-scripture-why-trump-and-cruz-are-the-direct-logical-result-of-american-evangelical-theology/>
<https://newhumanityinstitute.wordpress.com/2016/04/28/atonement-in-scripture-a-neuroscientific-reason-for-why-retributive-justice-is-from-the-fall-and-penal-substitution-is-immature/>

The Son's Assumption of Fallen or Unfallen Humanity

Meanwhile, your interpretation of Romans 8:3 is both incorrect and irrelevant to the point at hand. It is irrelevant because medical substitutionary atonement can stand up perfectly well in a slightly different form than the one I prefer. Some people do shift the atoning cleansing of the human nature of Jesus, from his active obedience accomplished as a human process throughout his lifetime and crucifixion, over to an instantaneous event at his conception/incarnation. In fact, some Eastern Orthodox theologians believe that very thing,

and there are some Christian leaders from early church history who seemed to believe that (starting with Tertullian, and perhaps Augustine). Yet, that still makes the overall objective in atonement, the cleansing of Jesus' humanity from fallenness, accomplished by Jesus, just in a different way. And even with this variation, medical substitutionary atonement can still be true, and still draws on much more biblical support than penal substitution.

However, I am persuaded that you are incorrect on exegetical grounds, and your suggestion that Isaiah 53 provides support for your position on Romans 8:3 is not at all self-evident. Your assumption that "lamb" language refers to an already purified human nature from Jesus' conception is faulty. There is no basis for this statement -- he came in the "likeness of sinful flesh" but never sinned. It is disingenuous to say Jesus had to overcome His sinful flesh when He actually overcame temptation attacking His flesh. I do not have to take drugs to be tempted to take drugs (who among my generation was not offered marijuana, but I never partook though tempted to try!).

Only a sinless man can pay the penalty for our sins - Jesus never allowed sin to work within His flesh for any moment in time.

Hebrews in general explores the humanity of Jesus, and Hebrews 4:15 says that he "has been tempted in all things as we are, yet [was] without sin." That last phrase is critical to think through. If Jesus did not have a fallen human nature, but only a pre-fallen Adamic human nature, then he was not actually tempted in all things "as we are." A temptation exists when something outside of me appeals to something inside of me. But if I have no desire for, or liking for, chocolate (say), then you could put all the chocolate you want in front of me - and I won't be tempted by it. So if Jesus did not have a fallen human nature, it's doubtful that he would even be tempted at all. And it would completely remove Jesus from being a source of pastoral comfort to us if he did not experience the same temptation we did. The whole point of Hebrews is that Jesus knows what it's like to be us. So Jesus was without sin in the sense of being without guilt. But Hebrews agrees with Romans 8:3 in the sense that Jesus did indeed have the same humanity we do, which made him "as we are."

Wherever there is sin there is guilt! Sin is the action, guilt is the feeling in aftermath of sin.

Furthermore, Hebrews 5:7 says that Jesus "became perfect." You say above, however, that "Adam had perfect flesh when he was created." You seem to argue that Jesus must have assumed a human nature that was like Adam's before he fell. In which case, he would be "perfect" from conception. But that is not in agreement with Hebrews 5:7. Jesus *became* perfect through his life, death, and resurrection, and he could only share his resurrected humanity by his Spirit after his death and resurrection. That is the real reason why the lamb and other sacrificial animals had to be perfect in their own physically unblemished way -- they pointed to the moral quality of Jesus' full human life as he made personal choices to obey the Father. And the lifeblood of the animal served as God's gift to the one who was offering the animal, to provide life to Israel. But you completely neglect how the animal sacrifices, which were uncorrupted as you observe, since animals did not fall into sin, were paired with the Jewish priesthood whose humanity was corrupted, and that pairing is inseparable in biblical imagery, not least in Hebrews. Jesus was the true sacrifice and the

true priest, and even the true tabernacle who was cleansed by his own lifelong obedience culminating in his self-sacrifice (Hebrews 7 - 10). This is preceded by the discussion about the true humanity of Jesus as high priest in Hebrews 4 - 5, who was not born "perfect." The insight of Hebrews means that Jesus' perfection was gained through a hard-won personal battle stretching over a lifetime, since he had an imperfect human nature to start with. If Jesus was perfect already from birth, then he could have shared his Spirit without going through the cross and resurrection. But John's Gospel says he could not have done that, in John 7:37-39, for example.

Jesus' "perfection" is better expressed as maturity. He had to pass through various temptations to pass the full test. As a baby or boy He could not be sexually tempted, if He had been an ascetic monk He would not have faced the many irritants of people, etc.

Then He (as a boy) went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them, but His mother kept all these things in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men. (Lk. 2:51-52 NKJ)

τελειόω [τέλειος] 'bring to a point at which nothing is missing' – a. of carrying out a responsibility or task complete Lk 13:32; J 4:34; 5:36; 17:4; Ac 20:24; Hb 7:19. W. focus on doing someth. within a specific span of time Lk 2:43. – b. of bringing someth. to a designed conclusion complete J 19:28; Js 2:22; 1 J 2:5; 4:12, 17. Of persons integrally united J 17:23. – c. of bringing to the ultimate point of maturation complete, to perfect – α. in ref. to ethical/spiritual perfection Phil 3:12; Hb 7:28; 9:9; 10:1, 14; 11:40; 12:23; 1 J 4:18. – β. in ref. to total qualification for an assignment, perh. = to consecrate Hb 2:10; 5:9.

Moreover, there is the meaning of the phrase "in the likeness of." Since you read my material on the early church, you would know that the phrase "in the likeness of" sinful flesh in Romans 8:3 means something much stronger than "in the superficial appearance of, only." Note that Paul uses the very same phrase in Philippians 2:7, where he says that the Son was made "in the likeness of" men. So now, are you going to propose a gnostic interpretation of Philippians 2:7 and claim that Jesus was only "in the superficial appearance of, only, but not the real substance of men"? Hopefully not. That's because you can't make the exact same phrase mean one thing in Philippians 2:7 and quite a different thing in Romans 8:3. This is the same author discussing the same subject. Furthermore, Paul, with his roots as a Jewish theologian, knows that the phrase "in the likeness" comes from Genesis 1, where image and likeness are first introduced. It denotes "real participation in," and becomes connected to Genesis 2 where God invites humanity to eat from the tree of life and have real participation in His life in a much deeper way than how humans were created initially. So back to Paul's usage of that phrase. Just as Jesus really became human and really participated in humanness according to Philippians 2:7, he really became sinful flesh and really participated in the same stuff we are according to Romans 8:3. If you choose to continue denying that the Son took to himself "sinful flesh" as in "fallen humanity," please explain why the phrase "in the likeness of" means one thing in Philippians 2:7 and quite another in Romans 8:3?

Adam was sinless til the fall, since all creation was good; likewise Jesus was sinless forever.

Jesus had all the same faculties of Adam body, soul, spirit; however, Jesus had the "essence/character" of God; therefore He could NEVER sin & if one never sins then one never has guilt. I have no guilt of bank robbing, but I do experience guilt for things I have said from years ago.

I absolutely agree with you when you insist on Jesus' innocence in terms of his activity - thoughts, emotions, deeds, words. He was sinless in the active sense. But you are making the assumption that having a fallen humanity automatically means that Jesus must have sinned actively, which is not true. Fallenness is a condition, which pertains to human nature generally. (not until we sin - I allowed that a baby in the womb can commit that first sin but he is conceived innocent) It is not the same as guilt, which pertains to human persons as we live and act and make specific choices freely. Guilt is a feeling or a legal pronouncement not an act/choice. With the exception of coveting, which Paul treats with special interest in Romans 7:14 - 8:4, I am guilty for things that you are not, and vice versa, because the sinful flesh in which we both share does not predetermine our individual choices. If that is true for our humanness, again, with the exception of coveting, it is also true for Jesus. He could share in sinful flesh without being predetermined to actively sin, especially because in Romans 7 - 8, Jesus won the deep battle against coveting that none of us could win. In Romans 7:14 - 25, Paul distinguishes between the "I myself" and "the sin which indwells me." The latter, he calls "flesh" and "sinful flesh" in 8:3. In medical substitutionary atonement, and in the specific expression of it which I prefer, which includes Jesus' lived human obedience as part of the cleansing and atoning process, Jesus specifically did what "the Law," that is, the Sinai covenant, could not do, weakened as it was by the flesh of Israel. What did the Law call for? Yes, of course, obedience to the commandments, in particular the tenth commandment against covetousness which Paul said nailed him. But the Sinai covenant called for Israel to circumcise their hearts (Dt.10:16). That is, to return their human nature back to God in a restored and healed condition after being shaped by the commandments, and etching the commandments onto their own hearts. Paul affirms that this was the goal of the Sinai covenant in Romans 2:28-29. Yet the Israelites could not do it. Only Jesus did.

Jesus never committed a sin which would have allowed "the sin that indwells" to have a foothold in Jesus. See the attachment designed to answer questions about "How is it that we are saved, but we continue to sin?" The purple lightning symbol is to depict the flesh warring with the spirit in Paul and us (but not Jesus SINCE JESUS REMAINED IN TOTAL CONTROL OF HIS FLESH BY NOT GIVING IN TO SIN). Jesus was tempted through His flesh (by porno, hunger, drugs, etc.) and soul (by fear, jealousy, anger, etc.) but he never gave in.

Hence, the phrase "pistis christou" is translated by KJV as "the faithfulness of Christ," denoting his lifelong struggle to be obedient to the Father, and live out all the commandments of the Sinai covenant. That phrase appears in the critical junctures of Romans 3:22 and Galatians 2:20. The phrase "pistis Christou" should not be translated "faith in Christ," as it is in many English translations, including NKJV. It should be the "faithfulness of Christ" because Jesus clearly stepped into the role of Israel, fulfilled Israel's side of the covenant through his own faithfulness, and therefore fulfilled God's side of the covenant, too, because Jesus as the true Israel was God doing to the humanity of Israel what they could not do for themselves. Hebrews 12:2 speaks of this same basic idea as Jesus being the "perfector of faith" itself, not just the perfector of deeds. Paul is arguing in Romans that God really has been faithful to His covenant with Israel (Rom.1:16 - 17; 9:1 -

11:36). God's righteousness is not simply a moral standard in the abstract, but specifically His faithfulness to His covenant with Israel (Rom.3:1 - 8). And God's righteousness is actually the faithfulness of Jesus (Rom.3:21 - 22). Your theory of Jesus taking pre-fallen Adamic humanity means that Jesus did not actually fulfill the Sinai covenant, because Adam, especially pre-fallen Adam, wasn't even within the Sinai covenant. So once again, if Jesus did not actually share in Israel's sinful flesh, then God was not actually faithful to the Sinai covenant, and He was not faithful to Israel. He would have just ignored and bypassed the Sinai covenant arbitrarily.

Sinful flesh is not a requirement to fulfill the covenant. What God would require someone to sin in order to be righteous? That sounds more like a gang initiation than God!

Also, there is Romans 6:6 and the surrounding logic of dying and rising with Christ. Jesus put to death "the old self." He did this for his own humanity, so that we could participate vicariously in his triumphant obedience and victory over sin. If Jesus did not have a sinful, fallen humanity, which he successfully fought and within which he had a personal victory over sin, how could he then help us? If his humanity was already somehow perfect and pristine, he would have no real point of contact with us. He would not have an "old self" to put to death from which point we could share in his death and resurrection. If Jesus did not have a true union with us in the depths of our fallenness, we could have no true union with him.

So taking your "point of contact" further --- do you need to go out and whore around & do drugs to relate to people and minister? Your wife & I hope not!

The Cross, Psalm 22, and the Trinity

Thank you for acknowledging that Jesus' quotation of Psalm 22:1 has to do with his appeal to the David story. (Incidentally, David was cursed with more than just violence within his family - his throne and all his heirs were cursed with warfare upon them from outside their family, related to their rule and governance, in 2 Sam.12:10, something Jesus had to also resolve - but I don't think this is a major point here). But surprisingly, you then switch metaphors and recall your son in the doctor's office undertaking treatment for a condition while you as his father are present and authorizing the doctor to administer the treatment. In other words, you resort to a medical, healing analogy where no one is actually behaving in a way that can be said to be an expression of retributive justice, and no one is paying out a legal penalty. But in your analogy, the father is not the doctor. In your analogy, the doctor is present to Jesus inflicting a painful treatment while the Father looks on, and in that sense "forsakes" the Son. So who and what does the doctor represent, in this analogy? Someone or something who is not God? Or an aspect of the Father which expresses a penal, spiritual wrath while another aspect of the Father can be said to keep his hands clean?

You use one metaphor to say the Father was present with Jesus and to Jesus, paying out the penal substitution penalty:

"the Father was with Jesus at the Cross and in Hades meting out the penal substitution! Think about it - if one of your children harm your other child, then it is your responsibility to mete out the "penalty" on that sinful child, right?"

Later on, you insist on this again:

"As persons in Hades are bereft of the Holy Spirit's empowerment/comfort so to Jesus, the cursed, would have not had the presence of the Holy Spirit in Hades as

the Father was meting out the penal substitution.”

But you also use another metaphor to suggest that the Father allowed others to act upon Jesus, and by this you hope to explain what Jesus meant when he said he was forsaken by God:

“Additionally, I think back to when my 1 year old only son was suffering dehydration from a virus - I allowed the doctors to insert an IV in his leg and the screaming torture of my little boy almost made me want to burst into the room to stop the procedure, but I did not because "that is the law" for hospitals. I was there, but I had to let the necessary procedure happen - he was most certainly crying "Daddy why have you forsaken me?"”

Perhaps you are attempting to explain how Jesus could both be aware of his Father’s presence (John 16:32) and yet lament that God had forsaken him (Psalm 22:1). So your proposal is to suggest that the Father was personally punishing Jesus “meting out the penal substitution” and thus Jesus was aware of that. And also, you suggest, as I do but in a different way, that Jesus’ cry of forsakenness had to do with the Father letting others act upon him to cause him pain.

The above description sounds like Isaiah 53 does it not (abused by both man & God the Father)!

Your juxtaposition of these metaphors leave large exegetical and logical questions which are common in PSA. The basic question is still rooted in the PSA-produced tension between divine presence (John 16:32) and supposedly divine absence (Psalm 22:1 as quoted by Jesus). Which was Jesus’ experience? The ambiguity comes in because, in the PSA understanding, forsakenness would seem to be the punishment itself. But that only increases the difficulty in connection with John 16:32: Is punishment the result of divine presence or divine absence?

I notice that Jesus did not say, "My God, my God, why are you present and assailing me?" The Holy Spirit is God, too! Or, "Why are you present and tormenting me?" Jesus knew Isaiah 53 Or, "Why are you present and burning me inside with hellfire?" But that is what is required by penal substitution as you are expressing it. How else could the Father mete out the penalty for sin except directly and personally? If, in your first analogy above, the Father relates to Jesus as the punisher of “the sinful child.” Although Jesus is at that point a substitute for others, nevertheless the Father must be doing it directly and personally. Anything else would be inconsistent with the divine retributive justice theory PSA requires.

Notice that since God, the Father, has executed His wrath against Jesus for the benefit of mankind; then, it is Jesus Himself (not the Father) who then executes the final judgement and wrath against unbelievers!

"For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself, 27 and has given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man. (Jn. 5:26-27 NKJ)

Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses. Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. (Rev. 19:11-15 NKJ)

And at the end the Lamb and angels enjoy the toasting of the unbelievers.

"he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. "And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night, (Rev. 14:10-11 NKJ)

Restorative justice, really?

So what does Jesus' quotation of Psalm 22 indicate about his experience of God? Here is where we differ, despite your appreciation of my treatment of the quote. Simply quoting Galatians 3:13 is not enough to interpret Psalm 22, especially when you are not at all engaging the Torah background to "cursedness," and especially "cursedness as self-harm," which include the first times the word 'cursed' appears in Genesis. You fault me for not engaging with Scripture, and prematurely so, but you, meanwhile, have only replied with analogies rather than exegesis to my observations about (1) Psalm 22 itself as an entire literary composition, (2) Psalm 22 in the life of David, and (3) the life of David as re-narrated and deployed by Jesus. In Psalm 22, David did not "feel" forsaken by God in an absolute sense, so the problem was not with his subjectivity. You say, "David felt as if God had abandoned him, but God did not abandon him." That's not what Psalm 22 says. **David can express his emotions & doubts like any human.** Once again, David consciously saw God's face and knew God's presence and knew God's anointing by the Spirit, during his whole life and during the whole Psalm. David was only complaining about why God had made him specifically physically vulnerable to the Gentiles. So to make Jesus out to be saying something that does not even correspond with David's intent or experience does violence to the way Jesus respectfully deployed the David story throughout the Gospel accounts. It also does violence to the way the New Testament respects the Old Testament contexts from which it quotes. Simply put, Jesus' quotation of Psalm 22:1 does not indicate an experience of the Father's absence. Actually, it is part of the Father's appeal, through Jesus, and by the Spirit, to the criminals crucified on either side of Jesus. The Trinity was united in witness. **The criminals hanging on the cross were in no mood to hear theological arguments created out of thin air -- "Today - you will be with me in Paradise" was all that they could stand to hear.**

Then we look at John's Gospel, and the problem for you and for PSA advocates only deepens, and quickly. Basic exegesis of John 16:32 tells us that Jesus' experience of the

Father's presence in John's Gospel was good and comforting, not punitive and tormenting. That is true in the immediate context of the verse, where Jesus says that the disciples will abandon him, which will be painful for him, presumably. The significance of Jesus' contrast is precisely that it is a contrast of what this will mean emotionally for Jesus: The Father will neither abandon him, nor cause him pain. **No basis for this sentence.** Then, even the cross narrative of John's Gospel makes the Son's union with the Father and witness to the Father unbroken: Jesus says "I am" three times in John 18:1 - 11 because "I am" is the name of God revealed to Moses back in Exodus; Jesus organizes his spiritual family for his biological mother and disciple, as God would organize a family by declaring what bonds exist; Jesus says "It is finished" like God declared the creation complete in the Sabbath; Jesus is in complete control of when he actually gives up his life, as he said in John 10:18 where he says that his authority to do so comes from the Father. John even omits the Gethsemane narrative so as to not even give any possibility to the reader that we should read the cross narrative as a narrative of divine opposition between Father and Son. The Gethsemane story should not be interpreted that way in the first place, since the Father strengthens Jesus, and Jesus' resolve holds to receive it. Nevertheless, John the author leaves out that story, perhaps to eliminate the possibility that it would be read that way.

And John's emphasis throughout his Gospel is how the Son always reflects the Father, in the Spirit, in an unbroken unity. In fact, Jesus said that the Father did not judge anyone, and instead entrusted all judgment to the Son (John 5:29).

That includes the question of whether the Father judged the Son himself. The Father did not judge anyone, period. Including the Son. The Son judged the flesh in himself (John 1:14; 3:14-15), by the power of the Spirit to express the will of the Father. Thus, Jesus was also not speaking of the Father being one step removed from him while the Jewish and Roman leaders beat him and administered pain upon him. That is what your analogy of being at the doctor's office with your son suggests. But by offering that story in that way, you are misrepresenting the actual relationships here.

KH, your assertion that "Jesus is a separate person from God" is deeply, deeply problematic. It is so problematic that it completely calls into question your self-designation as a theologian, because you just placed yourself outside of the bounds of orthodox Christian Trinitarian theology. For the Nicene Creed says that Jesus is "homoousios" with the Father, meaning sharing the same essence and substance and mind. Perhaps you meant to say that Jesus is a separate divine person from the Father and the Holy Spirit, but when we say that, we also must say that the three persons constitute the very reality of God and the nature of the relations within God, which simultaneously requires us to speak of the unity of the divine persons at all times. Jesus is not separate from God in the slightest. Jesus was never without the Holy Spirit at any time, contrary to your unnecessary and unfounded assertion that he went to Hades without the Holy Spirit. You say, "As

persons in Hades are bereft of the Holy Spirit's empowerment/comfort so to Jesus, the cursed, would have not had the presence of the Holy Spirit in Hades as the Father was meting out the penal substitution." But Paul says, "the Lord is the Spirit" in 2 Cor.3:18. That's a powerful statement of participation, if not identity. So how would "the Lord" Jesus not "have had the presence of the Holy Spirit" when Paul says he actually "is the Spirit"? And John says that the Spirit is how the Son is eternally in the Father and the Father is eternally in the Son, in John 14:16-20, because the Spirit is how the Son and Father come to live in and with the believer in John 14:21ff.; etc.

I have a standard trinitarian view per the Southern Baptist tradition. God is three persons and one essence. The Holy Spirit is a person who can be "sent" or "grieved" thus leaving. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit share the same "essence" (or character is a more anthropomorphic term). Thus as Jesus suffered the full penalty of the damned the person of the Holy Spirit would not have been available to "comfort" Him.

But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord. (2 Cor. 3:18 NKJ) The Holy Spirit is Lord & God and on a daily basis it is the Holy Spirit that guides our transformation --we do not have "face to face" interactions with a flesh & blood Savior.

One could say that as we obey His commandments that we download a bit of the "essence" of God's spirit and become Christlike.

You raise the question of divine omniscience in your ppt, but there are ways of handling that question other than placing those attributes with the Father but not shared with the Son and the Spirit. Perhaps you're thinking about the Scriptures concerning the Father by his authority setting in place certain events, like the precise day of the fall of Jerusalem, or of Jesus' second coming (e.g. Mt.24:37; Acts 1:7), but statements like those can and should be understood as the Father setting the divine action plan based on receiving the appropriate human responses and activities, which laid/lays somewhere in the future in an open ended way. But it is not as if the Father knew/knows something cognitively while the Son did/does not. Also in your ppt presentation, you indicate the Father alone as the creator, and not the Son and Spirit. But the Son and Spirit are also named as creator in Scripture (creation is "by him and through him" in Col.1:15 - 17; Rom.11:36; 1 Cor.8:6; cf. Gen.1:1 - 2) and in the Nicene - Constantinopolitan Creed, which again stresses the unity of the divine persons in all the activities of God in creation. The symmetry of how God made all creation "by the Son, through the Son, for the Son" is repeated in how God redeems by and through the Son: There is no division between them, in disposition or in mental state or in emotional experience, including at the cross. If Jesus is separate from God, as you claim, then Jesus cannot reveal God, nor can he bring us to God. Only God can reveal God. And only God can bring us to God. Your comments show why penal substitution brings you just one short step away from outright Arianism.

The Greek prepositions have a lot broader uses than indicated by the English translations thus simply changing the assumed English word selected reconciles issues that would make Jesus appear to be creator when His primary role is "Son of Man" and "Savior"

ἐν en {en} Usage: in 1874, by 141, with 134, among 117, at 112, on 46, through 37, misc 321; 2782

διὰ dia {dee-ah'} Usage: AV - by 241, through 88, with 16, for 58, for ... sake 47, therefore + 5124 44, for this cause + 5124 14, because 53, misc 86; 647

For with Him all things were created (Col. 1:16 NKJ) JESUS WAS THERE AT THE ETERNAL BEGINNING

For of Him and on account of Him and to Him (Rom. 11:36 NKJ) THE WORLD WAS CREATED TO GIVE JESUS CHRIST HIS BRIDE THE CHURCH PLUS VARIOUS OTHER REASONS

yet for us there is one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we for Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, on account of whom are all things, and because of whom we live. (1 Cor. 8:6 NKJ)

Galatians 3:13 and the Meaning of the Curse

Please explain what the word "curse" means in Genesis 3:14 (serpent), 3:17 (ground), and 4:11 (Cain's ability to cultivate the ground). Because you are ignoring the way the Pentateuch itself describes "cursedness." Both in terms of people and in terms of the imagery of the snake. And because the Pentateuch came before Paul and Galatians, as Paul demonstrates by his quotation of Deut.21:22 - 23, he is relying on your ability to read the Pentateuch first, before you say right off the bat that Galatians 3:13 refers to a PSA curse.

