

## Illustrations of the Atonement, Medical Substitution, and New Humanity

Mako A. Nagasawa

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### Illus of atonement, medical substitution, healing, transformation

By January of 2007, my brother-in-law was at a crossroads. His kidneys were failing. Healthy kidneys normally filter out toxins from your bloodstream. The lactic acid that your muscles give off when you're sore after a workout was not leaving his body, so he felt tired and sore. Potassium, which we need in small quantities, was building up in his bloodstream, and unfortunately potassium is what is injected into death sentence prisoners in large quantities to send their hearts into cardiac arrest. But my brother-in-law's kidneys weren't filtering those toxins out.

Although dialysis was an option, it wasn't a good one in his case. His dad wasn't eligible because he had had heart surgery before. My wife Ming was an option but she had already delivered each of our two children by C-section, and I felt like that was enough for her. I was the best option. I matched, fortunately. I was 34, and thus relatively young. And male kidneys are bigger and could filter more blood.

So we went to the hospital. I had never had surgery before, so I was nervous. The surgeon had told me what would happen. They would put me under. They would turn me on my side. He would make an incision right above my belly button, through my abdominal muscles, or what little I have left after my swimming days. They would put two catheters into my side which had small scissors at the ends. When the surgeon put his hand into my gut, the catheters would snip my left kidney loose, and it would roll into the surgeon's hand. Then they would stitch me up and put the kidney in his right side, under his own kidney.

The day of the surgery, they wheeled me into the operating room. It was cold! It was also filled with people who looked young, like it was... a medical school training workshop. A young woman gave me the gas mask and I wondered, 'Are you old enough to be here?!?' I prayed, 'Lord, help...' and then passed out. Meanwhile they did the surgery.

When I got up and saw Paul, he looked great. His skin color was already looking normal. The surgeon didn't cut through much muscle for him, since he went in right over his right hip bone, and put my kidney under his right kidney, so he didn't feel much incisional pain. It was like getting a new oil filter in your car. And it was working. His urine was yellow. Within 48 hours, his creatinine levels dropped from 13 to 2, where normal is 1.6. He was feeling better than he had felt in months. But I felt AWFUL! I told the nurse, 'Can you give me something stronger?!?'

I think that's a good parallel because Jesus is our organ donor. All of us have a poison in our bodies, a disease called evil or self-centeredness. We need healing from it. The reason why God became a human being – why the Word became flesh (John 1:14) – was to *acquire our disease* and *develop the antidote* in himself. He acquired the disease that coursed in his veins, and he fought it at every moment. The phrase, 'the faithfulness of Christ Jesus' in Romans 3:22 and Galatians 2:20 refers to that struggle. And 'he condemned sin in the flesh,' in Romans 8:3, by never, ever sinning. In the physical body of Jesus, there was a struggle going on (Hebrews 4:15; 5:7 – 9; Matthew 4:1 – 11; Luke 4:1 – 13). Jesus won the battles we always lost. He lived the life we couldn't live. He resisted the thing in us that resisted God. He loved the Father through the human nature that loves itself.

You and I might say, 'Well, that must have been easy for Jesus. After all, he's Jesus! Does Jesus know what it's really like to be human?' In fact, Jesus understands better than you what it means to be human, because he struggled harder than you and me, *as a human being, to depend on God's Spirit, which is what it means to be human*. A former World War I veteran turned scholar named C.S. Lewis once said that the only way to know how strong the Germany army is, is to fight them down to the last man. If you surrender, you don't know how strong that army is. And the same thing is true about sin and evil. You and I don't know how strong sin and evil are, really, because we always give in at a certain point (Romans 7:14 – 25). We give up. We surrender. We don't fight it enough. Jesus never gave in. Jesus knows what it means to be truly human. We know how to give in to temptation. Jesus only knows how to fight it. Therefore, the only thing we know more than Jesus is how to be *inhuman*.

Finally, Jesus killed the thing that was killing us. He died the death we should have died but couldn't, because none of us could filter out the toxins. None of us could present our human nature back to God cleansed, healed, and perfected. As Moses commanded, 'circumcise your hearts' in Deuteronomy 10:16, by internalizing the commandments of God all the way into the heart (cf. Jeremiah 4:4). That is to say: None of us could present ourselves back to God at the end of a life lived entirely in love and faithfulness to God, with God, and for God.

But Jesus did filter out the toxins from himself. Jesus rose from the dead with a fresh, God-soaked, God-drenched, new humanity. Thus fulfills God's promise to dwell among and dwell in humanity, to return humanity from exile, as God said, 'the Lord will circumcise your hearts' in Deuteronomy 30:6. And Jesus gives his Spirit to us, when we receive him. Jesus, by his Spirit in us, filters out the toxins from us. Spiritually, he became our organ donor.

### **Illus of atonement, healing**



This photo is Dr. Evan O'Neill Kane (April 6, 1861 – April 1, 1932) operating on himself at the age of 60. He is removing his own appendix. He did this on February 15, 1921. The reports I've read do not indicate that his appendix had ruptured. He didn't need to remove it. He just wanted to remove it. Why? Dr. Kane believed that general anesthesia, which was always used in this procedure before, was more dangerous than local anesthesia. He was treating other patients who had health conditions that made general anesthesia problematic. In this case, the general anesthesia was ether. Some patients could not be treated that way. But before Dr. Kane could prove that local anesthesia worked on his patients, he decided to be his own patient. In a sense, he loved his patients enough that he decided to become one of them. He wanted to experience surgery from the patient's perspective. Dr. Kane performed the operation with mirrors to enable him to see the work area. At this time, the appendix operation was much more major than today. Today, we use a modern keyhole surgery technique. Back then, the incision was much larger. Happily, Dr. Kane was well enough to be taken home the following day. ("Dr. Kane Recovering", *New York Times*, February 17, 1921, p.6) Now Dr. Kane performed many surgeries on people after that using local anesthesia. Of course, those were acts of love and service to other people. And yet, the surgery he performed on

himself was the starting point, the source. It was the decisive moment, the focal point, and the source from which Dr. Kane performed every other surgery. He took all the risk on himself first. He took the greatest risk on himself first. Every other surgery was an aspect of that surgery, a hint of it, a shadow of the surgery he had already performed on himself.

The reason I share that story is because it helps us understand the price Jesus paid out of his love for us. When God stepped out of heaven and into Mary's womb, God became both patient and surgeon. He performed a type of surgery on himself for almost 40 years to change his own human nature. His surgical cuts in himself rooted out the human selfishness, our resistance to the Father, and every desire that was never meant to be in the human heart. But he had to go beyond removing one organ because his whole humanity was infected. He took on this disease that he struggled against his whole life. And he was successful where everyone else failed. He never sinned. He never gave in. So he bent his human nature back to love the Father, and perfected the antibodies in himself. When he gave himself back to us, our maker became our healer. Our creator became our savior by recreating us. He did it first in the body of Jesus, and he does it now in our bodies by his Spirit.

### **Illus of atonement, medical substitution, healing, transformation**

Dr. Claude Barlow was a medical missionary to Shaohsing, China, in the early part of the twentieth century. During his ministry there, a strange disease began killing people. We now know the disease as *fasciolopsiasis* caused by parasites which infect the stomach and intestines. If you get this parasite, which might grow up to 3 inches long inside you, you might feel abdominal pain, or get chronic diarrhea, anemia, other allergic responses. Your intestines might get damaged so badly that you die. Dr. Barlow watched as his patients developed these terrible symptoms, and often died. He couldn't find a remedy. In search of a cure, he filled his notebook with observations of the peculiarities he had witnessed in hundreds of cases. He puts some of the worms into a small vial, and sailed for the United States. Just before he arrived, he injected himself with the disease and hurried to his alma mater, Johns Hopkins University Hospital. He had become very sick and now depended on his former professors to find a cure. They were able to save his life. He soon went back to China with a cure for this dreaded disease. In the process, many people were saved because a doctor cared enough about his patients to share in their suffering, and in their disease.

Similarly, sin is like a parasite in our human nature. We all have it. And it is an epidemic. Part of the challenge is that human beings have been in denial. So God called together a medical focus group called Israel, and gave them a strict health regimen. They were able to recover some health, some of the time, but they couldn't defeat the disease. But they did become convinced about that sin is real, and documented its symptoms. One day there were enough of those Israelites as partners of God that the eternal Son of God became human as one of them, took on our human nature, and acquired the sin-sickness. He committed himself to the Father's care by the Spirit of God. He fought and eventually defeated the disease, but only by dying and rising with a new humanity, a healed humanity. So the Spirit of God now takes from what is "in Jesus" and "in Christ" because in him is the cure, and puts it in us. Praise God! Sin, death, and hell are no longer our destiny, if we are trusting in Jesus.

### **Illus of atonement, medical substitution, healing, transformation**

Coronavirus in China: Dr. Lee is the doctor who became the patient and the whistleblower. This is a touching story of heroism. CNN, Coronavirus whistleblower doctor is online hero in China:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eEUqCxP5Lvc>

Similarly, Jesus contracted the disease we all have, when he took on the human nature we all have (via his incarnation). He suffered on our behalf (via his life and death), as he fought against the sin-sickness in himself. At times, Jesus also had trouble breathing (Gethsemane). Jesus felt the pressures of things weigh against his own heart (temptations). Jesus finally willed his own death because that was the only way to totally conquer the sin-sickness. And Jesus went to his death in order to blow the whistle on the authorities who were trying to minimize the sin-sickness, downplay it as if it would just go away, or distract from it. But Jesus vindicated himself in his resurrection. He raised his human body so infused with the Spirit of God that he had pressed into every cell that he became the source of all the antibodies to the sin-sickness. He vindicated himself over the authorities who tried to suppress the truth.

### **Illus of atonement, medical substitution, marriage, union**

There was a touching story, about healing and love. Travis and Taesha met in 2012 on a dating website. Travis was 29 years old, but Taesha discovered that he hadn't been expected to live beyond his first birthday. Travis was born with a chronic kidney problem that left him with only 25% of one functioning kidney.<sup>1</sup> Taesha,

'not wanting to lose him, started a fundraiser for a much needed kidney transplant. Family members -- including [Travis'] fraternal twin brother -- stepped up to get tested. No one was a match. [Taesha] then decided that she wanted to get tested too, despite knowing the odds were 1 in 30,000 that she would be a viable donor. As fate would have it, she was a match. That meant just ten months into their relationship, [Taesha] and [Travis] went in for surgery together. The kidney [Taesha] was donating would add 15 to 20 years to her boyfriend's life.'<sup>2</sup>

Taesha said,

'at the time that most people thought she was crazy to risk so much for a man she had met less than a year prior. "I was afraid of judgment because I'm his girlfriend. People tell him, 'When are you going to propose?' Or they say 'You'd better get a ring for this.'"<sup>3</sup>

But Taesha didn't give her kidney to Travis to make him feel so indebted to her that he'd propose.

