Correspondence with Joshua Schooping, Orthodox Father and graduate student at St. Vladimir's Seminary in NY, and Maleb M.
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Unknown to many, the 16th and 17th Century statements of Orthodox faith against certain Protestant teachings did not deny Penal Substitution, but included it as a natural and necessary part of Orthodox teaching on the Atonement.

https://godlightangels.blogspot.com/2020/02/a-point-of-agreement-penal.html

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Mako Nagasawa What would we say, then, about the idea of "limited atonement"? 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.'

Limited atonement appears to be the inseparable – and for some, 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, unless one is a universalist, there is a question lurking at the other end of the 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, and perhaps no reason to do evangelism. 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. Hence, the traditional formulation of penal substitution from Calvin onward appears to require limited atonement.

FrJoshua Schooping Since many Arminians hold to PSA, and also the Church Fathers treated throughout the previous studies, such as St. Cyril of Alexandria, St. Symeon the New Theologian, and St. Gregory Palamas, it would seem that the idea of "Limited Atonement" is not necessary to it. It is simply a matter of understanding that, for whomever Christ is Savior, His penal satisfaction is the source of justification.

That being said, I do not want to seek to align the Church Fathers in the direction of the Arminians or the Calvinists. The Orthodox are beholden to neither, although I think the issues they debate ought not be ignored, and need to be treated with dispassionate and close examination.

Mako Nagasawa I don't understand how one can escape the question. If you believe that Jesus satisfies the retributive justice of God (assuming that these Protestants are correct in defining God's justice as retributive), and "satisfaction" is defined as Jesus exhausting and draining the retributive justice of God by absorbing on himself what would have fallen on humans, then the next question is "how much" of divine retributive justice was "satisfied." I.e. was the atonement "limited" or "unlimited." Calvinists answer by positing "limited atonement." Arminians answer

by positing "unlimited atonement" but then breaking the activity of the Spirit from that of the Son. So they sacrifice the patristic principle of unified operations of the persons of the Trinity. Is there another option that can be provided to make penal substitution-satisfaction "work"?

Christine Erikson ALL are saved from death in that ALL will be resurrected with material but indestructible and immortal bodies. what we usually think of as "salvation" is the situation under which one will spend eternity in those bodies. meanwhile, the nit picking about double accounting and so forth is unnecessary. for one thing, PSA is only part of it. Anselm set the style for the west it seems, and his view addressed to people who thought only in terms of feudal lords and insult and so forth, was a bit too narrow. there is no need to separate the Trinity, and some of their operations are a bit different from each other anyway, for instance The Father begets the Son is begotten all are involved in creation and its maintenance. Christ received His sacrifice as did The Father, Blachernae Constantinople 1156/57 answering a confusing introduced by a couple of nit picking deacons

FrJoshua Schooping Mako, it seems part of this question is rooted in a certain understanding of how the atonement is limited. Everyone who is not a universalist limits the atonement in some way. Setting universalism aside, most seem to want to limit the atonement on man's side, that the atonement is universal, and they do this in order to show that there is absolutely nothing limited about Christ's power to save, and that His Cross is able to save all who come to Him in faith. They limit the atonement by showing that not everyone comes to Christ, and so not everyone is saved. This much I would think is non-controversial.

The Calvinist position, however, does not want to limit the power of Christ's salvation by saying that it failed to save certain people. To their view, if God intends to save everyone and yet does not save everyone, then God is not omnipotent (or sovereign). Thus, in order to preserve God's sovereignty, they say that the Atonement was limited or particular to those whom God in His foreknowledge knew were going to be saved. In other words, Christ died particularly for the sheep. In their view, to deny this would also be to deny God's omniscience, that when Christ died it wasn't already known from eternity who would and would not be saved.

A third option is the Lutheran one, which also holds to Penal Substitutionary Atonement or Vicarious Satisfaction. Without going into it, they also do not affirm Limited Atonement. In this way it is shown that at least two Protestant traditions both affirm PSA and deny Limited Atonement.

Now, that being said, the Church Fathers hold to PSA, and so the case is not determined by the complexities of the Calvinist-Arminian debate, nor the Lutheran alternative. Thus the options for working out how the atonement is universal without being universalism is important, while also maintaining God's omniscience and sovereignty. To me it appears that we, as humans, are running into a paradox due to the limited nature of our finite minds. Thus, although PSA is true, and although God is omniscient, and although God is sovereign, and although no one is denied access, and although the power of God to save is sufficient for an infinite number of universes, and although not everyone is saved, somehow these things are all true despite my inability to fully comprehend how the atonement is both universal and not universalism, limited and unlimited.

Daniel Lerma Mako Nagasawa Christ bore the sins of all and paid the penalty of death on behalf of all. However, each individual must freely receive the benefits of Christ’s sacrifice through repentance, right faith, and baptism.

Ethan Chan Correct me if I’m mistaken, but I don’t think FrJoshua is arguing for an understanding of PSA in which the actual wrath of God the Father experienced in hell by the wicked in eternity was literally experienced by Jesus on the cross. So it is not an “exactly equivalent” substitutionary replacement intended to appease an “angry Father.” That would definitely lead to Trinitarian issues.

Also, I think the problem of the activity of the Spirit being divorced from the activity of the Son can be avoided as long as we adhere to a synergist view of salvation in contrast to the Calvinist model of total depravity necessitating irresistible grace. That way, we can say that the Holy Spirit really does call all people to repentance and faith, yet only some will use their free will to cooperate with the Spirit’s call.

FrJoshua Schooping I find that in the exaggerations of some of the Protestants that they fail to strongly maintain the impassibility of God, and so fall prey to an incipient anthropomorphism in regards to God's "anger." People

intuit that this is not right, but then unfortunately confuse this with PSA itself, and then throw away a vital aspect of the Atonement (when understood rightly).

Mako Nagasawa FrJoshua, doesn't Luther confuse human nature with human personhood? In his lectures on Galatians, Luther said, "He sent His Son into the world, heaped all the sins of all men upon Him, and said to Him: "Be Peter the denier, Paul the persecutor, blasphemer, and assaulter, David the adulterer, the sinner who ate the apple in Paradise; the thief on the cross. In short, be the **person** of all men, the one who has committed the sins of all men. And see to it that you pay and make satisfaction for them." (volume 26, p.280) Irenaeus of Lyons (AH 3.17 - 19) said that Jesus shared in our human nature under the conditions of the fall, resisted every temptation to do evil through his active obedience, and died to kill the thing that is killing us (the corruption of sin from the fall) within his instantiation of human nature. Incarnation is therefore linked with atonement through the human development of Jesus, and his active obedience throughout. In his resurrection, Jesus became the source of a new humanity, a cleansed humanity which was "circumcised of heart." But in Luther, Jesus died to "be" every other human person, i.e. every human person who needs to die because of the retributive justice of God demands their deaths. The focus therefore shifted from Jesus' active to passive obedience. Jesus was no longer the agent of God's wrath, condemning sin in sinful flesh (Rom.8:3), but somehow the passive recipient and object of God's wrath. To my understanding, this is the ground of intersecting penal satisfaction theory with the idea of divine retributive (not restorative) justice. If you'd like to assert that divine impassibility or divine simplicity actually makes that impossible, then I am happy to agree. But then, I would say that we are not actually talking about penal *substitution*. We are instead talking about penal *participation* of some sort: e.g. Jesus participated in the consequences of the fall with us, by coming in a mortal human nature, under conditions of exile and empire, etc. But his "passive" reception of these things, if "passive" is the right term to use here, is not substitutionary, per se. That is, it does not deflect, exhaust, or absorb some attribute of God.

FrJoshua Schooping Those are some thoughtful reflections, Mako. I'll try to answer to the issues you bring up. Certainly, the active and passive obedience do play a role in the Atonement, but I would not say that they exclude or play against each other (not saying you are saying that). Active and passive obedience are not alternating moments of Christ's economy, but different aspects of a singular, total, and life-long obedience. The terms are simply meant to indicate that Christ comprehensively atoned for man, and that His obedience met different aspects of man's total need.

Moreover, as you know, there are multiple aspects that are discerned in Christ's total atonement, and in this way atonement in its broadest sense includes the entire economy of the Incarnation, from the Nativity to the Ascension. His participation in humanity atones comprehensively for man's fallen nature, sin, death, and bondage to Satan. His life is our total life, and so His life also provides for man justification, righteousness, sanctification, and theosis. He "fulfills all righteousness," and He satisfies the justice of God. St. Ignatius Brianchaninov puts it this way:

"He took upon Himself all the sins of mankind. He could do this because, being a man, He was also the all-powerful, all-perfect God. Having taken all mankind's sins on Himself, He brought Himself as an atoning sacrifice Sacrifice to the justice of God for the sake of sinful mankind." (The Refuge, pg 275)

It's also important that we keep in mind a Patristic understanding of God's wrath. St. Cyril provides a definition, stating that “the torments of the ungodly” are called “the ‘wrath of God’” (Commentary on John, Vol. 1, Book 2, Ch. 4, paragraph 260, pg 116). In other words, “punishment is often called ‘wrath’ in the Holy Scriptures” (ibid). The wrath of God is the punishment with which sinners are met with by divine decree. It does not imply or conceptually allow for a passion to be ascribed to God, nor any kind of anthropomorphism.

If Christ does not undergo this "punishment," which is death (see also St. Gregory Palamas' 16th Homily), then sin is not atoned for. Not only does St. Gregory assert the general principle that God does absolutely everything with justice, he also asserts that specifically that Adam’s condemnation was just, for Adam transgressed God’s command. And not only Adam, but all of human nature is justly condemned. God’s very wrath is now man’s hereditary inheritance from Adam, mankind as a whole being justly abandoned by God. This question of the “wrath of God” Gregory explains as “God’s just abandonment of man” (ibid, 124). Therefore, as he says elsewhere and in reference to John’s Gospel (3:35-36), “those who did not believe he threatened with God’s inescapable wrath,” because for he who does not believe, “the wrath of God abideth on him” (ibid, 121). In fact, “we had been vessels of wrath” (ibid, 129; cf. Romans 9:22-23). The wrath of God is therefore a present (eschatological) reality in which fallen man is

currently existing, and thus it is not only a future condemnation. Gregory's understanding is that man is born a child of wrath (cf. Ephesians 2:3), for "we were children of wrath, as God had justly abandoned us because of our sin and disobedience" (ibid, 122). We "were by nature separate" (ibid, 123). Thus wrath is both a juridical category and a state of being, that of separation, although not a metaphysical separation for that would entail non-existence. As such, man is legally condemned to death according to the hereditary condition of his fallen human nature and his willful transgression.

It is, then, in my opinion, that it is not enough to make the atonement only relative to the bare metaphysics of human nature, but also the consequence of sin. Patriarch Jeremiah II, quoting St. John Chrysostom, wrote to the Lutherans, urging them to "consider the following" Orthodox view of the Atonement:

"One might see a bandit or criminal being punished, and the king himself give his beloved, only-begotten, and legitimate son, who was not like that, to be put to death, transferring the guilt from the wicked man to the son in order to save the condemned criminal and rid him from an evil reputation." (Augsburg and Constantinople, First Exchange, pg 41)

Mako Nagasawa FrJoshua, Is it possible that we have a difference of opinion about what God's imposition of 'death' means? By extension, how we interpret 'death' probably does affect how we interpret Jesus' death on the cross. Almost all the patristic writers I know who comment on God exiling Adam and Eve from the garden interpret 'death' as the result of God's regretful but merciful love. Yes, 'death' is God's judgment, but God's underlying goal is to prevent human beings from making the corruption of sin immortal, if we were to eat from the tree of life in a fallen state. Since that is the case, death serves one constructive, positive purpose: It stops human beings from immediately immortalizing sin. In that way, death is a 'punishment,' too, since it is a consequence of the fall – yes. But death serves to condemn the corruption of sin now lodged in human nature.

For example: Irenaeus of Lyons: 'Wherefore also He drove him out of Paradise, and removed him far from the tree of life, not because He envied him the tree of life, as some venture to assert, but because He pitied him, [and did not desire] that he should continue a sinner for ever, nor that the sin which surrounded him should be immortal, and evil interminable and irremediable. But He set a bound to his [state of] sin, by interposing death, and thus causing sin to cease, putting an end to it by the dissolution of the flesh, which should take place in the earth, so that man, ceasing at length to live to sin, and dying to it, might begin to live to God.' (Irenaeus, Against Heresies 3.23.6; Methodius of Olympus, From the Discourse on the Resurrection, Part 1.4 – 5). Athanasius of Alexandria: 'For the Word, perceiving that no otherwise could the corruption of men be undone save by death as a necessary condition…' (Athanasius of Alexandria, On the Incarnation 8.1; Gregory of Nazianzus, Oration 45; Ambrose of Milan, On the Psalms 47 – 48). Maximus the Confessor: 'The phrase, "And now, lest he put forth his hand and take from the Tree of Life and live forever," providentially produces, I think, the separation of things that cannot be mixed together, so that evil might not be immortal, being maintained in existence by participation in the good.' (Maximus the Confessor, Ad Thalassios, Question 44.5) Significantly, Augustine seemed to neglect this interpretation, and saw death-exile as simply punishment for lawbreaking.

As such, death may be the last enemy, but it is not the first enemy. Hence, Jesus used death to kill the corruption of sin within his own human nature, since he lived faithfully to the Father in his incarnate life in such a way that he was internalizing the commandments of God into his human nature. Correspondingly, he was circumcising his human heart, in the biblical Jewish idiom, or cutting something unclean away (Rom.2:28 – 29). He crucified 'the old self' (Rom.6:6), condemned sin in his own sinful flesh (Rom.8:3) with the Sinai covenant ('law') as an aid, not an adversary. Clearly Jesus participated in our human death. But this seems to be a penal participation, not a penal substitution.

To say, then, that death is a 'juridical category' or a 'legal condemnation' seems to me to be a confusion of categories. It requires us to separate 'condemnation' from 'death' in Romans, and in God's activity, as if they are two different things. Yet Paul indicates that God's condemnation *is* expressed by death, and inseparably so, in Romans 5:12 – 21. Death is already the expression of God's condemnation. For Jesus to condemn sin in sinful flesh in Romans 8:3 is precisely to die, as God's active agent: Jesus is the human being who partnered perfectly with God, fulfilling the Sinai covenant (which called for that human partnership) by his active obedience, even unto death. I don't think we can read Scripture to conclude that the Sinai covenant could be fulfilled by someone's passive obedience – Jesus' or otherwise. It seems to me that the Sinai covenant was only fulfilled by active obedience – by

internalizing the commands of God into the human heart and circumcising away that which is sinful (Dt.10:16), as only a life of absolute faithfulness to God's commands would produce the circumcised heart (Dt.30:6) which returned Israel from exile, and humanity from its larger exile from the original garden.

FrJoshua Schooping Mako, I certainly agree with the Fathers you cite, but it seems like you are operating according to a false dichotomy, that these are mutually exclusive descriptions. St. Symeon integrates this profoundly:

"The sentence of God remains forever as an eternal chastisement. And all of us men became corruptible and mortal, and there is nothing that might set aside this great and frightful sentence. … For this reason the Almighty Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, came so as to humble Himself in place of Adam. And truly He humbled Himself, even to the death of the Cross. The word of the Cross, as the Scripture says, is this: 'Cursed is everyone that hangeth upon a tree'" (First-Created Man, pg 44; cf. Deuteronomy 21:23; Galatians 3:13).

What St. Symeon is making clear is that Adam had an unbreakable sentence declared against him and so upon all mankind, a chastisement, a punishment that was eternal in nature, for "the words and decrees of God become a law of nature" (ibid, 82). What is more, St. Symeon clearly expressed that Christ came to stand in Adam's place, humbling Himself "in place of Adam," receiving the curse that was Adam's, the death of soul and body, "for the abolition of the above-mentioned decree" (ibid, 83). Since the decree is eternal and unbreakable, "a law of nature eternal and unchanging" (83), Christ came that He might submit Himself to the chastisement, to death, and then to rise again so as to break the unbreakable sentence, to destroy death by death: "Therefore, for the abolition of this decree, the Son God, our Lord Jesus Christ, was crucified and died, offering Himself as... a sacrifice frightful and infinitely great" (ibid, 83).