Cursed - Does the definition "without God's help" work for you? I refer to the philosophy of the verse below:

And whoever will not receive you, when you go out of that city, shake off the very dust from your feet as a testimony against them." (Lk. 9:5 NKJ)

Regarding the imagery of the snake, your claim that the snake was only cursed when it was hoisted on the pole seems to ignore how the Pentateuch uses the image of the snake. The first incident is the fall of Genesis 3, where the snake-serpent image is cursed in principle. The notion of snake venom is implicit in the fall - where human beings now have a poison inside us because we have taken something into ourselves that we should not have. The second incident is the first plague on Egypt, where the snake image is used to symbolize the power of Pharaoh holding Israel captive. God delivers the first generation of Israelites out from that serpentine power. The third incident is the snake on the pole in Numbers 21. God has to heal the second generation of Israelites of the venom, because snakes have bitten them because of their faithless resistance and grumbling. But you suggest that the snake was understood "neutrally" before it was hoisted on the pole? No, the snake was already understood to be a cursed thing, long, long before Moses put it on a

pole.

I agree the snake was cursed from the Garden, but raising the serpent on to a pole simply emphasizes the "curse". Jesus did not become a curse until lifted on a cross where He became a curse for us.

Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law (i.e., trying to follow rules without His grace), having become a curse for us (for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree"), (Gal. 3:13 NKJ)

Not only is there a literary relationship happening as we read the Pentateuch, but there was the immediate issue: If you were an Israelite in that desert, you and your community had just lapsed into unbelief, which was itself cursed, and those snakes were biting and killing you to make the point of it. Wouldn't you have cursed the snakes as they bit you? Wouldn't you have believed that the snakes were cursed, not when Moses hoisted one on a pole, but as they all bit you?

These two posts refute your handling of the bronze serpent story and its connection to Galatians 3:13 – please read and comment

<https://newhumanityinstitute.wordpress.com/2016/01/05/atonement-in-scripture-the-bronze-serpent-and-passover-part-1/>

<https://newhumanityinstitute.wordpress.com/2016/01/06/atonement-in-scripture-the-bronze-serpent-and-passover-part-2/>

And as a reminder, the Deuteronomy law is grounded upon the Genesis account of the corruption of sin in humanity, and the internalization of a cursed existence. Adam and Eve corrupted and cursed themselves, seen by their inability to bring forth life (human and garden) without pain (Gen.3:16 – 19). Cain corrupted and cursed himself even further, and the ground cursed him, since he could no longer fruitfully work the ground on account of his sin (Gen.4:11-12). But notice: The ground was not cursed for anyone else, only Cain. Or, alternatively, due to the ambiguity in the Hebrew grammatical construction, the ground did not curse anyone else, only Cain. Which either way means that Cain cursed his own human nature by his sin. All this happened before anything was put on a tree. Hanging on a tree merely identifies who had already been laboring under a cursed mode of life (fallenness), or living in a cursed manner (active sinfulness); it didn't enact a new curse upon the person per se.

So the connection between self-cursing and God's deliverance/redemption as healing of the self reposes on a medical analogy, not a penal analogy. Your phrase "law of the hospital" is a confusion of categories. Even on a basic human level today, medical procedures are grounded in an understanding of who and what we are. So also the Bible sees God's laws as rooted in who we are according to being God's creation. The Scriptures call God's laws a wisdom tradition.

The Jewish wisdom tradition understood human nature and God's commandments to be perfectly fitted to each other from creation: Both flow from God's wisdom (e.g. Prov.8:22 – 23). And this is why Psalms 19 and 119 say, "The laws of God makes the heart rejoice" and so on. There is a good fit between us and God's commands. To suggest otherwise means that God commands things that are strangely inappropriate for His creation, or that God made the creation in some way that is disconnected from His commandments and moral

character. Either hypothetical case would boggle the Jewish mind. The corruption of sin does not alter the basic categories of creation. However much we now face sinful desires in ourselves that resist God, a situation acknowledged in the Psalms and supremely by Paul in Romans 7:14 – 25, that does not take away from the fact that we are already participating in God's wisdom – and therefore in God Himself, in some sense – by our very creation. If God's commandments cause the heart to rejoice (e.g. Ps.19:8, etc.), then the heart cannot be marred by sin beyond recognition. We may struggle to follow the commandments of God. Yet our struggles are framed by a prior assurance of God's love for us as Creator, a teleological hope in God's goodness to heal human nature as part of our destiny (e.g. Dt.30:6; Jer.4:4; 31:31 – 34; Ezk.36:26 – 36; etc.), along with joy in finding in ourselves a desire to follow those commands in the present, despite the resistance we also feel. That is arguably why Paul can speak of a true 'I myself' in contrast to the alien 'sin that indwells me' (e.g. Rom.7:18) in that convoluted passage and convoluted journey of self-diagnosis. What God commands of us might be challenging, in light of the fall, but it is appropriate for us. Why? Because by commanding us, God awakens and strengthens our truest desires – desires which linger on in us despite the fall by His persistent creational and providential love for us.

This is important because it serves to explain why God's justice is restorative, not retributive. If God's justice were retributive, as it is in PSA, then God would value His law more than His creation. And that is what is proposed in PSA: God "satisfies" Himself by pouring out His retributive wrath, either on Jesus for the sake of some, or on others directly. But that means, by definition, that God is content to merely express His retributive vengeance for the injuries He feels we have done to His holiness.

That's a problem because it doesn't fit with the Jewish wisdom tradition, expressed especially in Proverbs and Psalms. If God's creation is upheld by God's law, and both are united by the common factor of God's wisdom, then God cares about his law precisely because He loves us. So our sin is not merely the act of us willfully breaking God's will. It is self-harm. Breaking God's laws does violence to how we were created, and who we are. So God cannot possibly be "satisfied" in any sense by the mere meting out of a penalty for sin. God's love is for the restoration of His creation, all of it, because all of it was made by, through, and for the Son. If the Jewish wisdom tradition is true, then God's forgiveness of us is forgiveness from our own self-injury. We are the masterpieces that have damaged ourselves. So atonement must be medical, not legal, in nature. It must be restorative, not retributive, as its goal.

As Jacob Arminius said, "God's love determines His will, His will does not determine His love (as Calvinist would maintain)". Remember I am an Arminian Open Theist, not a Calvinist even though you are commenting/arguing as if I am a Calvinist above.

Coming back to your analogies. If you are willing to use medical, healing analogies like the story of you and your son, then why not go all the way? The Doctor is the Triune God, fundamentally different from His created human beings but still the archetype from which we are patterned. We are his patients, infected by a terrible disease. Some are in denial and thus, decline. Some resist treatment, thinking they might treat themselves. Some recognize

the sickness, but no one is able to follow the doctor's health regimen, even a focus group called Israel who got special attention -- they demonstrated a bit more health but in the end, only served to produce their own written agreement with the doctor's own diagnosis. So the Doctor becomes one of his own patients by becoming human and acquiring the disease. He is able to fight the disease, although it costs him terribly, and produce the antibodies in himself, even though he can only do so after a miraculous death and resurrection. But after that, he can share his victory over the disease by sharing those antibodies from within himself. Doesn't that summarize biblical history? Or Romans 7:14 - 8:11? Doesn't that line up how the commandments are good and ultimately for Israel's health, as Paul says? Or why our participation in our own healing and restoration is absolutely required?

The medical-healing atonement takes sin too lightly. The sin equation is not balanced. The force of sin must be balanced by an equal and opposite force of "sacrificial penalty". Think of the laws of Conservation of Mass, Energy, Force balance, Momentum, Charge, even Economics, etc. This is how God works for good reason! If He could generate these equal and opposite balancing forces at His whim, then who could understand creation, why would there be any laws against sin, we would essentially have a god like Allah who has his own whimsical prerogative about which Muslims to allow into heaven and which to condemn.

Jesus' Descent to Hades in 1 Peter

Then, you seem to think that Jesus descended to Hades merely to taunt evil spirits. He certainly did taunt them that he had paid the price to own the keys to Death & Hell which all of mankind deserved, but not after His Penal Substitutionary Atonement had paid the price - Praise the Lord! You seem to believe this based on 1 Peter 3:18-20. But Peter refers a second time to the same event in 1 Peter 4:6, "For the gospel has for this purpose been preached even to those (humans) who are (spiritually) dead, that though they are judged in the flesh as men, they may live in the spirit according to the will of God." The intended result of Jesus' descent into 'Hades,' as it were, is explained: that those human beings who lived before Jesus were judged in the flesh while they were alive and might choose spiritual life nevertheless upon meeting Christ. **THERE IS NO 2ND CHANCE SALVATION (YOU DON'T REALLY BELIEVE THIS DO YOU)!** In other words, Jesus' proclamation to the dead was not simply to condemn them. He offered them a real choice to respond to him, and to 'live in the Spirit.' While I do not assume that all did choose Christ, the fact that Jesus did appear to them and preach to them is important for understanding the character of God.

You forgot to look at the verses above to see who Peter is talking about Christians preaching too - not Jesus.

For we have spent enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles-- when we walked in lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries. In regard to these, they (our former Gentile friends) think it strange that you (Christians) do not run with them in the same flood of dissipation, speaking evil of you. They will give an account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. For this reason the gospel was preached also to those who are (spiritually) dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit (if they choose to be saved). (1 Pet. 4:3-6 NKJ)

The thematic and conceptual ties in 1 Peter are important. Peter parallels the proclamation that happened among the dead and the proclamation that happens among the living. He makes this parallel because he is reminding the suffering Christians that their proclamation must continue. Holding Jesus up as the example of one who proclaimed his gospel even unto his death means that God can certainly call Christians to do the same. Interestingly, Peter also has in mind the parallel between the effective ministry of the dying Christ and that of the Christians. Christ's suffering led to death, but his death only enhanced his ability to preach, this time to a new audience: the dead - **Only to wave the keys of Death & Hell in front of their demonic noses!** Similarly, the Christians' suffering could lead to their death as well, but if they die virtuously, their death will further advance their proclamation among the living. Christians fearful of death might have argued that their removal from the world of the living would eliminate their testimony, thus making death a potential weakness in Peter's argument. Rather, virtuous death strengthens the argument. This is a challenging perspective for the suffering Christian, but a useful one if we ask God for the courage and strength to live in it.

If, as some argue, and as you seem to argue, Jesus' proclamation to the dead did not offer them a real choice to choose him, not only would exegetical violence be done to 4:6 (**you missed meaning of 4:6 as described above**), but the larger parallel would be drained of its importance entirely. For if Jesus' death did not advance and further the proclamation of God's word and offer of salvation, then why bring it up at all? Jesus' death would not be an effective point of comparison; it would lose its significance towards inspiring Christians to suffer for the sake of greater Christian proclamation, even to death. Peter would then be made out to be a rather poor architect of ideas. But if Jesus' proclamation to the dead did offer them a real choice, then the link between 3:19 and 4:6 reads easily without any forced rupture, and the overall conceptual parallel between the proclamation of the suffering Jesus and that of suffering Christians remains intact, brilliant, and inspiring.

This insight from 1 Peter 3:18 - 20 and 4:6, taken together, once again affects how we read the Old Testament. Peter provides us with a bit of the back story to an Old Testament thread which the Old Testament itself did not. In the Old Testament, God responded to certain human choices by taking human life. Those acts include the flood of Noah (Gen.7 - 8), the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen.18), the slaying of the Egyptian firstborn (Ex.12), the death of Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu (Lev.10:1 - 3), the slaying of disobedient Israelites (Num.11:1 - 2), the earth opening under Korah and his rebellion (Num.16), the conquest of Jericho and the Canaanites (Gen.15:16 - 21; Josh.1 - 7), and the slaying of Uzzah who touched the ark of God (2 Ki.5). For those who believe in the penal substitution atonement theory and view God as a retributive western lawgiver, it is easy to claim that this portrayal reveals a God of meritocratic and punitive justice, whose mercy becomes all the more merciful when understood against the backdrop of God's absolute right to act this way.

This examination of 1 Peter 3:19 and 4:6 helps us understand Old Testament history in another way. It serves a secondary role in our ability to understand the character of God. God did not immediately consign to hell people whose lives He took in the Old Testament. God was not taking away all possibility of choice. Yes, they still had a choice to receive Jesus, which was offered when Jesus descended into Hades after his death to make his proclamation there to them. **There is No 2nd chance salvation, rather the Old Testament peoples and even remote civilizations today are judged according to their enlightenment of Romans 1.** When God took away people's lives in the Old Testament generally, He did so to protect Israel because He was committed to incarnating Himself among the Israelites. For without Israel, there would be no Jesus. So God had to protect Israel (or the early family of

faith, like Noah's family and Abraham's family) from being killed by the violence of the pre-flood human culture, or the Canaanites, etc. He also had to encourage Israel to not completely defect from Him, so occasionally had to take some lives from within the community of Israel (e.g. challengers to Moses in Leviticus and Numbers; Uzzah when he touched the ark in 2 Samuel and treated it as a spoil of war, etc.). This explains at a stroke why God did not make the ground open up to stop the human sacrifice among the ancient Chinese, Mesopotamians, Aztecs, etc. on the one hand. If God were fundamentally retributive, in principle, that is the theodicy question you'd have to answer. And on the other hand, it also explains why God protected and defended the integrity of Israel as a community while still offering Himself to those individuals whose lives He took prior to Jesus' first coming.

While we are speaking of people's response to Jesus, let me revisit the topic of free will and open theism. You ask if medical substitution and restorative justice requires universal salvation/reconciliation. It does not. Because the nature of the atonement in MSA is understood as addressing the corruption of sin in each of us. It is a healing of human nature first in Jesus which then is offered to anyone and everyone. The issue is ontological, related to our being, and addressing the source of sinful behavior in each one of us. The issue is not about retributive punishment. So the puzzle pieces fit logically. MSA and restorative justice do not logically require that some people be damned either, because there is no attribute in God's character which must be expressed eternally by the punishment of some people in a retributive hell. But because each person is invested by God with free will about the ultimate ordering of their human nature and their ultimate relationship with God, we cannot say that salvation/reconciliation will be something everyone chooses. It is simply unknown.

Let us not forget that there are attributes in people's character (who have refused the light and walked in darkness) which must be eternally punished for some people in a retributive hell.

By contrast, your commitment to penal substitution renders your commitment to unlimited atonement and free will and open theism fundamentally illogical and shaky. For example, well-respected evangelical scholar J.I. Packer, in his famous introduction to John Owen's *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ*, argues that penal substitution necessarily means limited atonement: **Not true the following is not cogent!** '[John] Owen shows with great cogency that the three classes of texts alleged to prove that Christ died for persons who will not be saved (those saying that he died for 'the world,' for 'all,' and those thought to envisage the perishing of those for whom he died), cannot on sound principles of exegesis be held to teach any such thing; and, further, that the theological inferences by which universal redemption is supposed to be established are really quite fallacious... So far from magnifying the love and grace of God, this claim dishonors both it and him, for it reduces God's love to an impotent wish and turns the whole economy of 'saving' grace, so-called ('saving' is really a misnomer on this view), into a monumental divine failure. Also, so far from magnifying the merit and worth of Christ's death, it cheapens it, for it makes Christ die in vain. Lastly, so far from affording faith additional encouragement, it destroys the scriptural ground of assurance altogether, for it denies that the knowledge that Christ died for me (or did or does anything else for me) is a sufficient ground for inferring my eternal salvation; my salvation, on this view, depends not on what Christ did for me, but on what I

subsequently do for myself...You cannot have it both ways: an atonement of universal extent is a depreciated atonement.'

Think of Jesus overpaying the workers in the following parable out of his overwhelming generosity -- Jesus has more than enough "Atonement Cash" to even pay for those who refuse His free gift to them.

'Take what is yours and go your way. I wish to give to this last man the same as to you. `Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with my own things (i.e., penal substitutionary atonement)? Or is your eye evil because I am good?' (Matt. 20:14-15 NKJ)

How do you avoid Packer's conviction? In Packer's view, limited atonement is the inseparable – and for you and many others, the unwanted – companion to penal substitution. One reason for this is to avoid the double accounting problem: If Jesus took God's entire wrath against humanity at the cross, and then God poured out more wrath on the unrepentant in hell, would this not be a double accounting problem? On the other hand, we must also avoid the problem lurking at the other end of the PSA spectrum: If Jesus took all of God's wrath at the cross, then perhaps there would be no wrath leftover for unbelievers, so there would be no hell. Since most evangelicals believe Scripture teaches that there is a hell, and at least the possibility that there will be people in it, Jesus could not have taken all of God's wrath. If God introduces a whole new reason for dispensing a fresh batch of wrath, based on acceptance or rejection of Jesus, beyond whatever criteria existed before Jesus, then the claim that Jesus offers an already existing divine forgiveness becomes an irrelevant lie, and God's long prior relationship with Israel becomes suddenly unnecessary and cruelly arbitrary.

PSA is our purchased ticket to heaven. I can give you a ticket to the movie, but if you never walk into the movie theatre then you missed the Truth.

Another reason for the tight link between penal substitution and limited atonement is to assert that Christ's death was efficacious for procuring the salvation of some, lest Jesus be said to have died for no one in particular. Theoretically none at all might believe in Jesus in PSA. Hence, advocates of limited atonement like J.I. Packer prefer to call their conviction 'definite atonement.' The atonement - conceived of as legal pardon - must definitely save some. It must be definite in order for it to be effective, although this assertion rests on the assumption that atonement consists of the satisfaction of a certain amount of divine retributive justice. People assume, mostly from reading the Old Testament through the lens of a western adversarial legal system (i.e. cultural bias), that God's wrath is directed at our personhood on judicial grounds, rather than being directed at the 'cancer' in our bodies on medical grounds; the Old Testament diagnosis of the human heart is that God needs to circumcise something off from it (Gen.6:5 – 6; 8:21; Dt.30:6; Jer.4:4) and change the heart (Ps.51:10; Jer.17:1 – 10; 31:31 – 34; Ezk.11:19; 36:26 – 36).

No the Atonement is primarily a legal purchasing contract. Any medical clean-up is secondary and after the fact. If I buy your boat I cannot clean it up until the sales procurement is done, right?

And they sang a new song, saying: "You are worthy to take the scroll, And to open its seals; For You were slain, And have redeemed us to God by Your blood Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, (Rev. 5:9 NKJ)

redeemed is ἀγοράζω agorazo {ag-or-ad'-zo} Meaning: 1) to be in the market place, to attend it 2) to do business there, buy or sell

Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree"), (Gal. 3:13 NKJ)

redeemed is ἐξαγοράζω 1 aor. ἐξηγόρασα; (1) active buy back, buy up; figuratively, of Jesus' liberating atonement deliver, redeem (GA 3.13); (2) middle, of making the most of an opportunity make the best use of, take advantage of (EP 5.16)

Also, some people stack up "attributes" of God in a way where those attributes are in conflict. John Piper says, 'God created the universe so that the full range of His perfections – including wrath and power and judgment and justice – will be displayed.' It follows that God's retributive justice-wrath-holiness is opposite His love-mercy-grace such that people receive either one or the other. Making strawmen is beneath you. Or, alternatively, you now seem willing to rely on concepts of masculinity and femininity, coordinating masculinity with divine retributive punishment and toughness, I suppose, and thus making that one aspect of God. But when we try to integrate all of God's characteristics into statements about Him as one being, we must conclude that, in models like those and models like yours, God is fundamentally two-faced, or arbitrary, at the core. That fundamental (mis)understanding of God's "full range of perfections" requires expression eternally, and therefore requires double predestination, limited atonement, no real human free will, no open theism. What fruit is there in false characterizations as refuted above? This means that God, before actually loving anyone in particular, decides who He will love and who will love Him back by His raw, arbitrary, and omnicausal will. That is all part and parcel logically with penal substitution. None of this would happen if you fundamentally understood the Trinity and how to start with God's nature as a Triune being.

I hope that you are a wise enough father to handle your kids with both Justice and Love -- that is a good thing and does not make you two-faced by any means. Only when we are imbalanced by teaching one side of systematic theology are we being cowards. For example, my Baptist Bible study lesson taught the evils of alcohol, yet failed to mention that Jesus made water into wine -- that is an example of political cowardice which I called them out on as being "imbalanced".

Christian Ethics

On to Christian ethics, and slavery, and restorative vs. retributive justice in practice. You ask me whether Paul condemns "slavery" in Philemon as if I didn't already write about Philemon, and as if that question proves something. It proves nothing. That's like asking whether Paul would ever approve or condemn something so broad like "employment." Of course Paul is not going to condemn "slavery" carte blanche because "slavery" back then was multi-faceted. Just as "employment" today can involve child or adult labor, fair or unfair wages, coercion or voluntarism, safe and unsafe practices, sabbath rest or overwork,

etc. "Slavery" back then had multiple routes into it, multiple reasons why a person would opt into it or flee it, multiple effects on the person, multiple vulnerabilities based on the behavior of masters. I already explained in my paper that what was important to the biblical writers is that, as they encountered slavery, they (1) condemned ways of entering it like kidnapping, being sold in a slave sale, birth to enslaved parents, etc. (2) delimited the only legitimate reasons as being voluntary, being there to pay off with labor a debt you owed personally to someone, or having to pay back 2 - 5 times the amount of something you stole based on Exodus 22, (3) limiting the power of masters to beat or threaten, (4) prescribing ways of exiting a term of service like 7 years (Dt.15) or the jubilee year on the fixed calendar (Lev.25) or, remarkably, just running away (Dt.23:15 -16). The end result was to make debt non-commodifiable; radically limit indebtedness which was the main driver of slavery in the ancient world; give human rights to people while they were enslaved, including rights of body, marriage and family. One commentator says that Jewish law made of slavery a voluntary institution because of the runaway law.

I agree with the Biblical wisdom on slavery as you describe.

All of which means that the Trans-Atlantic slave trade was morally abhorrent and heretical. **Yes.** The psychology of criminality upon which racial slavery depended, along with the institutions that it has influenced (e.g. the "war on drugs" and the mass incarceration problem) and the attitudes it continues to fund, are still problems.

Need to strengthen the family as the 1st court of law & order.