'As a friend of the couple, Kelly Morken, said at the time, "We live in such a self-serving society that people can't imagine giving an organ without something in return. She's expecting nothing except a healthier, longer life for Travis."<sup>4</sup>

The surgery was successful. Travis said, 'Within eight hours of the surgery, I was looking down at my hands and I had... complexion.'<sup>5</sup> Travis' health improved. Four months later, the two of them were at a baseball game, watching their home team, the Kansas City Royals. It was Organ Donor Awareness Night at the baseball stadium. Travis and Taesha were selected to throw the opening pitch and catch. So Travis threw the pitch and walked slowly back towards Taesha. He pulled out a ring, got down on one knee, and said, 'Taesha, you've given me a future that I can only dream of. I love you more than anything in this world. Will you spend the rest of your life with me? Will you marry me?'

In front of a crowd full of people, and a camera, and with tears streaming down her face, Taesha said, "Yes." They were married in May of 2014. Travis said,

"Imagine watching the person you love getting carted off and having her kidney removed so you could live, and watching that same person walk down the aisle to marry you. She literally had to give her kidney so I could even be standing there waiting!" he said. "She deserves more love and affection than I'll ever be able to give her in a lifetime but I can guarantee I'll spend all my days giving her every ounce of life she has provided me. I love her, I can't imagine not loving her."<sup>6</sup>

A touching story. Romans 5:10 says that we are saved by his life. His life. We are not saved by Jesus' death per se. It is his life – his human life of faithfulness that is now compressed and saturates his resurrected body. And yes, we

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<sup>1</sup> Chris Oberholtz, 'Woman Donates Kidney to Boyfriend for Valentine's Day,' *Hawaii News Now*, 2013; <http://www.hawaiinewsnow.com/story/21174646/woman-donates-kidney-to-boyfriend-for-valentines-day>

<sup>2</sup> Taryn Hillin, 'Couple Proves Love Conquers All, Even a Life-Threatening Disease,' *Huffington Post*, December 30, 2013; [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/12/30/kidney-donor-wedding\\_n\\_4521013.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/12/30/kidney-donor-wedding_n_4521013.html)

<sup>3</sup> *ibid*

<sup>4</sup> *ibid*

<sup>5</sup> The University of Kansas Health System, 'Kidney Transplant Love Story Continues,' May 29, 2013; [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oyML\\_mpb50](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oyML_mpb50)

<sup>6</sup> Taryn Hillin, 'Couple Proves Love Conquers All, Even a Life-Threatening Disease,' *Huffington Post*, December 30, 2013

are saved from the wrath, as Romans 5:10 also says. But the wrath of God is defined in Romans 1 as the downward spiral of sin and sin-sickness that we take our human nature down (Romans 1:21 – 32). So yes, we are saved from that wrath of God – which is God having let us make those sinful choices, so that we make our human desires and relationships worse – by Jesus' life. Jesus gives us his life, the life that fulfills what God meant for a human being to become.

### **Illus of atonement, medical substitution, redemption, healing**



This is Raphael Havard at age ten and his father Duane Havard, age fifty one. Let me explain why they are sitting in the hospital playing Uno. When he was nine years old, Raphael felt very sick. Duane and his wife Anna took Raphael to the hospital, where they were told it was a stomach bug. But within days, Raphael, who normally loved to play soccer (football in the U.K. where he lived) and cheer for his favorite team, Manchester United, got much worse.

Duane rushed Raphael to a hospital 70 miles from the family's home. The diagnosis came in: Raphael had a very rare kidney condition called Goodpasture's Syndrome, which essentially meant he would have total kidney failure. Raphael's toxin levels were 20 times higher than normal levels for children. Your kidneys normally filter out creatinine and other toxins in the blood and send it out of your body as urine. You really want to filter out those toxins because otherwise you would die a very painful death. Raphael's life could have ended within days.

Parents Duane and Anna watched anxiously over the next six weeks at the hospital, as their son Raphael underwent 3 operations, 20 plasma exchanges, and 2 blood transfusions. At last when Raphael could come home for a little bit, he had to suffer through 11 hours of dialysis per night. Dialysis comes with needle sticks, but also muscle cramps and sometimes abdominal pain. Duane wanted to relieve his son's suffering, so he got tested to see if his kidney would be a match for his son, which is not a given. In their case, fortunately, it was.

So two months later, Duane came back to the hospital with Raphael. He lay down on the operating table beside him. The surgeons took his kidney and put it into Raphael. Right away, Raphael's new kidney began filtering out the toxins from his body. He started to feel better immediately. Six weeks later, the surgery and match were judged to be a complete success. But to top it all off, the Manchester United soccer team invited Raphael to be their mascot at one of their games. And the BBC made a documentary of father and son, and had Raphael narrate it because he didn't want other children to be scared of hospitals or surgeries.<sup>7</sup>

### **Illus of atonement, healing, disease**

Stomach ulcers cause stomach pain, loss of appetite because of the pain, vomiting, possibly with blood, acid reflux and heartburn, and even anemia and stomach cancer. Stomach ulcers can be life-threatening. At one point in time, until recently, most people believed that stomach ulcers were caused by stress and spicy foods. But Barry Marshall,

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<sup>7</sup> See <http://news.sky.com/story/2908/father-donates-kidney-to-save-sons-life>;  
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/mediacentre/proginfo/2012/11/my-life-me-my-dad-and-his-kidney.html>;  
[http://www.ninelivesmedia.co.uk/production/tv\\_documentaries/memydadkidney.html](http://www.ninelivesmedia.co.uk/production/tv_documentaries/memydadkidney.html) (20 second mark)

a doctor and a professor of microbiology in Australia, became convinced that stomach ulcers were caused by a bacteria (*Helicobacter pylori*). He also believed that people could be cured by antibiotics. But there was a problem: It is illegal to perform experiments on human beings. So he infected himself. He drank a liquid that had the bacteria. Three days later, he developed a vague nausea and bad breath, which his mom noticed. On days 5 – 8, he was vomiting. On day 8, he took an endoscopy, which showed massive inflammation. On day 14, after he and his team were sure that the bacteria had colonized his stomach and given him a stomach ulcer, Barry Marshall took the antibiotic. And it worked. His theory was correct. Dr. Marshall cured himself of the stomach ulcer. He and his team published the experiment in the *Medical Journal of Australia* in 1985. Soon after, he began curing other patients, and now we have a cure for stomach ulcers. In 2005, he and his colleague won the Nobel prize in Physiology or Medicine for their work.

Stomach ulcers are like sin, in some ways. Sin causes all kinds of symptoms. It makes you feel nauseous at other people or yourself. It colonizes your heart, your mind, your body, and causes pain in you. It affects your relationships. It is life-threatening – not just ‘it could be’; it *is*. Many people believed that sin was just a residual effect of evolution and the stress of having to survive. So they thought if we can just make people feel comfortable, we can make ourselves less self-centered. That turns out to be false: sometimes when we are comfortable, we become more selfish; we become addicted to our comforts. So that was a wrong diagnosis offering a wrong cure.

There was one doctor who believed something different. God believed that sin was caused by something inside us that shouldn’t be there. Adam and Eve took into themselves the power and desire to define good and evil for themselves. They wanted to be the rule-makers. God also believed that sin could be removed from people. But no one cooperated fully with His treatment plan. So God came in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. He took to himself the infection of sin, because all human nature had been infected with sin. So simply by becoming human, Jesus acquired the bacteria of sin. He developed the symptoms, too, but he resisted them and conquered them. Because he followed God’s treatment plan perfectly. Jesus received and received and received the antibiotic of the Spirit of God, constantly, into his humanity. God’s treatment plan was obedience through a relational connection with the Father by the Spirit of God. When Jesus felt tempted, he received from the Father to press the sin back and conquer it. Jesus lived long enough to train a team and teach them what he was doing. Then he died in order to kill that disease. But he rose in the power of the Spirit, cleansed of it, healed of it. And now Jesus is the only cure for sin we have.

### **Illus of atonement, healing, disease**

What’s it like to have an internal problem, that you can’t fix on your own? What if you had a life threatening sickness, and needed a transplant? Earlier this year, I was asked to get a blood test to be a bone marrow donor. There was an older Asian American woman in California who had leukemia and needed bone marrow. I know that people with leukemia lose resistance to other diseases because they don’t have enough white blood cells. They bruise or bleed a lot because they don’t have enough red blood cells. So they need new bone marrow because bone marrow produces new blood cells. Since it’s pretty hard to find a bone marrow match, I said I’d go in for a blood test. But I have to say – I was scared! When you’re a bone marrow donor, the doctor gives you a local anesthetic at your tailbone. Then she or he will take out a huge, thick needle. That needle needs to be thick enough to break into your tailbone and get the marrow inside. OUCH!!! Into your BONE!!! Now it turns out that I wasn’t a match for her. I have to admit I was kind of glad.

But Jesus came to be our match. We have a life threatening sickness. The symptoms are obvious. We need something from outside ourselves put inside ourselves to replace what’s gone wrong. But if we’re all infected with the same thing, then where are we going to find a cure? I can’t help you, and you can’t help me. I have the same problem you have. That is why this loving God had to become one of us in Jesus, take on our human nature, and contract our disease. Imagine a doctor who does not just give you medicine, he gives you himself. What if the doctor takes our disease into himself, fights it, dies in order to kill it, and then is resurrected from the dead with a cleansed, healed, and transformed human nature? And then, what if he gives us himself – what is inside himself – as the antidote?

### **Illus of atonement, healing, disease**

**Short Version**

Do you know the movie John Q? Denzel Washington played John Quincy Archibald, father of a young son, Michael. Michael has a defective heart, and John's health insurance policy will not cover the surgery. So John gets a gun and takes hostages in the hospital. Then he starts to act like not the usual hostage-taker. He makes the doctors and nurses provide free medical care. He becomes friends with his hostages. He even gives advice to them. Towards the end, John has his son Michael brought to the operating room. He puts one bullet into his gun, revealing to everyone that (1) his gun had been empty this whole time, and (2) he had only ever planned to kill himself. He persuades the surgeon to take his heart after he shoots himself, and put his heart into Michael's body.



Now in the movie, at the last minute, a helicopter flies in a woman who had been killed in a car accident. She was a match for Michael, so John doesn't have to kill himself. Michael got a new heart after all.

In the biblical story, there was no convenient twist like that. Our entire human nature was infected with sin and selfishness. So God alone could be our human nature transplant donor. He became human, as Jesus of Nazareth. He came, not to lead an uprising against the Roman Empire, which surprised most people, but to resist the defect in his own humanity, fight his way through the selfishness, and take his own life selflessly. Not so he could offer us one organ from his dead body. Instead, by dying, he killed the defect itself, and let the infection die. Then he rose in resurrection power as a fully healed, God-soaked, and God-drenched new humanity, with God's love coursing in every part of his body and soul, to give his Spirit to us. Not just to one person, but to everyone who asks. And not just one organ, but his unlimited life and love, overflowing with the spiritual antibodies he perfected against human selfishness.