St. Symeon asks:

"Why did Christ become such a one? In order to keep the law of God and His commandments… But this was allowed so that there might be performed a certain great and fearful mystery, namely, so that Christ, the Sinless One, should suffer, and through this Adam, who had sinned, might receive forgiveness" (ibid, 45-6).

In this way the juridical categories are very real, and have mystical significance. They aren't contradicting what you wrote above from the Fathers, but show that God in His incredible wisdom also integrates the Law, i.e. the "juridical categories," into His economy.

Mako Nagasawa FrJoshua, It does not appear to me that your presentation is in agreement with the earlier Fathers as to the purpose of death from Genesis 3 being an instrument of halting the deeper problem: the corruption of sin. If God stops us from doing something worse to ourselves, then death has an instrumental value as an expression of His love, and we can simply understand God as taking this action because He loves us, and must love us this way, in light of humanity's self-corruption.

However, if we treat death as its own end, because God has been offended, then as we try to coordinate God's declaration of death with the character of God, we have to identify an attribute of God which supposedly called forth this action and explains it. And the attribute it seems to express is divine retributive justice. You quote Philaret of Moscow approvingly: "a perfect satisfaction to the justice of God, which had condemned us for sin to death."

There are some in the Protestant world who say, "In fact, God could have chosen not to save anyone." In effect, they suggest, God could have chosen to not send the Son into the world at all. The reason, they say, is because God's retributive justice could have also been satisfied that way. God could have simply sent everyone into a hell of infinite retributive justice. If satisfaction is what God demands and needs, then God can simply receive human suffering in exchange for all the human obedience that He did not receive. And if satisfaction is what God demands and needs, then God would be perfectly indifferent between the two outcomes.

I am hoping – and assuming – that you do not believe this, as it is unheard of among the Orthodox. But what would you say about it?

FrJoshua Schooping Mako, I may not understand what you are meaning. Should an Orthodox Christian not approve of St. Philaret of Moscow? Death is both "a punishment and a help," according to St. John of Damascus (Exposition, Book 2, Ch. 28). Unless a person is a universalist, which is explicitly and unambiguously condemned by the Church, then death must have a retributive aspect, and not only a restorative, i.e. since not all will be restored. The Father's consistently talk about God's justice in regards to the Atonement.

I would also quote St. Gregory Palamas, who asserts that God's "method of deliverance… had justice on its side, and God does not act without justice" (Homily 16, About the Dispensation, Collected Homilies, pg 115). Man's nature, St. Gregory continues, is "defiled by transgression" (ibid, 117). He calls it "the original condemnation" (ibid, 117). As such, we are "born and living in passions" (ibid, 121), and death is "passed down by heredity" (ibid, 122). In fact, we "were by nature separated" from God (ibid, 123). Incurring God's displeasure, "man was led into his captivity when he experienced God's wrath, this wrath being the good God's just abandonment of man" (ibid, 124). Having lost his connection with God, Adam's condemnation was not restricted to himself as if it were a private and isolated event, for "our human nature was stripped of this divine illumination and radiance as a result of the ugly transgression" (ibid, 132).

St. Gregory Palamas further argues that "it was clearly necessary that the human race's return to freedom and life should be accomplished by God in a just way" (ibid, 116). In other words, there is a definite juridical element to the Atonement. Since man's nature was conquered by the devil, Gregory considered it "also necessary for the conqueror [the devil] to be conquered by that nature [via the Incarnation] which he [the devil] had conquered [man's]" (ibid, 116). Man's sin gave the devil legal right over him. For this reason and "to this end it was necessary and indispensable that a man be made who was sinless" (ibid, 116). Sinlessness, in short, was required as a condition of justice.

Although God is not bound by any necessity, it would be absurd to say (as apparently some Protestants may say) that God would have created man with full foreknowledge of their Fall, knowing from eternity His plan to save fallen man though the sacrifice of the Son on the Cross, and yet be satisfied merely with casting them into hell. But that error does not speak to the fact that God does nothing without justice. Quoting St. Gregory Palamas again, since human nature itself was justly condemned, "the incarnation of the Word of God was the method of deliverance most in keeping with our nature and weakness, and most appropriate for Him who carried it out, for this method had justice on its side, and God does not act without justice" (ibid, 115).

Alex Malek Mako Nagasawa Do you believe God is Holy, the Just-Judge and the Lawgiver?
All dimensions of the Fall and Redemption is the True Orthodox Faith. There is NOT one that is mutually exclusive or contradictory.

Maged M Mako Nagasawa Christ did both things: 1. Condemned sin in the flesh by His righteousness and obedience AND 2. Fulfilled the curse and penalty of death in Himself as an equivalent and substitute for all. The Orthodox fathers taught both dimensions clearly and explicitly. You create a false dichotomy when you insist on one or the other. They are not mutually exclusive.

Mako Nagasawa Alex, Yes, of course, I do believe God is holy, etc. But what you may be suggesting is that God's attributes are something like a series of lightswitches that are all on the same horizontal level. Instead, if we are thinking about God in a disciplined, Trinitarian way, we must follow Irenaeus and Athanasius and say that the attributes of God are hierarchical. Before God created anything, the Triune God was and is love, relationship, family, community, goodness, beauty. For these things He was and is as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. These attributes are primary.

But before creating, God was not "holy" because the definition of "holy" is "separate" and "set apart for a special purpose." Prior to creation, is there anything God was separate or set apart from? No. So God could not, by definition be "holy" before creating. Note that that is not a defect in God. It is simply definitional. It's just like saying that prior to creating, God was not yet a creator. Terms like creator, holy, law-giver, wise, and sovereign describe God's relationship with the creation. To God, they are secondary attributes, or activities of His love. God is holy because He makes "space" for us and everything else in creation. He is law-giver because He declares how we are to grow in virtue and trust in relationship with Him. He is wise because, as Proverbs 8 declares, His

commandments to His creation and His intended growth for creation fit like a hand in glove. Etc. Yet throughout, these secondary attributes are activities of His primary attribute: love.

Given the fall, God engages with us in more ways. God demonstrates (restorative) justice, wrath, mercy, judgment, etc. But these are tertiary attributes, because they are activities of God's love given that God now has to respond to the fall and sin. God's wrath is directed not at our personhood or human nature, but the corruption of sin in our nature, because God is opposed to that in us which opposes His love. This view supports what I am calling a 'medical substitutionary atonement' view, anchored in synergeia and Jesus' active obedience. Jesus was the active agent of God's wrath, not the passive object of God's wrath. "Not even the Father judges anyone [including the Son], but He has given all judgment to the Son" (Jn.5:22; 10:17 – 18), who exercises that judgment on the Father's behalf.

Mako Nagasawa FrJoshua, Thank you for your patience. This is a challenging conversation to have, not least because several key words we are using have a wide lexical range of meanings. For example, the word 'death' in both biblical and patristic writers can refer to (1) the temporal meaning of 'the mortality imposed on us from the fall,' or (2) the anticipatory reference to some kind of 'tormented existence' in eternity, what Revelation calls 'the second death.'

Formally speaking, penal substitution rests completely on the second definition of 'death.' I assume that Palamas followed the likes of Irenaeus, Gregory of Nyssa and Maximus in defining heaven and hell in relation to what our human nature will become: humans "in hell" will have developed their own natures to become firmly resistant towards the fire of God's purifying love. They will experience God like patients who wants to hold onto the cancer of self-centeredness while God calls them to yield to his scalpel, or like alcoholics who want to hold onto their addiction while God calls them to renounce it. I assume Palamas thought and spoke this way (alas, I have not read the relevant works), and if so, then I don't think we can say he believed in penal substitution. This understanding of hell is incompatible with penal substitution. Straight through, it is about ontology and teleology – human being and human becoming.

I can read the quotations from Gregory Palamas which you've offered here, then, and hear only the former meaning of 'death' and not the second. 'Jesus saves us from our mortality by participating in it and emerging on the other side of it, so we can participate in his resurrected new humanity' is a perfectly plausible reading of those quotations you offered. Because of the ambiguity of the language, I can still hear 'penal participation' and not 'penal substitution.' I think it more reasonable to do so, especially when none of the other supporting theological pieces are brought in to support penal substitution, and explain it. The same can be said of the quotations you selected from Cyril of Alexandria, and John Chrysostom.

When you quote Philaret of Moscow, the number of terms, and the number of possible definitions of those terms, expands. This is both helpful and challenging. I am trying to narrow down and understand your definitions of 'satisfaction' and 'justice,' or at least how you think Philaret is using those terms.

Regarding the word 'justice,' there are two principal definitions at play here. One meaning of 'justice' is 'meritocratic-retributive justice.' It's the principle of reward or punishment based on what someone's action deserves. Significantly, Western Europeans renewed their interest in old Latin jurisprudence from about the 12th century onwards, reviving the influence of the pagan Latin concept of 'merit' and 'demerit,' and in ways that would influence theologians like Martin Luther and the Augsburg theologians who wrote to Patriarch Jeremias II looking for a word in Greek for 'merit' and finding that one did not exist. When deployed in human legal and economic systems, meritocratic-retributive justice requires a 'judge' who is absolutely neutral, impartial, and indifferent between rewarding or punishing a person. The emphasis lies on 'procedural justice' – fair and unwavering procedures that are applied consistently. The offender must be made to suffer in proportion with the offense he committed. When the principle of reward or punishment based on an action's deservingness is brought into the realm of theology, through the word 'justice,' then the presenters inevitably portray God as a judge who cares about his law more than he does, say, about human nature; is infinitely offended when people break that law, because his holiness is infinite, and He therefore has infinite retributive wrath stored up against all humanity in 'the second death.' In penal substitutionary atonement, Jesus substitutes himself in to passively receive the penalty from God.

In this understanding of penal substitution, certain difficult questions arise, such as 'limited' or 'definite' atonement, which we touched on that above. Or the Father-Son relationship. Or did Jesus 'go to hell' on the cross momentarily, or after he died. You appear to be content to say Christians should not do those things, on the grounds that they are going too far. But what if the slippery slope starts with the choice of 'meritocratic-retributive justice' as the definition of the word 'justice'?

The other meaning of 'justice' is 'restorative justice.' It's the principle where a prior vision for relationship exists, and something must be done to restore that relationship, but by helping to heal the harm that was done, or participating in the healing. When 'justice' is deployed in the ethics of Jewish law, if I injure your eye, I become 'your second eye' until you are 'completely healed' (Ex.21:18 – 19). The meaning of 'an eye for an eye' (Ex.21:24 – 25) is conditioned by its context in Jewish law, and specifically Exodus 21, which is restorative. Although the language of 'an eye for an eye' occurs in the Code of Hammurabi, where it is plainly retributive in nature, requiring the loss of the offender's eye or hand or something, the Jewish rabbis uniformly made a joke of this. If an offender were already blind, then poking his eye out would have no real meaning. Therefore, they reasoned, 'an eye for an eye' must have a restorative meaning, where the offender must participate in the healing of the harmed person (*Talmud BavaKamma* 83b – 84a) or in some cases when that was not possible, or when excommunication from the synagogue was decreed, bear 'the rod' (*Makot* 1:1). But strictly 'this for that' retributive justice is not what was understood here.

The larger meaning of the Sinai covenant was an expression of God's restorative, not retributive, justice. God was restoring Israel to a garden land, like His original vision for humanity. God's law to Israel served a restorative purpose: God called them to participate in the healing of their own human nature to the degree that they could, however imperfectly (e.g. 'circumcise your hearts' in Dt.10:16; 30:6; Jer.4:4; 9:25 – 26; 'write the law on your hearts' in Pr.3:3; 7:3), and to hope for God's eventual cure. This provides the total meaning behind Jesus' claim to 'fulfill the law.' In addition, another aspect of restorative justice can be seen when God exiled Israel under foreigners: it was 'just' (Heb.2:2) because the Israelites did not want to obey God as their king, and they were not obeying Him. So God 'gave them over' to someone else as king – the consequence was revelatory and ontological. But it was also an invitation to the Israelites to restore the harm they had done because the parents had to encourage their children to have faith in God; they had to undo the harm they had done to themselves and their children, without the benefits of living in the garden land, much like Adam and Eve had to for their children. Alister McGrath, in his book Iustitia Dei: A History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification, shows that the Hebrew word sedeq has the larger meaning of restorative justice, but later interpreters reduced sedeq and dikaosyne down to iustitia distributiva: the distribution of reward or punishment according to the merits of one's actions.

So when we read of the 'justice of God' in any given text, are we sure we know which definition of justice is meant there?

The word 'satisfaction,' then, can have different meanings based on which 'justice' is being referenced. If we are speaking of the satisfaction of retributive justice, then we are firmly in the PSA framework. This would make hell a Western-style prison system where people want to get out, end their suffering, and be with Jesus. But God would apparently not be done making them suffer, because His retributive justice is infinitely offended, so their punishment must be infinite.

If, however, we are speaking of the satisfaction of restorative justice, then we are in the medicinal, synergistic, theosis-oriented framework. God is satisfied with Christ ('You are My beloved Son; in whom I am well pleased') because Christ was the only one who was faithful to the Father throughout his entire life, and used our mortality to kill the corruption of sin, to raise his human nature restored, cleansed, and healed. Satisfaction would then be personal, referring to one person at a time, whether Jesus or a believer in Jesus. Satisfaction would not refer to the draining of an entire divine attribute. So it is possible to speak of a 'satisfaction of divine justice' although I believe it is unwise to do so, because of the critical ambiguity.

In your post on Gregory Palamas on Divine Justice, you say that the cultic (referring to the Jewish sacrificial system) is the juridical. This seems to be why you equate the term 'sacrifice' with notions of 'justice' and what 'justice' ostensibly 'demands' retributively. I disagree with this. Whether Palamas asserted this I am unsure. But I am fairly sure that the biblical text does not present the cultic as the juridical. The Jewish sacrificial system portrays God as a modern dialysis machine. He takes the impurity from Israel and gives back purity. Once again, I argue

that we are in a restorative justice framework, not a retributive justice one. I can expand on that if you like, but one's perception of the sacrificial system influences (determines?) how we translate the term 'hilasterion' in the New Testament (does 'hilasterion' mean 'propitiation-satisfaction' or 'expiation'?), and how we understand the purpose of 'sacrifices' and 'offerings.'

FrJoshua Schooping A well-researched article was written concerning St. Athanasius' (4th Century) view of the Atonement by Khaled Anatolios in On the Tree of the Cross: Georges Florovsky and the Patristic Doctrine of the Atonement, entitled, "Creation and Salvation in St Athanasius of Alexandria" (59-72). Though he never explicitly mentions the term "Penal Substitutionary Atonement," all throughout he demonstrates that Athanasius' view is consistent with it. According to him: "Athanasius argues that the death of Christ is salvific in part precisely because it is a fulfillment of divine justice" (69). Continuing:

"God's subsequent work of salvation cannot simply abrogate this law but must fulfill it, and that is why Christ had to die in order to bring about the forgiveness of sins and our salvation. 'It was absurd,' says Athanasius, 'for the law to be annulled before being fulfilled'" (69).

Since Christ works our salvation through death, according to Anatolios' reading of Athanasius, this also "speaks of Christ's salvific death as annulling the penalty and repaying the debt of sin on our behalf and thereby fulfilling the demands of divine justice" (63).

Mako Nagasawa FrJoshua, I've read and appreciated that book. Here are some posts of mine engaging with Athanasius directly, and arguing PSA cannot be compatible with him:
https://newhumanityinstitute.wordpress.com/atonement-foundations-athanasius-the-nicene-creed-new-humanity-institute/

Of particular interest would be this one: https://newhumanityinstitute.wordpress.com/2017/12/21/athanasius-as-evangelist-jesus-paid-the-debt-to-god-and-helps-you-pay-your-debt-to-god-too/

FrJoshua Schooping I look forward to reading your comments tomorrow when time allows. I appreciate your thoughtful engagement on the question.