Thus, Dinesh D'Souza's book grossly oversimplifies racial issues down to "culture". While I do think there are struggles that urban black communities face, which are worth paying attention to (fatherlessness, substance abuse, normalization of a perpetual youth culture, etc.), taking a longer historical view is essential to addressing those issues. According to your summary of D'Souza, he does not seem to mention, for example, how the U.S. federal government set up the largest affirmative action program ever, in the post-WW2 era, under the guise of the GI Bill. The federal government sponsored white flight out into the suburbs, and denied black applicants mortgage loans. For at least a great many white families, this allowed them to build up equity in their homes to pay for their kids college tuition, pass down an inheritance, and even speculate on the real estate market. This created a segregated residential housing system that has served as the basis for a wealth accumulation system for some and not for others, very different public schooling experiences because public schools are funded largely by property taxes, different experiences for children and youth because of very different experiences of neighborhoods and physical separation and parks and schools and gyms and adult availability, different tax revenue bases between cities and suburbs because cities were drained while white suburbs flourished, different experiences of policing because police could then treat communities very selectively for example with drug use (higher in white communities than in black, but easier to police in black communities because of geo), and virtually every problem which intersects with race as a factor. If you want to uphold the conservative principle of small, limited government, you have to denounce the GI Bill and American suburbanization as the precise opposite of that. If you want to uphold the principle of meritocratic-retributive justice in institutions, you have to

denounce the same as entirely non-meritocratic in nature. If you want to uphold the Constitution, pay attention to how this massive government subsidy which created the white suburb was a violation of the 14th Amendment's equal administration of the law clause. See Douglas Massey, American Apartheid. Here's a good article focusing on California's housing market and racial discrimination

(<https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2014/05/the-racist-housing-policy-that-made-your-neighborhood/371439/>). Here's a broader perspective (<http://www.epi.org/blog/from-ferguson-to-baltimore-the-fruits-of-government-sponsored-segregation/>). Revisit how the wealth gap is not the same as the income gap, and note how the wealth gap never closes (<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2017-02-08/the-big-reason-whites-are-richer-than-blacks-in-america>). Consider why the attempts of a conservative like Republican George Romney to undo residential segregation were shut down (<https://www.thisamericanlife.org/radio-archives/episode/512/house-rules>).

Can we both agree that government should simply stick to only the very basics of police, military, judicial administration, legislation, support for only orphans, insane, etc.?

In the Old Testament, God treated land and family as bound up together (Leviticus 25), and every fifty years He pushed a reset button to re-gift the garden land back to every family. This was part of His partial restoration of the original garden picture, if Adam and Eve had never sinned and humanity was enjoying the spread of the garden in creation. Although livestock, clothing, currency, and other forms of wealth could be passed down as personal possessions, land was only stewarded by Israel; it was owned by God (Lev.25:23). Land was the most basic form of wealth, work, school, nutrition, sense of place and mental health. And God did not allow land to be part of the way that advantage and disadvantage were passed down to children and grandchildren. It didn't matter if parents were unfortunate, or if they were lazy. What did their kids do to deserve advantage or disadvantage? Nothing. But the bigger theological picture is that God looked at land as part of the garden arrangement that He always wanted to restore for humanity. It's just another way that God was showing that His justice is restorative. Thus, most importantly, consider why countries like Germany, Canada, etc. do not allow for real estate to be part of the speculative, debt-fueled market in the first place, as we do here in the US, but instead intelligently and humanely treat neighborhoods to be part of an investment in human capital, and smart and conservative financing as a cornerstone of a flexible, well-run labor market (<https://www.forbes.com/sites/eamonnfingleton/2014/02/02/in-worlds-best-run-economy-home-prices-just-keep-falling-because-thats-what-home-prices-are-supposed-to-do/#339f57266ad0>).

Rather than incarcerate I would like to see criminals confined to a plot of land in the middle of nowhere with running water, seeds, educational videos, etc. and then told to survive for X period of time. This is what our American pioneering fathers did!!!!

Nor does D'Souza mention that divorce rates spiked dramatically after WW2 and Vietnam because men came back from military service with PTSD. But in the white community, those divorce rates went back down, while in the black community, they did not. After Vietnam, it kept rising in the black community. See Donna Franklin, Ensuring Inequality: The Structural Transformation of the African-American Family. Families and communities that were already being systematically stripped of resources and supports can only sustain

so much trauma. The projection of American "masculinity" abroad, by your own definition of "masculinity", is built on the crushing of minds and bodies and families of lots of people, but especially ethnic minority groups in the US in a disproportionate way. War is not a regular event of everyday life, and the cataclysmic effects of war on people cannot simply be chalked up to a "defective culture."

War victims/soldiers need an adequate social net for their service -- like Trump espouses, etc.

Nor does D'Souza mention how socialist-style entitlements are actually provided to middle-class and wealthy people, mostly white elites, in such a way that they can tout "hard work" and "meritocracy" and so deceive themselves about what is really going on: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/chrisladd/2017/03/13/unspeakable-realities-block-universal-health-coverage-in-the-us/#40c3ece5186a>. Keep in mind also all the tax loopholes, etc. granted to the wealthy and to corporations.

The key is to minimize government which is the one monopoly that can put a gun to your head.

Nor does D'Souza explore what we are learning about epigenetics and other health impacts. Trauma is passed down from one generation to the next biologically, not just socially. So physical health and mental health outcomes and health-related stresses get placed on families already traumatized by historic injustice (<http://bigthink.com/big-think-mental-health-channel/mental-illness-in-black-america>; <http://discovermagazine.com/2013/may/13-grandmas-experiences-leave-epigenetic-mark-on-your-genes>; <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-2611317/How-trauma-life-passed-SPERM-affecting-mental-health-future-generations.html>; <https://www.theguardian.com/science/2015/aug/21/study-of-holocaust-survivors-finds-trauma-passed-on-to-childrens-genes>). That intergenerational inheritance builds up on top of already existing social stresses on the body's genetics (<https://acestoohigh.com/2016/08/10/childhood-trauma-leads-to-lifelong-chronic-illness-so-why-isnt-the-medical-community-helping-patients/>; <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/the-athletes-way/201404/social-disadvantage-creates-genetic-wear-and-tear>). And the health impact of racial dynamics not necessarily genetically, but generally on the body, is still significant (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=INc1a6u8yP4&list=PLEF0280B25D0841C4&index=3>).

The reason you haven't filed and can't file for reparations from your Viking ancestors is that you live in another country, and there isn't any meaningful way in which systems like housing, wealth accumulation, economic inheritance, marriage and divorce trends, and health outcomes are currently being affected by anything they did. But the reality you and D'Souza don't seem willing to acknowledge is that these systems are still here and are having a dramatic effect on people, in this country. Tell me how most middle class Americans afford to send their kids to college. Isn't it by leveraging the equity in their houses?

In light of this, your projection of "socialism" onto Judas Iscariot is not only inaccurate (and ill-defined, as I align with libertarian socialism which is a pro-market labor alternative which limits the fluidity of capital which even Adam Smith favored in corporate law), but completely irrelevant. The problems which I am pointing out (and which you and D'Souza overlook) are

failures to live out the very principles which the right espouses. Your further suggestion that face-to-face accountability in family and church is the limitation on what God desires for organizations is not even affirmed by the case of Judas. Jesus was running a ministry, and launching his church, and Judas was the treasurer of this group of 13 men. So Judas did not represent anything near a government bureaucrat. Projecting that onto him has some accuracy in that of course government bureaucrats can do that, too, but it is inappropriate for you to suggest that it's limited to that sphere. He was carrying out a necessary function in any group, and in this case it was a small, voluntary church organization, not a government. Why do you not comment just as vigorously on how private profiteering is also present in families, family businesses, churches of all sizes, capitalist corporations, the subculture of America that is racially prejudiced, another subculture of America that is oblivious to systems, and government-corporate ties like the Trump family's promotion of the Trump "brand" while in office, Trump's obvious protection of Saudi Arabia and other Muslim countries which host his hotels, and Trump's violation of the emoluments clause? The problem represented by Judas Iscariot is much more universal and resists any kind of reduction to "this is the problem with socialism" or "the left." Transparency and accountability are the appropriate countermeasures for that, in every sphere. In corporations and government and democracy writ large, the solution is a matter of giving real organizational teeth (e.g. authority to fire people) and legal resources (e.g. real legal education and the ability to sue in court) to people while giving us laws that say, "You shall not lie; you shall not steal."

See my Anti-Christ attachment to see why socialism is so inherently evil as warned in scripture.

You seem to be asking a general question about restorative justice practices, and whether they are fair for victims. Since this is a concept used in cases ranging from classroom disruption to violent crime, I'll simply point to a few articles:

http://www.nytimes.com/2013/01/06/magazine/can-forgiveness-play-a-role-in-criminal-justice.html?hp&_r=0

<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2013/feb/25/norwegian-prison-inmates-treated-like-people>

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/nov/11/sweden-closes-prisons-number-inmates-plummets>

<https://www.usnews.com/opinion/knowledge-bank/articles/2016-04-08/public-charter-school-is-transforming-discipline-with-restorative-justice>

http://www.nytimes.com/2013/04/04/education/restorative-justice-programs-take-root-in-schools.html?hp&_r=0

<https://www.nytimes.com/2016/09/11/magazine/an-effective-but-exhausting-alternative-to-high-school-suspensions.html>

In certain cases of violent crime, as the first article explores, there are possibilities for the victim and the offender need to agree to a certain kind of process. Restorative justice obviously does not remove the need for prisons. It just structures the consequences for a crime or injury differently, giving the victim more voice into what those consequences should be.

Lastly, you are resorting rather quickly to your own cultural bias and also to attacking supposed motivations that you think are there in me. Consider this paragraph of yours:

There is absolutely no restorative justice after death - are you grasping for straws because you apparently do not want to confront those weak in the faith with Jesus as Judge? To me this indicates the cowardliness of your anti-PSA stance -- which plays better with effeminate audiences as "A GOD OF LOVE" while for masculine audiences the "GOD AS JUSTICE" receives a better welcome. Of course God is both Love and Justice and we must rightly divide the Word for all of our audiences.

You are making a lot of mistakes here in this one paragraph. (1) You seem to think that in my preaching and teaching and writing, I somehow don't talk about Jesus as Judge. That's wrong. (2) You associate "cowardliness" and negative "effeminacy" with a theological position. Cowardliness is a symptom of any out-of-balance theology, see comments above about wine in Baptist church -- I thought this effeminate/masculine contrast would grab your attention. Can you not develop your exegesis any further? Must you stoop to this level? (3) Your concepts of masculinity and femininity come from your own cultural bias, not Scripture. Cultures that are more inclined to restorative justice practices (e.g. the Maori in New Zealand, various African cultures) also simultaneously have fairly challenging rites of passage as boys become men, so your assumption that restorative justice equates to femininity is also wrong. It's the hyper-individualism of white American culture that makes retributive justice seem right, because an individualistic framework upholds individual freedom and liberty as ideals, so retributive justice takes those things away. A more relational framework upholds other ideals for human life, therefore conceives of punishments and consequences more relationally also.

Our cultures should all be bent toward Jesus Christ which is where TRUTH is. We should celebrate the differences and never be envious of another cultures/races success, since that is the spirit of Satan.

(4) You think that saying that God is about restorative justice is easy, apparently because you think being the offender in a restorative justice process is easier than just being punished. Many people who are offenders experience the demands of restorative justice to be harder than just being punished. They have to listen to injured parties until they empathize and internalize that pain. They have to take full responsibility for their actions. They have to publicly apologize to people and ask forgiveness. They may have to pay back people, or commit to a term of service in some way. Etc. As evidence, is it easy for alcoholics to stay sober as they resist their addiction and as they grieve the hurt they've caused their family and friends? Hardly. Yet that is the principle of restorative justice where we internalize the responsibility for all the damage we've caused, and work to undo it. That is the same principle in Jewish law, in the teaching of Jesus, and the character of God experienced as hellish for those who resist. And here's a good example: Restorative justice requires the repentance of the offender, in social practice and in theology. Retributive justice does not. A retributive "God" can be "satisfied" by "meting out the penalty" for sin. Repentance not required. And the most convoluted problem occurs when we imagine in a PSA framework that people in hell want to repent and be with God. There is no character-of-the-Trinity-based explanation offered for why God would continue to punish such people in a hell that is conceived of as a prison. Despite the many biblical statements that God desires the repentance of people, and does not rejoice in the death of people, PSA requires that there be a remarkable shift in the character of God. In a PSA hell, God now desires to punish people infinitely. And He absolutely, necessarily, rejoices in the death and suffering of people. His "satisfaction" depends on it.

Restorative justice can be practiced with the living, but not the dead.

I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held.

And they cried with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" Then a white robe was given to each of them; and it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they were, was completed. (Rev. 6:9-11 NKJ)

Notice how even the Holy Saints in Heaven are righteously calling for vengeance on the people on the earth (the unbelievers who are likely ISIS-types among others). There is no restorative justice here. I think restorative justice collapses on itself when presented with the Heavenly view of Rev 6:9-11.

The best testimonials are those from adversarial people who have "changed" their life philosophy as they were confronted by God (e.g., Paul the apostle). I am praying for that "change" in your view of Penal Substitutionary Atonement.

Best,
Mako

March 29, 2017

Mako,

Below are thoughts pertinent to our conversations that occurred to me after reading the Bible story of Philip & the Ethiopian to my grandson.

As a grandfather when I instruct my 4 year old to pick up a toy either he picks it up or I pick it up for him. If he picks it up then I am honored and he is blessed with more opportunities for future blessings. If I have to pick it up for him then he has dishonored me though I may prove my good and loving character by picking it up for him. Thus I have paid the price for him!

At the moment that the "superior wisdom" has requested the toy to be picked up then that statement becomes a "law". If I, the grandfather, deny the wisdom of the statement (or law) then I reflect that my commands are superfluous, vain, evil, etc. NOTE: If I am God, the Father, I cannot affirm that my commands are vain, superfluous, or evil because that would be an untruth, a lie.

Therefore, my only choices are to exact the "requirement" out of the grandchild, either myself (as Jesus Christ the Son if I was God), or prove myself to be a liar for committing an injustice of requiring what was not really required (e.g., excessive abuse). God cannot lie so the exacting of Justice must occur against the grandchild or myself (e.g. for God in the Trinity, the Himself is Jesus His Son)! If the penalty just magically disappeared, then God is a liar and an imperfect ruler of the Universe.

Notice how scripture immediately points to Isaiah 53 after the crucifixion.

So he arose and went. And behold, a man of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under Candace the queen of the Ethiopians, who had charge of all her treasury, and had come to Jerusalem to worship, was returning. And sitting in his chariot, he was reading Isaiah the prophet. Then the Spirit said to Philip, "Go near and overtake this chariot." So Philip ran to him, and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah, and said, "Do you understand what you are reading?" And he said, "How can I, unless someone guides me?" And he asked Philip to come up and sit with him. The place in the Scripture which he read was this: "He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; And as a lamb before its shearer is silent, So He opened not His mouth. In His humiliation His justice was taken away, And who will declare His generation? For His life is taken from the earth." So the eunuch answered Philip and said, "I ask you, of whom does the prophet say this, of himself or of some other man?" Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning at this Scripture, preached Jesus to him. (Acts 8:27-35 NKJ)

The Ethiopian was perplexed that "His justice was taken away". GOD CANNOT TAKE AWAY JUSTICE FROM ANYONE EXCEPT FROM HIMSELF THROUGH HIS SON. We all have a promise of Justice from God, either now or in the future, since to do otherwise does violence to God's Justice. For Satan himself challenges God's authority to be God, challenges God's authority to punish Satan himself in Hell, and wrecks havoc among mankind as the prize possession of God's creation. The evil ones cry out that God is not fair! Yet scripture reminds us: "Surely God will never do wickedly, Nor will the Almighty pervert justice. (Job 34:12 NKJ)" If God could magically make the penalty of Satan's rebellion disappear, then God would be a liar as if saying, "OK - Satan you can rule the universe! I really did not mean what I was saying."

Jesus Christ as a man suffered for ~48 hours of unrelenting human abuse. Many soldiers, cancer victims, elderly, etc. have suffered worse pain for longer periods of time than the crucifixion. Therefore, Jesus suffered the majority of his indescribable punishment while in the tomb and in Hades (Acts 2:27) in what I assume/speculate is another time dimension (or other unseen feature of the universe). Satan and his hordes would have mocked Jesus for not paying the penalty for mankind; therefore, only God, Himself, who has been dishonored by mankind is capable to impose the full force of punishment against Jesus due to our sins. Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief. When You make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, (Isa. 53:10 NKJ)

We must never attempt to take away from who God is (including His wrath against our sins), lest we build a false god:

For we know Him who said, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. And again, "The LORD will judge His people." It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. (Heb. 10:30-31 NKJ)

Our God is an Awesome God,

KH

April 7, 2017

Hi KH,

Please understand that my case for medical-ontological substitutionary atonement ultimately rests on Scripture, not on the early church. But the series of corollary accusations that you have to throw at the early church in order to defend your PSA position shows how weak PSA is. So I am still pressing you to make a case for penal substitution being "lost" by the early church because you don't seem to understand the early church at all.

For example, you say:

'As mentioned before - the church teaching on speaking in tongues was lost to the church for many centuries, yet tongues & penal substitution are "base case" in the canonical scripture. My goodness the whole church at one time became Arians for a few years because of the influence of Constantine's son, but thank goodness Athanasius through suffering preserved the "true way". Church history is important, but not an absolute in the way that scripture is. Jesus canonized the Old Testament Himself when He said "not one jot or tittle shall pass away" (Matt 5:18), but He also commented that the Jews had made the law of no effect" (Mark 7:13). If you can't make your case with scripture which I consider myself fully competent in, then do not waste your time using the inferior reference of the fallible Early Christian Fathers.'

Your sources about church history are misleading you, factually and in terms of constructing a logical parallel between teaching about tongues and teaching about PSA. (1) Factually. I'm going to belabor the point on this tangential issue of tongues to show that you're factually wrong about it, before we return to the challenge you have to answer about PSA being 'lost.' I understand the well-known case cessationists make that the 'charismatic gifts' stopped after the apostles, or shortly thereafter. Or, maybe after Athanasius finally canonized the New Testament in the fourth century. Whatever the case made, speaking in tongues is well known in Irenaeus (Against Heresies 5.6.1) and Tertullian (Against Marcion 5.8) during the second century, and persisted well into the Nicene fourth century, past the lifetime of Athanasius. In Roman Gaul, Hilary of Poitiers (315 – 367 AD) quoted the list of gifts in 1 Corinthians 12, and commented: "Here we have a statement of the purpose and results of the gift; and I cannot conceive what doubt can remain, after so clear a definition of His origin, His action, and His powers." (Hilary of Poitiers, On the Trinity, 2.34). Hilary also said, 'We who have been re-born through the sacrament of baptism experience intense joy when we feel within us the first stirrings of the Holy Spirit. We begin to have insight into the mysteries of faith, we are able to prophesy and to speak with wisdom. We become steadfast in hope and receive gifts of healing. Demons are made subject to our authority.' (Tract on the Psalms, 64.14-15; Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum 22:246) And specifically on Psalm 64:9, Hilary speaks enthusiastically about all the Spirit's gifts without qualification, 'The Holy Spirit is called a river. When we receive the Holy Spirit we are made drunk. Because out of us, as a source, various streams of grace flow, the prophet prays that the Lord will inebriate us. The prophet wants the same persons to be made drunk and filled to all fullness with the divine gifts, so that their generations may be multiplied. This means that the good earth is compared in the gospel simile to the seed of the word, bearing fruit thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold.' And, 'Through the miracles that have been granted for the profit of everyone the gift of the Holy Spirit does not remain hidden. Because the charisms are effective they are the pledge of our future hope.' (Hilary of Poitiers, On the Trinity, 8:33; Corpus Christianorum 62a:345) In Italy, Ambrose of Milan (340 – 398 AD) taught that all the gifts of I Corinthians 12 were part of the normal Christian experience. (Ambrose, Of the Holy Spirit, 2.8).

In the region of Egypt, miraculous gifts including tongues were observed among the desert fathers. It is likely that Athanasius of Alexandria observed tongues, because of his biographical account of the miracle-worker Antony the Great, the desert monastic, in his *Life of Antony*. One of the intentions of Athanasius in writing *Life of Antony* was to inspire fellow Christians to practice spiritual disciplines to cultivate the Spirit's more miraculous gifts like words of knowledge, exorcism, etc. Note also Pachomius (died 346 AD), another monastic Christian in Egypt, who never learned Latin, but was said to be able to speak it with a visitor after three hours of prayer (Acta Sanctorum, May III, 319, 342; cited by Michael P. Hamilton, *The Charismatic Movement*, p 69 and Stanley M. Burgess, *Perspectives on the New Pentecostalism*, p. 14-26). And stories like these were celebrated and circulated far and wide in the church.

Patrick of Ireland (387 – 493 AD), recounts two dreams in which miraculous tongues seem to have been spoken to him (Confessions, 24 – 25). The Venerable Bede (d. 735) associated the gift of tongues with Christian missionary expansion. In his case, he was on the borders of Celtic, Saxon, and Latin interaction. Bede recounts the experiences of the monk Caedmon, who received gifts of poetry and song. When passages of Scripture were interpreted for him, Caedmon could express them in English poetry. (Bede, *A History of the English Church and People*, trans. Leo Sherley-Price, p 250-253) (The Charismatic Movement, 1975, Michael P. Hamilton, p 69). Bede's work (completed in 731) also contains many notable references to experiences of healing.

Some medieval monastics were observed to speak in tongues, among the orders which embraced poverty, and the schismatic anti-papal Albigensians in France. Two early biographers write that Hildegard (1098 – 1179 AD) wrote numerous books on music, the lives of saints, medicine, and devotional subjects—all in Latin, “a language completely unknown to her!” (Acta sanctorum, Catholic Source, September V, 699; *Analecta Bollandiana*, 2 (1883), 126f.) (Perspectives on the New Pentecostalism, Spitter, Stanley M. Burgess, 1976, pp. 14-26) Jean/John of the Cross spoke with Muslims in Arabic (St. Omer: Charles Bascard for John Heigham, 1625), p. 15; Perspectives on the New Pentecostalism, pp. 14-26) Anthony of Padua (d. 1231) was a leading Franciscan figure. Among his miracles and spiritual gifts recounted in the earliest sources was the gift of tongues. At times, "his tongue became the pen of the Holy Ghost," and on occasion his hearers were reminded of the day of Pentecost when they heard him preaching in their native tongues. (From the *Legenda Prima* quoted by Raphael Huber, St. Anthony of Padua, p.54; cited by The Charismatic Movement, p.71) Vincent Ferrer (died 1419), a Dominican friar and preacher who was known for miracles and, while preaching in Latin was often said to have been understood by "Greeks, Germans, Sardinians, Hungarians, and people of other nations," as if speaking their languages. (The Charismatic Movement, p.71). The great Portuguese Jesuit Francis Xavier was reported to have spoken miraculously in Japanese and Tamil, and on occasion spoke in Latin but was miraculously understood in Japanese and Chinese.

(2) Your construction of a parallel between the teaching of tongues and the teaching of PSA. At times, especially regarding Francis Xavier and a few other medieval Christians, it is difficult to tell if this is legendary embellishment. But for our purposes, it doesn't matter. The fact that these stories were widely circulated and celebrated are enough to tell us something. It is true that many Christians observed that the gift of supernatural tongues had apparently stopped. But making an observation is not the same as reasoning it out from Scripture itself, and teaching a position as if it were Scripture. To the contrary, Christians don't seem to have stopped wanting supernatural tongues to re-emerge, and they sought out some other explanation for this biblical category because they recognized that it was in Scripture, clearly. Augustine, for example, thought the natural learning and speaking of languages which was taking place in his day, sufficed to explain how the Spirit was still giving a version of the gift of tongues. That idea carried forward into Thomas Aquinas and beyond. Etc. So Christians may have gradually stopped speaking in tongues supernaturally. They did not stop teaching about it, and hoping for the supernatural manifestation of it, and receiving it with great curiosity and interest when it did occur.