### **Long Version**

Back in 2002, Denzel Washington starred in a movie called *John Q.* Denzel played John Quincy Archibald, the father of a young son, Michael. Michael had a defective heart. He needed cardiac surgery, urgently, to have a heart replacement.

The health care system had failed Michael. The doctors didn't run the right tests on Michael and didn't detect the heart failure. John's health insurance policy will not cover the surgery.

So John gets desperate. He grabs his gun and takes the Emergency Room hostage, along with the ER doctors and staff. He says, 'The hospital's under new management now.' But John doesn't behave like the typical hostage taker. Along the way, he takes care of people in the hospital. Right from the jump, he says, 'From now on, free health care for everybody. How's that?'

Of course this is covered by the news. John brings the entire city to the edge of its seat. He releases some hostages. He says he wants his son delivered to the Emergency Room, too, because Michael is sick, and needs help. It seems like John is going to force the doctors to perform heart surgery on Mike.

But John actually becomes friends with his hostages. He even gives advice to some of them. It's quite touching, and sometimes funny. Towards the end, Mike is wheeled into the operating room.

The following is the script of the movie taken from the website, Screenplays For You ([https://sfy.ru/?script=john\\_q](https://sfy.ru/?script=john_q)). But you can watch the video clip on Youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-i73XQAeuXI>.

*Dr. Turner and John look through the glass at Mike resting peacefully.*

DR. TURNER: Mike's blood pressure has dropped into the mid-forties. His atrial blood pressure should be in the low teens. It's thirty-five. If I put that LVAD into him, his heart will never be able to handle the extra strain.

J.Q.: But...

DR. TURNER: Not buts, John. Without a new heart, he's not going to make it.

*J.Q. is devastated. It takes a few moments to sink in.*

J.Q.: Take mine.

*Turner doesn't get it.*

DR. TURNER: What?

J.Q.: You heard me. Take my heart and put it in Mike.

DR. TURNER: You can't be serious.

J.Q.: You think I'm just going to stand here and watch my son die? You bet I'm serious. Dead serious.

DEBBY: Wow.

JULIE: Oh my God.

*Lester (one of the hostages, a patient) tries to comprehend the nihilistic existentialism of it all.*

LESTER: But that means you'll die, man.

*J.Q. calmly finishes Lester's thought.*

J.Q.: And my son will live.

DR. KLEIN: John, you can't do this.

J.Q.: It's the only way.

DR. KLEIN: No, you don't understand. You physically can't do it.

J.Q.: Why not? I kill myself. You cut me open and take my heart. It's perfect.

LESTER: The boy crazy.

DR. KLEIN: We just can't remove your heart and put it into Mike's body.

DR. TURNER: There's too many unknowns. Matching a donor and receiver is extremely complicated. There's several critical tests that have to be taken.

J.Q.: Like what?

DR. TURNER: Cross matches for blood type, chest cavity measurements. If both blood tissues aren't compatible, there's a very high likelihood of rejection.

J.Q.: Come on, Doc. I know all about compatibility. We've been tested up the wazoo. Mike and I are both B-Positive. Our tissues are a match. And his heart is three times normal size which means mine will fit. You know damn well we're compatible.

DR. TURNER: No, we don't. You're an adult. Mike is strong, but the amount of blood your heart pumps may be too much for Mike.

J.Q.: I'll take that chance. It's better than letting him die.

DR. TURNER: Out of the question. Too risky.

J.Q.: I'm telling you, he'll make it.

DR. TURNER: Can't do it, John.

J.Q.: You're telling me that if I'm laying dead on the floor, you wouldn't take my heart and put it in my kid to save his life? You'd let two people die instead of one because of a technicality?

JULIE: I think what John's trying to do is right.

DEBBY: Me, too. I think it's very brave.

MAGUIRE: Yeah, it's all very noble and brave. But what do you think Mike would want? Or your wife?

J.Q.: Mike is too young to know what's good for him. I'm his father. It's my job to protect him, and Denise would do the same thing if she was in my place.

SECURITY GUARD: Are you saying Mike's life is more important than yours?

MITCH: Or that it's okay that Mike grows up without a father?

MAGUIRE: You can have more children, John.

LESTER: What happened to Mike is bad, man. It's the worst. It ain't fair, but you can't kill yourself. Sometimes you've just got to let go and let God take care of it. You've got to accept it.

J.Q.: Accept it? Accept what? Accept what??

DR. TURNER: That Mike's going to die.

J.Q.: No! I don't accept that. Ever! No, I reject that out of hand. I mean, look: He... Alright, he's a patient to you, I understand. But if you... He's a good kid. I mean, he... he loves bodybuilding! He wants to be a bodybuilder, can you believe that? And he's funny... He's... You'd like him. You'd like him, Doc, if you got to know him.

DR. TURNER: I do like him.

J.Q.: Please. You've got to help him. I'm begging you. If you ever do anything outside the rules, do this. Take a chance, please.

DR. TURNER: I'd like to. I really would. But what you're asking crosses the line. It's completely unethical.

J.Q.: I've crossed the line? No, you've crossed the line. The whole system has crossed the line.

*J.Q. paces around the room, his hand on his weapon, his mood very dark and threatening.*

J.Q. (CONT'D): I don't think you understand. I'm not letting him die. Haven't you figured that out by now? I don't care what I have to do.

DR. TURNER: So, what, you're going to kill me if I don't operate.

J.Q.: No. I'm going to kill myself.

*J.Q. puts the gun to his temple.*

J.Q. (CONT'D): And we'll just see what happens.

LESTER: Aw, man, this is messed up.

J.Q.: We all know how this works, people. In order for Mike to live, someone has to die. I'm the father. It might as well be me.

*J.Q. and Turner's eyes meet. Turner doesn't speak for a long moment.*

DR. TURNER: Alright.

MITCH: Alright, what?

DR. TURNER: I'll do it. If that's what you want.

John then reveals that in his gun is only ONE bullet. He brought only ONE bullet. He never intended to hurt anyone. This whole time, his plan was ultimately built around taking only one life: his own. He wanted the surgeons to put his heart into his child who was dying.

Now in the movie, there is a plot twist. At the very last minute, a helicopter flies in the body of a woman who had been killed in a car accident. She was a match for little Mike. John doesn't have to kill himself, to our great relief. Though John does go to trial and then to jail, Mike gets a new heart after all. He lives. The last you see of little Mike is him thanking his dad, and flexing his arms like a bodybuilder.

In the biblical story, there was no plot twist that let Jesus off the hook.

God, the Father-Son-Spirit loved us into existence. He made us to be His children. But we damaged our own hearts, to various degrees. Our life was draining away. A resistance to God set in. And we needed a heart replacement.

Can you imagine God, the Father-Son-Spirit whose very being is love, watch us get sick by Adam and Eve's own choosing? In Genesis 3, Adam and Eve took into themselves God's prerogative to define good and evil. So they started the corruption of their own human nature. They were in danger of making human evil immortal, and even intensifying it, without an escape from the disease. Would God accept this? I can just imagine God saying among Himself, 'Accept it? Accept it??? No! I don't accept that. Ever! No, I reject that out of hand. I like them. And I love them. I will offer them a new heart. MINE.'

The Father-Son-Spirit kept careful watch over us. He gave us instructions that would keep us alive and relatively healthy, until the time was right for a heart transplant. With Father-Son-Spirit's help, a few people (the people of Israel) recognized the desperate human need each of us have. They phrased it as a hope: This good and loving

Father-Son-Spirit will cut something diseased away from our hearts (Dt.10:16; 30:6), or rewrite the script on our hearts because we had garbled the originally good script (Jer.31:31 – 34), or replace our bad heart with a good heart by transplant (Ezk.36:26 – 36). But whatever the exact turn of phrase, the message was the same. We need for God to bring about a fundamental, internal change to be made right with Him, and right with ourselves.

So the watchful Father sent the eternally mature Son into our human flesh, by the power of the Spirit. He took on our sick condition personally, and started healing it from within, as one of us.

Meanwhile, people misunderstood him. They thought he was going to be a military revolutionary who would take over places – like the capital city, Jerusalem – and take some people hostage until they gave in to his demands. But Jesus of Nazareth became a friend to many people, and they didn't expect that. He said, 'Healing for all!' as he did miracles in the power of the Spirit. And as Jesus matured his humanity, he was cutting the disease away from his heart. He was rewriting the script on his heart. He was filling the weak heart in his chest with one full of God's love and Spirit.

Until finally, Jesus showed that he only brought one bullet, so to speak. He came to give himself up. But, unlike John Q, Jesus' heart-donation didn't happen through his dead body. His heart donation was spiritual, by the Spirit. By living and then dying and then rising again, Jesus perfected the heart we need. So Jesus shares it with us by his Spirit, by coming into us. That's why Jesus' resurrection is ultimately what saves us, not just his death: 'If Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins' (1 Cor.15:17).

That's great for us! Because we do not want to be stuck with that defective heart of ours! In this life, we have received Jesus' new heart, by his Spirit living in us, and we're learning to live his life, to share his life, to let his life pour out through us.

### **Illus of atonement, blood, healing, disease**

One of the many tragedies of 2014 was Ebola. In December, Time magazine rightly called Ebola fighters the people of the year (<http://time.com/time-person-of-the-year-ebola-fighters-choice/>).

'For decades, Ebola haunted rural African villages like some mythic monster that every few years rose to demand a human sacrifice and then returned to its cave. It reached the West only in nightmare form, a Hollywood horror that makes eyes bleed and organs dissolve and doctors despair because they have no cure. Those who contracted the disease encountered pain like they had never known.'

One person who got Ebola and survived said, 'It hurts like they are busting your head with an ax.' But in 2014, Ebola followed roads and planes and infected 'crowded slums in Liberia, Guinea and Sierra Leone; it traveled to Nigeria and Mali, to Spain, Germany and the U.S.' Ebola seemed especially diabolical because it struck doctors and nurses and health care workers; they were the most vulnerable.

'Anyone willing to treat Ebola victims ran the risk of becoming one... Governments weren't equipped to respond; the World Health Organization was in denial and snarled in red tape. First responders were accused of crying wolf, even as the danger grew.'

But heroic people rushed in. One of them quoted in Time magazine is named Foday Gallah. He was an ambulance driver who survived infection. Bear in mind that catching Ebola and fighting it is painful. But now, after he fought the disease, his blood carries an immunity.

'He calls his immunity a holy gift. "I want to give my blood so a lot of people can be saved," he says. "I am going to fight Ebola with all of my might."'

Jesus' blood carries an immunity. And he wants to give his blood so a lot of people can be saved – saved from the disease of sin. Everyone underestimated sin because it's a slow killer. But it was painful for Jesus to acquire it and fight it. As painful as it was for people to get Ebola, Jesus dealt with sin in a way that we can barely understand. So Jesus is the man. Time magazine's person of the year would be too small an honor.