Maged M Mako Nagasawa about whom is Psalmist writing here? Himself or someone else?
Like the slain who lie in the grave, Whom You remember no more, And who are cut off from Your hand. You have laid me in the lowest pit, In darkness, in the depths.
Your wrath lies heavy upon me,
And You have afflicted me with all Your waves. (Psalm 88: 5-7)

Mako Nagasawa Maged M, it would seem, others. The Psalmist says of himself in v.3 that he has "drawn near to Sheol", and then provides the poetic comparison in v.5 - 7 to those who are already in Sheol. Is there a reason you find this Psalm particularly relevant to the question of atonement? Also, my apologies for not directly replying to your earlier comment. I fully recognize that both Scripture and the fathers see both dimensions - (1) Jesus conquered sin and condemned it through his active obedience and (2) he shared in the curse and death (our mortality) with us. But simply affirming this does not settle the question of whether the atonement was a penal substitution-satisfaction, or whether God's justice is retributive or restorative. My reply to Father Joshua engages those questions, above.

FrJoshua: Mako, penal simply refers to penalty. It refers to the negative human relation that fallen man bears towards God's justice, and related to the Atonement it refers to Christ's atoning for this negative relation fallen man

bears towards God's justice. Quite simply, Christ either atones for the penalty of man or He doesn't. You are taking the position, it appears, that Christ did not atone fully for man. The Patristic position, as I have labored to show, is that Christ's death necessarily includes an atoning for man's penalty, and that He does so as a substitution, standing in the legal place of the sinner. I would not dispute a participatory element, but that would not remove the concept of penalty. So to follow you down that road, as you seem to be suggesting it, implies a false dichotomy. Now, adding or not adding certain meanings to penalty may be a place to have a dispute, but to deny that Christ atoned for the penalty of violating God's Law would not be helpful to any understanding of the Atonement, and ultimately false.

Maged M Mako Nagasawa Psalm 88 is about Christ. Notice that the Psalm says "You laid me in the lowest pit. Your wrath lies heavy upon me." The word "wrath" rules out the mere consequential experience of death by Christ. Christ endured the wrath of God, that was due to us on account of sin.

Mako Nagasawa FrJoshua, I do feel like we are talking in circles somewhat. If I said to you, “I’m mad about my flat,” would you understand what I meant? No, because even though you know all those words, you’re not sure what the context is. If I’m an American, then I mean, “I’m angry about my car’s flat tire.” But if I’m British, then I mean, “I’m happy about my apartment.” Those divergent meanings can be contained by the same words.

The same thing is happening here. ‘Jesus died for our sins.’ Yes. ‘Jesus took the penalty for our sins.’ Yes. ‘God is just.’ Of course. But those words have more than one meaning, or referent. Unfortunately, simply repeating them isn’t going to help us decide between the meanings that we see in them.

Hence I’m not sure you’re understanding my position, or my critique of yours. I am wholeheartedly for Jesus fully atoning for humanity, for instance. What I am disagreeing with is your apparent reliance on the notion that God’s justice is retributive, as opposed to restorative.

Might I propose that we properly identify the context from which words like ‘justice’ come, as we struggle to understand the words, and narrow down the interpretive choices. The Jewish sacrificial system in Leviticus is one of those larger contexts which determines the meaning of words like ‘sacrifice’ and ‘offering’ and what those mean. At the risk of making our discussion more complex, I’d like to explain why I disagree with your assessment of the Jewish sacrificial system. Here is why the Jewish sacrificial system is not a representation of a juridical framework, but a medical one. God was acting like what we would call a modern dialysis machine. In this framework, God is not blood thirsty. He is a blood donor. This sets the stage for understanding what ‘sacrifices and offerings’ meant, especially as they help us interpret Jesus.

Mako Nagasawa Maged M , Athanasius said, "Had it been a case of a trespass only, and not of a subsequent corruption, repentance would have been well enough" (On the Incarnation 7.4). Do you agree with him?

Maged M Mako Nagasawa by no means did St. Athanasius mean to say that God simply overlooks trespasses and that all was needed was a renewal of nature and abolition of corruption. I don't agree with your reading of Athanasius if that what you are trying to say.

FrJoshua Schooping Mako, you said, "Jesus took the penalty for our sins.’ Yes."
So, that really settles it.

The fact that the Church denies universalism proves that God's justice is also retributive, and not only restorative. Proving that it is restorative does not disprove that it is retributive. That would be a false dichotomy.

Mako Nagasawa, FrJoshua, If I said to you, "I'm mad about my flat," would you understand what I meant? No, because even though you know all those words, you're not sure what the context is. If I'm an American, then I mean, "I'm angry about my car's flat tire." But if I'm British, then I mean, "I'm happy about my apartment." Those divergent meanings can be contained by the same words.

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We need to properly identify the context from which words like 'justice' come, as we struggle to understand the words, and narrow down the interpretive choices. The Jewish sacrificial system in Leviticus is one of those larger contexts which determines the meaning of words like 'sacrifice' and 'offering' and what those mean. At the risk of making our discussion more complex, I'd like to explain why I disagree with your assessment of the Jewish sacrificial system. Here is why the Jewish sacrificial system is not a representation of a juridical framework, but a medical one. Thus, God was acting like what we would call a modern dialysis machine. In this framework, God is not blood thirsty. He is a blood donor. This sets the stage for understanding what 'sacrifices and offerings' meant, especially as they help us interpret Jesus.

https://newhumanityinstitute.wordpress.com/2015/12/25/atonement-in-scripture-temple-sacrifices-and-a-bloodthirsty-god-part-3/

https://newhumanityinstitute.wordpress.com/2018/10/18/god-as-dialysis-machine-the-sacrificial-calendar-as-the-renewal-of-the-covenant-and-the-retelling-of-moses-mediation-on-mount-sinai/

Maged M Mako Nagasawa the Psalm I just referenced (Psalm 88) along with Gal 3:13 (Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law having been made a curse for us) makes clear that Christ abolished the curse of transgression against us (God's righteous wrath) by fulfilling it in Himself on the cross. Denial of these fundamental concepts is denial of scripture and what the church fathers explained.

Mako Nagasawa Maged M, I am not reading Athanasius as if he said "God simply overlooks trespasses." I am reading him as he said: "Repentance would have been enough." Athanasius then sharply distinguishes between the internalization of corruption, from any particular "trespass" in a general sense. This demonstrates that for Athanasius, God's justice is not "retributive" in the way penal substitution requires it to be. PSA requires that God's justice fall on **every act of lawbreaking** because **every offense** against God's commandments supposedly call forth infinite retribution in hell. Jesus' atonement is then positioned against that theory. But Athanasius' statement shows that he did not hold that theory.

Mako Nagasawa We are talking in circles again, FrJoshua. 'Jesus took the penalty for our sins' can mean 'Jesus took the penalty for our sins so we wouldn't have to' as in PSA. Or the phrase, by itself, can also mean 'Jesus took the penalty for our sins because he shared in our mortal human nature, lived in the condition of exile and empire, etc.' Your use of the word 'penalty' assumes something you have not proven.

Mako Nagasawa Maged M: I'll ask you more about Psalm 88 later, if I may, as I think Galatians 3:13 is a more directly applicable and relevant text. As you might guess, my understanding of the 'curse' language and Galatians 3:13 differs from yours. The earliest patristic writers grouped the five 'he became' passages together. They treated them as mutually interpreting, as elisions for each other, and as all referring to the incarnation. 'He became' 'flesh' (Jn.1:14), 'human' (Phil.2:6 – 7), 'a curse' (Gal.3:13), 'sin' (2 Cor.5:21), and 'poor' (2 Cor.8:9). Let me demonstrate this, and explain what I see as the force of their comments.

Justin Martyr uses the language of the curse of Galatians 3:13 and Deuteronomy 21:22 – 23 to mark as sinful the lives of Jews and Gentiles alike (Dialogue with Trypho 94 – 96). Since both Jews and Gentiles sinned, with or without knowledge of the Sinaitic covenant and its commandments, every single person demonstrates that her or his existence is already 'cursed,' according to Justin. To Justin, hanging on a tree is simply confirmation of that fact, an exemplar of the whole category, not an additional punishment thrown on top of it. The 'curse' was not a divine punishment thrown on top of that by God, or otherwise absorbed by Jesus instead of human beings. Jesus participated in the 'curse' because 'he became' flesh, human, etc.

Irenaeus quotes Galatians 3:13 in Against Heresies 3.18.3. There, he argues against the gnostics who asserted that there was a spiritual being named 'Christ' who left the human being 'Jesus' before death. Irenaeus assures his audience that 'Jesus Christ' signifies one unified being, not two. The burden of Irenaeus' argument here is not the historical fact of Jesus' death, which the gnostics did not dispute, but whether there was an abiding union of divine (named 'Christ') and human (named 'Jesus') undertaken at his incarnation which carried through all the way to his death and resurrection. For good measure, Irenaeus quotes Scriptures where 'Christ' is explicitly named in connection with death on the cross (1 Cor.15:12). Irenaeus stresses that Paul refers to Christ as the one 'who was also born, and whom he speaks of as man.' Stressing the reality of Jesus' bodily death, Irenaeus enlists the help of four quotations from Paul. He quotes Galatians 3:13 in support of the incarnation, not the crucifixion.

Athanasius goes one step further in his explicit written exposition and theological reasoning. For Athanasius, if Jesus shared in the curse upon all humanity, as designated clearly by the manner of death he endured, then his sharing in the curse must have begun prior to his death. But when? Athanasius answers that by explicitly uniting Galatians 3:13 with ***John 1:14***. For Athanasius, 'becoming a curse' is a synonym for 'becoming flesh.' (Letter 59 to Epictetus of Corinth 8). Athanasius thus offers that the root cause of humanity's cursedness was the underlying corruption of human nature.

Ambrose of Milan (circa 340 – 397 AD), explains Galatians 3:13 by referring to ***Philippians 2:5 – 11***, which is also about Jesus' incarnation. Immediately after quoting Galatians, Ambrose writes of the incarnation, 'Cursed He was, for He bore our curses; in subjection, also, for He took upon Him our subjection, but in the assumption of the form of a servant, not in the glory of God; so that while he makes Himself a partaker of our weakness in the flesh, He makes us partakers of the divine Nature in His power.' (Exposition of the Christian Faith 5.178) Among the curses we experience as fallen human beings is 'our weakness in the flesh,' which recalls Paul's assessment in Romans 8:3 that the Sinai Law could not accomplish its goal through Israel because it was weakened by the flesh. Weakened flesh is not simply mortal flesh, but morally rebellious flesh.

Gregory of Nazianzus also quotes Galatians 3:13 in reference to the incarnation. He does this in *Oration 2.55* and *Oration 30.5 – 6*. Most notably, however, in *Epistle 101.7*, Gregory rejects Apollinaris' attempt to replace Jesus' human mind with the Logos. Apollinaris made this theological move in order to avoid claiming Christ was sinful, since it was believed that sin resides in the mind or soul. Gregory, however, argued that such a move compromised Jesus' true humanity, thus making it impossible for him to secure redemption for the whole human being: 'For that which He has not assumed He has not healed; but that which is united to His Godhead is also saved. If only half Adam fell, then that which Christ assumes and saves may be half also; but if the whole of his nature fell, it must be united to the whole nature of Him that was begotten, and so be saved as a whole… Just as he was called a curse for the sake of our salvation, who cancels my curse, and was called sin, who takes away the sin of the world, and instead of the old Adam is made a new Adam – in the same way he makes my rebellion his own as Head of the whole Body.' For Gregory, the language of 'curse' applies first to the full substance of the incarnation into full humanity.

John Chrysostom (circa 347 – 407 AD) in his *Homilies on John's Gospel* 1:14, he immediately refers us to Galatians 3:13, saying, 'It was fallen indeed, our nature had fallen an incurable fall, and needed only that mighty Hand. There

was no possibility of raising it again, had not He who fashioned it at first stretched forth to it His Hand, and stamped it anew with His Image, by the regeneration of water and the Spirit.' (Homilies on John's Gospel 1:14; see also Homily 13 from Homilies on Romans 8:3 – 4)

This appears to be the standard pre-Nicene and Nicene interpretation of Galatians 3:13. Considering this patterned usage, I believe we are on fairly strong footing to say that the early fathers read Genesis 3 – 4 to mean that all human nature was 'cursed' because of the fall into corruption. The 'cursed rebellious son on a tree' of Deuteronomy 21 served to indicate an extremis, because in our human becoming, it is certainly possible to curse ourselves further. But that did not remove the designation of 'cursed' from the whole category of all humanity.

FrJoshua: Mako, I think I have said what I can say. Are you a universalist? It sounds like you at least lean that way. Since Christ was sinless, there would be no way for Him to meaningfully share our sin in an atoning way unless He endured the penalty and curse of sin by having it placed on Him, and not simply sharing our nature. Simply existing as a human being is not a penalty, so your view not sufficient. There would be no need for the Cross in the logic of the case you are presenting. Any death would do, but that is not what the Scriptures or the Fathers teach. Christ died a cursed death in order to atone for a curse and give blessing, as a vicarious sacrifice, substitutionally, according to the laws of sacrifice, like on the day of Atonement when the goat was slain for the forgiveness of the people, and the other goat had all the sins placed on it and sent to die outside the city. That is the meaning of Christ's dying outside the city. He was both goats. This is the Bible's own sacrificial logic that provides the framework for understanding Christ's sacrificial death. An innocent must die in order to atone for the guilty. The blood transfusion view in the article you presented is therefore a fatally incomplete analogy because it ignores the killing and murder of the spotless animal as a sacrifice for the objective transgression of law, and the sending of the other out to die. The view you are presenting of sin and the Atonement is far too low and weak to account for the Cross.

That said, since we reject universalism, then the restorative aspect of justice is insufficient to account for all of what occurs through God's justice.

The problem is trying to prove an apple wrong by proving a banana right. The problem above is trying to remove an element is there by proving the presence of some other element. It will never work. Patriarch Jeremiah II writing to the Lutherans paraphrased St. John Chrysostom:

"One might see a bandit or criminal being punished, and the king himself give his beloved, only-begotten, and legitimate son, who was not like that, to be put to death, transferring the guilt from the wicked man to the son in order to save the condemned criminal and rid him from an evil reputation" (Augsburg and Constantinople, First Exchange, pg 41).

Maged M Mako Nagasawa I'm at work and I'll have to read your long comment later and respond in more detail. But my thoughts are curse is curse. Scripture makes clear what "curse" is. It is to be hung to die on a tree, as well as to be stoned to death according to the law . Christ endured the first curse to redeem us from the second curse which we deserved. He fulfilled our curse of the Law in Himself. I'm not interested in discussing whether or not a curse is retributive or restorative. It doesn't matter. Neither is penal substitution dependent on the curse being one or the other. That is a false condition you put in place. Punishment can be either. Punishment can also be both at the same time. Example: a prison sentence can be considered retributive to enforce justice as well as restorative to teach a criminal not to commit crime again.

Maged M Mako Nagasawa as I mentioned in my prior comment, I disagree with your reading of the fathers. Curse does not mean simply to become human which Christ assumed coincidentally by participation in our humanity. The curse of the cross was additive to whatever condemnation humanity incurred on account of the original transgression. To argue otherwise would be a gross misrepresentation of the fathers and defiance of plain common sense:

but thou shalt in any wise bury him that day (for he that is hanged is accursed of God), that thy land be not defiled (Deut 21:23)

The added curse of God of being hung on a tree cannot be more evident. Is every human hung on a tree? Clearly Christ's becoming a curse for us was on account of His accursed death and not merely on account of the incarnation. You are trying too hard to deny plain scriptural truths, and utilizing logical fallacies.

Maged M @Mako Nagasawa Additionally, if you are arguing that Christ became a curse merely on account of the incarnation, then you assert that Christ was a sinner. The curse was due to transgression. Christ was not liable to the curse of our humanity because he committed no sin. The reason we are under a curse is because according to the Law:
Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them." (Gal 3:10)
Christ fulfilled all righteousness and committed no sin. The curse Christ endured was the additive curse of the cross. He could not be subject to the curse of humanity.