More importantly than the teaching about tongues in the early church, however, is the formation of the pro-Nicene Trinitarian position, led by Athanasius, which is directly involved in our discussions about the atonement. You say that “the whole church at one time became Arians for a few years.” I'm hoping that this statement is just a careless slip on your part. Athanasius relied on his far flung congregation centered in Alexandria, Egypt to defend him and shelter him. This included the Egyptian monastic Christians up and down the Nile. When Emperors tried to replace Athanasius as bishop of Alexandria, they were met with fairly strong resistance. Furthermore, Athanasius had many allies all over the Latin-speaking world. He spent one exile in Rome in the 360's under the protection of Julius, bishop of Rome. There, he also met with the bishops of the West like Hosius of Cordoba, who had been present at the Nicene Council of 325, and Hilary of Poitiers, who were his allies. In fact, Athanasius' strategy was to mobilize the Western, Latin-speaking bishops in defense of the Nicene Creed because, on the whole, they were anti-Arian and pro-Nicene. Ephrem the Syrian, the great hymnwriter who spoke Syriac and presided in the Mesopotamian region during the fourth century, was pro-Nicene, which hints to us something of the Syriac speaking church.

Some Greek-speaking church leaders who were slow to adopt Athanasius' use of the Nicene word 'homoousion' were nevertheless vigorously anti-Arian. Athanasius also corresponded with Basil of Caesarea, the leading bishop in the East, who did not follow Arian theology, but took a while to come around to the fully Nicene use of the word 'homoousion' while he tried to hold a moderate position. Once he did come around, however, he brought his brother Gregory of Nyssa and their friend Gregory of Nazianzus on board. And the three of them became known as the three greatest theologians – ‘the Cappadocians’ – in the generation after Athanasius. Also, the impressive figure

of Cyril of Jerusalem, a fourth century contemporary, stood somewhat aloof from the word 'homoousion' for a time, but was nevertheless a strong critic of Arianism. For more information, see Thomas F. Torrance, *The Trinitarian Faith*, and for a challenging read, Lewis Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy*.

I say this not because I think the early church was infallible (I don't). Nor because I think Athanasius in particular was infallible (I don't). I say this to ask something about you:

Are you sure you're qualified to make statements about the early church?

Your attempt to construct a parallel just evaporated. Do you continue to assert that penal substitution was 'lost'? Because you have still not given any evidence for that claim. Not only because there is actually none, as I assert, but also because your understanding of the early church is inadequate and porous.

The Theological Method of the Early Church

Specifically, you don't understand the early development of the doctrines of the Trinity and incarnation, and the definition of salvation which those doctrines were designed to protect. Put simply, penal substitution is not compatible with the word 'homoousion' in the Nicene Creed. Therefore, PSA is not compatible with a proper understanding of the Father-Son relationship, a coherent doctrine of the Trinity, and with a fully biblical doctrine of salvation. In order to assert PSA, you and other PSA advocates – including Jacob Arminius – have to change all of those doctrines and more.

The earliest Christians wrestled with questions like this: Was/Is there a real presence of God the Father in Jesus the Son? And later, that question was applied to the Spirit. Or does the dualism between spirit and matter eventually result in a separation between the Father and the Son? Also, do we discern in Scripture itself guidance to read the history of salvation in a Christocentric way? For ultimately, what place in the Bible do we take as the primary place from which to understand the character of God and the activities of God?

Regarding the activities of God: Are the primary activities of God *upon* people, or *within* people?

(1) One implication of reading the character of God primarily out of the Sinai covenant is that God's interactions between human beings within that covenant (for Israel) and around the covenant (for Gentile nations) are between persons and nations. For the most part, in the Sinai covenant, God produces consequences that fall *upon* people. And if you take the outward activities which occurred in the Sinai covenant as the normative relation, then the atonement must be something put *upon* Jesus, and hell must be understood as something put *upon* people, too.

By contrast:

(2) If we read the character of God primarily out of the Father-Son relation, where the Father and Son mutually inhere within and indwell each other in the Spirit, then the first interaction we must consider is what God is doing *within* the person of Jesus, and specifically what is the divine nature doing with the human nature of Jesus? So if Jesus' internal identity is of foremost importance, and if what God is doing within the humanity of Jesus is paramount (enduring temptation, being transfigured, dying and rising into a resurrected body, etc.), then we must seek to understand what God is doing and will do *within* human beings. This is why divine 'fire' in Scripture, as a motif connected to both the burning sword, the burning bush, and to people in hell, must be understood as God acting *within* a person. Not only does 'fire' as a literary motif start positively and restoratively in every biblical book, it ultimately becomes manifest in the burning bush and in the burning Jesus (Rev.1). So when God becomes 'all in all' (1 Cor.15:28; Eph.1:23; Col.2:9; 3:11), it is simply God's nature coming through as light and fire, at least in the symbolism of the biblical expression. But the inhabitation of God in a human being who has sinfully chosen to deform themselves through disordered loves will only result in torment.

This raises the question of what characteristic, or character, of God explains that activity of God? For activities flow out of a character and a nature, for all beings, including God. So, regarding the character of God:

(1) Should we read the character of God primarily out of the Sinai covenant, with its promises and threats, and then fit Jesus into it as the one who absorbs the threat and leaves the blessing?

Or:

(2) Should we read the character of God primarily out of the relationship between the Father and the Son in the Spirit, and then interpret the Sinai covenant and the history of Israel in light of that, as a limited precursor much like a limited analogy?

The most important pieces of biblical data on which the early Christians people reflected, especially Athanasius, were the Father-Son passages. These Scriptures spoke of the relationship between the Father and the Son (and later, the Spirit) from all eternity and forever unchanging. The Son was with God in the beginning and is God, and God made all things through the Son (Jn.1:1 – 3). The Son and Father are one (Jn.10; 14:6 – 21; 17:1 – 5). The Son reflects the radiance of the Father (Heb.1:1 – 3). Only the Son knows the Father, and reveals the Father (Mt.11:28 – 30; Lk.10:21 – 24). In him all the fullness of deity dwells in bodily form (Col.2:9). God was reconciling the world to Himself in Christ (2 Cor.5:18). Later also the passages about the Spirit like 2 Corinthians 3:18 and John 14 provided firm anchor points for the divine identity of the Spirit. John's Gospel is all about the union of Father and Son in the Spirit at all times. And so on. This was important because if Jesus was not divine (not God), then he could not reconcile us to God, or unite us with God. If Jesus was not divine (not one with the Father), then he could not reveal God. And the teaching of Athanasius and Gregory of Nazianzus was, 'that which was not assumed is not healed.' That is, if there is a piece of humanity which God did not assume to Himself in Jesus, then that piece of humanity is not healed.

In this context, the word 'homoousios' was purposed with connecting the Father and the Son (in 325 AD at the Nicene Council, and then further in the 360's in Athanasius' Discourses Against the Arians) in terms of identity. By using the term 'homoousios,' the Christians did not mean that the Father, Son, and Spirit shared some generic 'substance' with three different centers of consciousness. They did not think of father Zeus and his son Apollo sharing golden ichor as the 'ousia,' a divine equivalent for blood. Rather, 'homoousios' meant that the Son shared everything with the Father except his Fatherhood, and at all times. That includes the divine mind. If the Son did not share in everything that the Father is, excepting his Fatherhood, then the Son did not fully bring us the real presence of the Father and real knowledge about the Father. And, the same is true about Jesus' humanity. As Irenaeus said in a preliminary way, and as the Chalcedonian Creed would later assert explicitly in 451 AD, if the Son did not fully become 'homoousios' with us in our humanity – indeed, fallen humanity – then he did not really save human nature for God as we actually are. If 2 Peter 1:4 is true, and we have been made partakers of divine nature, and if salvation is participatory and ontological, and not just penal, then Jesus had to mediate fallen humanity to the heavenly Father, and vice versa.

But if penal substitution is true, then the Father-Son relationship has to be understood quite differently than these Scriptures pronounce, and at the most visible points of Christian faith – the atonement and hell – dramatically so. In PSA, there must be a separation of mental experiences between the Father and the Son. For PSA postulates either wrath in the Father and suffering in the Son, or perhaps Son-forsaking in the Father and the consciousness of Father-forsakenness in the Son. In your presentation the matter is still conflicted and muddled. In fact, you increase the distance between the Father and the Son by attributing 'omniscience' to the Father and 'limited knowledge' to the Son. But whichever way you slice it, the fundamental relationship between the Father and the Son is changed from what these Scriptures above say. When you vacillate between Jesus experiencing divine presence versus divine abandonment at the cross, the character of the Father becomes murky and confused. In some versions, the Son ceases to bear the presence of the Father. In other versions, the crucified Son reflects only part of the Father's will because he is only saving some people. The question of the Spirit's presence or absence becomes even more thorny, as your statements reflect. That is a symptom of the 'broken Trinity' view of PSA. PSA twists the eternal Father-Son relation into something distorted. Which would mean, if true, that Jesus is not always 'homoousios' – one essence or one substance, including one mind and one presence – with the Father.

This is why Jacob Arminius' view of the Trinity became disjointed and defective, too. He tried to place human free will, which he correctly discerned in the patristics, into the tapestry that he still wanted colored by penal substitution. But PSA made his theological system incoherent and ultimately incompatible with Scripture in a full sense. Arminius knew he didn't agree with Calvinists like Theodore Beza. Beza believed God's act of predestination precedes His foreknowledge, which then drives how much retributive justice the Father allots to the Son in the atonement. Arminius tried switching the order. For Arminius, God in His foreknowledge looks ahead in time and

sees who will and who will not receive Jesus, whose atonement is still penal in nature. Then, God predestines out of that foreknowledge, although Arminius defined predestination as referring to a corporate destination and not about individuals per se.

While force fitting PSA into his system, Arminius seems to divide up discrete actions among the persons of the Trinity. The Father would like to save all, even though he knows it won't work, but he sends the Son to atone for everyone anyway. Then, the Son and the Spirit both wind up losing some people in their respective ways. The Son loses some people for whom he atoned just out of the fact that the atonement was universal in the Father's intent, but only partial when actually received in human history. So the Son must apparently pour out the extra wrath on people in hell, even though it was wrath that the Father intended for him to personally absorb. How does the Son reflect the Father in that case? Then, because Arminius believed that Christians could lose their salvation, where salvation is defined as 'from God's retributive justice,' he also effectively concluded that the Spirit loses people, too. But even if these claims did justice to all the relevant Scriptures (which it doesn't), what does that do to the concept of the Trinity? Is the Spirit even involved in the work of atonement? Arguably not. In fact, in your system, apparently the Spirit is absent from Jesus at some critical moment, despite the absolute lack of biblical support for your claim, and despite your inability to explain how Jesus could lack the Spirit when Paul identifies Jesus with the Spirit in 2 Corinthians 3:18!

So the activity of the Father, Son, and Spirit become terrifyingly disjointed. They are not 'homoousios' with one another in will and mind, and with respect to what they want to accomplish in our salvation. And if God is not unified in the movement of salvation, then we are only dealing with 'pieces' of God at any given time. And if God can fragment Himself like this into pieces, then at any given moment, we may not be relating to the whole God, the real God, God as He eternally knows Himself. So our experience of God and our knowledge of God collapses. This is all quite messy. It certainly is not compatible with the original creeds of the church. And in the Arminian tradition, the relativizing of the Spirit in the atonement led necessarily to the various 'second blessing' theologies of the Methodists and Pentecostals where the Spirit had to be smuggled in through the back door of sanctification.

Not only that, but in Arminius' own theological system, God's love hits an expiration date. You said:

'As Jacob Arminius said, "God's love determines His will, His will does not determine His love (as Calvinist would maintain)". Remember I am an Arminian Open Theist, not a Calvinist even though you are commenting/arguing as if I am a Calvinist above.'

But once we start talking about hell, how does God's love determine His will? It doesn't. In your retributive hell, God rejects people who want to get out and be with Him. Is that really love driving God's will? Clearly not. So by your own definition, God changes His character. Or, statements you make about God's character and activity in this age stop being true in the eternal age to come. God's love has an expiration date. Which again means the same thing: Sin is more powerful than God, because it makes Him change His character.

The only way out of these conundrums involving free will, atonement, and eternity, is to provide a theological anthropology. That is to say, we have to explain that God designed human beings with some free will determination about how their human nature would be completed or ordered, and that is bound up with the question of how they will experience the full presence of God in eternity. This principle of human nature affected by our own choices is evidenced in the Genesis stories of Adam and Eve, and Cain, where human sinful choices are shown to have an effect (corruption and curse) on people's human natures. It occurs elsewhere in Scripture, too, not least when Jesus says that evil choices, which come out of a corrupted heart, *further corrupt* the person (Mt.15:18 – 20; Mk.7:20 – 23). Only a careful explanation about human nature as heading towards ordered or disordered can answer the two important questions about eternity simultaneously: Why will the redeemed not be able to sin anymore, and why will the unrepentant not be able to repent anymore, despite God loving all the same? In patristic and Eastern Orthodox thought, human nature is affected by the human will, and ordered by it, but is not synonymous with it. That is the only explanation which adequately answers the question of the redeemed and the resistant in eternity. So it's not that God's character changes, or that God's character has two aspects, but that human nature has two ultimate possibilities, which at some point become unchangeable.

Arminius also fragmented the doctrine of the Trinity on PSA, and you follow closely behind him. He thought of the penal substitution as unlimited in nature, which would logically lead to universalism. But to avoid universalism,

you throw the doctrine of the Trinity under the bus. When I bring up the logical objection about atonement from J.I. Packer, it is simply not enough for you to say:

‘Not true the following [comment of Packer] is not cogent! [...] PSA is our purchased ticket to heaven. I can give you a ticket to the movie, but if you never walk into the movie theatre then you missed the Truth.’

And here:

‘Think of Jesus overpaying the workers in the following parable out of his overwhelming generosity -- Jesus has more than enough "Atonement Cash" to even pay for those who refuse His free gift to them.’

Switching from judicial to financial metaphors still runs you into the double accounting problem *again* which neither Arminius nor you have answered: How could God pour out wrath twice? Once on Jesus at the cross, supposedly, then again on unbelievers in a penal hell? What would that mean for our understanding of the Trinity? The Father wanted the Son to absorb all the retributive wrath for everyone, but the Son chooses to keep some of it and play hot potato with the rest by passing it on to others? Is the Son ‘homoousios’ with the Father, or is he a separate deity with a separate will?

Notice also how you fail your own standards in debating me: When I present you with the same logical arguments that Jacob Arminius did not solve, and could not solve, you rely on the name of ... Jacob Arminius??? And you do this while accusing me in the same breath of ‘relying’ on the early church fathers? And incorrectly so, because my exploration of the church fathers was not at all a substitute for solid biblical exegesis, but a historical and sociological demonstration. But if you’re going to cite a Christian theologian, what makes Jacob Arminius so much better than Irenaeus or Athanasius? His exegesis?

John Wesley was a better theologian than Jacob Arminius, precisely because after his own study of the early church fathers, he switched from penal substitutionary atonement to the governmental theory of Hugo Grotius. This half-way step was an improvement, though not complete. So Wesleyan Arminians still have some difficulties on the Trinity, but they don’t run into quite the same problems you do.

Divine Retribution in the Old Testament

Moreover, PSA changes the relational dynamic of who is being reconciled to who. Biblically, God was reconciling us to Himself in Christ (2 Cor.5:17 – 21; Col.1:22). So there is no theory of divine self-appeasement operating here. God changes us, by eliminating the corruption of sin first from the humanity of Jesus, then in us by our participation in Jesus by the Spirit. What PSA asserts is that God was reconciling Himself to us, but that’s not what Paul says, is it? (2 Cor.5:18)

For example, simply because there are elements of a certain type of poetic justice outlined in the Sinai covenant, you make God out to be fundamentally and eternally retributive. Regarding Deuteronomy 32:43, you write:

Here is a verse that links the wrath of God’s vengeance & atonement: "Rejoice, O Gentiles, with His people; For He will avenge the blood of His servants, And render vengeance to His adversaries; He will provide atonement for His land and His people." (Deut. 32:43 NKJ) Wow! No restorative justice here!

Not so fast, KH. Consider what we can and can’t tell from this verse and this section of Scripture. From this verse and the entire Song of Moses in Dt.32, do we know what the consequences will be on these ‘adversaries’? No. Do we have enough exegetical material – despite mention of ‘arrow’ and ‘sword’ in 32:42 which are generic metaphorical images for war specifically, or hardship and threat generally – to decide for certain what secondary means God will use on these adversaries of Israel? No. Most importantly, do we know out of what attribute of God’s character, or even larger conception of God’s character, these consequences will be poured out? No.

You assume that when God speaks of ‘vengeance’ in Dt.32:43, that He is operating out of a strict retributive principle of ‘you cause me pain, I cause you pain’ because something in His character necessitates that, for all individual persons. Then, you want to read that divine character through the cross, and then all the way through the book of Revelation into a retributive hell. But that entire framework, springing out of the presence of the mere

English word 'vengeance,' is a cultural product of your own mind. It is an extension of imagining God as a Western adversarial lawgiver and judge.

In the Hebrew mind, the proper role of a lawgiver and judge is to provide restorative justice within the covenant community. Even the context of your citation proves it. Moses was speaking of the exile and future eventual return of Israel to the garden land, despite resistance from any Gentile peoples who would try to obstruct them. This is a creational picture, since Moses' reference to 'heaven and earth' in 32:1 echoes Genesis 1:1, and the Spirit hovering over Israel in 32:11 also echoes Genesis 1:1. God's returning Israel from exile will be a 'new creation' action. And since it is a return to creation, it is a restoration. So yes, God's highest principle of justice is restorative justice. And it is found in Dt.32, and in fact all over Deuteronomy.

Furthermore, God's justice is covenantal in an open, invitational sense. As the Song of Moses (Dt.32) shows, God's activity is centered around His covenant with 'Israel' as that covenant unfolds through history. I put 'Israel' in quotes because the question of who is part of 'Israel' will become a central theological question by the time of David, because those who acknowledge David's kingship are thus constituted as 'Israel' in the covenantal sense, and it is arguably *the* central theological question by the time of Jesus and Paul. But in principle, already in the Song of Moses, Gentiles can somehow join Israel at least in 'rejoicing,' as Moses says quite surprisingly in the first word of 32:43: 'Rejoice!' That is surprising because Gentiles are spoken of negatively in 32:27 – 42 as 'adversaries.' How then will these adversaries 'rejoice' with Israel? The Song of Moses itself does not answer it. So Gentiles as a category might be divided into two sub-categories: some who are against Israel and others who are for. Or, Gentiles might be in one broad category but referring to two experiences in a sequence. They were adversaries but now are not. The verse alone does not provide enough information by itself.

Whatever the 'vengeance' that God speaks of dealing to the adversaries of 'His people,' it will be some kind of defeat and reversal. We can fairly call it, at least, poetic justice as it relates to groups. But it is not strict retributive justice, that is, applied individually. For Moses is not even speaking about being measured against a moral code per se. Nor is he talking about individuals per se, but about people groups. And he is referring to a long stretch of human history, concerning generations of families in the context of that history. All this means is that God's actions in Dt.32 are not 'tit for tat.' God's dynamic relationship with 'Israel' and its Gentile neighbors over this long stretch of history cannot be straightforwardly taken as a divine principle for how God treats individual persons in eternity. You do assume that, and you are wrong in doing so, because the scope of the Song of Moses leads up to the point where God provides atonement for the land and people in real history. What happens beyond that is where the Song stops.

So, are Gentiles to expect to rejoice or suffer at that point in history where God works out an atonement? From this passage alone, it is not clear. There are unknowns here, based on the well-recognized principle that much of the Old Testament prophecies are indeterminate in the form they are given, and admit of several possibilities, such that they are texts awaiting further expansion and explanation, sometimes even when there is a fulfillment of those prophecies. In that light, we have to consult Paul's quotation of Dt.32 in Romans 9 – 11 to best understand it.

Paul shows that God defeats and eliminates His adversaries by making them His friends. Paul quotes Dt.32:21 in Romans 10:19 in such a way that the whole Song of Moses is assumed, involved, and comes into a clearer light. In Romans 10:4, Paul says that Christ is the 'telos' of the Sinaitic covenant. That is, Jesus is the climax of the covenant. I know this is disputed between us, but it bears repeating here once again: I think Paul is saying this because the commandments of the Sinai covenant were good and were to guide Israel to condemn sin within their own flesh (Rom.7:7 – 8:4), i.e. through circumcision of the heart (Dt.10:16). But, 'what the commandments could not do, weakened as they were by the flesh [of Israel], God did, sending His Son in the likeness of sinful flesh' to 'condemn sin in the flesh' of the Messiah (Rom.8:3). In other words, Jesus was and is 'Israel' in the truest sense. This is part of the dynamic of substitution in the atoning work. He achieved 'circumcision of the heart' by his lifelong, faithful obedience which was the goal of the Sinai covenant, and which is the underlying reality required for God to return Israel from exile (Dt.30:6) and then invite the Gentiles to rejoice with them (Dt.32:43). The close proximity of Dt.30 and Dt.32 in Paul's discussion in Romans 10 refers us to the overall plot arc of Israel's story. Paul believes that Jesus has wrought atonement, and God is now returning people from exile as Moses expected in Dt.30 – 33, in and through Jesus.

So Paul quotes the phrase, 'I will make you jealous by that which is not a nation, by a nation without understanding I will anger you,' from Dt.32:21. Paul takes that verse and applies it to the Gentiles receiving the Holy Spirit through Jesus. So Paul is anchoring the final meaning of Moses' words. Unbelieving Israelites are made jealous and angry because Gentiles who were not a covenanted nation, and therefore without stable community identity, are being drawn into the community of Christ, the representative and embodiment of Israel. That's Paul's understanding. And the way Paul also weaves Isaiah and Hosea into his discussion in Romans 9 – 11 along with Dt.32:21 is also very significant because he is implying that Isaiah and Hosea read Dt.32 in the same way. Hosea, speaking to the renegade northern kingdom of Israel which did not follow the Davidic king in Jerusalem, said that those northerners in their time were drawn back to the Davidic king as 'Gentiles,' considered that way at first. They were once outside the Davidic covenant, but came in by re-pledging their allegiance to the throne of David. Thus, Paul quotes Hosea 2:23 and 1:10 in Romans 9:25 to offer that example as an early indication that in Christ, the final heir of David, God would do the same for Gentiles who were even more remote. And Isaiah, speaking to the kingdom of Judah about a new Davidic king who would also be a new cornerstone for a new Temple (Isa.8:14; 28:16 also in 52:7 and 53:1), said that there would be those Jews who would disqualify themselves from being 'Israel,' although some Gentiles, strangely and wonderfully, will seek God and become part of 'His people' (Isa.65:1 – 2). Paul quotes all those verses from Isaiah in Romans 9:27, 33; 10:15, 20, 21. They envelop and sandwich Paul's quote of Dt.32:21, which occurs in Romans 10:19. Which means that Paul viewed them as saying the same basic thing. Once again, in the view of the Song of Moses, at the atonement, God destroys His enemies by making them His friends. Beyond that, the Song of Moses is silent.