## **Illus of atonement, transplant, disease, healing**

<http://theophanes.hubpages.com/hub/Cellular-Memories-in-Organ-Transplant-Recipients>

Cellular memory is a theory that states the brain is not the only organ that stores memories or personality traits, that memory as a process can form in other systems in the body and can be stored in organs such as the heart. First studied in heart transplant recipients Cellular Memory was noted when upon waking up from surgery patients would display a strange change in tastes, opinions, cravings, and other mild personality changes. Could it be the organs given to them had some part of the donor's memory left within it?

Most examples of cellular memory in transplant patients are recorded by scientists doing studies, with the aid of a hospital system that forbids the transplantee to know or speak to the donor's family. Because of this most of the cases are written of without the use of names, leaving these patients stories at large but still in obscurity.

One of the few cases we know the patient's name was a woman called Claire Sylvia who received a heart and lung transplant in the 1970's from an eighteen year old male donor who had been in a motorcycle accident. None of this information was known to Sylvia, who upon waking up claimed she had a new and intense craving for beer, chicken nuggets, and green peppers, all food she didn't enjoy prior to the surgery. A change in food preferences is probably the most noted in heart transplant patients. Sylvia wrote a book about her experiences after learning the identity of her donor called *A Change of Heart*.

Other documented cases have been perplexing and sometimes extreme. A 47 year old man receiving a heart from a 17 year old black boy suddenly picked up an intense fondness for classical music. The boy whose heart had been donated was killed in a drive-by shooting, still clutching his violin case in his hands. A 47 year old transplant patient claimed that his new heart was responsible for a sudden onset of eating disorders, heralded from the heart's previous owner, a 14 year old girl. Once a change in sexual orientation was even documented in a twenty seven year old lesbian who soon after getting a new heart settled down and married a man.

The most stunning example of cellular memory was found in an eight year old girl who received the heart of a ten year old girl. The recipient was plagued after surgery with vivid nightmares about an attacker and a girl being murdered. After being brought to a psychiatrist her nightmares proved to be so vivid and real that the psychiatrist believed them to be genuine memories. As it turns out the ten year old whose heart she had just received was murdered and due to the recipients violent reoccurring dreams she was able to describe the events of that horrible encounter and the murderer so well that police soon apprehended, arrested, and convicted the killer.

Other common quirks recorded have been changes in attitude, temperament, vocabulary, patience levels, philosophies, and tastes in food and music. The phenomena has just recently been put into studies. The most notable of which was Dr Paul Peasall's questioning of 150 heart transplant patients which was published in Near-Death Studies magazine in 2002 entitled "Changes in Heart Transplant Recipients That Parallel the Personalities of Their Donors" from which the aforementioned cases are mostly from.

What if Jesus were really our spiritual heart transplant donor?

### **Illus of atonement, substitution, suffering, blood**

Woman allows thousands of bedbugs to feed on her over 5 years, makes incredible discovery

CBS News, Posted 8:29 am, January 9, 2015

<http://wtvr.com/2015/01/09/bed-bug-scientist/>



(PHOTO: Simon Fraser University, Greg Ehlers)

‘VANCOUVER, British Columbia — Regine Gries has been bitten by more than 1,000 bedbugs each week for the last five years and she allowed it to happen, according to Q13Fox.com. In fact, Gries welcomed the 180,000 bites. Now her literal blood sacrifice has paid off. She and her husband Gerhard, both biologists at Simon Fraser University in Vancouver, British Columbia, said they have figured out how to attract and repel the bloodsucking parasites. It turns out bed bugs communicate by odor. The researchers have been able to identify that histamine effectively repelled the creepy creatures. They also discovered five odors that attract bedbugs and could be used to draw them into death traps. That’s where Regine Gries’ blood comes back into the story. She sacrificed her own skin night after night as part of the experimentation process to feed the bugs they were using in their research. But her blood, sweat and probably tears may all have been worth it for people plagued by the beasts. A Victoria British Columbia company, Contech Enterprises, is now developing what is being called the first affordable bait and trap for detecting and monitoring infestations. Contech expects it to be commercially available next year.’

My wife and I have fought bed bugs multiple times, and you can be sure that we were glad to hear this!! BUT WHAT A SACRIFICE!!! Thank you Dr. Regine Gries!! That’s five years of enduring torture as far as I’m concerned!! But this helps me admire Jesus in an even deeper way. You see, Jesus took on another parasite, one that lives inside us. Sin is the parasite. Sin communicates in and through human nature. We are its hosts because our ancestors got infected. The problem is that it doesn’t just bite once and then go away until the next time it’s hungry. It’s *always* hungry. It stays with you. In fact, it’s IN you. And it can drive you crazy because each bite causes jealousy, anger, guilt, fear, self-loathing and pride, greed, and a whole bunch of other things. Many times, someone else’s sin triggers yours! But Jesus took to himself human nature and got the parasite. He fought it internally every step of the way, and suffered who knows what, internally. Except in his case, he had to kill the

parasite in himself by finally giving up his own life. Then he rose from the dead with a new humanity, cleansed of the parasite. He sacrificed his own skin and very being. His blood, sweat, and tears were worth it for all of us plagued by sin. Now, a company called the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit has developed the cure.

### **Illus of atonement, rescue, ransom**

Imagine a diver stripping off his clothes, tying a rope to himself, and swimming deep, deep down to reach a drowned person. The diver reaches the drowned person. He ties the rope around him. And because the depth is so deep, he dies. Then the father of the diver pulls them both up to the surface and does CPR on them both, and they both recover. C.S. Lewis used that image. He got it from Irenaeus. Now imagine Jesus stripping off his divine privileges and taking on human nature, diving deep into our plight to recover the gem of his own humanity from the murky depths to which humanity had descended. Then he died but the Father pulled him up by the rope of the Spirit. And he can share his new humanity with us by his Spirit offered to us!

### **Illus of atonement, participation**

In the fall of 2013, I started running with my 11 year old daughter, Zoe. Zoe came to like running last spring when she joined a running club. And one reason for that was it is one of the first things that Zoe likes and is good at that doesn't come from her older brother John. Things came more easily for John: school, piano, singing, swimming, soccer, drawing. When Zoe tried all those things, she never felt like they came easily. She had to work at them. Running was the first real activity that came more easily to her. But I had read this book, *Born to Run*, about how we should not run heel to toe. That's because when we land on our heels, all the weight impacts our knees, hips, and lower back. I had been on the track team in 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade, then had a lower back injury in 10<sup>th</sup> grade. So for me, running since then has always been a bit risky. But I had found this insight that if we run more on the balls of our feet that our feet will act as a spring and absorb the shock. Apparently there is a tribe of native Americans who run ultra-marathons like that, well into old age! So I didn't want Zoe to get running injuries. So I asked her if her coach taught running form. She said no. So I decided to go running with Zoe. Now at first, running this way is hard because it works out your calves. Also, my body is not the best for running. I'm flat footed. I was a swimmer and not a runner, really. If I sleep badly, I still feel lower back pain. I'm 41 and not in great shape. So this is not the best body for running. But because I love my daughter and want her to run well, I am sharing in her life in this way.

That is *like* what the Holy Spirit does. He extended the Son of God into a human body, weakened by the corruption in human nature. The Spirit helped the Son work out that human body, and burn away the bad form, the resistance to God, the spiritual resistance and spiritual laziness that comes with being one of us. The Spirit shared the Son with us to share the Father's love with us, as Jesus loved people; to share in the suffering of his people by taking the worst of Israel's exile, being tortured by the Gentiles and crucified on a symbol of high treason; to share in the consequences of opposing Caesar as Lord because that is what it means to say that God is more important than any human king; to share in our physical death because death terrifies us; but in the end to share with us Jesus' healed human nature. The Spirit empowered Jesus to turn the mortality of his body into a victory for immortality. When the Spirit raised Jesus' dead body into new resurrection life, he was able to take the cleansed new humanity that Jesus had perfected in himself and share it with us. He didn't just run alongside us coaching us as best he could. He ran alongside us so that he could conquer what we could not and then share with us what he had perfected. He knows that what he calls us to do is hard. That's why the Spirit comes into us to share the love of God with us.

### **Illus of atonement, struggle with flesh, suffering**

'I used to tell them about a friend of mine who went up to Basel to study music when I went there to study theology with Karl Barth. In those years before the war, there were two of the world's greatest musicians in Basel, Adolf Busch and Rudolf Serkin – it was with the latter that my friend Edgar wanted to take piano lessons. Serkin looked at his hands and asked how old he was. When he said that he was twenty seven, Serkin shook his head and told him that he was too old for him to take on, and declined to enroll him. But Edgar hung about and when Serkin found that he has an unusually keen 'understanding for music,' he sent him to a friend in Salzburg who gave him exercises for six months on end, until the muscular functioning of his hands was transformed. I recall his talking to me afterwards about the drawn-out pain and agony of that experience. But it had been worth it, for when the muscles in

his hands had been sufficiently restructured, Serkin at last took him on – and in due course Edgar became a distinguished musician, and indeed a composer, himself.<sup>8</sup>

### **Illus of atonement, death and resurrection of Christ, two natures of Christ**

I really enjoy Harry Potter for its portrayal of friendship and for its clever literary allusions and historical references, like 1945 being the year Dumbledore, a Brit, defeated Grindelwald, a German, over blood purity issues – Rowling is paralleling Grindelwald with Adolf Hitler. But the even deeper connection is between Voldemort and Harry. Now for those of you who don't know the story, and for those of you who do but don't quite hear the allusions, I'm going to summarize the story and explain some of the significance.

When Harry Potter was 1 year old, the most powerful evil wizard of all time, the Dark Lord Voldemort, killed Harry's mother and father. But when Voldemort cast a killing curse on Harry, it rebounded back onto Voldemort. The reason it didn't kill Harry was because Harry's mother had sacrificed herself first, and thus given a magical protection to Harry.

The reason it didn't kill Voldemort was because Voldemort had already split his soul into objects outside his own body, and had achieved a kind of immortality in a very evil way. Voldemort had wanted to lead the wizarding world to conquer the world of Muggles, which is the word for ordinary human beings who don't have magic. He wanted to divide humanity up into two races – the magical race and the Muggle race – and make the magical race supreme. He was a wizard-Nazi.

Now the problem that Harry Potter faces is that Voldemort becomes re-embodied. Voldemort regathers his army and starts to take over the wizarding world again. This time, Harry has to personally fight the Dark Lord, but he does it by making all the choices in the right that Voldemort made in the wrong. He already has in some ways. Harry lost his parents when he was young, like Voldemort did. Harry had a flawed father and a loving mother, like Voldemort did. Harry was raised without love, being squished into the cupboard under the stairs by his aunt and uncle; and Voldemort had been raised without much love at an orphanage. But Harry made a choice to be loving, to be a genuine friend to others despite, whereas Voldemort did not. Harry chose to value courage and went to Gryffindor, whereas Voldemort valued cunning and went to Slytherin. Finally, when Harry discovers that he has a piece of Voldemort's soul in him that needs to be destroyed by Voldemort himself, then Harry chose to face death, to give his life for others, whereas Voldemort took others' lives to try to live forever. Harry makes all the choices right that Voldemort made wrong. So, Harry goes to face Voldemort, and to die. Here is an excerpt from that story.