Maged M Mako Nagasawa, additionally you argue that Old Testament sacrifices served as "medical substitution"--of healing only, and not punishment, but that is simply not how scripture presents the sacrifices, nor how the church fathers understood them. While there is no denying that through Christ we are healed of our sins, that is not the only dimension of Christ's sacrifice. Your denial of it contradicts scripture and patristic interpretation. Judge for yourself, as to whether anyone should subscribe to your personal interpretation, or that of scripture and the church fathers. If Sacrifices were merely a "medical substitution", the high priest would have been identified as a "Physician". But that is not the analogy revealed by the Holy Spirit. With regard to the sacrifices, the High Priest acted as "Mediator". In what sense? St. Cyril explains this about the priest's role:

1. The priest assists at the holy altar and appeasing wrath for sinners
2. The priest placated God as Moses did so when the people of Israel had made a golden heifer and submitted himself to justice and made an appeal:

"The priest, therefore, was taken as a mediator between God and man, accepting the gifts from the people and having a share in what is sacrificed on the altar, as Scripture says; he sacrificed himself, as it were, for the sins of the people, as of course our Lord Jesus Christ also did. For proof that what I say is true, I shall cite the Law dealing with the he-goat; it goes as follows: "Moses made an inquiry about the he-goat of the sin offering, and it had already been burnt. Moses was angry with Eleazar and Ithamar, Aaron's remaining sons, and said, Why did you not eat the sin offering in a holy place? For it is a holy of holies, and he has given it to you to eat there for you to remove the sin of the assembly, to make atonement on their behalf before the Lord." Do you see how those assisting at the holy altar and appeasing wrath for sinners with pure prayers act as mediators by eating the sin offerings, as it were, offering to God their own souls as a sweet-smelling odor for the sins of the people? As in the case of the divinely inspired Aaron, of course, when the people took ill, Scripture says, he seized the censer, put on the incense, "stood between the dead and the living, and the plague was stopped." The blessed Moses likewise acted as mediator as well and placated God when the people of Israel had made a golden heifer in the wilderness; he submitted himself to justice and made an appeal, "If you will forgive their sin, forgive it; but if not, blot me also out of this book you have written." - St. Cyril of Alexandria (Commentary on Hosea, Chapter 4)

Mako Nagasawa Maged M, You write, "I'm not interested in discussing whether or not a curse is retributive or restorative. It doesn't matter… Example: a prison sentence can be considered retributive to enforce justice as well as restorative to teach a criminal not to commit crime again."

I disagree. It does matter whether God's justice is retributive or restorative. To make your case, you resort to the framework of a Western prison sentence, but that logic is only retributive. In the Western-style retributive justice system, a prisoner confined in a cell need not repent, grow, or exhibit contrition. At the end of the sentence, he is free to go because 'retributive justice was served.' That is the key difference here.

What if we framed 'lawbreaking' somewhere other than the Western criminal justice system, like the Hebraic covenantal community, or a simple family unit? In my family, if one of my children slapped a sibling, am I somehow required by the logic of retributive justice to slap that child in response? Absolutely not. It is perfectly in keeping with restorative justice that I call for their listening, then their understanding from their lips and heart, along with efforts to apologize to a sibling, or clean up the mess, or rebuild trust, etc. That is repentance.

The key point: A critical distinction between restorative justice and retributive justice is that, in a restorative justice framework, I as a parent (for example) demand that my child **participate in my condemnation** of their behavior and also (since I am a Christian parent) the root cause of that behavior: the corruption of sin in their human nature. I demand and call them to align their will with mine, and participate in it. As a human analogy, this is synergeia and theosis, is it not?

In Hebraic restorative justice, the repentance of the offender and an offer of restitution is enough. That is why the Jewish law structured compensatory service 'until he is completely healed' as the primary and preferred method of dealing with harm done to a victim (Ex.21:18 – 19). Just to be clear, there are consequences for an offender in a restorative justice framework. In fact, sometimes those consequences may 'feel' harder to the offender, emotionally and psychologically, because it requires repentance, which includes restitution and growth with a new centering around the injured person. For example, in Jewish law, a thief must repay two to five times the amount that they stole (Ex.22:1 – 14) because he must rebuild trust, not simply replace a sheep stolen for a week based on the time value of an economic asset. Jesus approved of Zaccheus honoring that principle: 'I will return four times what I stole' (Lk.19:1 – 10).

If Jesus' atonement covered over Zaccheus' sinful past in the way that PSA and retributive justice suggest, and Jesus 'paid for it,' then why did Jesus endorse Zaccheus' restitution to his past victims as something he *owed* them? Shouldn't Jesus have reframed his act as 'charity'? – a gift that need not be offered, because the payment was already 'paid' by Jesus, somehow? Shouldn't Jesus have corrected Zaccheus' motivation, and clearly severed Zaccheus from his anchor point in Exodus 22, because Zaccheus thought he still owed others something for his past sins? But no: Jesus understood it to be an act of restitution, and therefore of justice – restorative justice as prescribed by Jewish law of what Zaccheus *owed* for stealing. More weight is added to this interpretation by Jesus' declaration of Zaccheus as a 'son of Abraham,' honoring Zaccheus' desire to be restored not simply to God but to his Jewish community; and also by Luke's placement of the story of Zaccheus as Jesus' climactic last successful encounter before he confronted the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem, who, as Luke portrays them, fail to respond, precisely as Jews.

This is how ontological-medical atonement, repentance, and growth in virtue work together. Zaccheus climbed a tree, which was something only children did. This detail becomes a sign that Zaccheus becomes like a child and a 'new creation' (cf. like 'infants' in Lk.18:15; 'born from above' in Jn.3), which the 'rich ruler' was unwilling to do (Lk.18:18 – 30). Thus, Zaccheus desired to participate in the restoration of his own human nature, which was undergirded by Jesus' atoning work regarding human nature in principle. And *within that movement with Jesus* and not apart from it, Zaccheus participated in the restoration of his human relationships. Again, if retributive justice were 'satisfied' by Jesus' atonement as PSA suggests, then Jesus should have given Zaccheus an 'imputation' of innocence and righteousness (as Calvin would have wished). Jesus should have reframed Zaccheus' motivation without reference to what he owed his countrymen, or negated the act altogether.

You have not indicated how you can interpret Athanasius differently. So I repeat him here to keep his insight before us: In the garden, had the transgression been other than the one leading to self-corruption, then 'repentance would have been enough.' The only way to endorse this statement is to understand divine justice as restorative justice, where God would welcome the repentance appropriate to the transgression. If Adam had treated Eve in an unloving manner, or if they somehow mistreated their kids, then God would have commanded them to take the appropriate steps to repair, and their repentance in doing that 'would have been enough.' However, if you shift into a retributive justice framework where God takes infinite offense at the breaking of any command, because He is an infinite being whose ability to be offended is infinite, then you open yourself up to a whole host of problems that have afflicted the Protestant world. And you wind up disagreeing with Athanasius.

Mako Nagasawa Maged M, Regarding the 'curse': The fullest way to explain both Scripture and the fathers is to see how the 'curse' relates to death in the sense of *mortality*, first in the Pentateuch, then in Galatians. To cite but one source, Justin Martyr: 'For *the whole human race* will be found to be under a curse. For it is written in the law of Moses, 'Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them.' [Dt.27:26] And no one has accurately done all, nor will you venture to deny this; but some more and some less than others have observed the ordinances enjoined. But if those who are under this law appear to be under a curse for not having observed all the requirements, how much more shall all the nations appear to be under a curse who practise idolatry, who seduce youths, and commit other crimes?' (Dialogue with Trypho 95)

'Curse' in Dt.21 continues a theme begun long before, rooted especially in self-corruption along with the choices which make it worse ('practice idolatry,' etc.) and the mortality which is its limit. The 'curses' on the ground and on childbearing, which originate the 'curse' language, were not retributive in nature. Rather, they are God's descriptions of the ontological consequences of Adam and Eve's self-corruption. For again, God in His love had to exile humanity from the garden, and impose mortality, lest we eat from the tree of life in a corrupted state. For humans to bring forth more human life and garden life would be 'cursed' in the sense that we still have to do them, but if we are a remove from God and the garden, the original context of life, then the bearing of life would be all the more painful.

Genesis 4 shows that it is possible to curse one's human nature further, and this also supplies background to Deuteronomy 21. When Can tilled his brother's blood back into the ground, Abel's blood cried out to God from the land, and Cain cursed himself from the land in an amplification of Adam's alienation from the land. Whereas Adam had to toil on the land and produce thorns and thistles, at least he was able to eat of the plants of the field and produce bread; but with Cain, matters were far worse: 'Now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. When you cultivate the ground, it shall no longer yield its strength to you; you shall be a vagrant and a wanderer on the earth' (Gen.4:11 – 12). Cain then identified the position God and the land stood in relation to an estranged humanity: 'Thou hast driven me this day from the face of the ground, and from Thy face I shall be hidden.' He described his alienation from one by his alienation from the other. There again is the association: land – agriculturally fruitful land – represents the face of God's blessing to human beings. Bearing a corrupted human nature affects (curses) our relationship with the land, and is its own curse, especially if we do things that further damage our human nature.

The narrative of Genesis 2 – 4 supplies the reason behind the Deuteronomic idea that a 'rebellious son' (like Cain) who was especially wicked should be hung on a tree (Dt.21:22 – 23): his body and blood should be separated from the land, if only for a short while. Hanging his dead body on a tree shows that he especially alienated himself from the land, and God. Hanging did not bring the curse per se. It called attention to what was already true about that man: he cursed his own human nature especially deeply.

So I think you are mistaken when you deny that all human beings, as Justin Martyr said, are already under a curse: the curse of self-corruption and the curse of mortality which limits it. When Paul says in Galatians 3:13 that Jesus 'became a curse' he is referring to his incarnation into mortal human nature, which of course includes his death, but is not reducible to it. Hanging on a tree identified Jesus' human nature as mortal, and thus, truly participating in our cursed existence.

As further evidence, in Galatians 4:4, Paul quotes the phrase 'born of woman' not merely as an historical fact but as a phrase from Job. To be 'born of woman' is to be 'short-lived and full of turmoil' (Job.14:1) because of the following question:

'You also open Your eyes on him, and bring him into judgment with Yourself.
Who [among men] can make the clean out of the unclean? No one!' (Job 14:4).

It is to ask,

'How then can a man be just (righteous) with God?
Or how can he be clean who is born of woman?' (Job 25:4).

Job associates 'Hebrew legal courtroom' terminology like 'judgment' and 'just/righteous with God' on the one hand with ontological terminology like 'uncleanness' on the other. It shows that the former, which is drawn from the Sinai covenant, is indicative of the latter. For the second stanza of the step parallelism of Hebrew poetry always has the greater weight, either for emphasis, clarity, or causation: The Hebrew (not Western, Latin) legal courtroom terminology is being enlisted to demarcate the ontological. To be born of woman is to have some kind of stain in our human nature, and Paul identifies Jesus that way.

Mako Nagasawa Maged M You raise the question of whether I am calling Jesus 'a sinner.' No: just because Jesus bore a mortal human nature does not mean that he sinned in it. Athanasius says that he had to have an 'infirm' human nature, though:

'To give a witness then, and for our sakes to undergo death, to raise man up and destroy the works of the devil, the Savior came, and this is the reason of His incarnate presence. For otherwise a resurrection had not been, unless there had been death; and how had death been, unless He had had a mortal body? This the Apostle, learning from Him, thus sets forth, 'Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might bring to nought him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage [Hebrews 2:14 – 15].' And, 'Since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead [1 Corinthians 15:21].' And again, 'For what the Law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh; that the ordinance of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit [Romans 8:3 – 4].' … For as by receiving our infirmities [Isaiah 53:4/Matthew 8:17], He is said to be infirm Himself, though not Himself infirm, for He is the Power of God, and He became sin for us [2 Corinthians 5:21] and a curse [Galatians 3:13], though not having sinned Himself, but because He Himself bare our sins and our curse, so, by creating us in Him, let Him say, 'He created me for the works,' though not Himself a creature… When for our need He became man… that, by His dwelling in the flesh, sin might perfectly be expelled from the flesh [Romans 8:3], and we might have a free mind [Romans 8:5 – 8].' (Discourses Against the Arians 2.55 – 56)

Of particular interest is Athanasius' use of the term 'infirm.' Athanasius assumes his audience, like he does, calls Jesus 'infirm': 'He is said to be infirm Himself…' This description, based on Isaiah 53:4, is fascinating and important. In his third *Discourse*, Athanasius quotes Isaiah 53:4 explicitly again, and does two very important things there. First, he interprets the term 'infirmity' by the term *sinfulness*. Second, he says that the Son 'carried' our infirmities-sins; he did not simply 'remedy' them from a distance by doing a miracle, or waving a wand, as it were. He 'bore them' and was personally involved and experienced at carrying 'infirm,' sinful flesh all the way to its death which was his death.

'And the Word bore the **infirmities of the flesh**, as His own, for His was the flesh; and the flesh ministered to the works of the Godhead, because the Godhead was in it, for the body was God's. And well has the Prophet said 'carried [Isaiah 53:4];' and has not said, 'He remedied our infirmities,' lest, as being external to the body, and only healing it, as He has always done, He should leave men subject still to death; but He carries our **infirmities**, and He Himself bears our **sins**, that it might be shown that He has become man for us, and that the body which in Him bore them, was His own body; and, while He received no hurt Himself by 'bearing our sins in His body on the tree,' as Peter speaks, we men were redeemed from our own affections, and were filled with the righteousness of the Word.' (Discourses Against the Arians 3.31)

Athanasius uses Isaiah 53:4 to interpret Romans 8:3, which is rather compelling for my position. He points out that Isaiah 53:4 means that Jesus 'carried' our infirmities and sins, which implies some length of time from his incarnation: 'that it might be shown that he has become man for us.' Isaiah does not say, as Athanasius points out, that Jesus simply 'remedied' them, which could be instantaneous. In *Discourses* 2.55, therefore, Athanasius means this: Jesus bore 'sinful flesh,' which to him meant what we today would call a 'mortal' and perhaps 'fallen human nature.' Through his active obedience culminating in his death, Jesus 'circumcised the heart' by cutting away mortality and sin-sickness from his human nature.

Discourses 2.55 also shows us how Athanasius handled the 'communication of attributes' (*communicatio idiomatum*). How do we properly discuss the properties of the incarnate Son when he is both divine and human, and human in such a way as to fully participate in our mortal existence in light of the fall? Athanasius says, 'He is said

to be infirm Himself, though not Himself infirm.' Athanasius perceives the fundamental 'subject' or 'person' of Jesus, although still decades away were the Second Ecumenical Council of 381 which brought about a terminological agreement about the use of 'hypostasis' for 'person,' and the Third Ecumenical Council of 431 which affirmed that the eternal Son was the single subject or person ('hypostasis') in Jesus of Nazareth; the human nature of Jesus did not give rise to a second subject or human person. This would be why we can say with Paul that Jesus 'became a curse' but without having transgressed any command of God. Jesus is not 'a sinner.'

Mako Nagasawa Maged M, Regarding the language of sacrifices and offerings: While I appreciate your quotation of Cyril, he does not support PSA. I cite three qualities of the biblical text, in ascending order of textual scope. You and FrJoshua have stated that you disagree with this assessment, but you have not offered explanations as to how we can better understand the text on all three levels. If you have such an interpretation, please explain.

First, the most microcosmic level: the sin offering. Other sacrifices existed before Mount Sinai and the tabernacle, but the sin offering was the unique sacrifice introduced by God being present with Israel in the tabernacle. So there is something unique about it which relates to the whole sacrificial system. When Israel carried out the sin offering, they partitioned the animal into various pieces.

The Organs for Waste and Toxins: Interestingly, the kidneys, liver, and intestinal fat are the parts of the body which process waste or store toxins within the body. Any farming or herding people watching animals urinate and defecate every day would understand how these organs lined up and what they meant. Very importantly, the kidneys, liver, and intestinal fat were to never be eaten (Lev.3:17; 7:22 – 25; 8:16, 25; 9:10, 19 – 20, 24; 10:15). They were reserved for God alone. When they were consumed in fire, the Lord smelled the smoke of the fat, kidney, and liver as 'a soothing aroma' (Lev.3:3 – 5, 9 – 11, 14 – 16). Nothing else triggered this response from God, including *the death of the animal*. This fact shows that penal substitution advocates are making wrong conclusions about the whole process of sacrifice. For sin offerings, in particular, burning the toxin-bearing organs became 'a soothing aroma' to God (Lev.4:21). And this step in particular is constitutive of 'making atonement' (Lev.4:35). God was not "soothed" by the death of the animal, as if the animal per se became the object of God's wrath. But if penal substitution is true, then that is what the text should say. The text does not say that at all. Instead, the text of Leviticus 4 shows that medical substitution is true. Toxins and waste (uncleanness) must be cut away and consumed by fire. There is a sharp distinction between made between the animal itself, and something within the animal associated with uncleanness.