The mistake you seem to make is to assert that a certain amount of divine retribution must be transferred over to Jesus in order to accomplish atonement, or even more strangely, transferred back over to unbelievers in hell as an aftershock of atonement. But Dt.32 does not require that. The dynamics between God, Israel, and Gentile nations are unique to Israel prior to the atonement. The dynamic is about groups, not individuals. And it is about history, not eternity. You wrongly suggest that, to discern the character of God, we take limited aspects of the Sinai covenant, reconfigure them, and then take them as more normative than the Father-Son relation of mutual indwelling, which is eternal and always unbroken. God's relationship with Israel through the Sinai covenant only approximated and approached the Father-Son relationship. You can't take the approximation for the reality, or the approach for the arrival.

The Nature of the Sinai Covenant, and Jesus' Incarnation into Fallen or Unfallen Human Nature

You are failing to see the difference between human nature, which is now corrupted, and human personhood, which can become guilty of specific sins after the person makes bad choices. I have offered, will continue to offer, biblical support for that distinction. You, however, have not. Nor have you offered any biblical support for your view that simply having a fallen nature makes us incur guilt automatically.

Here, you make a bizarre statement:

'I allowed that a baby in the womb can commit that first sin but he is conceived innocent'

So in your view, a baby in the womb can become guilty of actively sinning? That doesn't seem to square with Paul's statement that he was in a state of innocence long after he was born: 'I was once alive apart from the Law; but when the commandment came, sin became alive and I died.' (Rom.7:9). Paul said that every single person manifests the symptoms of sin as disease (Rom.1:21 – 3:20). He briefly speaks of adults (presumably) having enough of an awareness of God that they are accountable for knowing they are corrupting their own human nature (Rom.1:32), although the precise meaning of 'know the ordinance of God' is debated (probably having to do with the conscience and the Jewish wisdom tradition's view that we have an innate awareness of God and His general commands). But he only imputed the guilt of the Sinai covenant to the Israelites under the Sinai Law (Rom.5:12 – 14), and of those Israelites, only those who were old enough to be rationally aware of the commandments as spoken from someone outside themselves (Rom.7:7 – 12).

Paul is also clearly distinguishing between various uses of the word 'sin.' When he says, 'sin became alive,' he seems to be speaking of the corruption first (as in 'sin as a disorder in our human nature'), which then led him to commit a sinful act, as in 'commit a sin.' So when you make statements like this, you slip between 'sin as condition' and 'sin as committed act':

‘Wherever there is sin there is guilt! Sin is the action, guilt is the feeling in aftermath of sin.’

Because you assume that ‘sin as corrupted condition’ necessarily leads to ‘sin as committed act,’ you naturally want to protect Jesus from both. But your assumption that God holds us ‘guilty’ for bearing a corrupted human nature is wrong. It’s a confusion of categories. Please look up the difference between the doctrine of ancestral sin and the doctrine of original sin. The former refers to inheriting a fallen human nature from Adam and Eve, which is what the early church believed. The latter is what Augustine developed: inheriting the personal guilt of Adam and Eve. And Augustine was wrong. If we inherit the guilt of Adam and Eve, why don’t we inherit the guilt of every single one of our ancestors? Why don’t we just accumulate human guilt, stockpiling it in some spiritual account somewhere in the mind of God? The incongruities begin to stack up.

Most importantly, you did not answer the central exegetical question: Why does ‘in the likeness of men’ in Philippians 2:7 mean ‘in the real substance of,’ whereas ‘in the likeness of sinful flesh’ in Romans 8:3 mean ‘in the superficial appearance of only, but not in real substance?’ That’s a major flaw in your exegesis. This is the same author, speaking of Jesus’ incarnation in the same way, using the same phrase, within the span of a few years.

Your treatment of the phrase ‘in the likeness of,’ the words for ‘slavery’ in the Old and New Testaments, and even ‘Father-Son’ language in the New Testament and the creeds reflects a common pattern: You seem to interpret words based on modern connotations, not their original context. If we were to hear the phrase, ‘I’m mad about my flat,’ we would not know what that phrase meant. If we were in America, then the phrase probably means, ‘I’m angry about my flat tire.’ But if we were in Britain, then it probably means, ‘I’m happy about my apartment.’ That little phrase shows that even if we know the words, we might still be unsure of the meaning of those words. For those words have a range of meanings, based on different contexts in the English-speaking world, and they must be interpreted within a certain context in order to have a stable meaning.

I have argued that the phrase, ‘in the likeness of,’ means ‘genuine participation in,’ because it comes from Genesis. You have provided nothing to refute that. Nor have you tried to coordinate this phrase with any other place in Scripture to provide a normative, controlling context.

As another example of your free associations without context, your treatment of Hebrews fails to grasp the entirety of the letter and its theological context. You say:

‘Jesus’ “perfection” is better expressed as maturity. He had to pass through various temptations to pass the full test. As a baby or boy He could not be sexually tempted, if He had been an ascetic monk He would not have faced the many irritants of people, etc.’

No, ‘perfection’ in Hebrews is not simply with reference to Jesus’ biological age, or an arbitrary social location like your hypothetical monastery, but his theological context within the Sinai covenant, the community of the Israelites with its prescribed modes of communal life, and direct contact with the institution of the sanctuary by which the Sinai covenant was renewed year after year. That’s the whole point of Hebrews 5 – 10, isn’t it? Jesus was not just a ‘generic’ human being raised wherever. He was specifically ‘born under the Law’ (Gal.4:4). Born ‘descended from Judah’ (Heb.7:14). Born under the Law and the oath (Heb.7:28). And according to Paul in Romans 7, that Sinai Law was designed to provoke the corruption of sin within the Israelite. So under that Law, Jesus had to struggle to align his human nature with the Spirit and unto the Father, to completely subdue the ‘flesh’ in which he was incarnate (Jn.1:14), the ‘flesh’ to which Saul of Tarsus had succumbed (Rom.7:14 – 25). His theological context mattered.

You misunderstand the nature of this experience and why the Sinai covenant required it. You say:

‘So taking your “point of contact” further --- do you need to go out and whore around & do drugs to relate to people and minister? Your wife & I hope not!’

I gladly receive your well-wishes for my marriage. But you’re missing the logic, KH. You’re making sinful flesh more powerful than the Son of God. The whole point of Jesus assuming fallen humanity is to fight every temptation for us because we couldn’t, and eventually defeat the corruption of sin on our behalf because we couldn’t. That is

called the vicarious obedience of Christ, for example in the works of systematic theologians Christian Kettler, T.F. Torrance, and Karl Barth. Jesus' active obedience was perfect and was a perfecting of his human nature, all the way through the experience of crucifixion, and on into resurrection, and his active obedience becomes ours by his Spirit. It is why, again, Jesus is called 'the perfecter of faith' in Hebrews 12:2, or better yet, 'the perfecter of faithfulness,' after a long litany of what 'faithfulness' meant to Israelites in Hebrews 11.

Once again, the pastoral significance of Jesus as a source of comfort is at stake here. In the language of Hebrews, how is he a sympathetic high priest to us? If Jesus did not also have sinful flesh, then he would be asking us to fight incredible battles that he himself did not. That would make Jesus into quite a hypocrite, wouldn't it? That detracts from the sympathy, doesn't it? If Jesus did not have sinful flesh, then he wouldn't know temptation the way we do. People, objects, and options would appear to him in a fundamentally different way than they do to us. This is the emotional consequence of the doctrine of Christ's high priestly mediation. If we cannot look to Jesus as the source of understanding what it means to struggle for holiness while being a fallen human being, then we will look somewhere else. This is how the hierarchy of priests and saints and other forms of hero-worship emerge in churches. We emotionally need those figures to mediate that sympathy to us precisely because Jesus got removed from that place, and now a yawning vacuum opens wide.

I was pleasantly surprised to read your reflection on your interaction with your grandson. Here, you show that the obedience you call for from him involves your vicarious obedience on his behalf:

'As a grandfather when I instruct my 4 year old to pick up a toy either he picks it up or I pick it up for him. If he picks it up then I am honored and he is blessed with more opportunities for future blessings. If I have to pick it up for him then he has dishonored me though I may prove my good and loving character by picking it up for him. Thus I have paid the price for him!'

'At the moment that the "superior wisdom" has requested the toy to be picked up then that statement becomes a "law". If I, the grandfather, deny the wisdom of the statement (or law) then I reflect that my commands are superfluous, vain, evil, etc. NOTE: If I am God, the Father, I cannot affirm that my commands are vain, superfluous, or evil because that would be an untruth, a lie.'

'Therefore, my only choices are to exact the "requirement" out of the grandchild, either myself (as Jesus Christ the Son if I was God), or prove myself to be a liar for committing an injustice of requiring what was not really required (e.g., excessive abuse). God cannot lie so the exacting of Justice must occur against the grandchild or myself (e.g. for God in the Trinity, the Himself is Jesus His Son)! If the penalty just magically disappeared, then God is a liar and an imperfect ruler of the Universe.'

Your own illustration helps to explain why PSA is wrong. In PSA, God would ultimately be 'satisfied' with only doling out consequences no matter what. Now let's try to make the analogy work in PSA terms. You say that if your grandson obeyed you, you would be satisfied. And if your grandson disobeyed you, you would punish him (or so you suggest), and so you would be satisfied. Or, if you provide a penal substitutionary atonement, you would figure out a way to absorb the punishment within yourself so he wouldn't have to bear it. So your grandson's actual choices don't matter to you, because all that actually matters is your satisfaction, right? Because if the three options for you are (1) seeing your grandson obedient, (2) punishing your grandson for his disobedience, or (3) punishing yourself, you are perfectly content between all three options, right? Whatever happens, you're perfectly neutral between them, right? And those three options feel equal to God, right? Because He'd be 'satisfied' one way or the other, right?

Wrong. Because of your relationship with your grandson, and your desires for him to become the man you hope he becomes, you would not be satisfied with disobedience of any sort, nor would you be satisfied by punishing him, nor deflecting punishment from him onto yourself. You want him to emulate your best characteristics, that is, to bear your image and likeness. You would not be satisfied until he participates with you in the cleaning up of his toys. In fact, you would not be satisfied until he shares in your mind, manners, affections, and will. To the extent that he willfully deviates from that image and likeness, you will work with him relentlessly so he can conquer that self-centeredness with your partnership.

So retributive justice is not your highest character quality, or even one of your character qualities at all, when you're honest with yourself. Retribution (doling out rewards or punishments in a detached sense that leaves you 'satisfied') does not actually define your relationship. At least, your grandson and I hope not! Why? Because in reality, you do not look neutrally among his various choices. Why? Because you will only accept good character, and you will never accept lack of good character. To do so would be a lack of love on your part. Even the way you construct experiences for him to grow is not a test of a supposedly retributive justice in your heart, for you are not a detached, distant observer. When self-centeredness is evident in him, your approach to him is a form of restorative justice, because you are trying to heal something in him, with his partnership, and simultaneously restore his relationship with you, and the two things are mutually connected. And you will bear the cost to continue in that relationship, to fight for that relationship, and to fight for the character you desire him to show forth in relationship with you. In a larger sense, your approach to him is partnership in image-bearing. And if you were an infinite being of love, like God is, while your grandson is a finite being, then you will never be 'satisfied.' Because when a finite being is in relationship with an infinite being, that means constant growth for the finite being. So because of God's infinity, God is never 'satisfied.' Joyful and delighted, yes. But 'satisfied'? No. God's infinite love is never 'satisfied.' Never.

Thus, your own illustration serves to explain why PSA is false, and why sinful flesh is a requirement of Jesus' incarnation to fulfill the covenant: Because, within the covenant relation, God called Israel to circumcise their hearts. That is, to become the type of people who will clean up their toys and grow up. That is what the covenant was for: to bring God into closer and closer proximity with fallen human beings to cultivate their faithful and obedient responsiveness in image-bearing. That was true in the life of Abraham and Sarah, as God had to cut away from them other possibilities for childbearing: God cut off the possibility of discarding of Sarah because she was the legitimate wife and Abraham's promise was not just for his virility but for their marriage (Gen.12). God cut off the possibility of utilizing the cultural practice of adopting an heir, as they tried with Eleazar (Gen.15). God cut off the possibility of utilizing the cultural practice of surrogate motherhood, as they tried with Hagar (Gen.16). Then God cut off the foreskin of Abraham's penis. Could the lesson be any clearer? Physical circumcision marked the acknowledgement from Abraham and Sarah that God's creation order for marriage – and not male cultural power to have another wife, name his own heir by adoption, or impregnate a surrogate – governed their reception of God's promise of a son (Gen.17). God was reshaping their lives and attitudes so that they could actually be a type of renewed Adam and Eve, a couple longing for the son of promise, and specifically under the ethics of the original creation. Physical circumcision continued to symbolically mark the removal of the uncleanness that had set in to human nature because of the fall, as shown in Lev.12. Entrance to the covenant was marked by circumcision, which represented the acknowledgement that something needs to be cut away from us in order to remove some kind of uncleanness. It marked a cleansing back to the original creation.

Moses summarized the Sinai covenant by using the Jewish practice of physical circumcision as an indication that something needed to be spiritually cut away from the heart, or human nature, of every person: male and female (Dt.10:16). As the community of Israel wore physical reminders of God's commandments, the Shema, etc. on their foreheads and hands, doorposts, etc., it was a reminder that they were pressing God's commandments into their humanity. Wearing this externally, hearing the commands repeatedly, etc. were meant to have an internal impact on them. In the original creation, human beings were to receive their humanity as a gift from God to steward, ultimately to present to Him again, out of a constant partnership with Him, for Him to inhabit more fully in glory. Given the reality of the fall, that human vocation had to include fighting the sinfulness within, but still out of a partnership with God. And Israel was gifted and burdened with the Sinai covenant, which made that explicit and placed on them consequences of exile for failure. So their spiritual responsibility became to 'circumcise their hearts' through internalizing the word of God. But because they would fail in this, God's remedy, and restoration after Israel's exile, was to circumcise the heart of the true Israel (Dt.30:6).

Your objection to me, therefore, stems from inappropriate assumptions. You write,

'Sinful flesh is not a requirement to fulfill the covenant. What God would require someone to sin in order to be righteous? That sounds more like a gang initiation than God!'

Of course sinful flesh is a requirement to fulfill the covenant! Why? Because sinful flesh is the assumption and condition of the covenant. Because the covenant is aimed at cultivating the human partnership needed to circumcise it away. From its expression in the Sinai covenant, and all the way back to its first instantiation with Abraham and

Sarah, the rite of physical circumcision marks the covenant and called the Israelites towards the spiritual circumcision God wanted to perform with their partnership. It was the cutting away of something impure, the burning away of dross, the draining away of the serpent's venomous lie, the reinscribing of God's word on the tablet of the heart. All of these biblical motifs point to the same thing: God's desire to restore His original creation vision for humanity as human nature was placed back on its intended trajectory to be indwelt by God's divine life.

So if you think that sinful flesh is not a requirement to fulfill the covenant, then what does it mean that Jesus fulfilled all the commands of the Sinai covenant? Isn't Deuteronomy 10:16 part of the Law? Yes. Can God's commandment to Israel to circumcise their hearts be removed from the actual practice of pressing the words of God deeper and deeper into one's heart and mind? No. Did Jesus toss out Deuteronomy 10:16 and other passages from the text of Deuteronomy and the fabric of the Sinai covenant? Absolutely not. Did he toss to one side the narrative of Israel in Deuteronomy 28 – 30 which said that God would take Israel through an exile experience (Dt.28 – 29) and only then bring about circumcision of heart (Dt.30:6)? No. Ezekiel expanded on Moses and presented renewal of the heart and return from exile as synonymous with resurrection, which is why the 'new heart' passage and the 'dry bones' vision go together (Ezk.36 – 37) and are mutually interpreting. Thus, Jesus understood 'exile' as his crucifixion at the hands of the Gentiles, which was what Israel was already experiencing, and understood 'return from exile' as his resurrection (see N.T. Wright's three books, *The New Testament and the People of God*, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, and *The Resurrection of the Son of God*). If Jesus did not bear sinful flesh from conception, then Jesus was not truly Jewish.

But you point out something very important about 'gang-initiation.' And you try to use it against me, but it actually turns against you. You write, 'What God would require someone to sin in order to be righteous? That sounds more like a gang initiation than God!' Indeed. Then what is your explanation for why God worked with an Israel, and placed Israel under the Sinai covenant in the first place? Did God know that placing Israel under the Sinai covenant would cause them to experience more covetousness, a burst of internal jealousy and lust of all sorts, as the apostle Paul says he experienced in Romans 7? Yes. So your interpretation of God's character is at stake through your interpretation of the Sinai covenant.

If you interpret the Sinai covenant through a PSA lens, then you would have to interpret God as arbitrary and cruel to Israel, like the gangster you mock. The typical explanation goes like this: God placed Israel under the Sinai covenant to show His retributive justice; so that when Jesus came, God could show His mercy. If that's the real reason for the Sinai covenant, then God made Israel into a whipping post, to merely be the foil for His wrath in a preliminary sense. That's entirely unconvincing, from a biblical standpoint, since it's not faithful to all of Scripture. It's also totally unconvincing from a sociological standpoint: Human beings already understood retribution fairly well without the Sinai covenant, as we can see in other societies. And the concept of a retributive hell of some sort already existed in the form of the Greek Gehenna and Hades, the netherworld of the Mesopotamian god Nergal, the principle of karma in Hindu thought, etc. So in PSA, God the Son could have become incarnate without an Israel, and gospel proclamation without an Israel could have been done by just referring to human relational principles and fears of a retributive afterlife. So if you're trying to answer the question of 'why Israel' with PSA, you're left with weak appeals to some supposed need to make retribution the pedagogy. All that boils down to nothing. PSA makes God's work with Israel out to be as arbitrary and whimsical as a gang leader or mafia don who terrorizes his immediate family in order to demonstrate that he will terrorize his neighbors. That's what PSA makes of the Sinai covenant and the Jewish experience. Do you see any way out of that?

But if you interpret the Sinai covenant as I do, as a partnership between God the great Physician and Israel the community of willing patients who received God's commands as a prescription for human health, then the foreseen failure of Israel to live within the doctor's orders becomes clear. It was for the purpose of correctly diagnosing the disease within (the corruption of sin right after creation), developing the outlines of a cure (the new humanity, new heart, internal circumcision provided by God), developing a documentation of the disease and its diagnosis (the Hebrew Scriptures), cultivating hope for God's personal intervention as a full human patient (messiah), and cultivating the personal investment in proclaiming the cure (global mission to the Gentiles and not just Israelites). All of this was necessary, because of God's commitment to human partnership. All of this was a huge step forward in salvation history. All of this means that the whole world was and is indebted to Mosaic Israel, not least as Paul says in Romans 11, and the prophet Isaiah before him. And this fundamentally medical, restorative understanding of the Sinai covenant is far truer to the Scriptures in every sense.

Once again, to suggest that Jesus assumed unfallen humanity in a PSA framework is to also back yourself into the logical corner that God's covenant with Israel was just an arbitrary fabrication of cruelty that God could have sidestepped altogether. Jesus' human partnership with his Father, in the Spirit, and *in the context of Israel,* mattered. And his human partnership mattered because he had to defeat through human means what we, and Israel in particular, could not. By contrast, if Jesus could have come into instantaneously purified human nature free from the stain of inherited corruption, only to use his humanity as a vehicle to absorb punishment to bring about atonement, then his life and obedience were of no real consequence. He could have died at a much younger age. In fact, if all that mattered in atonement is the pouring out of divine retributive justice onto the incarnate Son, then Jesus may as well have been born onto the cross.

Isaiah 53 and Atonement

You write:

The Ethiopian was perplexed that "His justice was taken away". GOD CANNOT TAKE AWAY JUSTICE FROM ANYONE EXCEPT FROM HIMSELF THROUGH HIS SON. We all have a promise of Justice from God, either now or in the future, since to do otherwise does violence to God's Justice. For Satan himself challenges God's authority to be God, challenges God's authority to punish Satan himself in Hell, and wrecks havoc among mankind as the prize possession of God's creation. The evil ones cry out that God is not fair! Yet scripture reminds us: "Surely God will never do wickedly, Nor will the Almighty pervert justice. (Job 34:12 NKJ)" If God could magically make the penalty of Satan's rebellion disappear, then God would be a liar as if saying, "OK - Satan you can rule the universe! I really did not mean what I was saying."

Really, KH? Maybe you should check other translations besides NKJ.

Isaiah 53:10

By oppression and judgment he was taken away (ASV)

He was taken away by force and judged unfairly (ERV)

By oppression and judgment he was taken away (ESV)

By oppression and judgment He was taken away (NASB)

He was taken from prison and from judgment (NKJV)

By a perversion of justice he was taken away. (NRSV)

Acts 8:33

In his humiliation his judgment was taken away (ASV): His ability to judge as king was taken away

He was shamed, and all his rights were taken away (ERV): Protection of Jewish law was denied him

In his humiliation justice was denied him (ESV): Protection of Jewish law was denied him

In humiliation his judgment was taken away (NASB): His ability to judge as king was taken away

In His humiliation His justice was taken away (NKJV): Either one

In his humiliation justice was denied him (NRSV): Protection of Jewish law was denied him

Translations vary. Was Jesus wronged as a common Israelite due the Jewish law's protections being 'taken away?' Or was Jesus wronged as the king of Israel due to the king's right to judge being 'taken away?' We can't be sure. Regardless, one thing is certain: Isaiah was referring to the human legal treatment of Jesus; and it was unjust. Jesus was not treated as befitted his legal right before Jewish law as an Israelite. Nor did it fit his legal right as the king of Israel. So this verse is not talking about some spiritual punishment God inflicted on Jesus at the cross. It is only talking about how other people treated Jesus.

By contrast, you make the phrase, 'His justice was taken away' out to be about God, not humans, doing something vicious to Jesus. Not surprisingly, when you consider the fact that there were worse ways to die than crucifixion, humanly speaking, you worry. You feel the need to amp up the suffering Jesus must have felt, to make it far exceed anyone else's. Because if anyone was punished worse than Jesus, well that wouldn't make sense in PSA, would it? So you hypothesize that God tormented Jesus' soul with 'indescribable punishment' and 'the full force of punishment' when his body lay in the tomb. You write:

'Jesus Christ as a man suffered for ~48 hours of unrelenting human abuse. Many soldiers, cancer victims, elderly, etc. have suffered worse pain for longer periods of time than the crucifixion. Therefore, Jesus suffered the majority of his indescribable punishment while in the tomb and in Hades (Acts 2:27) in what I assume/speculate is another time dimension (or other unseen feature of the universe). Satan and his hordes would have mocked Jesus for not paying the penalty for mankind; therefore, only God, Himself, who has been dishonored by mankind is capable to impose the full force of punishment against Jesus due to our sins. Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief. When You make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, (Isa. 53:10 NKJ)'

Exegetically, you are completely torturing the verse in Isaiah 53:8 and Acts 8:33. It parallels the torture you have to project from the Father onto Jesus. This is one more way in which you follow Jacob Arminius who followed John Calvin into incoherence. The tentacles of Calvin's thought reach into yours. It's unbiblical and debilitating.