'His job was to walk calmly into Death's welcoming arms. Along the way, he was to dispose of Voldemort's remaining links to life, so that when at last he flung himself across Voldemort's path, and did not raise a wand to defend himself, the end would be clean, and the job that ought to have been done in Godric's Hollow would be finished: Neither would live, neither could survive. He felt his heart pounding fiercely in his chest. How strange that in his dread of death, it pumped all the harder, valiantly keeping him alive. But it would have to stop, and soon. Its beats were numbered. How many would there be time for, as he rose and walked through the castle for the last time, out into the grounds and into the forest? Terror washed over him as he lay on the floor, with that funeral drum pounding inside him. Would it hurt to die? All those times he had thought that it was about to happen and escaped, he had never really thought of the thing itself: His will to live had always been so much stronger than his fear of death. Yet it did not occur to him now to try to escape, to outrun Voldemort. It was over, he knew it, and all that was left was the thing itself: dying.

'Slowly, very slowly, he sat up, and as he did so he felt more alive and more aware of his own living body than ever before. Why had he never appreciated what a miracle he was, brain and nerve and bounding heart? It would all be gone...or at least, he would be gone from it. His breath came slow and deep, and his mouth and throat were completely dry, but so were his eyes...

'He stood up. His heart was leaping against his ribs like a frantic bird. Perhaps it knew it had little time left, perhaps it was determined to fulfill a lifetime's beats before the end. He did not look back as he closed the office door...

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<sup>8</sup> T.F. Torrance, *Atonement* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009), p.442 – 443

‘He could no longer control his own trembling. It was not, after all, so easy to die. Every second he breathed, the smell of the grass, the cool air on his face, was so precious: To think that people had years and years, time to waste, so much time it dragged, and he was clinging to each second. At the same time he thought that he would not be able to go on, and knew that he must.’<sup>9</sup>

As you probably know, Harry was able to return to life and defeat Voldemort. The reason I tell you that story is because it is a good illustration of the Jesus story. Compare Harry’s Forbidden Forest story to Jesus’ Gethsemane story in Matthew 26 and Luke 22. It’s powerful. In order for Harry Potter to defeat the evil of his day, he had to die because there was a part of the evil in him. In order for Jesus to defeat the evil in humanity, he had to die because there was that same evil in him.

Harry suffered because the piece of Voldemort’s soul caused him deep pain. Jesus suffered because the corrupted human nature in him caused him deep pain. Jesus took hold of a fallen, sinful humanity from his conception, and it was always struggling against him. But Jesus never gave into it; in fact he fought it every moment of his life, and it was a heroic struggle.

Jesus retold the human life in his own life, by making choices in the right where we made them in the wrong. He lived the life we couldn’t live. He won the battles we always lost. He killed the thing that was killing us: that thing that should never have been in us, nor in him (Romans 8:3). But Jesus rose from the dead with a fresh, new, God-soaked, God-drenched human nature that he can share with us by his Spirit (Romans 8:4). So when he lives in us, he starts to kill the thing that is killing us, and heal us in the way we couldn’t heal ourselves.

### **Illus of atonement, two natures of Christ, death and resurrection of Christ**

One of the best ways to appreciate Jesus is to consider Frodo, in J.R.R. Tolkien’s *The Lord of the Rings*. In this great, sprawling story, the forces of good are trying to defeat the forces of evil. The Dark Lord Sauron had long ago crafted rings that he used to deceive humans and dwarves. He presented them as gifts to the nine human kings and seven dwarf kings, but they corrupted the mind and eventually made the wearers serve the Dark Lord. It was Sauron’s way of controlling the kingdoms. In secret, Sauron forged a master ring - the One Ring - which controlled all the others. But in a battle, the One Ring was cut from his hand, taken, but lost.

Now, the One Ring had been rediscovered. But the forces of good were torn over what to do. When they decided that the One Ring had to be destroyed in the volcanic fires of Mount Doom where it was forged, they couldn’t decide which person among them - wizard, elf, human, or dwarf - could handle the Ring without succumbing to its corrupting power. But Frodo, a hobbit, was sitting there, part of the conversation.

‘A great dread fell on him, as if he was awaiting the pronouncement of some doom that he had long foreseen and vainly hoped might after all never be spoken. An overwhelming longing to rest and remain at peace by Bilbo’s side in Rivendell filled all his heart. At last with an effort he spoke, and wondered to hear his own words, as if some other will was using his small voice. ‘I will take the Ring,’ he said, ‘though I do not know the way.’<sup>10</sup>

From that point on, Frodo fought a long battle. The Ring wasn’t just this neutral object. It was filled with an evil force that tried to take him over and give himself away. The Ring drew dark forces to him. The Ring fought with him. It tried to make him self-centered, and filled him with delusions of grandeur. It tempted him to use its power over other people. But Frodo resisted. Even though he suffered for it. In the end, Frodo was not able to cast the Ring into the volcanic fires, even though he stood at the very edge, the power of the Ring was too great. The evil had taken him over.

The moment Jesus entered into the womb of Mary is like the moment Frodo took hold of the Ring of Power. He began a long battle. His human nature wasn’t just this neutral object, like clothing that he wore. It was corrupted by the same sinfulness that all of us have in our humanity, because we all inherit the problem Adam and Eve passed

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<sup>9</sup> selected from J.K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, p.691 – 698

<sup>10</sup> J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Fellowship of the Ring* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1965), p.354

down to us. So Jesus had to fight it every step of the way, every moment of his life. And Jesus couldn't put it down, like Frodo shared the burden of the Ring with his friend Sam. It was part of him.

And do we know what that struggle was like for Jesus? C.S. Lewis, in his book *Mere Christianity*, asked, 'How much do we understand about fighting our own sinfulness?' And he used a parallel. If you had to fight the Nazi German army, the only way to know how strong that army is, would be to fight it, all the way down to the last man. If you surrender, you don't know how strong that army is, because you didn't fight it. In the same way, we don't understand how to fight our own sinfulness. Why? Because we give in. We give up. We cave to temptation. But Jesus never did. So Jesus is the only human being who knows how strong sin actually is, because he's the only one who ever fought it, always beat it, and never gave in.

But where Frodo ultimately failed, and where each of us fail, Jesus succeeded. Frodo couldn't throw the Ring into the fire. But Jesus took the corruption of sin lodged in his humanity all the way into its destruction. That is the judgment of God at the cross where Jesus plunged himself into death. It was a judgment against the thing in us that needed to be judged and cleansed out of us. Jesus wasn't judged by his Father. Jesus carried out the judgment of his Father (John 5:27) against the corruption of sin within his human nature (Romans 8:3). It wasn't a passive obedience of receiving a judgment. It was an active obedience of judging something in himself. Jesus' victory revealed what he had done all along. His victory was his resurrection. When Jesus was raised in his resurrection, he had a God-drenched, God-soaked new humanity, which is what he had been fighting for the whole time. So now, Jesus shares himself with us by placing his Spirit in us, that he might be victorious over human evil in us and through us. The humanity of Jesus no longer resists him at all. So everyone can participate in God's good and healing work in the world by participating in Jesus by his Spirit.

The great fourth century theologian Athanasius of Alexandria (who gave us the final form of the New Testament; defended the deity of Jesus against the Roman Emperor Constantine when Constantine fell into heresy; and is revered by Orthodox, Catholic, and Protestant traditions) said:

'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. What – or rather Who – was it that was needed for such grace and such recall as we required? Who, save the Word of God Himself, Who also in the beginning had made all things out of nothing?... Thus, taking a body like our own, because all our bodies were liable to the corruption of death, He surrendered His body to death instead of all, and offered it to the Father... This He did that He might turn again to incorruption men who had turned to corruption, and make them alive through death by the appropriation of His body and by the grace of His resurrection. Thus He would make death to disappear from them as utterly as straw from fire.'<sup>11</sup>

Jesus deals with our *corruption*, our *evil*, our *diseased humanity*. He shared in our diseased humanity, that we might share in his healed humanity. Jesus didn't just absorb some punishment from God that was otherwise headed our way. He paid the price of fighting our battle, throughout his whole life and death (1 Corinthians 6:19 - 20), to give us his victory. He didn't change God's mind; he changes us. He gives us a new identity in himself that is fully forgiven and fully reconciled to God and fully transformed and fully human. Who else can do that? It's not just that we need better schools, better laws, and better systems, although those things help and are worth struggling for. We need a new humanity. And only Jesus deals with our internal issue, our very being. He gives us his new humanity – the fresh, healed, 'full of resurrection power' new humanity he has perfected in the love of God and brought to a full and glorious union with God.

### **Illus of atonement**

This way of saying it might be new for some of you. Some of you think about only Jesus' death on the cross. You think that Jesus at his death absorbed a punishment that people deserve from God. But if that's all that happened, then why didn't Jesus die on the cross at age 5? Why wasn't Jesus born onto the cross? What's the point of his *life*? But in reality, it's not just Jesus' death that deals with sin. It's Jesus' entire life, death, and resurrection.

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<sup>11</sup> Athanasius, *On the Incarnation*, 2:8 – 9

Furthermore, look at the social-political context in which Jesus struggled. Think about it this way: It's possible that you would exaggerate and lie just to get a job that pays a little better, or to get into a grad school. It's hard for us to resist our fear, anger, lust, and anxiety even when we live in an affluent nation with government welfare and our parents' house to go back to. Look at what Jesus faced. 'The Word became flesh *and dwelled among us.*' The 'us' refers first and foremost to the Jewish people. That provides the context in which Jesus resisted the flesh that he took on. And what was that? Well, I composed a poem to tell you:

He was born into oppression, Roman exploitation put high taxation on the Jewish nation;  
he became a refugee; because his family had to flee  
when he was an infant, a genocidal tyrant  
came after him; it was sink or swim  
so he grew up in a poor family,  
on the margins of his community;  
'isn't he the bastard son?' some whispered with impunity;  
Joseph died early so he had to grow up fast  
did he have stretch marks and pimples? did the chicken pox scars last?  
at the right time, he faced down the devil; but Jewish leaders thought he meddled;  
he protected prostitutes and crowds;  
he cared about oppressors, the Samaritans he wowed;  
but 'you're not Jewish enough,' some retorted;  
most of his own family thought his mission should be aborted;  
but he kept on reaching out,  
the Father's love was what he was all about  
day after day  
time after time  
person after person  
patiently explaining  
enduring all of the complaining  
his closest friends were draining  
and then they caught him  
in the grip of police brutality; a crazy racist illegality;  
they called him a terrorist; the soldiers struck with whip and fist  
in the shady backroom, they brought out their list, and they beat him;  
he was betrayed;  
all his friends left;  
his enemies spread rumors; by the crowds he suddenly was hated  
he faced trumped up charges; all his rights were violated;  
they killed him 'for the greater good' they said;  
and that was what most understood; he bled  
as he forgave, and was publicly displayed  
in nothing but his underwear  
but this humiliation he was glad to bear,  
for to you and me and all humanity, this showed the utmost of his care

### **Illus of atonement, healing, substitution**

Walter Wangerin draws up a simple, powerful picture of Jesus as healer in his story *The Ragman*. You need to know that in American towns and cities, there used to be men who pushed carts offering to exchange dirty cloths for clean ones.