Conceptually, this is just like "circumcision" where something impure is cut away from the human male, in order to cleanse the human male as a representative of the community (Gen.17; Lev.12). And it is conceptually identical with "circumcision of the heart" for every male and female human being: something within us must be cut away and consumed by God's fire. Thus, God is not "propitiated" or "satisfied" by anyone's death per se. He is certainly not "propitiated" or "satisfied" by inflicting suffering and pain, as the Israelites were absolutely not instructed to "torture" the animal, and Jewish tradition developed the most painless way possible to kill the animal. Rather, God is only "propitiated" or "satisfied," if we want to use that term, which is questionable in itself, when the uncleanness in us is cut away and consumed. Also, the more accurate translation for "hilasterion" is "expiation" because it is conceptually more foundational, it fits with the Jewish language of salvation as surgical/medical as presented in circumcision, and it is less prone to the absolutely deadly mistake of thinking that God's justice is retributive, as if God inflicts human suffering when He doesn't get human obedience out of His own desire to simply "satisfy Himself."

The Flesh: As whatever symbolic uncleanness of the animal itself was disposed of through the waste organs being burned, it could serve a purpose for the Israelites as a vehicle of atonement. When an ordinary Israelite worshiper laid a hand on the animal to identify himself with the animal in some sense, the sinfulness of the human person seems to have been communicated or identified with the flesh of the animal. The flesh of the animal, in the peace and sin/guilt offerings of Lev.3 – 7, was consumed by the priests or the common people. This is a non-negotiable part of how the priests 'made atonement' for the people (Lev.6:24 – 30; 10:16 – 20). Notice how mad Moses was when Aaron and his sons didn't eat the flesh of the sin offering? Moses said it was a non-negotiable part of the priests making atonement for the people. Once again, this does not fit the imagery or framework of penal substitution. If all that was required in the sacrificial system was the death of the animal, the atonement should have happened when the animal was killed. The eating of the flesh of the animal cannot be incorporated into the PSA

framework. It's an embarrassing detail for PSA. As Cyril indeed points out, the priests had to internalize the sin that was symbolically placed by the Israelites onto the animals. They were 'sin-bearers' in their role as priests, as much as the scapegoat was a 'sin-bearer,' too. On the Day of Atonement, the high priest, representing all the priests, brought the collected uncleanness and sinfulness to God. More on that below.

The Blood: The Israelites were to never eat the blood, because God was giving back the blood to symbolize purified life which cleansed people and objects. The blood of the animal was the cleansing agent that restores sanctity, life, and health to what it touched. Animal blood (life) was not corrupted by sin, at least not in the same way human blood (life) had been. So animal blood (life) could serve as a symbol of purity. This is the basis for saying that God was acting like a dialysis machine. Once again, if PSA is true, then contact with blood would be meaningless and superfluous, because blood flow itself – as indicating death – would be atoning. Why would anyone have to touch it? That simple fact hints that in atonement, God does not change a disposition in Himself. He changes something in us. Atonement is medical, healing, and restorative, not penal, punitive and retributive.

Second, the annual cycle of offerings. So far, we have only examined the sin offering in isolation. Now it's time to integrate that one offering into the larger, annual calendar of sacrifices. Here's what happened on that day, each year:

The high priest goes in once a year on the appointed day (Lev.16:2)
The high priest wears clean white linen, apparently representing being clothed in light (Lev.16:4)
The high priest sacrifices a bull for himself and his family (Lev.16:6, 11)
The high priest sprinkles the bull's blood on the furnishings of the sanctuary (Lev.16:14 – 20)
The high priest sacrifices a goat as a sin offering, sprinkling its blood on the mercy seat in the holy of holies, and then the holy place, cleansing it (Lev.16:9, 15 – 19)
The high priest lays his hands on the live goat, the scapegoat, confessing all the sins of Israel onto the head of the scapegoat, and sent it away into the wilderness (Lev.16:20 – 22)
The priests do not eat the flesh of the bull or first goat, which is **absolutely unusual and unique**, but rather burn it to ashes, so the sin **does not symbolically cycle back** into the priests (Lev.16:26 – 28)

The Israelites passed their impurities to God through the mechanism of the animal sacrifices (specifically the sin and guilt offerings) and the priesthood. The priests, when they ate the sacrifices, stored up those impurities in themselves. Simultaneously, the priests shed the blood of the animals offered, since the animals' blood was not corrupted by sin. The innocent animal blood 'cleansed' the uncleanness of the Israelites and the objects they touched. The two goats were two sides of the same coin. The scapegoat carried the sin of the people far away into the wilderness as a representation that God separated sin from the people. And the other goat and the bull could not be eaten, but rather, they were burned down to ash as a representation that God burned sinfulness down to nothing when we bring it into His presence with trusting obedience, trusting Him to do just that. This gave rise to Micah saying that God separates our sin from His people, and cast them into the sea (Micah 7:19), or David saying God separates our sin from His people as far as the east is from the west (Psalm 103:12).

Third, the sacrificial system has to be integrated into the narrative of the Pentateuch. The high priest's horizontal movement into the holy of holies was a reenactment-retelling (recapitulation) of Moses' vertical movement to the top of Mount Sinai. Moses experienced Mount Sinai as three levels: the base of the mountain with all Israel (Ex.19), the halfway point with the 70 elders (Ex.24), and at the top, with Joshua alone. Moses went into the divine fire, and ultimately participated in God's cleansing and purification such that his face glowed with light (Ex.34), and mediated the Sinai covenant on behalf of Israel – even though he later faltered and showed that Israel needed a better covenant and a better mediator. But for the long history when Israel had a sanctuary (tabernacle then temple), the high priest represented Moses, making contact with the fire in the bronze altar, which made holy whatever touched it (Ex.29:37). He went into the holy place where the priests could be, since they represented the 70 elders at the halfway point up the mountain. Then he went through the smoke of incense and offering, which represented God's cloud of glory near the top of the mountain, and into the holy of holies on the Day of Atonement. The high priest renewed the covenant for Israel. In fact, that covenant renewal was so momentous and profound that on the Jubilee Year, God redistributed the land to its original family boundaries as if Israel were entering the garden land again for the first time (Lev.25). The Jubilee was proclaimed on the Day of Atonement (Lev.25:9).

And what does the sacrificial system as a whole demonstrate to us about atonement? Let's look first at Moses. God accepted Moses' mediation of the covenant not by punishing him as a substitute for Israel, which is what PSA would require, but by **purifying** him. Moses' active obedience mediated the covenant between God and Israel. It was not his "passive obedience," as if God just had to make Moses suffer something in order to be in covenant relationship with others who were not Moses. But penal substitution absolutely depends on the notion of Jesus' "passive obedience" as the passive object of God's wrath. In fact, the sacrificial system as a whole represents what God was doing within Moses' human nature as Moses approached Him with a soft and eager heart, receiving God's commandments into himself as much as he could.

Moses mediated the Sinai covenant, but Jesus mediated a better covenant (Heb.9:15). God accepted Moses as mediator not by making Moses bear a retributive punishment to satisfy His own retributive anger, but because Moses was faithful, and allowed himself to be purified to some degree. Likewise, God accepted Jesus as mediator not by making Jesus bear a retributive punishment to satisfy, exhaust, and drain God's retributive anger, but because Jesus was faithful, transfigured his whole body (not just his face) with God's light infinitely greater than the white linen of the high priest's garment, and purified his own human nature completely.

Jesus became our eternal mediator who offered himself as priest (Heb.7 – 10) and both goats, taken together: the goat sacrificed (Heb.8 – 9; 13:11 – 12) and the scapegoat (Heb.13:13). Jesus took the corruption of sin within himself to death, burning and cutting it away, and simultaneously sent it away from us. Two sides of the same coin. Jesus' death revealed and exemplified the central inner dynamic of his entire life: to resist every temptation and live his life faithfully unto God the Father. Though his suffering and obedience throughout his life, Jesus "became perfect" (he did not start off "perfect" in the same sense that his resurrection indicates) and became the source of our salvation because he is the source of a cleansed, purified, new humanity (Heb.5:7 – 9).

Jesus also carried out God's pattern of purification by partitioning. That is, "the circumcision of Christ" (Col.2:12) in which we participate by the Spirit (Rom.2:28 – 29). Jesus' bodily death by itself was not the atoning act per se in isolation, but was a means to an end: the destruction of "the flesh" (Rom.7:14 – 8:4), or "the old self" (Rom.6:6), and the fulfillment of the Sinai covenant, which called for "circumcision of the heart" (Dt.30:6; 10:16 notice also "Jesus is the telos of the covenant" in Rom.10:4). Thus, Jesus' death on the cross was the revelation of what Jesus was doing his whole incarnate life: putting the flesh to death, separating the corruption of sin from human nature, so God could raise Jesus from the dead with a purified, cleansed, new humanity which he shares with us by the Spirit. This is why Jesus' resurrection is part of the atonement, equally with his death, because we must participate in both, by the Spirit: 'If Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins' (1 Cor.15:17). Jesus did not die instead of us. He died ahead of us. And Jesus' active obedience is the substitutionary element in atonement. He did for us what we could not do: put the flesh to death.

Many advocates of penal substitution believe that the sacrificial system is the Old Testament lynchpin for penal substitution. But the sacrificial system does not actually support penal substitution. It supports medical substitution. God's wrath is not against human persons per se. God's wrath is against the corruption of sin within our human nature. That is shown especially in the partitioning of the sin offering, and the burning of the organs associated with waste and toxins.

Here's what we can say about this. God is not bloodthirsty. God is a blood donor. Thus, in the sacrifices and offerings, God was acting like what we see today in a modern dialysis machine.

Mako Nagasawa FrJoshua, No, I am not a universalist. I think I understand why you are puzzled by that. I don't think there is anything on God's side that prevents people from choosing Jesus (a universal hope, not limited atonement). But, at the same time, I do not know how each person will decide about Jesus, so I reject universal certainty. And I honor the patristic way of framing how people's choices shape their human natures, and vice versa. The framework of ontology and teleology – human being and human becoming – fits with divine restorative justice perfectly. It makes the notion of divine retributive justice completely out of place. So for people who reject Jesus, they do experience torment, but not because God is trying to extract a retributive suffering from them. It is simply what they have chosen to become. A Jesuit priest at Boston College writes about it this way:

‘Of course, the question of punishment, i.e. of hell and damnation will arise in many people’s minds, and quite rightly. But damnation does not mean that God ceases to love the one damned. If that were true, then the sinner would be more powerful than God, since the sinner would have the power to make God, who is love, agape, something less than God. No, God’s love is constant, unchanging and perfect. Damnation means that the sinner refuses finally and absolutely to accept being loved and to love in response. The damned may not love God, but God continues to love the damned. After all, the love of God is what holds us in existence. If God does not love you, you’re not damned. You simply aren’t. What supports our existence and holds us in being is God’s love. We exist by the fact that God gives God’s self to us at every moment. Therefore, of course, God loves the damned. God loves everything that exists just because it exists. Indeed, that is what makes it exist: God loves it into being.

‘Let me give you an image which comes from Gregory of Nyssa at the end of the fourth century. The difference between heaven and hell is described in this story he tells: Picture yourself walking out on a bright sunny day with healthy eyes. You will experience the sunlight as something wonderful and pleasant and beneficent. Now, picture yourself walking out on exactly the same bright sunny day, but with a diseased eye. You will now experience the sunlight as something terrible and painful and awful, something to shy away from. Well, the sun didn’t change. You did.

‘That is the point about heaven and hell. Heaven and hell are exactly the same thing: the love of God. If you have always wanted the love of God, congratulations, you got heaven. If you don’t want the love of God, too bad, you are stuck for all eternity. God remains God. God makes the sun shine on the just and the unjust, the rain fall on the good and the wicked. If you don’t want rain or sun, too bad, you are still going to get them. The question is not that God changes in response to us. It is that we are judged by our response to the absoluteness of God’s self gift.’ (Michael Himes, S.J., Doing the Truth in Love, p.14 – 15)

Here is a sampling of the fathers using the motifs of sunlight and/or fire as having a singular nature (purifying love) but two effects based on the quality of the substance we have become. God is love. But how we receive His love depends on us.

Irenaeus of Lyons said: ‘For one and the same God [who blesses those who believe] inflicts blindness upon those who do not believe, but who set Him at naught; just as the sun, which is a creature of His, [blinds] those who, by reason of any weakness of the eyes cannot behold his light; but to those who believe in Him and follow Him, He grants a fuller and greater illumination of mind.’ (Against Heresies 4.29.1; cf. 4.39.1 – 4)

Athanasius of Alexandria, Third Festal Letter (of 331 AD), paragraphs 3 – 4, understands ‘fire’ in this dual way: God’s love comes first as a fire to melt and refine us. But we develop our human nature in such a way that we want to hold onto the very corruption of sin that he wants to burn away from us. That will feel like torment.

Cyril of Jerusalem writes, ‘The sun also blinds those whose sight is dim: and they whose eyes are diseased are hurt by the light and blinded. Not that the sun’s nature is to blind, but that the substance of the eyes is incapable of seeing. In like manner unbelievers being diseased in their heart cannot look upon the radiance of the Godhead.’ (Lecture VI: On the Unity of God, paragraph 29)

John Chrysostom says, ‘I know not your works; I consider not that which you have begun; and so, as one who fears God, I give counsel to everyone among you, whether man or woman, whether great or small, to anyone of you that may be guilty of sin, convicted by your own counsels, that first you must repent and confess your sins, that you may dare, considering yourself unworthy, to approach and touch the Divine Fire Itself. For our God is a consuming Fire, and they, therefore, who with faith and fear draw near to the God and King and Judge of us all, shall burn and scorch their sins; and It shall enlighten and sanctify their souls. But It shall burn and scorch with shame, the souls and bodies of them that draw near with unbelief. Therefore, many among you are ill and sleep in sickness, that is, many are dying unconfessed and unrepentant. And furthermore, my brethren, I beseech you, and I say: no one that swears oaths, nor a perjurer, nor a liar, nor one that finds fault with others, nor a fornicator, nor an adulterer, nor a homosexual, nor a thief, nor a drunkard, nor a blasphemer, nor one that envies his brother, nor a murderer, nor a sorcerer, nor a magician, nor a charmer, nor an enchanter, nor a robber, nor a Manichean, shall, unconfessed and unprepared, approach, touch, or draw near the dread Mysteries of Christ, for it is terrible to fall into the hands of the Living God.’ (Homily for Holy Thursday)

Augustine of Hippo says, ‘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)

Maximus the Confessor says, ‘God is the sun of justice, as it is written, who shines rays of goodness on simply everyone. The soul develops according to its free will into either wax because of its love for God or into mud because of its love for matter. Thus just as by nature the mud is dried out by the sun and the wax is automatically softened, so also every soul which loves matter and the world and has fixed its mind far from God is hardened as mud according to its free will and by itself advances to its perdition, as did Pharaoh. However, every soul which loves God is softened as wax, and receiving divine impressions and characters it becomes the dwelling place of God in the Spirit.’ (Chapters on Knowledge, par.12)

FrJoshua Schooping Mako, you are still trying to show that something is not there by showing that some other thing is there, which is a non-starter, and assumes a false dichotomy. It won't work. It also sounds like you are projecting or inserting passibility on the idea of God's having retributive justice. Retributive justice simply means the inexorable opposition between God and sin. As illustrated in the Psalms and elsewhere, it is the sword of the sinner falling on his own head, the pit he digs and into which falls into, the net he lays as a trap but entraps himself into. God is a judge, and it is dread judgment seat, not simply the throne of the healer, and so if God only uses justice restoratively, then everyone must be restored. If the judgment, i.e. justice, of God does not restore everyone, then it cannot be exclusively restorative. Perhaps you are assuming that the concept of retributive justice must mean that there is some passible element in God. God is, however, impassible, and His justice is both restorative and retributive.