Then, without refuting any of the exegesis I provided about Isaiah 53 and its background companion Leviticus 16, you state:

I read your 5 blogs below and was amazed at how fast you moved away from the obvious point of Jesus' propitiation/punishment by God. Whenever scripture excessively repeats itself it is making a very strong point so that WE DO NOT MISS THE POINT. How can God be more emphatic than the verses below!... So when you MISDIRECT to "exile" out of thin air you have missed this emphatic point!

You are 'amazed' that I 'moved away from the obvious point of Jesus' propitiation/punishment by God.' Well, that's because 'propitiation' is not enacted by 'retributive punishment,' either in Isaiah, or in Leviticus 16, or elsewhere in Scripture, as I have amply demonstrated. Consider the logic of the biblical story. Simply punishing people for sinful choices doesn't solve the underlying problem for why God exiled people from the garden in the first place! The corruption of human nature must be undone and healed. You're focused only on the consequences of sinful choices as in the hostility of God's attitude, and out of the wrong framework about God's character, at that. I'm focused on both the consequences and the root cause. So who is taking sin more seriously?

'Misdirect to exile,' KH? That's not a misdirection. What did exile mean in the Hebrew Scriptures? Exile is a biblical metonym for death, because it signified alienation from the tree of life in the garden. That is, exile is a term that says 'who we are now' is not 'who God intended us to be.' Consider what Isaiah meant when he spoke of exile from the garden land and 'return from exile' in Isaiah 40 – 55. Isaiah's wonderment was less that the messianic king would one day come, and more that when he would come, he would share in the exilic experiences of his people, though he didn't deserve it. But his enthronement and reign would inaugurate the return from exile (Isa.52:12 – 15; 13:10 – 12). Or recall again Ezekiel 36 – 37: 'return from exile' back to the garden land is connected to 'the new heart/new Spirit' and 'resurrection from the dead.' They are all metonyms for each other. They refer to 'new humanity' ontologically.

Going further, God did not allow for human injustice to triumph, and that's why God vindicated Jesus through resurrection and enthronement (Isa.53:10 – 12 and 52:13 – 15). In other words, he did not exact 'vengeance' in a tit for tat way upon the people who brutalized Jesus. Rather, he restored Jesus to the place of Adamic authority as the head of all creation, where humanity should be in principle, and opened up a way to bless those very people who carried out the injustice upon Jesus. Restorative justice once again.

You seem to want me to anchor my presentation of Isaiah around the word 'propitiation.' But how we define 'propitiation' (hilasterion) is dependent on what we think is happening in the sacrificial system. You haven't engaged me on that, despite having adequate material in my posts on Isaiah 53 and the sacrificial system. In the sacrificial system, was God saying, 'Don't come near me or I'll kill you, so you should kill an animal instead'? In that scenario, all that matters is that the animal dies. The problem with that is: Leviticus sees enormous significance in where the blood goes (on people and land and sanctuary objects), who eats the sacrifice or not (absorbs the impurity), and when. These elements go unexplained by PSA.

By contrast, I think that in the sacrificial system, God was saying, 'Come near to me, and bring me your impurity so I can give you purity.' The image of God acting like a dialysis machine is quite good. At a stroke, all elements of the sacrificial system are honored and explained. Laying hands on an animal symbolically conveys the corruption of

sin from the human to the animal. The animal is either burned in fire (consumed by God) or eaten by priests (Lev.6 – 7), who store up the sinfulness symbolically until the high priest sends all that sinfulness into God in the Day of Atonement (Lev.16), using the double image of God consuming it and also God sending it far away from Israel. The lifeblood of the animal is then a gift from God back to Israel, to cleanse people, land, and objects. That is important because the symbolism of the cherubim on the lid of the mercy seat (hilasterion) is that it is identical with the cherubim with the flaming sword when they were outside the garden: the holy of holies marked the threshold of the heaven and earth, or rather the garden of Eden and the rest of earth. God faced Israel from that threshold to give life back to them, to foreshadow atonement as a medical/surgical restoration akin to circumcision. Once again, PSA finds it difficult to impossible to integrate all the motifs together. The coherent elegance of the whole picture in medical-ontological substitutionary atonement is an argument for its superiority over PSA.

If it were sufficient for God to simply punish people (or Jesus as penal substitute) for sinful actions in order to return us to the garden, then you would have real problems squaring the atonement with Hebrews 2:2, for example: 'every transgression and disobedience [under the Sinai covenant already] received a just penalty.' Received. Past tense. Same with Isaiah 40:1: Jerusalem had received double for all her sins. Received. Past tense. That means God wasn't 'transferring' His wrath from Mosaic Israel onto Jesus. And if you misunderstand Romans 3:25 – 26 to mean that, then you have a real problem putting together Hebrews 2:2 (God already punished Israel fully) alongside Romans 3:25 – 26 (God supposedly did not): Which is it?

Also, taking Hebrews 2:2 as one way to summarize the Old Testament means that God did not punish Mosaic Israel in a 'tit for tat' retributive way (because nothing in His character required it), yet the author of Hebrews still considered it a 'just penalty' already. The main way God enacted a 'just penalty' on Israel's disobedience was through various forms of exile: Exile and captivity under the Philistines, then the Assyrians, then the combo of Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, and Romans. Why? Because the appropriate response to ignoring God's commandments is to be removed from the garden land, or at least its full blessing. That's the archetypal pattern from Eden. That is why Nehemiah lamented that, even though the Israelites had geographically returned to the land, they were still 'slaves' on the land (Neh.9:36 – 37), not enjoying its 'fruit,' and vulnerable to Gentile rulers. The lament of Israelites in the Second Temple period was that their exile was still continuing. It was a real consequence, but it was also pedagogical.

So 'exile' is the appropriate category after all. The problem the Israelites were grasping was that 'exile' was shared by Israel and the Gentiles. Because Israel had the same human nature problem as the Gentiles. So they were in the same boat and shared the same exile. And the underlying cause behind 'exile' was the 'corruption of sin' within human nature, present in all from the fall, which required the Isaianic Servant to 'bear away' the sin. Not the 'consequences' of the sin, because they were already dealing with the consequences! But the sin itself. The problem was not 'in God.' The problem was 'in each person.'

The other passage you quote, Job 34:12, refers to God's enactment of justice in the creation and upon it. But you are again draining the biblical term 'justice' of its content both in the book of Job and in the canon, and replacing that content with your retributive principle. Elihu's speech in Job 32 – 37 was penultimate and introductory. God's speech in Job 38 – 42 was ultimate and definitive. And when you understand God's speech (<http://nagasawafamily.org/job.38-42.god's.response.pdf>), it becomes clear that neither God nor Elihu say that divine justice is 'retributive.' Divine justice is, once again, restorative. Hence God won Job back into partnership by describing Himself being the source of life, setting up the cosmos for life, being the midwife to every birth, etc. And Job experienced restoration afterwards. Context is key to interpretation of words you think you know. Remember, KH: 'I'm mad about my flat.'

1 Peter 3 – 4 and the Descent of Jesus to the Dead

Your emendations of 1 Peter 4:6 cause some exegetical problems. You write:

"For the gospel has for this purpose been preached even to those (humans) who are (spiritually) dead, that though they are judged in the flesh as men, they may live in the spirit according to the will of God."

Let's include the verse right before that to see if that makes sense:

But they will give account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. For the gospel has for this purpose been preached even to those who are [spiritually] dead, that though they are judged in the flesh as men, they may live in the spirit according to the will of God.

Since Peter was just talking about the living and the dead in 3:18 – 20, it would be most natural to take ‘the living and the dead’ to refer to biologically living and dead. But you’d probably resist that. So you’d probably like to revise Peter’s meaning in 4:5 to be something like this:

But they will give account to Him who is ready to judge the [biologically and spiritually] living and the [biologically living but spiritually] dead. For the gospel has for this purpose been preached even to those who are [biologically living but spiritually] dead, that though they are judged in the flesh as men, they may live in the spirit according to the will of God.

However, when Peter refers to ‘the dead,’ earlier in his letter, he is referring to biologically dead people. ‘The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead’ (1:3). ‘God, who raised Him from the dead’ (1:21). And he has just talked about Jesus going to visit the dead (3:18 – 20). He is continuing that thought here in 4:5 – 6. You’re trying to fit a wedge between 1 Peter 3:18 – 20 and 4:6. But it’s unconvincing. In 4:1, Peter continues to reflect on Jesus’ descent to the dead by saying that Jesus ‘suffered in the flesh’ – which refers to his death in 1:11 and 2:21 and 2:22, and thus his visit to the dead. So there are too many connectors to separate 3:18 – 20 and 4:5 – 6. Jesus went to preach to the biologically dead in 4:6.

A logical problem arises in your interpretation because in 4:5, the (supposedly) biologically alive but spiritually dead men have ****not**** been judged in the flesh as men yet. Jesus is ‘Him who is ready to judge’ (4:5). But he has not passed judgment on them ****yet****. That’s important because in 4:6, Peter refers to a past judgment that has already happened or is happening. That past judgment gives credibility and basis for the future judgment. It would seem more plausible that Jesus judged those who were dead at the time of his first coming, so he will judge those who will be dead at the time of his second coming.

Also, in 4:6, Peter uses the word ‘even,’ in the phrase ‘preached even to those,’ to underscore that there is a different group of people Jesus preached to. The Gentiles he referred to in 4:3 – 4, will be judged because Jesus has ‘preached even to those’ who are already judged. The word ‘even’ underscores that this connection is rather extraordinary. If Peter had just wanted to say that the gospel had been preached to the same Gentiles that he had just been criticizing, it’s doubtful he would have used the term ‘even’ to draw attention to the connection. Otherwise, why is it remarkable that the gospel has been preached to the spiritually dead who are contemporaries of Peter and the recipients of his letter? Of course it has been preached to them. There is nothing remarkable about that.

Furthermore, you did not engage my point about Peter’s use of this example in the letter as a whole. If, as you argue, Jesus’ proclamation to the dead did not offer them a real choice to choose him, how does that serve Peter’s point? Peter is exhorting his readers to continue to witness, even if it costs them suffering and death. He wants them to do evangelism even under these hard conditions because it could bring people to Christ. Why, then, does he bring up Jesus’ descent to the dead? In my understanding, it’s because it fits his point: Jesus, through his suffering and death, gave even more people the possibility of coming to him. But you’re making Peter out to say, ‘Keep witnessing, because people could come to Christ. Oh, and by the way, Jesus went to the dead and made fun of them.’ Huh? In your understanding, it would be a complete non-sequitur.

Can you offer any more exegesis for why you would see a wedge in-between 3:18 – 20 and 4:6?

The earliest Christians understood it in the way I am presenting. For example, Cyril of Alexandria (376 – 444 AD), who was probably the architect of resistance to Nestorius and a chief contributor to the Chalcedonian statement on Christology, comments on 1 Peter 3 and 4, ‘...while Christ was able to preach to all those who were alive at the time of his appearing and those who believed in him were blessed, so too he was able to liberate those in hell who believed and acknowledged him, by his descent there. However, the souls of those who practiced idolatry and outrageous ungodliness, as well as those who were blinded by fleshly lusts, did not have the power to see him, and they were not delivered.’ (Gerald Bray, ed., *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, New Testament, Vol. XI, James, 1-2 Peter, 1-3 John, Jude* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000) p.107 – 108) To see the persistence

of this early idea, see Thomas Aquinas (1225 – 1274 AD), *Summa Theologica*, Question 52 Christ's Descent Into Hell, Article 6.

On the question of whether this is a 'second chance' at salvation: Yes, I do believe that. But because you are thinking about 'second chances' in the context of a PSA framework where there is a legalistic definition of salvation (salvation = salvation from God), along with an anemic and impoverished theological anthropology (human beings are stripped down to mere groping wills driven by external and extrinsic factors like external rewards and punishments), let me explain why this 'second chance' is not what you probably think.

Seeing Jesus face to face won't necessarily cause people to choose him. It is not just 'better information' about himself that Jesus is now offering. People's responses will depend on what they've done in life, for or against Jesus, prior to meeting him. All throughout our discussion you have noticed that human nature can be corrupted and cursed by human choices (Gen.3 – 4). I also noted above that Jesus said that evil deeds proceed out of a corrupted heart and further corrupt the person (Mt.15:18 – 20; Mk.7:21 – 23). The experience of addiction seems to describe this pattern of sin well. Sinning makes it easier to sin the next time, because the corruption of sin within us intensifies. That exemplifies the negative. But the positive pattern also holds true. Choosing God makes it easier to choose God the next time. Moses' decision to ascend into God's fiery appearance on Mount Sinai led to God purifying him and making his face shine with light (Ex.34; Dt.5). The Jewish wisdom literature points out that the commandments of God cause the heart to rejoice and delight (Ps.19; 119), such that obeying God makes one want to obey God more. These are trends. In this life, either trend can be reversed. But in eternity, as Christians have long noted, the redeemed will not be able to sin, and the resistant will not be able to repent. So something happens to each person's human nature upon seeing Jesus face to face on what we call 'judgment day.' Judgment day will be the culmination of all their choices, which have shaped their human nature respectively, when all their secrets will be laid bare (Rom.2:12 – 16; Heb.9:27). As in the Gospel of John, Jesus' judgment of them will be reciprocally and simultaneously their judgment of Jesus (e.g. Jn.9:39 – 41).

Assume a person who had said for years that he would choose Jesus on his deathbed. But after a long life, lived mostly selfishly, he suddenly and unexpectedly finds himself standing before Jesus. But he finds himself desiring the freedom and independence that he had long cultivated. He wanted a long life of autonomy on earth, filled with experiences of his own making, determined by values of his own. Now, with an awareness of eternity stretching out before him, he finds his desire for independence rearing its head again. The regrets about his life which he had mostly suppressed also surface, though he once again finds that the old rationalizations gain new force. If Jesus could wait for those 80 years he had on earth, why can't Jesus continue to wait for hundreds, thousands more? What's his darn rush? Why can't Jesus be patient? He has eternity, after all! Why does everything have to happen on Jesus' timeline? Thinking there are possibilities of whole new adventures opening up before him, a fresh wave of excitement and resentment surface, provoked by the question: Why does Jesus' definition of timing and reality and love get to win out? This man will still have a choice about Jesus, but how he receives the claim of Jesus upon him will be shaped by all his previous choices. He has conditioned his human nature.

Or assume a person who lived a full lifetime, who never heard of Jesus, or only had absolutely lousy Christian witnesses. The person has still been shaping his or her human nature for their whole lifetime. She has cultivated desires, either for a sinful end, or for Jesus, even though she didn't know about Jesus and was only being guided by her conscience a la Romans 1:19 – 20 and 2:12 – 16. She still has the deep fundamental choice to receive Jesus as the one who judges the corruption of sin within her, who will cause her to look back on her whole life to parse out when she was being honest with her truest self, her image-of-God self which is now becoming more clear, versus when she was dominated by selfishness, fear, and dishonesty. Jesus will be exercising his claim on her, calling her forward out of all her other desires to now be decisively centered on him. And how she receives that claim will be shaped by all her previous choices. She has conditioned her human nature.

Or assume a person whose life was cut short as a very young child, who is now being given his resurrection body. He is now meeting Jesus for the first time. He has mostly experienced his own simple, childlike, intuitive desires for goodness, beauty, and love whose personification and source now stands before him. He has little to claim for himself, which is part of the reason why Jesus praised children right before he encountered the rich man who could not part with his possessions (Mt.19:13 – 30; Mk.10:13 – 35; Lk.18:15 – 19:10). He will also see in himself the evidence of the fall: simple resentments that he had during moments; ways in which he was already dominated by his childish selfishness and limited perspective; some awareness of what his life could have been like had he acted

on each of those impulses. He will still have the deep fundamental choice to receive Jesus as the one who judges the corruption of sin within him. Jesus will call him forward into a maturity of truly new humanity. Jesus is who he was meant to be with, and in a sense, meant to be. And now he has the opportunity to decide what kind of maturity he will step into.

Do you think that this choice for or against Jesus will be a straightforward one where everyone will say yes? I do not. Some people, perhaps yourself included, think that coming to Jesus is just a matter of more or less information. So, in that view, when Jesus presents himself, that constitutes maximal information that even the most hardened atheist will have to consent to. That will not be the case. It is not, nor ever has been, a matter of mere information. The information is not, and never has been, neutral. Since news of Jesus and awareness of Jesus also involves his complete and total claim upon every aspect of our lives, we are not disinterested people considering neutral news in an objective manner. We are not, and never have been, objective. We are being acted on, from within because of the bond the Son of God has made with our humanity, and claimed for his own. And since our choices have an impact on our desires and human nature, every single person is preparing herself or himself to confront Jesus in one way or the other, without even knowing it. The soil of our hearts is always being shaped by our choices. If this sounds strange, it is because serious reflection about human nature and desire has been seriously lacking in Protestant circles for centuries. Protestants have reduced the human being down to the will, caught up in the Lutheran-Calvinist-Arminian debate about whether the will is free or not, or in what sense. But the framing of this entire debate tends to take place in a vacuum when it comes to human nature. Again, however, the only way to explain why the redeemed will not be able to sin, and why the resistant will not be able to repent, comes down to what is human nature. Simple appeals to a voluntarist, Arminian notion of a free human will at that point do not and cannot suffice as an explanation.

Revelation, Judgment Day, and the Nature of Hell

Oh, but what about the threat of hell? Why won't people be immediately cowed by the thought of unending torture? Who will not choose Jesus, given the alternative? Because that is not how 'hell' as a concept will appear to them. Even in Scripture, that is not how 'hell' appears to us.

Now there are a lot of misconceptions about what heaven and hell are. I like ice cream. So it's really easy for me to imagine heaven as a place where I can eat lots of ice cream and not get fat, get diabetes, or get gas. I mean, who wouldn't want to go to a place like that? What is hell like? Again, it's natural to start with myself and ask yourself, 'What do I fear and hate?' I hate needles. Whenever I go to the doctor, I hate shots or blood tests because I hate getting stuck by needles. So it's natural for me to think that hell is full of not only fire and whatever else is there, but needles that stick me all the time. But is that the most accurate way to think about hell? Is it right to start with you want and what you don't, raise that to the nth degree, and get heaven and hell?

Here's the problem. Doesn't that just make Jesus the gatekeeper to what you want and avoiding what you don't? Just deal with him once and then you're done with him! What if your desires are messed up? What if you can't start with yourself, and your desires *by yourself*? Does an alcoholic get lots of alcohol in heaven? Does a porn addict get lots of porn in heaven? What if God is actually trying to fix your desires? Then you can't just start with yourself and your current desires.

The key question to ask when we are looking at the topic of hell is not just, 'How is *hell* described?' but 'How is *sin* described? What does *sin do to us*?' In John's Gospel, we see that the ultimate result of rejecting Jesus is self-negation. In John 18 – 19, sin is expressed in terms of self-negation. Jesus, when he was arrested, boldly stated his identity and said three times, 'I am' (John 18:5, 6, 8). But Simon Peter, Pilate, and the Jews negate their own identity. Simon Peter, while trying to follow Jesus into the courtyard of the trial, was confronted by people who suspected him of being a follower of Jesus, and he said three times, 'I am not' (John 18:17, 25, and implicitly in v.27). Pilate, when Jesus was standing right in front of him, should have cared about truth in legal proceedings, but said in abdication, 'What is truth?' (John 19:38) The Jews, who cried out at every Passover that they had no king but God, said, 'We have no king but Caesar' (John 19:16). I believe this pattern of self-negation is at the heart of sin and therefore represents what will happen to those in hell.

In the book of Genesis, the same thing happens. Sin is self-negation. God made humanity in His image, and turning away from God meant that humanity was turning away from being human. We started becoming inhuman. The

same thing is true in Romans. Paul says three times in Romans 1:21 – 32 that God ‘gives them [i.e. people] over’ to their own choices, and they reap the consequences of self-negation. Because God is life itself, when people turn away from Him, things experience death a little. In the Bible, whenever people spurn God and turn away from Him, God gives us what we want. But now, God has entered into human form as Jesus. He’s entered humanity itself, making Jesus the only place God and humanity are fully together, *so humanity has nowhere to hide anymore*. Jesus healed and transformed human nature in himself (Rom.8:3; 6:6), by killing the ‘old self’, i.e. our internal resistance to God, and being resurrected as God’s new humanity. Jesus is humanity’s destiny and purpose, exemplar and savior. Anyone who rejects Jesus is trying to reject God’s ultimate purpose, which is union with Himself to refine away the corruption of sin in human nature. In Romans 1:18, Paul, the author, says that the wrath of God is revealed against the unrighteousness and ungodliness of people, but not against people per se. The wrath of God is expressed by letting us chase our sin (Rom.1:24, 26, 28), which is why we are saved from divine wrath by the *life* of Jesus, since Jesus has laid hold of our human nature in himself, not some penal substitutionary *death* of Jesus (Rom.5:9 – 10). But ultimately, the wrath of God is against our sin, specifically the internal corruption which Paul calls ‘the flesh’ in Romans 7:14 – 8:11. Jesus is God’s solution for this rebellious flesh. That is why the wrath of God is the wrath of a surgeon that burns against the cancer in our body. But the wrath of God is not against our personhood per se. It’s just that people who refuse Jesus think that the cancer is actually *who they are*. They are in love with a *false self*.

So ‘what does sin do to us?’ is the logically prior question. That is the only way the question of hell can be approached. So then: Is fire positive or negative for us?

Fire is symbolic of God’s refining presence in the Pentateuch. When God closes the garden to Adam and Eve, the first incidence of fire anywhere in Scripture occurs. Guarding the way to the tree of life is a flaming sword (Gen.3:24), probably symbolizing the word of God (Rev.1:16, etc.) which can cut/circumcise/burn uncleanness away. Both the fire motif and the sword motif anticipate circumcision/cutting/burning something away from people so they could eventually return to the tree of life. God then appears as a fire in the burning thorn bush (Ex.3:2; Acts 7:30). God also appears as fire on Mount Sinai inviting Israel higher up and further in (Ex.19:13; Dt.5:5). See also Hebrews 12:18 – 29, where the writer says that we come not to the fiery Mt. Sinai, but to a new Mt. Zion after having been cleansed and perfected through Jesus, ‘for our God is a consuming fire.’ And God in Israel’s Temple was acting like a dialysis machine. He said, ‘Give me your impurity, and I will give you back My purity.’ It was like Jewish circumcision, cutting something unclean away from the person, and cleansing the person. The laying on of hands on the animal symbolized placing the corrupted part of us and giving it to God to consume. God consumed it with fire directly, or indirectly consumed it through the priests. God then gave Israel back innocent, uncorrupted animal blood. So God used the sacrifices as a way of refining and purifying Israel.