'I noticed a young man, handsome and strong, walking the darkened, dirty alleys of the city. He was pulling an old cart, filled with clothes, bright and new, and he was calling in a clear, tenor voice, 'Rags! New rags for old!' I wondered about this and so I followed him. The Ragman came to a woman sobbing on her back porch, with her elbows on her knees, wiping her face with a handkerchief. Her shoulders shook with each sob.

'Give me your rag,' said the Ragman, 'and I will give you mine.'

She looked up and he took her old handkerchief and laid a new, clean, white linen one in her hand. Then, as he began to pull his cart again, the Ragman put her handkerchief to his face and began to weep, to sob with grief as she had done, his shoulders shaking. Yet she was left without a tear.

‘Rags! Rags! New rags for old!’

In a little while, the Ragman found a girl whose head was wrapped in a bandage. Blood soaked her bandage. Blood ran down in a line down her cheek.

‘Give me your rag, and I will give you mine.’

The child stared back helplessly. So he untied the bandage and tied it to his own head. Then he put a brand new bonnet on hers. I gasped at what I saw, for the wound went with the bandage! Against his brow it ran with fresh blood, his own!

‘Rags! New rags for old!’ cried the sobbing, bleeding Ragman.

The Ragman met a man slumped against a telephone pole.

‘Do you have a job?’ the Ragman asked.

‘Are you crazy?’ said the man, showing that the right sleeve of his jacket had no arm in it.

‘Give me your jacket and I will give you mine.’ He took off his jacket, and I trembled because the Ragman’s arm stayed in its sleeve. When the other man put it on, he had two good arms, but the Ragman had only one.

I wept to see the change in the Ragman. He stumbled, weeping, bleeding, exhausted to the garbage pits of the city. He climbed a hill. With clumsy labor he cleared away a little space on that hill. Then he sighed. He laid down. And then he died.

I slipped into a junked car and cried because I had come to love the Ragman. The wonder of this man remained in my mind, and I sobbed myself to sleep. I slept through until Sunday morning when I was awakened by a light. Light slammed against my sour face and I saw him. The Ragman stood there, folding the bandage carefully, a scar on his forehead, but healthy! And all his rags were clean and shined. I lowered my head, trembling, and walked to him.

‘Please dress me,’ I said. And he put his new rags on me, and I am alive beside him: the Ragman, the Christ. (paraphrased from Walter Wangerin’s *The Ragman*)

What are your wounds? Jesus took into himself all of our self-centeredness, God-resistance, brokenness, and fearfulness. But he resisted all that, to realign his humanity to be in perfect union with God. So he can now give us his resurrected, God-drenched humanity in place of our self-centeredness, God-resistance, brokenness, and fearfulness. ‘He put his new rags on me, and I am alive beside him.’

‘He himself took our infirmities and carried away our diseases.’ Amen, thank you, Lord Jesus.

### **Illus of atonement, two natures of Christ, death of Christ**

Here is what John Calvin said about that: ‘When it is asked how, after abolishing sins, Christ removed the discord between us and God and acquired a righteousness, it may be replied generally that he provided us with this by the whole course of his obedience...From the moment he put on the person of a servant, he began to pay the price of liberation for our redemption...In order, however, to define the manner of salvation more surely, scripture ascribes it to Christ’s death as its property and attribute. Yet there is no exclusion of the rest of the obedience which he performed in his life; as Paul comprehends the whole of it, from the beginning to the end, when he says, ‘he made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross’...Nor was this without inward conflict, because he had taken our infirmities, and it was necessary to give this proof of his obedience to his Father. And it was no mean specimen of his incomparable love to us, to contend with horrible fear, and amid those dreadful torments to neglect all care of himself, that he might promote our benefit.’<sup>12</sup> Calvin himself says that it’s not just Jesus’ death. It’s his whole life that was atoning. His whole life was the undoing of human sin and the forging of a new humanity.

### **Illus of atonement, two natures of Christ, death of Christ**

The great 4<sup>th</sup> century theologian Athanasius said: ‘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

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<sup>12</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes* 2.16.5

the Image of God. No, repentance could not meet the case. What – or rather Who – was it that was needed for such grace and such recall as we required? Who, save the Word of God Himself, Who also in the beginning had made all things out of nothing?... Thus, taking a body like our own, because all our bodies were liable to the corruption of death, He surrendered His body to death instead of all, and offered it to the Father... This He did that He might turn again to incorruption men who had turned to corruption, and make them alive through death by the appropriation of His body and by the grace of His resurrection. Thus He would make death to disappear from them as utterly as straw from fire.<sup>13</sup> Athanasius gave us the final form of the New Testament; he defended the deity of Jesus against the Roman Emperor Constantine when Constantine fell into heresy; and he is revered by Orthodox, Catholic, and Protestant traditions. This is what we should all be able to agree on. Jesus deals with our *corruption*, our *evil*, our *ontology*. He doesn't just absorb some punishment from God that was headed our way. He absorbs our nature to give us a new nature. He doesn't change God's mind; he changes us. He gives us a new identity that is fully forgiven and fully reconciled to God and fully transformed and fully human. Who else can do that? Can Judaism or Islam, which only give us laws external to us? Can atheism, which does the same thing? Can Buddhism, which tells us to not desire anything, to suppress ourselves? Only Jesus deals with our internal issue, our very being. He gives us his new humanity – the fresh, healed, 'full of resurrection power' new humanity he has perfected in the love of God and brought to a full and glorious union with God. God's answer to the problem of humanity is: *Jesus' new humanity*.

**Illus of atonement, recapitulation, retelling**

Going even further back, to the first writing theologian outside the New Testament, we can look at Irenaeus. 'Man, who had sin in himself... was liable to death. [So] it behooved Him who was to destroy sin, and redeem man under the power of death, that He should Himself be made that very same thing which he was, that is, man; who had been drawn by sin into bondage, but was held by death, so that sin should be destroyed by man, and man should go forth from death... Thus, then, was the Word of God made man... God recapitulated in Himself the ancient formation of man, that He might kill sin, deprive death of its power, and vivify man; and therefore His works are true.'<sup>14</sup> According to his self-description and other documents, Irenaeus grew up under the teaching of Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna, who knew the apostle John. If that is true, then there is a very significant and tight line of continuity. Even if not, we have the earliest attestation by a sophisticated and thorough person that Jesus became incarnate, lived, died, and rose to heal human nature in himself, and offer it to us.

**Illus of atonement, flesh, new humanity**

Just so you can see that this is also the main idea of John the Gospel writer, look at the literary structure of John's Gospel. John is echoing Genesis. In the same way that Puff Daddy, in *I'll Be Missing You*, put his own layer on Sting's *Every Breath You Take*, John puts his own layer on Genesis.

<b>Old Creation</b>	<b>New Creation</b>
In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. (Genesis 1:1)	In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. (John 1:1)

	<b>7 Miracles</b>	<b>7 Discourses</b>	<b>7 'I AM' statements</b>
<b>1</b>	Emptiness to joy. Water into wine at Cana. (2:1-10)	Second birth with Nicodemus (Jn.3:1-21)	I am the bread of life (6:35)
<b>2</b>	Sickness to health. Healing of the royal official's sick son. (4:46-54)	Living water with Samaritan woman (Jn.4:1-42)	I am the light of the world (8:12)
<b>3</b>	Debilitation to wholeness. Healing the invalid man. (5:1-15)	The 'Son and Father relationship' debate with the Pharisees (Jn.5:16-45)	I am the door (10:7)
<b>4</b>	Hunger to satisfaction. Multiplication of bread. (6:1-14)	Bread of Life (Jn.6:22-71)	I am the good shepherd (10:11)
<b>5</b>	Fear to peace. Walking on water. (6:16-21)	Abraham debate with the Pharisees (Jn.8:12-59)	I am the resurrection and the life (11:25)

<sup>13</sup> Athanasius, *On the Incarnation*, 2:8 – 9

<sup>14</sup> Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, book 3, chapter 18, paragraph 7

6	Blindness to sight. Healing of the blind man. (9:1-41)	Good shepherd (Jn.10:1-38)	I am the way, the truth, and the life (14:6)
7	Death to life. Resuscitation of Lazarus. (11:17-44)	Upper Room discourse (Jn.13:1-17:26)	I am the true vine (15:1)

Old Creation	New Creation
Then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being. (Genesis 2:7)	Jesus breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit.' (John 20:22)

The literary allusion and structure is unmistakable. It is a reflection on Genesis and the first creation of humanity. What is John's Gospel about? The overarching point: Jesus is God, and he is bringing forth a *new humanity*.

### Illus of incarnation, atonement, two natures of Christ, flesh

In the movie *Avatar*, there is the story of the human race colonizing another planet, and fighting the alien race, the Na'vi, to get a precious metal. The strategy that the humans have is to enter into the Na'vi as one of them. The way they do this is to grow in labs bodies of the Na'vi mixed with human DNA. Jake can then transfer his consciousness into his Na'vi body and become one of them. Except that the humans are the imperialists replaying the recent history of European conquest of native ('Na'vi' = native) lands, or the Japanese conquest of Asia, or the Spanish conquest in the Americas, or the Aztec conquest before that, and so on. What becomes clear is humanity is messed up. Someone needs to step into a human body and not just subvert our society, but change human nature!

Who can do that but the God who created us? But let's look more deeply that what that meant. John 1:14, 'the Word became flesh and dwelled among us.' He became *flesh* (Greek *sarx*). 'The word became *flesh*.' That's not a neutral term. John the writer could have said that the Word became *soma* (a body) or *anthropos* (a man); that would be a neutral way of saying it. But to say that the Word became *sarx*, flesh, is the most negative way of saying that Jesus became human. Flesh in the ancient world was understood to be the corrupt aspect of us – our depravity. In another part of the New Testament, Paul says, 'Nothing good dwells in my *flesh*.' The Jewish commentator Philo of Alexandria said, 'The Lord said, 'My Spirit shall not remain among men forever, because they are *flesh*.'" (Philo, 'On the Giants', *Commentary on Genesis*, V.19 – 21)

God originally and carefully designed human nature as good and inclined towards Him. That is what it means to have been created in the image of God. But we have tainted it and corrupted it, and that phenomenon in the New Testament is called *flesh*. It's not just a physical issue, that we are skin and bones. It's a physical, spiritual, moral, and ontological issue; it's our whole being that is affected. *Flesh* is like the side of a magnet that opposes another magnet, God's side. You try to bring those two sides of those magnets together, and they will oppose each other. That is what happens when you try to approach God on your own. You think that you want God, and there is a part of you that is drawn to Him, yes. But there is another part of you that opposes Him. Why? He is pure love; we have self centeredness coursing through our veins, and He asks us to entrust our whole selves to Him so He can make us more like Himself, more radically like Jesus. So how can a loving God reconcile Himself to a self-centered humanity? He becomes one of us, takes on the fallen human nature, and forces it to change.