Maged M Mako Nagasawa, if you want to dialogue, then please stop copying and pasting from your internet articles, imposing on me that I read them. I'm not going to dialogue with your article(s). I fully agree with FrJoshua Schooping, and as I mentioned you consistently create a false dilemma. Punishment can be retributive and restorative at the same time. You argue in vain that it must be one or the other, even in your response about my prison example. In most, if not all prisons, in the United States, prisoners don't only do time (retributive), they are also afforded many rehabilitative opportunities while in prison. They learn new skills and trades to help them become self-supporting law-abiding citizens. Prisons even hire religious clerics to allow for spiritual restoration of those who are retributively and justly punished. Hence punishment can be retributive and restoratie at the same time.You arguments are logically flawed and your logical fallacies extend deeply into your theology. With God, punishment is is sometimes one, the other, or both.

Remedial/restorative:
“My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord,
Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him;
For whom the Lord loves He chastens,
And scourges every son whom He receives.” (Hebrews 12:5-6)

Retributive:
Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,” says the Lord. (Romans 12:9)
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. (Hebrews 10:30)
Your denial of God's retributive punishment is nothing but human wisdom, alienated from what was revealed in scripture. Your view are a form of neo-Marcionism. Judge for yourself whether anyone should listen to your personal wisdom or to scripture.

Additionally, your selective reading of the fathers (and scripture) is very concerning. When you quoted St. Athanasius out of context "Had it been a case of a trespass only...repentance would have been well enough" you

conveniently left out the prior sentence where he said: "But repentance would not guard the Divine consistency, for, if death did not hold dominion over men, God would still remain untrue."

St. Athanasius had just finished explaining that death needed to take place because it was the "penalty" and "sentence" God declared for transgression. If it was not fulfilled, God would be a liar. Hence when St. Athanasius said "had it been a case of trespass only", he already finished explaining that it wasn't a matter of trespass only. Why not? Two reasons, he explained:
1. There was “need of death” (sot that God’s word is not broken). Christ suffered on behalf of all so that the debt owing might be paid, “in the stead of all”.
2. Corruption was done away with (restoration and victory)
You selectively pointed out the second reason and neglected the first reason to justify your fallacious interpretation. You have done this with the rest of your reading of the fathers. Please take the time to objectively read this article. Notice that I didn't copy and paste it in its entirety as to force you to read it, but I hope that you will read it objectively: http://myagpeya.com/blog/sa-incarnation/

Mako Nagasawa FrJoshua, I recognize that part of our disagreement is about the definitions of key terms. However, part of it is genuinely conceptual, especially as you are trying to create a bridge between Orthodoxy and Protestants around the phrase ‘penal substitutionary atonement’ and ‘the satisfaction of divine justice.’ While I appreciate your attempt to build bridges, this dialogue ought to remind us that those phrases are fraught with… well, ‘peril’ might be one way to express it.

That said, our definitions of atonement can be adjudicated by the following, as I do think that they are mutually exclusive:

1. Athanasius says, "Had it been a case of a trespass only, and not of a subsequent corruption, repentance would have been well enough" (On the Incarnation 7.4). As I asked Maged M, do you agree with Athanasius here? Or, was Athanasius mistaken because he should have said, “Any trespass whatsoever would have been deserving of infinite retributive wrath.”

Maged M, you are mistaken about how to read Athanasius here. Just prior to this quote, Athanasius was referring to God’s options (as it were) given that the fall into self-corruption happened. So, absolutely, given the fall, repentance was not enough. But Athanasius distinguishes between the pre-fall and post-fall realities as far as how God would have responded to other types of transgressions. So my point still holds. (Incidentally, perhaps it is matter of personal taste, but I am fine with reading blog posts that are linked here, or quotes copy-pasted directly from those blog posts. I ask your forgiveness and understanding if that seems insincere to you. It is not to me. Besides, FrJoshua copy-pasted from his articles, and you didn’t critique that?)

This is a helpful quotation because it shows how Athanasius conceptually ‘prioritized’ ontology over divine law-judgment in the structure of creation, while integrating the two. To be sure, Athanasius did not set aside divine law, judgment, and justice. And, I applaud Khaled Anatolios for his efforts to remind us that Athanasius integrated divine law and justice into the ontology of creation and its role in salvation. However, in my opinion, Anatolios, when he critiques Georges Florovsky for prioritizing ontology in the book, On the Tree of the Cross, on p.70 – 71 is still too indeterminate about what he counterproposes, or what he perceives in Athanasius.

A personal interest of mine is understanding the impact of Christians losing connection and dialogue with Jews and the synagogue over time. One area of impact is in our biblical interpretation: Christians began to prioritize typological exegesis so highly that they gradually lost the ability to do narrative exegesis, the so-called ‘Antioch School’ notwithstanding. For example, Christians apparently lost interest and ability to track themes, plot, and literary dynamics over the course of an entire narrative book like the Pentateuch, or a literary collection like the Psalms. I find that earlier fathers like Irenaeus and Athanasius, say, are more attentive to narrative considerations that I believe are vitally important.

Athanasius does not ‘flatten’ the narrative of Scripture. He recognized that humanity’s experiences of divine law and justice were not the same across four major time periods: (1) Adam and Eve in Eden (Gen.1 – 2); (2) from exile

to city (Gen.3 – 11); (3) the chosen family (Gen.12 – Ex.18); and (4) Israel under the Sinai covenant (Ex.19ff). Of course there were similarities, but there were also major differences.

By contrast, Christians who 'flatten' the narrative of Scripture are surprised to find Athanasius saying that in Eden, 'repentance would have been well enough' for ordinary transgressions of God's moral law because they project Sinai covenant dynamics backward onto Eden. They assume that God must relate in the same way to people at all times when people did not obey His commandments, therefore 'death' under the Sinai covenant gives the true purpose of 'death' in the exile and not the other way round, that the apparently quicker, steeper consequences from the Sinai covenant actually applied at all times. They seem to believe that the intensified and 'tighter' dynamic between divine law and externalized judgments which Paul notes was a 'covenant of death' (2 Cor.3) was actually the secret dynamic the whole time, implied in every interaction between God and humanity, if not temporally then in anticipation of the eschatological judgment.

Athanasius discerned distinctions and interrelations. To him, Eden showed the true priorities of God: To draw human beings into partnership with Himself in the formation of their own human nature. The Sinai covenant was subservient to that goal – a pedagogical framework most of all, to help Israel diagnose the problem with human nature (Rom.7:14 – 8:4), like a patient group vindicating the diagnosis and regimen of the doctor despite failing to complete it fully. Sinai served as a compressed illustration that referenced Eden and the original exile, and helped Israel remember it, but which was not identical with it. Hence Irenaeus said, 'But the law [that is, the Sinai covenant in particular, not God's commandments generally] coming, which was given by Moses, and testifying of sin that it is a sinner… merely made sin to stand out in relief, but did not destroy it.' (Against Heresies 3.18.7; cf. 2.12.4; 3.18.1; 5.1.3). The dynamics about God's judgment under the Sinai covenant were not abiding and permanent. That God judges, to be sure. How He judges, no: there are discontinuities that are vital to highlight.

In On the Incarnation 7.4, Athanasius represents the older patristic sensitivity to the fact that ontology frames the positive purpose of God's commandments as the foundation for 'virtue ethics' and the shaping of one's own nature in partnership with God. They saw that the displays of divine justice and judgment under the Sinai covenant's arrangements were provisional in nature; that the Sinai covenant's juridical terminology served a medical purpose: to reveal who could 'circumcise the human heart' (Dt.10:16; 30:6); that the mode of God's judgment of people and communities under Sinai (e.g. Ezk.18) externally to the person (e.g. Isa.45:7; 2 Pet.3:10 – 13) is not synonymous with the mode of God's judgment in the eschaton, which will be internal to the person and based on the formation of their human nature to that point (e.g. Rom.2:15 – 16; the theme of fire throughout Scripture); and that atonement addresses the ontological problem of human nature through the internalization of the commandments into human nature.

Likewise, Irenaeus speaks of Israel as "accustoming man to bear His Spirit and to hold communion with Him... He adjusted the human race to an agreement with salvation." (Against Heresies 4.14.2). Gregory of Nazianzus says the Sinai covenant was for the cultivation of goodness or virtue as an indication that the law was for our diagnosis and cure; yet ultimately we needed Christ to come, and heal and cleanse us (Oration 2, paragraphs 9 – 23). Pseudo-Macarius of Egypt, refers to the sanctuary system as a rite of God's cleansing of His dwelling place in a preliminary sense (Fifty Spiritual Homilies, Homily 15.45); and refers to Moses bestowing a partial cure (Homily 20.6). Cyril of Alexandria says, "After Moses, Prophets were sent to cure Israel: but in their healing office they lamented that they were not able to overcome the disease... The wounds of man's nature pass our healing... The evil is irretrievable by us, and needs thee to retrieve it. The Lord heard the prayer of the Prophets. The Father disregarded not the perishing of our race; He sent forth His Son, the Lord from heaven, as healer..." (Lecture XII: On the Word Incarnate, and Made Man, paragraphs 6 – 8).

Khaled Anatolios may well be aware of this, but his comments are still too generalized. Georges Florovsky's warning remains important: 'Not by the *suffering* of the Cross only but precisely by the *death* on the Cross.' I submit that Florovsky may have been at risk of detaching the lifelong moral struggle of Jesus to press the commandments of God deep into his human nature, which was the Jewishness of Jesus, 'born under the Law' as in Galatians 4:4 and Romans 8:3 – 4. And that is the danger of detaching divine law and judgment from ontology altogether, which is one side of the problem of the church losing connection with the synagogue. We formulate our christology from Adam to Christ but without proper consideration of Israel, leaving us with the looming question of whether Israel's experience taught us anything about theological anthropology. But when Florovsky said, 'And the final victory is wrought not by sufferings or endurance, but by death and resurrection,' he was, in effect, warning us

about the flip side of the church's detachment from the synagogue, which is a misperception of the Sinai covenant as suggesting God was interested in inflicting suffering for its own sake as a response to disobedience. Florovsky was, in effect, warning us not to think that God was 'satisfied' to a limited degree by the suffering of the Jewish people under the Sinai covenant, or as if God was 'satisfied' by Jesus' human suffering per se on the cross per se, or as if God simply operates on the principle of 'satisfying' Himself with human suffering to compensate Himself for all the human obedience He did not obtain. Florovsky reminds us that instead, 'We enter here into the ontological depths of human existence… not just the remission of sins, nor merely a justification of man, *nor again a satisfaction of an abstract justice*.' (all quotes from On the Tree of the Cross, p.65, emphasis mine).

2. Is hell what we deserve for our actions taken against divine commands? Or is hell what we desire based on how we form our human nature? – a certain state of being which a person makes of their own human nature and human desires, against Christ?

To suggest that Jesus was a 'penal substitute' by definition means that Jesus (1) took the ultimate penalty on our behalf (2) which was required by God's character given human disobedience (3) in such a way that his substitution means we don't have to experience that ultimate penalty ourselves. Any formulation like this means you have to position Jesus against hell, therefore.

But is that what hell is? The fathers' explanation for hell indicates that Jesus did not absorb a 'hell' so that we would not have to. Actually, Jesus makes hell *possible*, given the fall. Jesus confers a resurrected bodily life on everyone regardless of whether they believe in him or not. However, how people develop their human nature either with or against Christ, and of course with or against Christ's commandments like a health regimen (not an achievable 'standard'), fully explains why they experience the presence of Jesus as either bliss or torment, heaven or hell.

Hell is defined by what we desire, not what we deserve. Jesus is either the fulfillment of their desires or the rejection. Those who cultivate a disposition of desiring the corruption of sin will be like an alcoholic at an addiction treatment center constantly called upon by the counselor to give up the addiction, but who only digs in further every time, claiming with increasing resolve that the addiction is the central part of his identity. Or, they'll be like a patient who wants to retain the cancer of self-centeredness while the surgeon holds out the scalpel, interpreting the surgeon as Death wielding his scythe. Or, they'll be like a person who just wants to be left alone while being pursued by someone who insists on loving them. Someone who wants to hold on to the disease-addiction, cultivates their desires in opposition to Jesus' truth and life and new humanity, since our sinfulness affects the mind and perception.

Therefore, the quotes from the fathers I provided above are not only succinct, but exhaustive in an explanatory sense: Further, John of Damascus said, 'In eternity God supplies good things to all because He is the source of good things gushing forth goodness to all... After death, there is no means for repentance, not because God does not accept repentance – He cannot deny Himself nor lose His compassion – but the soul does not change anymore... people after death are unchangeable, so that on the one hand the righteous desire God and always have Him to rejoice in, while sinners *desire sin though they do not have the material means to sin*... they are punished without any consolation. For what is hell but the deprivation of that which is exceedingly desired by someone? Therefore, according to the analogy of *desire*, whoever desires God rejoices and whoever desires sin is punished.' (Against the Manicheans 94.1569, 1573) C.S. Lewis said that the doors of hell are locked from the inside. Augustine said, 'Every inordinate desire is its own punishment' (Confessions 1.12).

The term 'penal substitution' also requires that God's intention in hell is to inflict pain for its own sake. The companion term 'penal satisfaction' makes that even more explicit and unavoidable. But Gregory of Nyssa cautioned us about thinking this way: 'Not in hatred or revenge for a wicked life, to my thinking, does God bring upon sinners those painful dispensations; He is only claiming and drawing to Himself whatever, to please Him, came into existence. But while He for a noble end is attracting the soul to Himself, the Fountain of all Blessedness, it is the occasion necessarily to the being so attracted of a state of torture.' (On the Soul and Resurrection). There is a difference between God's intention of love and how that love is received.

When you refer to "the Psalms and elsewhere, it is the sword of the sinner falling on his own head, the pit he digs and into which falls into, the net he lays as a trap but entraps himself into…", I absolutely agree. But the question

is: In what sense is this dynamic true? Is it because God wishes to avenge His offended justice, and therefore wishes to cause pain? Or is it because when a human being sins, and repeatedly sins, his human nature becomes misshapen and his desires deformed? Is this not why the Psalms constantly cry out to God to 'refine' or 'purify' the speaker? The Psalms are training us to pledge our willing participation in 'enlarging our hearts' by taking in God's commandments into ourselves (Ps.1, 119).

Which brings up a misunderstanding to clear up. You say, "if God only uses justice restoratively, then everyone must be restored. If the judgment, i.e. justice, of God does not restore everyone, then it cannot be exclusively restorative." No, because by definition, restorative justice – whether with God or with humans – requires voluntary participation. So divine restorative justice can be extended to someone who resists participating in their own restoration and rejects God's premises. So restorative justice does not logically require universalism with certainty, or the reduction of human free will and participation to irrelevance as if it were inevitable. The very fact that God extends a call to surrender, to participate, to admit wrong, to revise one's entire perception of one's self, out of His posture of restorative justice as the activity of His love, will be torment. But that does not mean that God's intention is to cause torment.

Retributive justice, by contrast, does require God's intention to be to cause torment, and therefore does require divine passibility, because God's apparent intention to cause torment for its own sake cannot be an expression of God's nature of love; thus God must be passible because He seems to have grown a strange appendage in response to human sin that is not related to His nature of love. I am trying to carefully define these terms, and make critical distinctions throughout. We often use the word 'retribution' to describe a simple pattern of responsiveness. But that is not how I am defining it, as I am trying to respect the rich discussions in the fields of both modern criminal justice and biblical studies (e.g. N.T. Wright), independently of each other. I am trying to be much more clear and a bit technical about other facets of 'retributive justice.' I note that this has patristic precedent as well: Clement of Alexandria believed that distinguishing between various possible *intentions* of God was critical. Since sin is supremely self-harm, requiring God to heal human nature through Jesus (Instructor 2.10), God cannot be said to 'take revenge' (Instructor 1.7 – 10), but always teaches and chastises us for our learning and growth in goodness and virtue. He defines his use of terms carefully, and deploys them in this way: 'God does not punish, for punishment is retaliation for evil. He chastises, however, for good to those who are chastised' (Stromata/Miscellanies 7.16). The consequences of our own choices will be seen in eternity strictly in terms of our human being-human becoming (7.20).