Fire is symbolic of God’s refining presence in the beautiful and massive prophecy of Isaiah. Isaiah says, ‘When the Lord has washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion and purged the bloodshed of Jerusalem from her midst, by the spirit of judgment and the spirit of burning, then the LORD will create over the whole area of Mount Zion and over her assemblies a cloud by day, even smoke, and the brightness of a flaming fire by night; for over all the glory will be a canopy.’ (Isa.4:4 – 5) Then, Isaiah’s unclean lips are cleansed with a fiery, burning coal (Isa.6:6). That is very significant! Fire *becomes destroying* for those who want to hold onto their impurity (Isa.10:16 – 17; 29:6; 30:27 – 30; 66:1 – 24 which is also connected to the theme of renewal of God’s presence on Mt. Zion, a retelling of Sinai)

Fire is symbolic of God’s refining presence in the book of Ezekiel. God’s throne is described as ‘a great cloud of fire...like glowing metal in the midst of the fire’ (Ezk.1:4, 13, 27; 8:2). ‘Because all of you have become dross, therefore, behold, I am going to gather you into the midst of Jerusalem. As they gather silver and bronze and iron and lead and tin into the furnace to blow fire on it in order to melt it, so I will gather you in My anger and in My wrath and I will lay you there and melt you. I will gather you and blow on you with the fire of My wrath, and you will be melted in the midst of it. As silver is melted in the furnace, so you will be melted in the midst of it; and you will know that I, the LORD, have poured out My wrath on you.’ (Ezk.22:19 – 22) This leads to a purified Israel (Ezk.36:16 – 36)

Fire is symbolic of God’s refining presence in Malachi. Malachi says, ‘For He is like a refiner’s fire and like fullers’ soap. He will sit as a smelter and purifier of silver, and He will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, so that they may present to the LORD offerings in righteousness.’ (Mal.3:2 – 3)

Fire is symbolic of God's refining presence in the Psalms. 'For You have tried us, O God; You have refined us as silver is refined ... We went through fire and through water, yet You brought us out into a place of abundance.' (Ps.66:10, 12) Psalm 18:6 – 14 also seems to use Mt. Sinai and the fire there as a reference point.

Fire is symbolic of God's refining presence in Matthew. If we are baptized with the Holy Spirit and fire, it's positive. The Spirit refines us like precious metal in fire. The Spirit took Jesus' humanity and empowered him to resist temptation (3:13 – 4:11). Jesus then said that his presence was giving forth 'light' (4:16). His followers would become the new temple-presence of God; they would be like a lamp, which of course gives off light by a burning fire within (5:14 – 16). In each of us, our eye's spiritual focus serves as a lamp (6:22 – 23). Very importantly, the next time the Spirit's presence is manifested on Jesus, the Spirit transfigures him (17:2, 5), like Moses' face had been transfigured before on Sinai, and presents Jesus as the new temple-presence of God on a mountain. Like at the baptism of Jesus, the Father and the Spirit acknowledge Jesus' identity publicly, and this literary symmetry is important because it establishes the 'Spirit and fire' baptism that Jesus is putting his human nature through, by which he gives forth light through his very own humanity. The parable of the ten virgins uses the motifs of the lamp, oil, fire, and light to represent our calling (25:1 – 13). Then, of course fire also appears to us as destructive. But it depends on us. The same is true in Jesus' use of 'fire and darkness' throughout the Gospels.

But notice this: 'Fire and darkness' come from Israel's refusal to come up Mount Sinai to meet with God. This is what Moses said: 'You came near and stood at the foot of the mountain, and the mountain burned with fire to the very heart of the heavens: darkness, cloud and thick gloom...' I was standing between the LORD and you at that time, to declare to you the word of the LORD; *for you were afraid because of the fire and did not go up the mountain* (Dt.4:11; 5:5). Fire and darkness are literary motifs related to Israel's failure at Mount Sinai. They said, 'No' to God's invitation to come higher up and further in, and remained on the outside of God instead.

Sin is self-trashing and self-defeating. Notice that, in Matthew, Jesus says that salt can become mixed with other things: 'You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men.' (Mt.5:13) He also says, in the context of talking about anger, that by harboring and nursing our anger, we are self-trashing and self-defeating:

'But I say to you that everyone
who is angry with his brother
shall be guilty before the court; and
whoever says to his brother, 'You good-for-nothing,'
shall be guilty before the supreme court; and
whoever says, 'You fool,'
shall be guilty enough to go into the fiery hell.' (Mt.5:22)

The consequences are not 'external punishments.' They go hand in hand intrinsically with the acts themselves. Everyone angry with his brother will be liable to judgment by others local to him. Everyone who announces his anger in accusation broadcasts his venom and anger problem. That's like, for a Jewish person, becoming liable to the highest court in the land, the Sanhedrin. Then, everyone who uses the 'you fool' label and excommunicates another person, cutting off relationship, out of anger alone, will be excommunicating himself from the community of faith.

Luke also uses fire as symbolic of God's refining presence, in Luke – Acts. John the Baptist speaks of the fire of the Holy Spirit (refinement) or wood-burning (destruction) (Lk.3:9 – 18). At Pentecost, the Spirit comes with 'tongues of fire' (Acts 2:1 – 3), which symbolically makes each believer a mini Mt. Sinai, since Pentecost commemorates the giving of the Sinai Law. How you experience divine fire depends on you.

Paul also uses fire as symbolic of God's refining presence. 'Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. If any man's work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward. If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.' (1 Cor.3:12 – 15)

The book of Revelation uses fire as symbolic of God's refining presence. Jesus is described first with fire. 'His head and His hair were white like white wool, like snow; and His eyes were like a flame of fire. His feet were like burnished bronze, when it has been made to glow in a furnace' (Rev.1:14 – 15; 2:18). He says, 'I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire so that you may become rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself, and that the shame of your nakedness will not be revealed; and eye salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see.' (Rev.3:18). The Spirit is identified as 'lamps of fire' (Rev.4:4 – 5). Clearly, fire purifies, because the new Jerusalem representing God's people is made of 'pure gold, like transparent glass' (Rev.21:18, 21). Ordinarily, pure gold is not like transparent glass – the only way to coherently make sense of that language is to perceive that the stress falls on its purity. But then, fire is destroying for those who cling to impurity: 'tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb' (Rev.14:10). And of course the famous lake of fire passage (Rev.20:12 – 15).

The 'lake' was prefigured by the Red Sea and the Sea of Galilee. God drowned the Egyptians who pursued Israel in the Red Sea, in the Exodus. Jesus drowned pigs possessed by demons in the Sea of Galilee (Mt.8:28 – 34; Mk.5:1 – 20; Lk.8:22 – 39). The Sea of Galilee was considered unstable, dangerous. In fact, it tapped into a bigger theme from Scripture. The Jewish preference for 'land' for humanity as opposed to the 'sea' came from Genesis 1, where God made the land to be the place of stability as opposed to the sea which was a place of chaos. And of course, fire refers to God's refining power, which might feel like destroying power if you identify yourself with the corruption that God wants to burn out of you, but that is your choice. So the 'lake of fire' is a physical region where people experience the refining love of God as torment, because they have become addicted to something else; they experience no stability. What is Jesus refining/burning out? The corruption in human nature, which he already has first in himself, then us (Gen.6:5 – 6; 8:21; Dt.30:6; Jer.4:4; 17:1 – 10; 31:31 – 34; Ezk.11:19; 36:26 – 36; Mt.15:18 – 20; Rom.2:28 – 29; 6:1 – 11; 8:1 – 4). God is healing us through Jesus' new humanity and his Spirit (Rom.6:1 – 11; 8:1 – 4) with our willing partnership (Rom.4:1 – 5:11). God continues to do that in hell, which is what makes hell, well, *hell*. It's not so much that God 'puts' people into hell, but that hell is a condition of being that people have rejected Jesus so deeply that they continue to reject Jesus even while he is loving them. Jesus offers to heal and transform their human nature; they refuse; they find it insulting that he would demand this. And they continue to resist the love of God.

A side note: Does Revelation *literally* mean that the redeemed in the new heaven/new earth has the name 'Jesus' written on their foreheads? Maybe. But it does refer *literarily* to other places in the Bible. Bearing signs of being God's covenant people on your heart, hands, and head: 'These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart... You shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead.' (Dt.6:6 – 8). Might it also mean that when we see each other we'll see Jesus? I think so. So in that sense, his name will be written on our foreheads. We will partake of him and what he has done. The spiritual formation exercises given in Jewish law in Deuteronomy are now working from the inside out, not from the outside in.

In other words, fire is a literary theme in each book. You cannot draw conclusions about fire from only the passages where fire is destroying. That is a methodological mistake, and you are making it. Just to show you other examples of that methodological mistake, let's take Acts as an example. (1) Take tongues and the Spirit. Do we examine only times when the Spirit bestows tongues on believers (Acts 2:1 – 11; 10:44 – 48; 19:1 – 6)? If we did, then we would conclude that when the Spirit comes, people must speak in tongues. But the problem is that the Spirit comes without causing people to speak in tongues, in the narrative of Acts itself. (2) Take imprisonment. Do we only examine times where God breaks the apostles out of jail (Acts 5:18 – 20; 12:4 – 10; 16:23 – 26)? If we did, then we could expect God to break us out of jail whenever we get thrown in jail for our faith. But no: The problem is that there are times the apostles are in jail and God doesn't cause a jailbreak to free them (Acts 4:3 – 23; 8:3; 23:10 – 18; 24:27; 25:14; 26:32; 28:17 – 31). So if it is clearly inappropriate exegetically to draw conclusions about a two-sided literary theme in Scripture by considering only one of its sides, why don't you do the same thing with fire? Fire always starts positively. Please explain why that is.

Augustine of Hippo, in Roman North Africa during the 4th and 5th centuries, said, 'O God, *you are the consuming fire* that can burn away their love for these things and re-create the men in immortal life.' (*Confessions* book 5.3) 'I have been divided...until I flow together unto You, *purged and molten in the fire of Your love.*' (*Confessions* book 11.29) To explain that, he also said, 'Every inordinate affection is its own punishment.' (*Confessions*, book 1.19). You could say, 'Every inappropriate love is its own punishment.'

T.S. Eliot said it eloquently in his poem *Four Quartets*:

*The dove descending breaks the air
With flame of incandescent terror
Of which the tongues declare
The one discharge from sin and error.
The only hope, or else despair
Lies in the choice of pyre or pyre-
To be redeemed from fire by fire.*

*Who then devised the torment? Love.
Love is the unfamiliar Name
Behind the hands that wove
The intolerable shirt of flame
Which human power cannot remove.
We only live, only suspire
Consumed by either fire or fire.*

We find this dynamic unfolding in the church's mission today. Later in Romans, Paul gives instructions to Christians on how to love their enemies. This passage, which you are fond of quoting as it is found in Hebrews 12, is really important.

¹⁷ Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men. ¹⁸ If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men. ¹⁹ Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, 'Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,' says the Lord. ²⁰ But if your enemy is hungry, feed him, and if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in doing so you will heap burning coals on his head.' Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.' (Romans 12:17 – 20)

Paul is concatenating Proverbs 20:22, 24:29, and 25:21. The point here is that God will take vengeance on those who do violence to the Christians, but that vengeance will be precisely *by God working in and through the Christians showing love to the aggressors*. Love given in response to hate will feel like burning coals on one's head. That means that 'the wrath of God' is fundamentally an expression of the love of God. It is the love of God directed at the person, because the wrath of God is directed at the corruption of sin within the person, trying to set the person free to be the person God always envisioned. Paul is not saying, 'Christians cannot do evil, but God can.' Instead, God's love also contains and shapes God's wrath if a person refuses Him. God's love is His vengeance. And, indeed KH, 'Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,' says the Lord.

People who choose to resist Jesus on judgment day will not experience Jesus threatening them with 'hell' as a thing. They will experience Jesus as fire and hell (Rev.14:9 – 10). For this is when God will become 'all in all' (1 Cor.15:28; Eph.1:23; Col.2:9; 3:11). They will want to be rid of Jesus, and separated from him, but his presence of light and fire will extend into them, into every molecule of their eternal bodies, for they will share his resurrected humanity whether they want to or not. With their disordered loves fighting his at every moment, they will find it utter torment.

To sum up this section, you are making major methodological mistakes in Scripture, KH.

1. First, you are asking the question, 'What is hell like?' before you ask the question, 'What does sin do to us?' Reverse the order.
2. Second, you need to treat 'fire' as a two-edged literary theme in every biblical book in which it appears. You cannot only take the mentions of when fire is said to be destroying, to draw your conclusions. Draw conclusions only when you have considered that divine fire always starts off as purifying.

Christian Ethics and Restorative Justice

Your comments below suggest that you believe retributive justice (and its friendlier flip side, meritocratic justice) ought to be the reigning principle in public policy.

Need to strengthen the family as the 1st court of law & order.

Can we both agree that government should simply stick to only the very basics of police, military, judicial administration, legislation, support for only orphans, insane, etc.?

Well, I'm tempted to ask, 'Government should simply stick to... legislation???' And let you welcome a camel into your tent that way. But I take what I think is your intended meaning.

Your earlier comments about 'Judas Iscariot represents socialism' (wrong) and 'American slavery could have been abolished through private efforts and not the Civil War' (wrong – slavery was increasing all the way up to the Civil War and was also increasing in other countries as they entered the global market) and now these comments paint a portrait of someone who is a 'small-government' conservative, perhaps libertarian leaning, who wants to avoid 'taxes,' believes modern capitalism honors 'free will,' and believes that the church is the realm of 'mercy' while society is the realm of 'retributive justice.'

No, neither you nor I should agree with that.

The two faces that you perceive in God because of PSA, you tend to project into two realms, although I'm genuinely grateful for your comments about prison ministry and your interest in restorative justice there. I suppose I can see why calling penal substitutionary atonement an error threatens to destabilize your views of both church and society.

But consider where you already believe in restorative justice. Not only with prison inmates. But also, the family. Supporting the family is an act of restorative justice, and the family itself is the first realm of restorative justice, not the retributive 'law and order' you suggest. What was Jesus himself doing with marriage? Restoring it to its creational vision. In discussions about homosexuality, for example, evangelicals (including me) are quick to go to Matthew 19:3 – 12 for Jesus' teaching on marriage. Why? The passage so clearly links God's original creation to Jesus' new creation, and spells out the implications for marriage and sexual expression. While making room for the single eunuch who does not get married, Jesus announces that he is removing 'hardness of heart' and restoring people to God's creation order as far as marriage and sexuality are concerned. 'He who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'' (Mt.19:5 – 6). Jesus is reissuing norms from God's original creation order described in and implied by Genesis 1 – 2. He also indicates that the Sinai covenant shaped Jewish life into a partial restoration of that creation order. Now whether this should be the only form of 'family' that is recognized in public policy is another matter that requires looking at some other Scriptures. My only point here is that you are actually relying on a relational, restorative justice paradigm, though you might not like to admit it.

For now, let me focus on what counts as theft in a biblical restorative justice paradigm. It involves considering human relationships as God designed them, as well as the human relationship to the creation and natural resources. In both Old and New Testaments, God's creation is good, Christian love involves physical resources, and theft is prohibited because it violates love. For example: Paul talks about food in 1 Corinthians 10:26, and he quotes the psalm, 'The earth is the Lord's and all it contains.' This link between OT and NT is helpful. Because the earth is the Lord's, theft from another person or from future generations is still wrong because of the way God desires for people to interact and for the creation's resources to be shared in love.

On the very basic level of manual activity, there are definitely forms of wealth acquisition that the New Testament condemns: 'He who steals must steal no longer; but rather he must labor, performing with his own hands what is good, so that he will have something to share with one who has need' (Eph.4:28). There are first relational responsibilities people have towards one another. So what counts as theft?

Theft by Avoiding Liability and Responsibility

- In cases of physical injury, the goal of Jewish law whenever possible is complete physical healing (Ex.21:18 - 19). The victim or victim's family was expected to ask for compensation or ransoms where the outer limit of proportionality was denoted by the phrase 'an eye for an eye.' (Ex.21:22 - 24)
- Not bearing full liability for one's animals or property was theft against anyone who got hurt because of your negligence. For example: The owner of a goring ox that was known to be violent is fully liable for any injuries or death that the ox causes; the victim or victim's family demanded compensation (Ex.21:28 –

36). Similarly, 'When you build a new house, you shall make a parapet for your roof, so that you will not bring bloodguilt on your house if anyone falls from it' (Dt.22:8).

- Not restoring trust in a human relationship after a theft was further theft. This is shown by the fact that thieves had to repay two to five times the original amount of what they stole (Ex.22:1 – 14). Zaccheus honored that principle by returning four-fold what he stole (Lk.19:1 – 10). This was not because there was a 'time value of money' that was lost by the victim of a theft, because there was no usurious interest rate banking system. Rather, it was an example of 'restorative justice' in the criminal justice arena, where an offender had to restore not just the value of the object but also the trust that was destroyed by the act of stealing. The problem with 'limited liability' is not related to 'class.' It has everything to do with appropriate love and responsibility for harm, in principle.

Admits the Economist, 'The modern world is built on two centuries of industrialisation. Much of that was built by equity finance. Which is built by limited liability.' (The Economist, 'The Key to Industrial Capitalism,' The Economist, December 23, 1999). But British evangelicals correctly opposed corporate limited liability on the basic biblical ground of 'do not steal': 'Limited liability is contrary to biblical teaching because, exceptionally in the law of contract, it allows that certain debts may be left unpaid. As a result shareholders, who retain rights of ownership, are excused responsibilities of ownership, while directors bear some of the responsibilities of ownership, and share some of the rewards, but carry few of the risks. This flaw at the heart of corporate structure leads to problems in corporate governance, absence of corporate social accountability, and an unhealthy trend towards corporate giantism.' (Paul Mills and Michael Schluter, *After Capitalism: Rethinking Economic Relationships* (Cambridge: Jubilee Centre, 2012), ch.10).

Note that this is not a 'socialist' or 'leftist' argument. Liability has to do with responsibility for your own actions, for which you can be taken to court. And it comes from the right, from as venerable a representative of capitalism as Adam Smith. Economic and technological development at the expense of moral responsibility was anathema to him: 'Smith, indeed, predicted what might happen in the *Wealth of Nations*, when he supported the idea of private companies (or copartnerships) against joint stock companies, the equivalent of today's limited liability firm. In the former, Smith said, each partner was "bound for the debts contracted by the company to the whole extent of his fortune", a potential liability that tended to concentrate the mind. In joint stock companies, Smith said, shareholders tended to know little about the running of the company, raked off a half-yearly dividend and, if things went wrong, stood only to lose the value of their shares.' (Larry Elliot, 'Plc: The Prerogative of the Unaccountable Few: Adam Smith Argued for Free Trade and Self-Interest, But Not This Kind of Capitalism,' *The Guardian*, July 9, 2007; cf. Rachel Maizes, 'Limited Liability Companies - A Critique,' *St. John's Law Review*, Summer 1996; Philip Mattered, 'The Buck Doesn't Stop Here: The Spread of Limited Liability Companies,' *Corporate Research Project*, September 2002; Marie-Laure Djelic, *When Limited Liability Was (Still) An Issue - Conflicting Mobilizations in Nineteenth Century England* (paper), May 2010; Stephanie Blankenburg, Dan Plesch, and Frank Wilkinson, 'Limited Liability and the Modern Corporation in Theory and in Practice,' *Cambridge Journal of Economics*, September 2010 (see whole issue, 'Corporate Accountability and Legal Liability: On the Future of Corporate Capitalism').

So this earlier full liability law prioritized labor over capital in both the profit dimension and the responsibility dimension of economic activity. Unfortunately, 'The consequences of the Companies Act 1862 [in Great Britain] completed the divorce between the Christian conscience and the economic practice of everyday life. Legally speaking it paganized the financial and commercial community. Henceforward an astute man by adherence to legal rules which had nothing to do with morality could grow rich by virtue of shuffling off his most elementary obligations to his fellows.' (Sir Arthur Bryant, *The Search for Justice: A History of Britain and the British People*, volume 3 (New York: Collins, 1990), p.177)

Yet trust and accountability are essential to an economy. If you couldn't trust anyone who brought you food, wouldn't you have to grow your own? If you couldn't trust people who built houses, or drug companies...? If you couldn't trust other people's products, you'd try to do everything yourself. So trust and accountability: essential.

Limited liability, therefore, seems to require the growth of the regulatory state, which requires taxes, bureaucracy, watchdogs, and watchdogs to watch the watchdogs. In *Bloomberg Business*, journalist Paul Barrett writes in his August 2, 2016 article, 'Why White Collar Crime Is Here to Stay': 'When it comes to errant corporations, Buell writes, the government runs into a structural problem: As a legal creation, the corporation was specifically designed to reduce personal responsibility. It's a device that allows individual owners—shareholders—to limit their liability

while sharing capital. The sheer size and complexity of many modern companies allows top managers, nominally employees of those shareholders, to maintain that whatever criminality may have transpired in the trenches escaped their notice.’ So if you want to keep limited liability, you need to accept the vast regulatory state and its challenges.

Theft of Land and Health

- The basic form of work and wealth open to every Israelite family was in relation to land. Poetically and theologically, God was giving every Israelite family a share of the garden land that Adam and Eve should have given all their descendants. Restoring a fellow Israelite to their ‘portion’ (the language of the Psalms) of the garden land was to act like God: Since God gave Adam and Eve the garden land, it was perfectly appropriate and required of a kinsman to bear the image and likeness of God in that way.
- Moving the boundaries of the original family-land arrangement was prohibited, and punishable (Dt.19:14 – 21). Not returning the land to its original family boundaries in the Jubilee year was theft (Lev.25:23 – 28). Therefore monopolizing real estate and making people homeless was theft. The prophet Micah said, ‘Woe to those who scheme iniquity, who work out evil on their beds! When morning comes, they do it, for it is in the power of their hands. They covet fields and then seize them, and houses, and take them away. They rob a man and his house, a man and his inheritance...’ (Micah 2:1 – 2) Micah’s measure and standard for justice is the Sinaitic Law. He continues, ‘The women of My people you evict, each one from her pleasant house. From her children you take My splendor forever...’ (Micah 2:9)
- Ecological principles preventing theft are also present in the Torah. Taking a mother bird along with her eggs was forbidden; only the eggs are to be taken (Dt.22:6 – 7), reflecting the principle that whenever possible, you don’t jeopardize the future supply of creation’s wealth. Destruction of fruit trees, even for purposes of building the tools of warfare, seemed to be robbery from future generations (Dt.20:19 – 20). Thus in Judaism, there is a proverb about the goodness of trees: ‘If you are planting a tree and the messiah comes, finish planting the tree and then go meet the messiah.’ The point is that planting trees and caring for trees is one of the most generous things you can do, because you put in all the work, and future generations benefit. Since Deuteronomy is about establishing the life of Israel for future generations of Israel, it is easy to see that concern from a big picture perspective.
- Going through your own field a second time to harvest grain, olives, grapes, etc. was theft from the alien, orphan, and widow (Dt.24:19 – 22). This ‘law of gleaning’ was established in Israel because God claimed ultimate ownership of the land (Lev.25:23) and the claimed the right to dispose of its fruitfulness to the vulnerable as He saw fit. Grain, olives, grapes, etc. that you had overlooked, or that ripened after the day of harvest, was theft from those who did not fit into the family-land arrangements of Israel: aliens were new to the area; orphans and widows were dependent on extended family.