Before I go any further with that, let me explain why it's important that we try to understand Jesus' experience as a human being. His experience tells us the truth about our problem. The problem is human nature. It is internal to us. Now we tend to think that human nature is just ignorant, or the product of bad circumstances. We look at the Holocaust – there's a whole class devoted to it at Boston College – or we look at war and violence and racism. And there's a tendency for us to think that better education and better circumstances will solve our problems. But see, education often becomes part of the problem: every empire believes they are more educated and more civilized than the people they conquer, and they conquer in order to educate and civilize. So education can help but it often becomes part of the problem. Better circumstances can help but how do you explain all the crimes done by rich people? How do I explain my own evil? How do you explain yours?

Because we like to blame other people or other things, and minimize our own fault, we wind up not telling the truth about ourselves. We don't tell the truth about the human condition. We have fantasies, like, 'I will save the world.' Really? You??? Why don't you come to my low-income, high-crime neighborhood with your "good ideas"?!? Or,

we go the other direction and give in and let the world go down the tubes. But when we look at the life of Jesus, and how he resisted all the evil around him, and also the evil he was tempted to do, then we see the truth. It took God Himself to save us from the flesh, from human evil.

### **Illus of incarnation, atonement, two natures of Christ, struggle with flesh**

Do you know how hard it is to resist temptation? To resist evil? No. You don't. You have very little idea. Why? Because the only way to really know how evil and self-centered you are is to try to resist it. And the more you resist it, the more you realize how strong it is. How many of you struggle with killing other people? Well, that's a relief! Why is it relatively easy to resist the sin of killing someone? Because there are lots of things that could happen to you if you do. You could get caught. You could do time. Your parents would be really mad at you. But how many of you struggle with gossiping about that person, or feeling spite towards those people? Why is it hard to resist those internal sins? Because you don't think there are consequences for them. The further upstream you try to resist your own evil, the harder it gets.

Illus: If you read the saints of the past, they were really aware of their self-centeredness because they were pushing so hard against it. We're not really aware of our self-centeredness because we pamper ourselves so quickly. We eat when we want, change the channel when we want, we listen to the music we want, we listen to the news we want. We have no idea how evil we can be because we protect ourselves from it. How many of you say to your parents when they take you shopping, 'Mom and Dad, I'd like to give that money to children in poverty instead'? How many of you guys are virgins, not because you've resisted temptation, but because you've not had the opportunity?!? How many of us really engage with the racial tension here at Boston College for the good of the campus? That's the difference here. The only way we know how strong our own evil is, is to resist it. Resist our tendency to consume, to indulge, to self-protect. And the longer we resist it, the more we feel it.

Jesus resisted it at the source. When his flesh wanted to just have an easy life, Jesus said, 'No, my life belongs to God.' When his flesh wanted to lash out at his enemies, Jesus said, 'No, my life belongs to God.' When his flesh wanted to sin, Jesus said, 'No. I belong to God.' He constantly took his own humanity and redirected it to God, to receive the love of God to the fullest, to love God absolutely. When Jesus grew up, he increased in stature, says Luke in Luke 2:52. But the word for 'increased' is *proekopten*, which is the Greek word that means 'to hammer out with blows.' (T.F. Torrance, *Incarnation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009), p.64) He was reshaping his flesh like a blacksmith reshapes a piece of metal that has its own way of resisting him. Jesus' life was a life of struggle to manifest the pure love of the Father. The letter to the Hebrews refers to the 'loud cryings and tears' of Jesus (Heb.5:7).

### **Illus of sacrificial system, Temple, atonement**

Now why does Paul bring up the Jewish sacrificial system in Romans 3:25 – 26? Because in the Jewish sacrifices, God was acting like a dialysis machine. He took our impurity. He gave us back His purity. The Israelites laid the corruption of sin within them symbolically upon the animal. They sent it into God. God gave them back the blood of the animal, because animals had not fallen into sin. Animal blood was uncorrupted. In Leviticus 6 – 7, there were three basic types of sacrifices you could offer, and what made them different was who ate them. You could offer a burnt or grain offering, which God would eat, symbolically by consuming it with fire (Lev.6:8 – 13). You could offer a peace offering, which you would eat (Lev.7:11 – 15). Or you could offer a sin offering, which the priests would eat (Lev.6:14 – 18, 25 – 26). Notice that in Leviticus 10, there was an incident where Aaron, Eleazar, and Ithamar did not eat the sin offering. And Moses got mad at them:

<sup>16</sup> But Moses searched carefully for the goat of the sin offering, and behold, it had been burned up! So he was angry with Aaron's surviving sons Eleazar and Ithamar, saying, <sup>17</sup> 'Why did you not eat the sin offering at the holy place? For it is most holy, and He gave it to you to bear away the guilt of the congregation, to make atonement for them before the LORD. <sup>18</sup> Behold, since its blood had not been brought inside, into the sanctuary, you should certainly have eaten it in the sanctuary, just as I commanded.' (Lev.10:16 – 18)

Notice that the priests eating the sin offering was 'atonement'!! Symbolically what was happening with all this eating and sacrificing was that God was communicating to Israel how He would deal with human sin. He would let

you eat the peace offering. You get to swallow, eat, or internalize peace from God. But with regards to sin, if you were Jewish, you would lay your hand on the animal or the offering, symbolically saying that it was your sin, and God would suck it out of you. He would eat it. He would take it from you. Even in the case where the priests 'ate the sin' symbolically, they accumulated it in themselves as a group, and then the High Priest would send the sin to God once a year during Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. (I believe the two goats represent one thing. One goat is killed and the other is set free into the wilderness to 'bear the sin away.' The sin is carried far away precisely because God consumes it within Himself. Hence, the two goats represent one thing.)

Once again, the misconception we can have is that the God of the Old Testament is just bloodthirsty and wanted a sacrifice to appease His anger. So He kills an animal instead of a human being, symbolizing how, in the New Testament, He would kill Jesus instead of human beings to appease His anger. But that's not what's happening. God is acting like a dialysis machine. He is symbolizing the fact that He is the sin eater. He takes our sin into Himself, which He did in the physical body of Jesus. And He ate it. He cleansed it through the human choices of Jesus. The reason why it required Jesus' blood to be shed is because that's what had to happen. Like Harry Potter had to die to kill that piece of Voldemort's soul in him, Jesus had to die to kill the sinful humanity in him. So the cross, where Jesus shed his blood, was his victory. God is satisfied when He consumes human sin and destroys it in Himself!!!

### **Illus of atonement, redemption**

During high school, I read Victor Hugo's book *Les Miserables*, and it made a lasting impact on me. The story is about Jean Valjean, a convict who leaves from prison on parole. And as he looks for a job, he finds that no one will hire him because no one forgives him for the crimes he's done in the past. So he wanders from town to town in dejection until he's surprised by one man, a silver haired old man who turns out to be a Christian bishop in the town of Digne. The bishop smiles, speaks to him with such respect, and says, 'Stay at my house for dinner and shelter.' But during the night, Jean Valjean says, 'This is too good to last. I'm going to take advantage of this bishop guy before he changes his mind.' Then he takes the silverware; he just rips the bishop off thinking, 'This is the most valuable thing this man can offer.' He runs off, the police catch him. But when they bring him back to the bishop to press charges, the bishop totally surprises him again by saying, 'Keep the silver. But my friend, you forgot these.' And he presses the silver candlesticks, the last things he owns, into Valjean's hand, and brushes away the accusations. The smiling bishop then becomes the clearest Christ-figure in the whole drama because what it costs him to forgive Jean Valjean and his transgressions. In fact, he goes even further by giving up the silver candlesticks – his very last valuables – to give him a chance to start life over. His boundaries were violated, but he gave even more. He entered Jean Valjean's poverty to give him a gift that set him free from that poverty. He gave what was really the most valuable thing he could offer: his love. In the same way, Jesus allowed us to violate his boundaries, but instead of retaliating, he gave us even more!!! We put nails in his body to take away his life, and he not only allowed this, he gave us his new life! This is shocking!! In the musical, the bishop sings these words:

And remember this, my brother, see in this some higher plan.  
You must use this precious silver to become an honest man.  
By the witness of the martyr, by the passion and the blood,  
God has raised you out of darkness; I have bought your soul for God

I think that's a powerful illustration of Jesus' self-sacrifice. Even down to the motif of silver. Silver was used in Scripture in the betrayal of a brother, first in the life of Joseph, and then in the life of Jesus. But I want to interpret this story a bit more. God continually offered human beings hospitality. This is His world. These are His things. We wound up trying to steal from Him. But He came to us in the person of Jesus. He gave us something infinitely more precious than purified silver. He gave us a purified new humanity, his own new humanity, for he had taken our rebellious and distrustful corrupted humanity, fought against it, and purified human nature so that it shone like precious silver. Perhaps we might hear Jesus say:

And remember I am your brother; see in me God's higher plan  
I am like precious silver; I am the honest man  
I bear witness; I am the martyr; by my passion and by my blood  
God has raised you out of darkness; I have bought your soul for God

### **Illus of sacrificial system, Temple, atonement, healing**

The movie *The Green Mile*. One day, John Coffey (Michael Clarke Duncan), a giant black man convicted of raping and killing two young white girls, arrives on death row, where he will soon walk 'the green mile' – named for a stretch of faded green linoleum. Coffey is really innocent, and shows all the characteristics of being a 'gentle giant.' He is kind, soft-spoken, and respectful despite the fact that he could easily overpower everyone else. He heals a urinary tract infection in a prison guard named Paul Edgecomb (Tom Hanks). Later, the Warden Hal Moores (James Cromwell) brings John Coffey to his home to see his wife Melinda (Patricia Clarkson), who is suffering from a large brain tumor and would surely die. He leans over Melinda and breathes something in from Melinda's mouth. It's the cancer, which John inhales and takes into his own body. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Df7viUgmkLo> I think this is a good illustration of what God was symbolizing in the Temple sacrifices, and ultimately what Jesus did. God was inhaling the sicknesses and uncleanness of humanity into Himself. Ultimately, He took it into Himself by taking on the very human nature that was sick and unclean. He did that in Jesus, and he took the sickness and uncleanness and consumed it within himself. John Coffey regurgitated the sickness into a corrupt prison guard named Percy Wetmore. But Jesus did not regurgitate it. He took it down with himself to his own death, so when he rose a new human being, it was no longer within himself.