If hell is not what we deserve, but the result of what we have grown to desire and perceive, then the words 'penalty' or 'punishment' might be terms that are acceptable to use only with the right qualifications. That is, with reference to ontology and teleology, human being and human becoming.

But, I don't think there is a substitutionary element for our own desire. We cultivate our own desires for or against Jesus by our own choices. Hence, if we understand hell to be the penalty and punishment for a deformed human nature and deformed desires, Jesus is the one who makes hell possible. He does not take it away, deflect it from us, or exhaust it on our behalf. So it seems improper to speak of a 'penal substitution' in that sense. Again, if we position Jesus' atonement against our temporal 'mortality' as the early fathers did, then Jesus accomplished a 'penal participation,' participating in that particular penalty but without removing it from us, since we obviously are still temporally mortal, and instead making our deaths an instrument of his victory over sin. But if we try to position Jesus' atonement against 'hell,' then where is the substitutionary element?

Defined carefully, as above, it seems improper to me to speak of 'divine retributive justice.' If God's character is impassible love, then divine justice – defined above – must be restorative. It must have love for the person as its object, along with the person's voluntary participation. The object of God's wrath must be the corruption of sin, simply because God's wrath is an activity of God's love, seeking to enlist the participation of the human being in the condemnation of that corruption of sin within herself/himself.

3. Finally, we might do more exegetical and literary work on the Pentateuch, especially, and the Sinai covenant in particular.

Discussing the various elements of Israel's experience under the Sinai covenant (sacrifices, laws, consequences, intergenerational effects) would also be decisive about assessing penal substitution and restorative vs. retributive

justice. The Hebraic covenantal system of restorative justice must be distinguished from the Western adversarial system of retributive justice. The Sinai covenant's sacrificial system is not one big metaphor for a judicial lawcourt, but a cleansing. I understand if you or others would prefer to leave these questions aside for now, as I realize that this road is more daunting, but I maintain that they are still important questions.

FrJoshua Schooping Mako, the term retribution is a biblical concept, and means simply repayment or recompense. To deny that God acts in this way is to deny that God keeps His own Covenant word, as well as denying an enormous theme of the whole Bible. If justice is not retributive then it is quite simply not justice. Justice is restorative, but restorative is also a concept of repayment, as in restoring what has been taken. Unless an evil man repents, God restores to evil men their evil, and that is just retribution.

Pentateuch
10 "and He repays those who hate Him to their face, to destroy them. He will not be slack with him who hates Him; He will repay him to his face. (Deu 7:10)
21 "When you make a vow to the LORD your God, you shall not delay to pay it; for the LORD your God will surely require it of you, and it would be sin to you. (Deu 23:21)
41 If I whet My glittering sword, And My hand takes hold on judgment, I will render vengeance to My enemies, And repay those who hate Me. (Deu 32:41)
35 Vengeance is Mine, and recompense; Their foot shall slip in due time; For the day of their calamity is at hand, And the things to come hasten upon them.' (Deu 32:35)

Prophets
18 According to their deeds, accordingly He will repay, Fury to His adversaries, Recompense to His enemies; The coastlands He will fully repay. (Isa 59:18)
56 Because the plunderer comes against her, against Babylon, And her mighty men are taken. Every one of their bows is broken; For the LORD is the God of recompense, He will surely repay. (Jer 51:56)
10 "And as for Me also, My eye will neither spare, nor will I have pity, but I will recompense their deeds on their own head." (Eze 9:10)
21 "But as for those whose hearts follow the desire for their detestable things and their abominations, I will recompense their deeds on their own heads," says the Lord GOD. (Eze 11:21)
43 "Because you did not remember the days of your youth, but agitated Me with all these things, surely I will also recompense your deeds on your own head," says the Lord GOD. "And you shall not commit lewdness in addition to all your abominations. (Eze 16:43)
19 Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: "As I live, surely My oath which he despised, and My covenant which he broke, I will recompense on his own head. (Eze 17:19)

New Testament
6 since it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you, (2Th 1:6)
14 Alexander the coppersmith did me much harm. May the Lord repay him according to his works. (2Ti 4:14)
30 For we know Him who said, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. And again, "The LORD will judge His people." (Heb 10:30)
4 And I heard another voice from heaven saying, "Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues. 5 "For her sins have reached to heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities. 6 "Render to her just as she rendered to you, and repay her double according to her works; in the cup which she has mixed, mix double for her. 7 "In the measure that she glorified herself and lived luxuriously, in the same measure give her torment and sorrow; for she says in her heart, 'I sit as queen, and am no widow, and will not see sorrow.' 8 "Therefore her plagues will come in one day--death and mourning and famine. And she will be utterly burned with fire, for strong is the Lord God who judges her. ... 20 "Rejoice over her, O heaven, and you holy apostles and prophets, for God has avenged you on her!" 21 Then a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw it into the sea, saying, "Thus with violence the great city Babylon shall be thrown down, and shall not be found anymore. (Rev 18:4-8, 20-21)

FrJoshua Schooping "For the LORD is the God of recompense, He will surely repay" (Jeremiah 51:56).

FrJoshua Schooping "If you do not strive here to gain this life in your soul, do not deceive yourself with vain hopes about receiving it hereafter, or about God then being compassionate towards you. For then is the time of requital and retribution, not of sympathy and compassion: the time for the revealing of God's wrath and anger and just judgement, for the manifestation of the mighty and sublime power that brings chastisement upon unbelievers. Woe to him who falls into the hands of the living God! (cf. Hebrews 10:31) Woe to him who hereafter experiences the Lord's wrath, who has not acquired in this life the fear of God and so come to know the might of His anger, who has not through his actions gained a foretaste of God's compassion. For the time to do all this is the present life." (St. Gregory Palamas, To the Most Reverend Nun Xenia, Philokalia Vol. 4, paragraph16, pgs 298-99)

Mako Nagasawa FrJoshua, please note that I already did say that the word 'retribution' in Scripture is used to designate 'response' in a general sense, and I affirm that usage as well as 'recompense' or 'repayment.'

I'm guessing that it's safe to say that you and I both know that words from the context of Scripture take on a different meaning when used in the context of dogmatic theology because the need for further clarity and/or agreement arose. The word 'ousia' in the context of Luke 15:12 means 'property' or 'material substance.' But in the context of Nicea, 'ousia' was stretched to mean an 'immaterial substance' denoting the divine essence/substance, something it did not mean before. The term 'hypostasis' in the context of Hebrews 11:1 means 'assurance' and perhaps even 'substance.' But when we use 'hypostasis' in the context of the Trinity, 'hypostasis' means 'person.' We might even note Athanasius, Tome to the Antiochenes, was somewhat reluctant to *fix* the word 'hypostasis' as 'person' and said that he recognized the *same structure of thought* in the two Antiochene parties despite their terminological differences. The *structure of thought* is what is important here, as I show below. Again, similarly, Gregory of Nyssa used the terms 'blending' and 'mixing' to discuss the interaction of the two natures of Christ. But we do not judge him from the standpoint of the later clarification of Chalcedon, which affixed clearer nuances to those words and said there is no 'blending' and no 'mixing.' Context matters.

Just because the term 'repay' or 'retribution' is used in the context of Scripture does not mean that we have before us a more technical definition involving either or both 'retributive justice' and 'restorative justice' or a decision between them. Both those forms of justice are further clarifications of terms which we make today that Scripture did not make in its context in the same way. That's why I keep insisting that how we further define these terms is quite important.

In that effort, consider other context clues from Scripture related to God's 'responses' or 'repayments' to Israel's sins. Moses, in Deuteronomy 28:63, uses a Hebrew word 'sas' which indicates that God 'rejoices' or 'is pleased' to punish Israel through the exile, but 'sas' also has the meaning of 'being content to' let the exile happen.

Yet when biblical writers speak of God restoring Israel on the other side of exile, they say restoring 'delights' ('chaphets') God's heart, a word which is used in the context of intimate, married couple relations on the human level, and is used to emphasize the God-Israel covenant relation. 'Sas' and 'chaphets' are proximate, but not synonyms. It is significant that there is a gradation of feeling, intensity, commitment, and intimacy between the two words, from 'sas' to 'chaphets': 'Who is a God like You, who pardons iniquity and passes over the rebellious act of the remnant of His possession? He does not retain His anger forever, because He *delights* in unchanging love.' (Micah 7:18) 'It will no longer be said to you, 'Forsaken,' nor to your land will it any longer be said, 'Desolate'; but you will be called, 'My delight is in her,' and your land, 'Married'; for the LORD *delights* in you, and to Him your land will be married. For as a young man marries a virgin, so your sons will marry you; and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so your God will rejoice over you.' (Isaiah 62:4 – 5) 'Do I have any *delight* in the death of the wicked,' declares the Lord GOD, 'rather than that he should turn from his ways and live?' (Ezekiel 18:23) Keeping in mind all the qualifications and caveats about divine impassibility and anthropopathic language in the Old Testament, it is still very significant that there are differences like these involved when we characterize God's various responses to Israel. From a linguistic and semantic perspective alone, restoring is more fundamental to who God is – something He 'feels' more passionately about. By itself, that data point alone is not decisive, but it does weigh in a certain direction.

Nevertheless, I agree with you that the term 'repay' is important, and should be examined when used. And what do we find? When we trace out the dynamics, we find that God said that the Gentile nations that came in to attack

Israel went far beyond what He called for, in terms of 'repaying' Israel with suffering. That is absolutely important to keep in mind, and helps us understand what type of justice God has. Babylon, for instance, inflicted 'twice' the suffering Jerusalem 'deserved' (Isa.40:1 – 2). Also, the Gentile nations went far beyond what God wanted for Israel: 'I was only a little angry, they furthered the disaster' (Zech.1:15). Habakkuk reflected extensively on this dynamic.

When God 'repaid' (i.e. 'responded to') Israel, therefore, He did not causally ascribe to Himself every bit of suffering Israel endured. The clarity of prophetic hindsight affects how we go back and read the totality of Israel's experience. When we read Deuteronomy 28 – 29, for example, God said with prophetic foresight what Israel will suffer, but we must say that He was speaking descriptively as a warning, not prescriptively as if *the suffering itself* was going to be the factor that would end Israel's exile and trigger God's restorative action on their behalf (Dt.30). God was not 'satisfied' by Israel's passive suffering. He was only 'satisfied' by active obedience: Israelites came out of exile only by participating as best they could in the formation of the 'circumcised heart' (Dt.30:6), or by 'writing the law on the heart' (e.g. Pr:3:3; 7:3), which Jesus would alone perfect and give them by the Spirit. During the Babylonian exile, for example, Israelite parents had to undo the harm they did to themselves and their children, by trusting God afresh, cultivating the virtues through the commandments, and teaching their children to have faith in God, despite not benefiting at the time from the abundance of the garden land. The book of Numbers showed itself to be paradigmatic: In the Pentateuch, the first generation of Israelites coming out of Egypt had to live and die while nurturing their children, the second generation, in faith – and that became the narrative dynamic of the Sinai covenant.

This was how God invited Israel to participate as the 'offender' in His restorative justice paradigm that echoes throughout the entire Sinai covenant narrative. The parents were self-centered for their own sake, so they would have to grow to be God-centered and other-centered for their children's sake, like in Numbers. The Israelites had to once again have an orientation of repentance, hope, and obedience towards the 'reign/kingdom of God' being pressed into human nature (e.g. 'give me a clean heart' in Ps.51 or the 'heart of flesh' in Ezk.36) which was messianic-christocentric. In other words, said differently, the climax of the Sinai covenant (the 'telos' as in Rom.10:4, with 'circumcision of the heart' in mind as in Rom.2:28 – 29; 6:6; 8:3 – 4) was brought about by active, not passive, obedience – culminating in Israel canonizing the Scriptures, Mary of Nazareth nurturing the human child Jesus in faith, and Jesus then doing for all Israel and all people what no one else could to human nature, internally. What about the sheer amount of Israel's human suffering, then? From the standpoint of human experience, the suffering was devastating, to be sure, and to be lamented. But from the standpoint of theodicy and theology, as related to the character of God and the transition from exile (death) to messianic restoration (life), the sheer amount of suffering from sources external to Israel was neither here nor there.

Therefore, your many quotations from within the Sinai covenant experience need to be framed properly by the notion that God wanted Israel's 'inward' decisions to become manifested 'outward.' Specifically, since Israel bowed down to other kings and powers, God eventually allowed those choices to become apparent. From the standpoint of the biblical narrative, Israel was 'regressing' and turning back to another 'Pharaoh' in another version of 'Egypt' (Isa.10:24 – 25; 11:16; etc. and the 'return from exile' is portrayed as another 'exodus from Egypt' in Isa.40 – 55). But the Prophets made a sharp distinction between A and B. 'A' was the simple fact of Israel coming under the reign of another. 'B' was the military devastation which often accompanied it, not least because the Israelites often tried to put up a military resistance of their own. God's judgments about Israel made manifest (revealed) their judgments about Him. So when we quote any 'judgment' or 'repayment' passage from the Sinai covenant experience, we also need to clarify the relationship between judgment in the Sinai covenant and judgment in Christ / the eschaton. There was a movement from external to internal, from extrinsic to intrinsic, from consequentialist to revelatory.

We see the internal, intrinsic, and revelatory in John's Gospel especially, when Jesus is being judged by everyone, but is also ambiguously 'sat down' in the judgment seat himself to judge their judgments of him (Jn.19:13). When people judged Jesus this way, their judgments rebounded on themselves (Jn.9:39 – 41). Jesus said that those who reject him have 'been judged already' (Jn.3:18) because they choose to hold onto the venom of the serpent within their own human natures – and I think it is very telling that Jesus, to interpret the cross, used the medical and healing image which was used in Numbers 21 with the second generation of the Israelites (Jn.3:14 – 15). The Sinai covenant made externally apparent the dynamics of judgment which would ultimately be fully internal in the eschaton.

We can also see this movement and progression from external to internal in how the biblical writers cleverly take one particular phrase from within the Sinai covenant and use it in the context of the new covenant: 'Vengeance is mine says the Lord; I will repay.' You quoted the phrase as it appeared in Dt.32:41 and 32:35. My explanation of the Sinai covenant, above, can explain that immediate context. But when we observe how the apostles redeploy that phrase in Romans 13 and Hebrews 10 and 12, we find that it is used to describe a judgment of God that happens *internal* to the person. In Romans 13:17 – 21, the 'vengeance' happens *inside* the persecutors: as Christians repay good for evil, love for hatred, the persecutors will internally feel like there are burning coals on their heads – which is probably what Saul of Tarsus felt in his conscience as he stoned Stephen.

In Hebrews 10, God's vengeance is *inside* the person who rejects Jesus, because inside Jesus is the new human nature which burns away the corruption of sin in us, for Jesus was 'made perfect' in his resurrection (Heb.5:7 – 9), which was what no one else, even with the Sinai covenant, could do (Heb.10:1 – 4). No one could 'take away sins' from themselves (Heb.10:4) – only Jesus could and did, which is precisely why the whole apparatus of the Jewish sacrificial system is invoked in Hebrews 7 – 10 as an explainer for how Jesus could do that *internally* to his human nature: 'His body' was his 'offering' (Heb.10:10), and 'his body' was how he 'has perfected for all time those who are sanctified' (Heb.10:14). To put a fine point on it, it was not 'the act of his death' on the cross as a moment abstracted from his physical body or his whole human life, i.e. his continual self-offering to the Father, as 'he learned obedience' (Heb.5:8; i.e. active, not passive obedience) and pressed that 'obedience' into his humanity (i.e. he 'wrote the commandments on the human heart' in Jer.31:31 – 34 and Heb.8:7 – 13), and expelled the corruption away from (i.e. 'cleansed') 'his body.' Since that is how Jesus, by his Spirit, comes into us to do the same work of 'purification' ('from sins' as in Heb.1:3), the one who rejects Jesus by definition clings on to the very thing God wants to burn away, since God in Christ 'is a consuming fire' (Heb.12:29).