In Mosaic Israel, wealth was God’s blessing for all, including future generations. Leviticus 25, especially is quite significant because land to Israel was the most basic form of wealth, work, school, nutrition, and mental health (sense of community and place). Leviticus 25 also means that children and grandchildren would not be penalized for the laziness or misfortunes of their parents and grandparents.

I don’t think there is one straightforward way to take the Sinai covenant’s vision for restoring the relationship between human beings and land. Nevertheless, the examples I gave comparing Germany’s housing policy to the American system is meaningful. Once again, in Germany, housing and more equal neighborhoods are seen as an investment in human capital, human health, and a fluid labor market where people don’t get stuck with underwater mortgages and can’t take jobs elsewhere. It is unacceptable that we allow the housing market to be part of the speculative market, based on a financial system that incentivizes personal debt, built on a past history of intentionally racist residential segregation.

When it comes to caring for the ‘insane’ (your word), and other types of vulnerable people, including those in poverty or the homeless, I am strongly for the Housing First paradigm. A conservative state like Utah applied this principle, with spectacular results: <http://www.npr.org/2015/12/10/459100751/utah-reduced-chronic-homelessness-by-91-percent-heres-how>. The results are beneficial in both humanitarian and fiscal terms.

In addition, the relationship between people and land requires a strong environmental protection policies. How many ways have we injured ourselves and our future children based on meager environmental protections? Lead in water in Flint, MI and throughout the U.S. resulted in brain damage and all kinds of diseases. Lead in the

atmosphere because there was leaded gasoline resulted in higher crime rates. Plastic and other xenoestrogens in the water and now food system cause deformities in sexual organs (See Tyrone Hayes' Ted talk The Toxic Baby at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X9NFPZGyDPg>; Tyrone B. Hayes, Case Study of Atrazine and Environmental Health, UC Irvine video, June 11, 2012 (Youtube); Juan Gonzales and Amy Goodman, 'Silencing the Scientist: Tyrone Hayes on Being Targeted by Herbicide Firm Syngenta,' Democracy Now, February 21, 2014; A.M. Vajda, L.B. Barber, J.L. Gray, E.M. Lopez, J.D. Woodling, D.O. Norris, 'Reproductive disruption in fish downstream from an estrogenic wastewater effluent,' Environmental Science Technology (May 2008), p.3407 – 14.).

Do you believe that people can steal other people's health? In particular, if you want to address sexuality and gender issues from an orthodox Christian ethics standpoint, you have to also address environmental pollution – the two are inseparable. This covers almost all plastics, especially when plastics become hot or are heated in the sun; Bisphenol A in plastic bottles; containers and almost all food-can liners; recycled plastics with residues of herbicides, pesticides, poisons and chemical solvents; non-organic livestock are fed estrogenic drugs to fatten them, grains sprayed with pesticide; some soaps, cosmetics, lotions, shampoos; solvents found in fingernail polish and polish remover, glue, cleaning supplies; some types of food coloring; plastic microbeads in water; etc. I'm hoping that you, with your background in chemical engineering, can appreciate this.

Then there's energy. Better public policy measures need to be put in place for sustainable, renewable energy. Through environmental degradation, the present generation is stealing health and life from future generations. It's a form of taxation without representation across time.

Incidentally, wouldn't you say that Trump's rhetoric about the coal industry, for instance, is based on willful negligence of the impact on coal miners' health, carbon pollution, and the simple fact that other industries are cleaner and more efficient than coal?

Theft by Usury, or Holding Another in Debt Past God's Limits, or Overreaching by Debt-Collection

- Holding a person in debt more than seven years, or past the Jubilee year (whichever happens first), is prohibited (Lev.25:35 – 43; Dt.15:1 – 18). This means that God put a concrete and early limit to the leading cause of enslavement, debt-bondage, throughout the Ancient Near East. Israel was totally exceptional in this. Again, this is appropriate for a people delivered from slavery in Egypt. Thus, redemption from financial debt is often paralleled to redemption from Egypt.
- Usury was prohibited (Ex.22:26 – 27; Lev.25:35 – 38, Dt.23:19; Ps.15:5; Prov.28:7 – 9; Ezk.18:10 – 18, 22:12; Hab.2:6 – 7; Neh.5:1 – 15) because compassion should not be profit-making, nor debt-accumulating for the recipient. Charging usury was considered theft of a person's labor. There was no usury-driven finance in Israel. There could be equity sharing, and therefore sharing of responsibility and liability, but not debt-financing.
- Seizing another person's basic life necessities, even if they pledged it as collateral for a defaulted loan, is prohibited (Dt.24:10 – 14), because that is theft. Even when the debtor has to retrieve his collateral ('pledge', NASB) and give it to his creditor, the creditor must not enter his house but must wait outside (Dt.24:10 – 11), because the debtor has dignity that must not be violated. Furthermore, 'If he is a poor man, you shall not sleep with his pledge. When the sun goes down you shall surely return the pledge to him, that he may sleep in his cloak and bless you; and it will be righteousness for you before the LORD your God.' (Dt.24:12 – 13) Assuming that the pledge is an article of clothing like a cloak or blanket, the debtor will still need that to keep warm at night, so the pledge must be returned to him. To violate the dignity of a person is theft. Taking the pledge garment of any widow is theft (Dt.24:17).

Private debt is at least as big of a problem as public debt, if not more, because its effects are more far reaching. 'The latest statistics from the Federal Reserve indicate consumer debt in the United States continues to increase, reaching nearly \$3.4 trillion in May 2015. According to statistics published by the Census Bureau, that works out to over \$10,200 in debt for every man, woman and child that lives here in the United States. Anyone thinking that statistic isn't alarming needs to keep this in mind: the \$10,600 per person doesn't include debt associated with mortgages.' (<http://www.money-zine.com/financial-planning/debt-consolidation/consumer-debt-statistics/>)

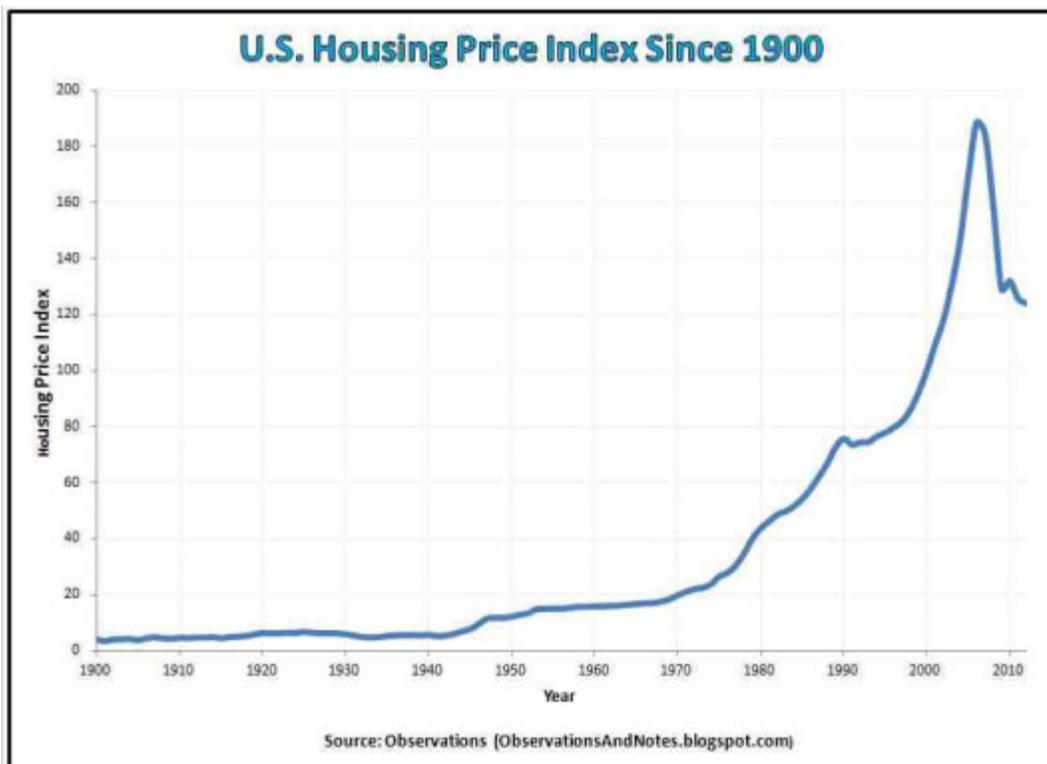
So why have Americans gone into debt like this? Both conservatives and liberals answer, 'people's individual choices as consumers.' So in both circles there is the myth of the sovereign, rational consumer. But that is only part

of the problem. The credit-debt system as a whole is designed to be predatory. Like ‘payday lenders’ in poor urban areas. Church groups have admirably rallied to fight this exploitation (Tom Strode, ‘Payday Loans Targeted by ERLC, Others in Coalition,’ Baptist Press, May 15, 2015; <http://www.bpnews.net/44773/payday-loans-targeted-by-erlc-others-in-coalition>; see also Rebecca Robbins, ‘Churches Step In With Alternative to High-Interest, Small-Dollar Lending Industry,’ Washington Post, Jan 9, 2015; <http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/get-there/wp/2015/01/09/churches-step-in-with-alternative-to-high-interest-small-dollar-lending-industry/>).

Of course, there are individual predatory lenders. Wells Fargo internally called black people in Baltimore ‘mud people’ and gave them subprime mortgage loans, with the explicit goal of one day repossessing their homes, and turning them out. Associated Bank in Wisconsin discriminated against black and Hispanic borrowers from 2008 – 2010. But the problem is more widespread and systemic than these incidents. A group of senior research economists at the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston discovered that credit cards, ATM fees, and the like are a wealth transfer mechanism from the poor to wealthy financial companies. (<http://www.bostonfed.org/economic/ppdp/2010/ppdp1003.pdf>). How? These companies give perks like airline miles to wealthy, ‘good-credit’ customers, but charge steep fees to late-payers, who often weren’t properly informed about the fees they would be incurring. But this just illustrates a more widespread pattern.

The entire system of usury produces inflation in the price of the underlying good: spectacularly so with college tuitions (Bonnie Kristian, “Study: Federal Student Loans Increase Tuition, Not Enrollment,” The Week, Jul 7, 2015) and of course, homes. See below. The steep rise in the 1970’s was caused by the Equal Credit Opportunity Act which allowed banks to factor in two incomes, rather than just one, for home mortgage calculations. Along with this increase in price came inflated house sizes. Real estate developers simply built bigger, more expensive houses.

1950: 983 square feet
1960: ~1200
1970: ~1400
1980: almost 1800
1990: ~2100
2000: almost 2400
2008: 2519



The basic problem with an interest-bearing loan relationship was what it implied about the relationship: Why should loaning money, especially to the poor as an act of compassion, yield a profit? If a poor person has asked for a loan, usury is seen as extortion, a taking advantage of another person's misfortune. It was deemed inappropriate as measured against the type of relationship God envisioned for human beings, which involved compassion, generosity, and hospitality. Hence it violated God's relational vision and restorative principle of justice.

To God, indebtedness is a form of slavery. Usury magnifies indebtedness and worsens it. By contrast, God wanted His people to be free to serve Him. That was one reason why they were not to be indebted to other people, or keep people indebted to them (Dt.15:1 – 17). Usury provides a way to tie risk to return. This seems to be why Israelites were permitted to loan money at interest to non-Israelites (Dt.15:3). There was a risk that the non-Israelite person might run off without paying it back. But otherwise, the Israelites were forbidden from charging interest. The Israelites could not tie the future to the present through the medium of money, for time belonged to God. They could not offer an easy way for the wealthy to get wealthier by profiteering off of another's manual work rather than doing work yourself.

We treat loans and bonds as money, even though they are not money: A bond or loan has the risk that the borrower will not repay you. But we allow debt to circulate in the economy as money. One person's liability or debt appears on another person's accounting books as an asset. If a borrower defaults on paying back a debt, even after bankruptcy proceedings, a ripple effect runs through the entire economy as 'assets' completely disappear from the balance sheets.

By contrast, the Israelites could not sell a debt from one person to another. The most obvious demonstration of this fact took the form of God's command, 'They are My servants whom I brought out from the land of Egypt; they are not to be sold in a slave sale' (Lev.25:42). When Person A became indebted to Person B, Person B could not sell Person A's debt-contract to Person C. This and the prohibition against kidnapping (Ex.21:16; Dt.24:7) absolutely prohibited all forms of human trafficking in Israel. But just as importantly, it also prohibited the Israelites from turning debt into a commodity that could be traded. Debt in Israel was seen as a personal investment of trust, and perhaps risk as well, between two unique people. The debt could not be transferred to another without doing violence to the initial relationship. Hence debt could not be a publicly traded commodity. It could not be bought and sold. This is quite different from our modern view of economic relationships, where debts can be bought and sold, where 'risk' is simply assigned to the buyer of the debt.

Furthermore, today's banks can count what they are owed as 'assets,' and then leverage those 'assets' on other risky ventures to make more profits. Making things even more complicated, banks can be limited liability corporations, a legal invention of Americans in the 1800's, so they can default and not pay their debts (usually to other banks and wealthy creditors) unless they are required to by legal constraints (i.e. bankruptcy laws, FDIC minimum deposit rules). So banks compound the risks associated with debt. Therefore, in principle, banks are predatory organizations that are always in need of being bailed out by tax payers if financial commitments throughout the system are to be preserved. Banks today privatize profits and socialize losses.

The bottom line is that banks need to be run in the form of state-owned banks like the Bank of North Dakota (started by populist Republicans in the early 20th century, and has served its community very well), or community credit unions. It makes no sense for banks to become 'too big to fail,' so they we need to socialize the losses, while they privatize the profits. If we are going to socialize the losses, we should also socialize the profits. People at a certain low level of income and wealth (e.g. the poverty line; living wage level; etc.) should be able to get zero interest loans – they can be held accountable for repayments but without collateral.

Theft of Labor by Abuse or Forced Labor

- We have already covered the topic of slavery in Scripture. Theft of a person, not just their labor, was considered heinously immoral. The Hebrew *ebedim* ('slave' NASB) was a contract of labor, where the person either voluntarily works in such an arrangement, or needs to pay back a debt because of stealing.
- Delaying payment of wages, especially to a poor person, was sinful (Dt.24:15). This concern continues in the New Testament (James 5:1 – 6).
- Harsh treatment of labor and withholding wages and/or prolonging debt was prohibited (Isa.58:1 – 7)
- Making people work on the Sabbath was prohibited (Isa.58:3 – 7, 13 – 14)

- Wealth acquired by prostitution, and presumably other sinful acts, would be problematic, given the prohibition on prostitution, cultic or otherwise (Dt.23:17 - 18; 1 Cor.6:9 – 20).

Here is where we get into the dignity of labor. Lots of implications here for the priority of labor over capital in economic production, the validity of labor unions, the rights of labor, etc.

Theft by Trickery

- Lying is prohibited (Ex.20:16; Dt.5:20)
- Manipulating balance scales by using different weights was prohibited (Dt.25:13 – 15). This means that the means of exchange was stabilized, that currency was stabilized, and that manipulating currency was considered to be theft.
- Bribery of judges was prohibited (Dt.10:17;16:19 – 20)

This gets into absolute truth in advertising, transparency about health and environmental impacts, equal treatment under the law as expressed by the ‘equal protections’ clause of the 14th Amendment, etc.

I could go on, but I think you can understand the point I’m trying to make. I don’t think this form of ethical reasoning fits into ‘liberal’ or ‘conservative’ camps very neatly, at least not as those camps define themselves today. There are liberal principles like a strong safety net, reintegration of indebted people into the community, fairly strong environmental ethics, etc. There are conservative principles like strengthening the family, personal responsibility, accountability especially in cases of harming others, etc.

The reason why biblical restorative justice doesn’t fit into those categories is because it is pre-Enlightenment. Since the Enlightenment, western philosophers wanted to kick the church out of politics. So they elevated the individual over any relational vision, like when Rousseau suggested that we are born free individuals in the state of nature. So all relationships are social constructs, free to be modified as we please. The only relationships we should have are those we enter into voluntarily, with consent. And the nation-state is supposedly the product of rational agreement, so there is not coercion.

That is absolute nonsense. We are born helpless and completely dependent on others. Every other academic discipline (along with common sense and observation) tells us that we are **not** born free individuals in the state of nature. Psychology and neuroscience and biology tell that our brains are still being formed long after we are born, by nutrition, affection, language acquisition, laughter, and love. Epigenetics tells us that we are affected by what happened to our ancestors in generations past. Anthropology and sociology and history tell us that we are born into families, into responsibilities and obligations, which we did not choose. Christian theology tells us that we are made to be relational, in the image of a relational Triune God. Thus, when Western political philosophers created the myth of individualism as a political tool, they departed from every other academic discipline. And sadly, Protestants embraced Enlightenment philosophy, especially in America. The consequence is this: liberal Protestants embrace some aspects of the sexual freedom movement because they think traditional ideas of family are coercive and sexual relationships are all social constructs. And conservative evangelicals embrace many aspects of economic libertarianism because they think coercion (taxes) is always bad and that economic obligations (e.g. social safety net, environmental cautions, etc.) are social constructs and don’t really exist. This dichotomy comes about because ironically, their root is the same. The foundation of this Protestant-libertarian synthesis is fundamentally heretical.

You seem uncomfortable with my critique of the hyper-individualism of white American culture. You write:

‘Our cultures should all be bent toward Jesus Christ which is where TRUTH is. We should celebrate the differences and never be envious of another cultures/races success, since that is the spirit of Satan.’

Well, I can agree in principle that we can celebrate cultural differences when there is not truth at stake. But unfortunately, truth is at stake here. And that is a problem for you. And to clarify, I am not ‘envious’ of the success of this culture or race. I am concerned about its self-destructiveness and self-contradictions, which took root gradually as Western theology and philosophy lost touch with Eastern Christian thought. You wrote earlier that you

don't like those who criticize American progress and success because that is your version of American exceptionalism. You write:

'I just think that the USA has been the best example of a culture of freedom, high standard of living, opportunity, etc. The envy of others who would tirelessly work to denigrate the USA is not of God.'

There it is again: envy? No. This is an issue of truth, KH. The problem with your statement is that this kind of 'freedom, high standard of living, opportunity, etc.' are nowhere lifted up in Scripture to be criteria by which to evaluate the 'truth' or 'success' of any culture or society. Where does the Bible say that? Nowhere. Mosaic Israel, in fact, disincentivized technological progress because of its laws against land accumulation and its strong limitations on finance and lending. Since Israelites could not do those things, they could not develop the engine of modern capitalism. They could not develop 'the time value of money.' They could not convert land into private property and from there into money. Without slavery of the Trans-Atlantic type (chattel slavery), they could not develop crops for a global market, no plantation systems, no hierarchy of people where cheap labor could be squeezed out of people - all of which were essential for the global economic superpowers in the modern era to develop. The Sinai covenant order favored equality and restorative justice and sustainability far above a 'high standard of living' and 'opportunity.' The New Testament did not fundamentally change that.

What does that mean for us who live in the flow of American history? For the moment, I'll set aside the fact that American wealth is, to a very significant degree, built on stolen land (from Native Americans, Chicanos, and Mexican Americans), stolen life and labor (from African Americans), stolen wages (from underpaid immigrant strikebreakers to today's migrant workers, with underpaid women throughout), and stolen health (from people affected by pollution, toxins, harmful products, workplace injuries, etc. who went without legal defense). I'll set aside the fact that Exodus 22 specifies restitution for theft, and Jesus and Zaccheus honored the principle of restitution in Luke 19:1 - 10. I'll only point out that the definition of 'theft' is not left up to relativism to decide.

Thus, the early and medieval church steadily developed the classical Christian-Aristotelian synthesis. That synthesis is what I refer to with the label 'biblical restorative justice.' Aristotle, in his Politics and Nicomachean Ethics, asserted that community life and political life is natural, not unnatural, for human beings. But we need to cultivate the right virtues, said Aristotle, in order to best participate in the 'polis.' Now Christians could not accept Aristotle's low views on non-Greeks, women, slaves, and children because of biblical teaching. But they did find a common touchstone between Aristotle's basic insight with Trinitarian theology: We are not 'individuals in the state of nature.' We are made for community. Community and relationship are natural for us. We even have ways to involve and respect non-Christians in our common political life. And because of the challenge of sin, Alasdair McIntyre and other Christian (especially Thomistic) philosophers, and also the Catholic social teaching, combine that relational vision with 'virtue ethics,' a developmental framework of the human person where we grow in virtue in order to participate more and more in that relational vision. All of this is coherent, challenging to those on the left and the right, and most importantly of all, biblical.

In fact, the New Testament confirms that the very concept of 'freedom' upon which you seem to be relying is wrong. 'Freedom' in Scripture and in the classical tradition is 'freedom to be and act according to one's nature.' So for instance God is free. But God is 'constrained' by His nature: He cannot lie or go back on His word (Heb.6:18). He cannot be the source of darkness (James 1:17), for He is light. He cannot be unloving, for He is love. So when we speak of God being free, we do not speak of Him entertaining possible choices which are contrary to His nature. We speak of Him being free to be and to act according to His nature.

Correspondingly, true 'freedom' for human beings means 'freedom to act according to our nature.' In a spiritual sense, freedom is found in Christ because only in Christ is there a human nature that is free from the corruption of sin. Hence, the Son sets us free (Jn.8:312 - 38), free from sin, that is (Rom.6:15 - 23). Even for non-Christians who would not acknowledge that true human freedom of this sort is found in Christ, there is still a derivative sense in which our freedom is directional, and it is towards community. So the voluntarist, modern, and post-modern notions of 'freedom' are wrong. 'Freedom' does not mean the ability to have an unconstrained set of choices, regardless of any discussion of human nature, regardless of the problems of relativism (e.g. you can define stealing however you like). 'Freedom' does not mean the ability to have unconstrained economic choices as in modern capitalism. Freedom to turn land into money is not true Christian freedom. Freedom to not invest in all the children of the broader national community is not true Christian freedom. Freedom to pass down all your wealth to your

children regardless of concerns about intergenerational inequality, and the fact that children have done nothing to deserve all the advantage and disadvantage that they inherit, is not true Christian freedom. Freedom to move equity and debt around, decoupled from responsibility, at the expense of labor, at the expense of systemic risk in financial systems, and at the expense of political and moral conflicts of interest, is not true Christian freedom. And so on. That is not 'freedom.' It is theft and it is sin. And it is both other-harm and self-harm because it is a violation of one's human nature.

Take care to note that I am not making an argument for or against 'America' or 'white America' or 'white American culture' per se. I am certainly not 'envious.' I am talking about truth and heresy. And truth and heresy should be investigated regardless of nation, race, or culture because we are now talking about Christ and his kingdom. I am not against 'America' per se, as I think there are quite a few things to appreciate, here. I am not against 'white America' or 'white people' per se as I think there is quite a lot to celebrate about how the gospel impacted Europeans and the histories/cultures of European peoples. What I am criticizing is how the forces of heresy and unbelief and fear have diminished or unraveled that impact. I think there are a few critical instances where you have adopted heretical ideas and values in your defense of the U.S. and your particular political persuasion. And I for one would like you to be free – free in the truest sense.

Best,
Mako