Incidentally, the way Hebrews understands the Jewish sacrificial system supports my earlier argument: God was acting like a dialysis machine, taking Israel's impurity and giving back purity, until He could do it fully and completely through Jesus. All that weighs against penal substitutionary atonement, and for medical substitutionary atonement. God has wrath, certainly, but not against the personhood of persons. He is against the corruption of sin in the person. And against the decision to reject Jesus, yes, God takes 'vengeance,' a vengeance *inside* the person, because sin 'defiles' the self (Heb.13:15) and God, in His love, will eternally demand a surrender of that defilement which they, in their self-love, will eternally resist. If they have rejected Jesus, then 'there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins' (Heb.10:26), in the sense that there is no other vehicle for expiating the corruption of sin.

Hebrews then makes a key distinction about God's judgment in the past and God's judgment in the future (Heb.10:27 – 29) with is relevant to our conversation, not least because you quoted Gregory Palamas quoting it: Casting aside Moses and the Sinai covenant (i.e. excommunicating one's self from Israel's covenant) carried its own consequence of death in a provisional but self-contained sense (Heb.10:28). But casting aside Jesus means rejecting Jesus' ontology as the normative human ontology (Heb.10:29). Rejecting Jesus is like touching a furious, purifying fire when you desire to remain contaminated with dross and unpurified (Heb.10:27). By moving from lesser to greater, Hebrews shows us that God's actual basis for judging unbelievers is neither the Sinai covenant in particular, nor His behavioral commandments in general. 'Lawbreaking' is not the reason God ultimately judges people. 'Lawbreaking' under Sinai was simply a necessary symptom of a deeper problem, because the law [the Sinai covenant] was a 'pedagogue' (Gal.3:24) given by God to Israel to help diagnose the problem with human nature (Rom.7:14 – 25). Rejecting Jesus carries a divine judgment unlike anything prior in biblical history because rejecting Jesus is a rejection of one's true self. It is self-judgment and self-denial, where one becomes an ontological contradiction. Thus, Jesus does not 'absorb part of hell' on our behalf, or 'exhaust the retributive justice for any and all of our bad actions' as if such a thing drives the existence of hell in the first place. To Hebrews, given the fall into corruption, Jesus is the one who makes hell a possible reality at all.

Hence, I maintain that you are 'flattening out' the biblical narrative in a way that obscures important differences in periodization. Athanasius, again, deserves credit for perceiving them. Yes, as Khaled Anatolios says, ontology and divine law are always related, categorically, because obedience fulfills ontology, and becoming fulfills being. But dynamics of divine law and divine judgment are presented to us in different ways over the course of the biblical story. If we take a Christocentric approach to the story, as the story itself and Hebrews not least demands, then we see that the eschatological judgment will be based on our cleansing and purification in Christ, from the one

transgression in particular that opened up self-corruption, and not 'forgiveness for any lawbreaking' in a general or generic sense.

Again, I think a differentiating question between us is whether you agree with Athanasius concerning divine-human dynamics in Eden: 'Had it been a case of a trespass only, and not of a subsequent corruption, repentance would have been well enough' (On the Incarnation 7.4). Can you clarify how you interpret him here?

I maintain that the only way to honor Athanasius and make sense of his statement here is to say that:

- ontological concerns are uppermost, so the 'atonement' is a medical substitution;
- the Sinai covenant is subservient to Christ in a pedagogical and illustrative way, and not vice versa;
- 'divine justice' is restorative because of God's loving demands that we participate, in Christ, in our own cleansing and restoration through the deepest type of repentance where we receive from Jesus a renewed human nature.

If we want to pastorally emphasize the seriousness of sin and our own choices, then we can simply say: How people feel about God's judgment will depend on the condition of our human nature, and the desires we have cultivated with or against Jesus, through our own choices. The sooner we agree with Jesus' judgment, the better, because it's always easier to break an addictive habit sooner rather than later. Later in life, we will have more to repent of, and who can say if we will become the type of people who would yield to Jesus when we are older? We can agree with Jesus' judgment now and later, and finally find relief from our struggle with 'the flesh' and the corruption. Or we can judge Jesus' judgment of us, which may lead us into endless disagreement with Jesus, frustration, and torment. Universalism is by no means a certainty.

FrJoshua Schooping Those who perished in Noah's flood were not "restored." The Egyptians were not restored at the Exodus. Babylon was not restored when God confused their tongues. Sodom and Gomorrah were not restored by fire and brimstone. No one is restored who goes to hell. The punishment is simply retributive.

Mako Nagasawa FrJoshua, I am genuinely puzzled that you would list moments in OT history when God took life. 'Those who perished in Noah's flood' actually were restored – at least some of them – when Jesus visited them in Sheol/Hades, giving them the opportunity to choose him (1 Peter 3:18 – 20; 4:6). The Egyptians who perished in the Exodus and the people of Sodom and Gomorrah were probably there in Sheol/Hades, too; Jesus gave them a choice to be restored or not.

In fact, there are people you are overlooking when you simply name places. Babel *as a project* was left behind, but the *people* were restored to their creational mandate of spreading out over the earth (Gen.1:28). So I find it odd that you speak of Babel *as a people*. The people were in fact 'restored' in a provisional sense. Regarding Egypt, Joseph's wife was Egyptian, so it's a very reasonable inference that Egyptians had come to faith and intermarried with other Israelites when Israel settled there. Some Egyptians actually left with the Israelites and became part of Israel as 'the mixed multitude' (Ex.12:38), showing that God was restoring them to be part of this people in a new garden land. God's restoration to a garden is a demonstration of restorative justice.

Then, you say, 'No one is restored who goes to hell.' I agree. It's the reasoning as to why.

You say, 'The punishment is simply retributive.' Are you quite determined to ignore the more precise definitions and clarifications on offer here, which are being pressed upon us (that is, the church) for many reasons? The more precise way to say it is: 'The punishment is simply the result of their choice of what to make of their human nature.' It is God's 'response' to that choice.

But what is God's *goal* in responding this way? Either God's 'retributive' activity – as in 'responsive' activity – is wholly conditioned on His love and explainable by love, in which case God's love must still make the same demand as God does in Christ that we participate in the healing and cleansing of our human nature from the corruption of sin. Or, if you say that God is being 'retributive' for the sake of compensating Himself for being offended, or

extracting human suffering in an attempt to 'satisfy' Himself for all the human obedience He missed out on, then you are jeopardizing divine impassibility and the doctrine of the Trinity, because these are not motivations that can be said to flow out of His love. How do you explain this?

Might I remind you again about Athanasius' commentary on Eden? 'Had it been a case of a trespass only, and not of a subsequent corruption, repentance would have been well enough' (On the Incarnation 7.4). Do you agree with him here?

FrJoshua Schooping You have admitted that not all of them were restored. And you have also denied universalism. So, those who burn in hell eternally and without hope, are they being restored?

Mako Nagasawa FrJoshua, I have freely admitted ignorance and uncertainty about how any given person decides for or against Jesus. So yes, I have denied universalism as a certainty, although I affirm universalism as a hope – and no more.

Those who burn in hell eternally have fixed their human nature in a state of selfishness. Therefore, when God calls and demands that they be restored in Jesus and participate through repentance and humility and admission of self-deception and self-delusion, that very call of God causes the torment. Might I repeat the quote from John of Damascus here? 'In eternity God supplies good things to all because He is the source of good things gushing forth goodness to all... After death, there is no means for repentance, not because God does not accept repentance – He cannot deny Himself nor lose His compassion – but the soul does not change anymore... people after death are unchangeable, so that on the one hand the righteous desire God and always have Him to rejoice in, while sinners *desire sin though they do not have the material means to sin*... they are punished without any consolation. For what is hell but the deprivation of that which is exceedingly desired by someone? Therefore, according to the analogy of *desire*, whoever desires God rejoices and whoever desires sin is punished.' (Against the Manicheans 94.1569, 1573)

Why are you resistant to relocating the basis for people's experience of heaven and hell to ontology, to the condition of their human nature? We also have to explain why those who choose Jesus will continue to love Jesus for all eternity. Something in their human nature will become fixed in its direction and ever deepening in its quality as well. Doesn't the explanation for that also depend on what human nature is?

'Had it been a case of a trespass only, and not of a subsequent corruption, repentance would have been well enough'?

FrJoshua Schooping Universalism is unequivocally condemned even as a private opinion (i.e. theologoumenon). The canon against universalism is simple and all-encompassing: "If anyone says or thinks that the punishment of demons and of impious men is only temporary, and will one day have an end, and that a restoration (ἀποκατάστασις, apocatastasis) will take place of demons and of impious men, let him be anathema."

And since you have admitted not knowing, then on what grounds are you asserting knowledge against the above? The question you posed above are really beside the point if you don't know, and since the conclusion is already drawn by the Church. Somehow people reject Jesus, and their rejection has an eternal, unending consequence that is not therapeutic in any way.

If you want a fuller exposition of the canonical rejection of universalism, you might read here: https://godlightangels.blogspot.com/2020/01/the-orthodox-rejection-and-condemnation.html

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Mako Nagasawa FrJoshua, Origen and Gregory of Nyssa believed in a purgatorial universalism, and that 'apokatastasis' is the species of universalism that was condemned at the 5th E.C. The reason is because unless human nature becomes fixed in eternity and for eternity, then we are also opening ourselves up to another cataclysmic fall, or individual persons falling away from God. Origen's system, because he failed to understand ontology-teleology, requires a deliberate openness to the uncertainty: Evil could start again, at any point. Origen himself expresses this idea. Hence, Origen's universalism, as with any universalism-with-certainty, actually ceases to be a real option. At best, it is a misnomer disguising a cyclical view of time.

See Origen of Alexandria, Commentary on Matthew 13.12; On First Principles 3.1.23. Jean Daniélou, History of Early Christian Doctrine Before the Council of Nicaea, Volume 2: Gospel Message and Hellenistic Culture, translated and edited by John A. Baker, p.423 describes Origen's system this way: 'Since spiritual creatures must always be free, and since freedom always implies mutability, new falls will be possible to all eternity; and its was this point in his system which Gregory of Nyssa most severely criticized, comparing it to the Platonist doctrine of metempsychosis… It does not appear that Origen ever succeeded in resolving the contradiction between an eternal cycle of fall and return, and a universal restoration – with both of which doctrines he was later to be charged.'

So it is a non-sequitur to argue that an 'uncertain but hopeful universalism' was condemned at the 5th E.C. Mention of Origen's name in the records should be enough to indicate the difference. The underlying theological architecture here is completely different from Origen's system. All I am saying is that there is nothing on God's side that *requires* that people go to hell. And that is consistent with the other widely accepted fathers.

I think that if you were to interpret the 5th E.C. as condemning every single species of 'universalism' in an undifferentiated way, including especially an 'uncertain but hopeful universalism,' then don't you have to promote a 'double predestination' along the lines of Augustine, Luther, and Calvin? Are you certain that God will damn people to hell? How is that consistent with human free will? Or are you certain that some people will reject Jesus? And how do you know that?

FrJoshua Schooping That is not a correct understanding of the condemnation of universalism. It was worded the way it was for a reason. The sophistry which tries to rehabilitate universalism is a lie.

If you carefully read the previous exposition, and still want to hold onto universalism, which as you say is only a hope and so cannot rightly be the ground for this incessant arguing, then please also read why the "contextualizing" of universalism is another falsehood.

https://godlightangels.blogspot.com/2020/01/against-sophistry-of-canons-why.html
Against a Sophistry of Canons: Why the Anathema Against Universalism is Absolute

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Mako Nagasawa FrJoshua, please clarify then: Do you believe that God must send some people to hell? And what in God's character requires that He do so? Was this something God decided to do prior to creation?

FrJoshua Schooping I am not ascribing necessity to God. I am saying He will, according to both Scripture and the Church's teachings, whether in the Councils or individual Fathers like St. Gregory Palamas, quoted above.

Mako Nagasawa FrJoshua, If you believe God will send people to hell, how do you integrate that with God's nature as Triune, and His character as love? Is love a predicate for God? How is it loving for God to send people to hell?

FrJoshua Schooping That is a fundamentally distinct "how" question, one whose answer does not decide the case we are discussing. The Church has already unambiguously condemned universalism, and affirmed that people will suffer in hell eternally, and so if your question is to *understand* the Church's teaching, rather then to cast doubt on the Church's teaching, then it could be a profitable discussion for another place.

Mako Nagasawa Well, feel free to start another post, or direct me to one.

By the way, you still have not agreed or disagreed with Athanasius: 'Had it been a case of a trespass only, and not of a subsequent corruption, repentance would have been well enough.' Yay or nay?

FrJoshua Schooping I agree that man is corrupted in his nature. Sin itself proceeds from a corrupt nature. Man is not a sinner because he sins; he sins because he is a sinner. His nature is corrupt. That being the case, it is not a point relative to the present conversation whether or not repentance "would have been well enough," for the reality is that man is sinful and corrupt, not merely in a behavioral error but in a corrupt nature, and unless he repents and believes the Gospel, receiving Christ as His Savior in Baptism and Communion, then he will justly spend an eternity in the total consequence of his own sin.

Mako Nagasawa In relation to your original post about atonement, however, it is relevant. Which is still the larger and more important upstream category. Athanasius says 'repentance would have been well enough' because he does not position atonement against the amassing of divine hostility towards bad actions in a general sense. Athanasius positions atonement against the corruption of human nature through a particular, unique transgression. Full stop.

FrJoshua Schooping So was repentance *actually* enough?

Mako Nagasawa FrJoshua, I guess you don't agree with Athanasius in two ways? In the pre-fall, pre-corruption state, repentance *would have been* enough, says Athanasius. Not only that, Athanasius seems perfectly happy to consider the hypothetical, not simply the actual, and reason out from what he understood of the character of God what would have happened.

FrJoshua Schooping You are overlooking the fact that St. Athansius stated that repentance was not enough, because of the corruption of human nature that did happen. Hypotheticals are precisely what St. Athanasius is demonstrating are insufficient to describe or account for the case of man's fall. You quoted St. Athanasius as saying 'Had it been a case of a trespass only, and not of a subsequent corruption, repentance would have been well enough.' In other words, St. Athanasius is saying repentance was not enough. Full stop. Because there was a corruption, this corruption entails the incarnation because, without it, all men would perish in hell eternally and justly.

Mako Nagasawa FrJoshua: No, I am not overlooking anything. Here is the passage in question: 'Had it been a case of a trespass only, and not of a subsequent corruption, repentance would have been well enough; but when once transgression had begun men came under the power of the corruption proper to their nature and were bereft of the grace which belonged to them as creatures in the Image of God. No, repentance could not meet the case.'

I fully embrace the fact that Athanasius said that *given the fall into corruption*, repentance is not enough. *Given the fall*, God absolutely needed to provide us with Jesus' atonement to undo the corruption in one instantiation of human nature, and our participation in Christ was needed for each of us particularly, because a volitional repentance was not enough to heal a damaged human nature.

The possibility Athanasius was imagining was Adam and Eve *not falling into corruption.* Athanasius said Adam and Eve might have done something wrong and transgressive apart from eating from the tree of knowledge of good and evil – for example, acting disrespectfully towards each other, or their children. He entertained this possibility as a thought experiment because he was emphasizing how troublesome the fall into self-corruption was, by an order of magnitude. In our discussion, Athanasius' thought experiment is important because he indicates that not *any* lawbreaking, but only a particular one, was the reason for atonement. Athanasius says that God did not have a nature or character such that He would have been infinitely offended at any and every breaking of a rule. In those cases, atonement would not have been needed. God did not have to send the Son to atone for any and every transgression, only a particular one: the only one by which we damaged our human nature; the only one that forced God to impose mortality upon us and deny us access to the tree of life lest we immortalize human evil within ourselves; the only one for which merely learning and apologizing and growing (i.e. repentance) would not have been enough.

You seem uncomfortable with Athanasius' statement. Do you believe it undermines a key piece of the logic undergirding penal substitutionary atonement?

Once again, you appear to disagree with Athanasius in two ways. First, in the pre-fall, pre-corruption state, repentance *would have been* enough, says Athanasius. You seem to wish that he had said, 'Any transgression, not just the eating from the tree, would have called forth infinite retributive justice from God.' Second, Athanasius seems perfectly happy to consider the hypothetical, not simply the actual, situation, and reason out from what he understood of the character of God what would have happened in the hypothetical.