### **Illus of atonement, sacrificial system, Temple, two natures of Christ, death and resurrection of Christ**

In the movie *Matrix Revolutions*, there is a scene where Neo takes into himself Agent Smith. He becomes Agent Smith in the matrix. But because he remains his true self, he breaks through Agent Smith from within and then frees all the other people who had been taken over by Agent Smiths. Watch this: [www.dailymotion.com/video/x45rbg\\_the-matrix-revolutions-neo-vs-smith-shortfilms](http://www.dailymotion.com/video/x45rbg_the-matrix-revolutions-neo-vs-smith-shortfilms) 9:20 to 12:44 (the end)

What Jesus did was to take to himself this flesh-thing, this thing that was like Agent Smith. He was swallowed up in our material. Here's one way the metaphor breaks down, though. Over the course of his life, Jesus lived as that material, in that body of fallen human nature, forcing it into compliance with his own will. It was as if Neo lived for 30 some-odd years within that one Agent Smith, but constantly battling it from within in order to help people, physically heal people, be nice to people, serve people. This is what John means when he says, 'And we beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.' In every other case, human beings in our humanness blocked God's glory. We didn't reveal the love of God. We revealed the selfishness of humanity. But with Jesus, we beheld his glory shining through the human flesh he became. It was amazing!! To see God's Son revealing Himself through and even in spite of the humanness he wore.

And in the end, Jesus forced it to explode in a sense because he pushed so hard against it, against its selfish nature. He killed it. But Jesus didn't disappear, and he didn't stay dead. He rose from the dead as a new kind of humanity, a fresh kind of God-drenched humanity that had no internal resistance to God. And now he shares the Spirit of his new humanity with us, so that from within we can be set free from within from the evil that is also in us, so that we can battle it, and have some victory. John says, 'For of His fulness we have all received.' Jesus filled his humanity to the full with the love of God, the character of God, and now He shares that with us from within us. That is the beginning of our healing. And we can be assured that there is hope that God is remaking and renewing humanity *en toto*. One day we will all be resurrected physically and be completely set free and be completely healed if we share in Jesus' victory.

### **Illus of atonement, incarnation, two natures of Christ, hell**

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wOg-yjOeuVU&feature=fvwr>

I want to talk today about how Jesus separates evil from us, in order to destroy what is evil and set us free. To help us better understand that, I'd like to show you a clip of the movie *Spiderman 3*. One of the storylines in this movie is that there is a villain called Venom, which at first becomes Spiderman's new black suit. It gives him more power than he had before. But it is actually a parasite, and it feeds off of Spiderman's (a.k.a. Peter Parker's) anger and pride. It connects to his negative emotions. The more Spiderman gives into those emotions, the more powerful he becomes while he wears the black suit Venom. That experience becomes addicting. Who wouldn't want to be more and more powerful? When Spiderman finally realizes that he's becoming a person he no longer wants to be, he struggles to strip Venom off himself. Venom can't endure the sound of bells and clanging metal, so Spiderman goes to a bell tower, and with the bell ringing, is able to kick the black suit Venom out of his life. Unfortunately, Venom

then falls on a guy named Eddie, who is super jealous and proud, so together the two of them become Spiderman's enemy. Here is the clip from Spiderman 3: [<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AIXWDh0hRWQ&feature=related>]

The reason I like this clip is because it shows that Spiderman is dead set on separating himself from evil, in this case the parasite Venom. He is also dead set on separating other people from its evil as well. He pulls Eddie out of Venom's clutches. But Eddie unfortunately doesn't want to be separated from the evil parasite, and runs back into Venom, only to be destroyed.

I think that is a great analogy for understanding Jesus, and what Jesus wants to do in us. Jesus is dead set on separating himself from evil, which he does by struggling against it throughout his life, killing it in his own death, and rising free from it in his resurrection. He rips out the parasite called sin from within himself, and destroys its presence in his own human nature. Then, Jesus is also dead set on separating other people from sin as well. Jesus pulls us out of evil's clutches. But this is something that requires our choice. Just as Eddie had to choose, so we have to choose. We have to receive Jesus' help and his authority.

### **Illus of atonement, healing, social justice, incarnation**

I'd like to tell you a story that will help us understand Jesus. It's a story of a Catholic priest known as Father Damien. He started off as the son of farmers. He became a Catholic priest in Hawaii – what a great parish, huh?! In the late 1800's, the Hawaiians were helpless to control leprosy, so they started a leper settlement on the remote island of Molokai. If you were diagnosed with leprosy, you were taken by force from your family and sent to this island to die. You'd be dumped in the surf. You'd have to make your way ashore, find shelter in caves or build a shack if you could. You could imagine the anger, the hopelessness, the crime, and the self-pity there; it was life at a low level to say the least. Damien felt Jesus call him to go to that island. So he got there, and he started telling them about Jesus. He made sure he hugged the 600 residents all the time. He was a priest, but also a doctor; he treated ulcers and other problems. He was also an architect and carpenter as he built beds and homes. He always said, 'We lepers.' And then one day, that became reality. Damien acquired leprosy. He knew that would happen, but I'm not sure he knew all the ways it would affect him. On one occasion, another priest visited to show some support but refused to get off the ship. So Damien rowed out to meet him and shouted up his confession. It was humiliating. Damien couldn't even visit his headquarters because of the disease. He lived and loved this way for 16 years, he died the death everyone else was dying. But he gave them a life they could never live on their own. As soon as he had landed on Molokai, he had started to instill in the members of his community a sense of dignity and self-worth. Previously, people tossed dead bodies into shallow graves so that pigs and dogs would eat the bodies. Damien built a cemetery that was clean and fenced-in. People could then die with honor and others could express honor to them. He gathered people to build new clean houses, farms, and schools, always building right alongside them. He and the people built a church building to worship God together. He performed marriage ceremonies. Within a few years, the island was transformed. The crime rate went down. It was no longer just a living cemetery for those waiting to die, with no purpose in life; it was full of smiles because it was full of the love of God. Father Damien had embodied it. (distilled from Robert Ellsberg, *All Saints*, p.169 – 170. Gandhi said (quoted from [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Father\\_Damien](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Father_Damien)) Damien was an inspiration for his social campaigns in India that led to the freedom of India. Gandhi wrote, 'The political and journalistic world can boast of very few heroes who compare with Father Damien of Moloka'i. It is worthwhile to look for the sources of such heroism.'))

### **Illus of God's justice, atonement, reconciliation**

This morning I'd like to step back and view humanity from God's perspective. What does it look and feel like for Him? And how does He deal with it? As a father, I have some understanding of the complexity of human evil. Occasionally, there are times when my son John hit his younger sister Zoe. Or there are times when Zoe ignores John when he's trying to say something. When I see that happen, I get angry because I love the one who has been hurt. In fact, anger is a legitimate feeling that flows out of love: the greater my love for the hurt one, the greater my anger towards the one who hurt her or him. I am not impartial. But what about the one who did the wrong? Of course, I also love the one who has done the hurt, the wrong, the injustice. So I want to have mercy on the one who has done the wrong, but I also want them to be loving for their own sake, because I can discern that their truest nature is to grow in love, and their real context is relationship, not independence. I want them to come back into alignment with my love for their brother or sister. And I can discern something in them (and in me!) that is evil, that resists love, and resists the truth.

Now let's ask how God views evil and injustice as our heavenly Father. Imagine that you are called before God, the highest and most insightful Judge in the land, the One before whom all hearts are laid bare, the great King. The charges are very troubling: injustice, through your internal thoughts and external actions, through what you have done and what you have not done, through what you have said and what you have not said. The scary thing is that God is actually not impartial. He loves every person you've ignored, judged, cheated on, had contempt for, and actively hurt. Also, you have benefited from an unjust system that has hurt many other people He loves, and God is angry with that system and all who identify with it. And because God infinitely loves those people, God brings you before Him. Yet He loves you infinitely, too, just as I love my children even when they are in the wrong. He also wants you to be as loving as He is so that you won't inflict evil on them. And God sees your truest nature which is in His image and your real context which is in right relationship with Him and all others. And He discerns something in you (and in each of us!) that is evil, that resists Him, and opposes Him.

So God as Judge and King finds you guilty of injustice, and as Father finds you lacking in love. And because you have already cut yourself off from Him, the source of all love and life, He reminds you that dying you will die. That has already been true. Yet he also looks at you with compassion and says, 'I will remove from you the corruption of sin. I will participate in your human nature through My Son. I will live and labor as a human being, a dying human being who will constantly live to express my love. And in him, I will kill the corruption that is killing you. But in him, I will perfect human nature into resurrection glory, so that the problem of human evil is solved in him. If you hold my hand, and join yourself – your heart, your life, your will – to Me in Jesus, then I will judge your sinfulness as I have judged it in Jesus. I will put that thing in you to death. But I will also place his life and his love in you by My Spirit. You will be new. So not only will you be innocent of the corruption at a fundamental level, but healed of it as that healing continues to work its way through you by your willing participation.' This is what God did for us through Jesus. God entered His own judgment through Jesus, so we could die and rise with him and be free from the authority of sin, self-centeredness, and evil *in us*.

### **Illus of sin, incarnation, atonement**

'Mankind is out of gear with nature, and anxiety characterizes their life. But the consequences of broken fellowship with God extend deep into human life and keep spreading. The first brothers fall out with each other, and one slays the other. And so the story of the theological narrative goes on. It is a double story. On one side it is the story of the atomization of mankind, for the internal rupture results in individualization and conflict. On the other it is the story of human attempts at re-socialization, great attempts to mend the broken relations, to heal the internal rupture, to bind divided humanity together again, as at Babel. But all the attempts to heal man partake of *our fallen nature* and cannot but give new orientation in sin to the broken relationship with God, so that all attempts break themselves on the divine judgment and result in further disintegration. Mankind is unable to re-socialize itself, unable to heal its internal rupture for that which really makes man *man* is the bond between man and God.'<sup>15</sup>

### **Illus of atonement, reconciliation, two natures of Christ**

'I want you to imagine two great rivers, two fast flowing rivers that come together in a rush. I used to live at one point by the banks of the Ottawa River outside Montreal, just upstream from where it meets the other great eastern Canadian river, the Saint Lawrence. Normally, the two rivers were quite placid, but sometimes particularly in the spring with the runoff from the snow they could both become massive fast-flowing powerful torrents. It was both scary and fascinating to stand and watch them and not least at the point they came together. And now imagine two rivers like that flowing together with enormous force creating a single swirling turbulent torrent that crashes and splashes and rushes forward. With the double energy of the two rivers combined until quite soon they come to an enormous waterfall where they plunge, still swirling against one another, down and down until they hit the massive foaming pool beneath. Then, and only then, do they become, as it were, reconciled and now they flow downstream in quite a new way. Outside Montreal once the two rivers have combined they only have one name the Ottawa River is finished. The new combined river is the St Lawrence... Hold this in mind as you think about Jesus. Jesus represents the ancient tradition that the world is to be put to rights. The work that Jesus was doing attracted a second force that crashes into the first river with a massive amount of power. All of the powers of evil come against him. Until they come rushing together at the great waterfall which we call the crucifixion where the powerful

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<sup>15</sup> T.F. Torrance, *Incarnation*, p.39; emphasis mine

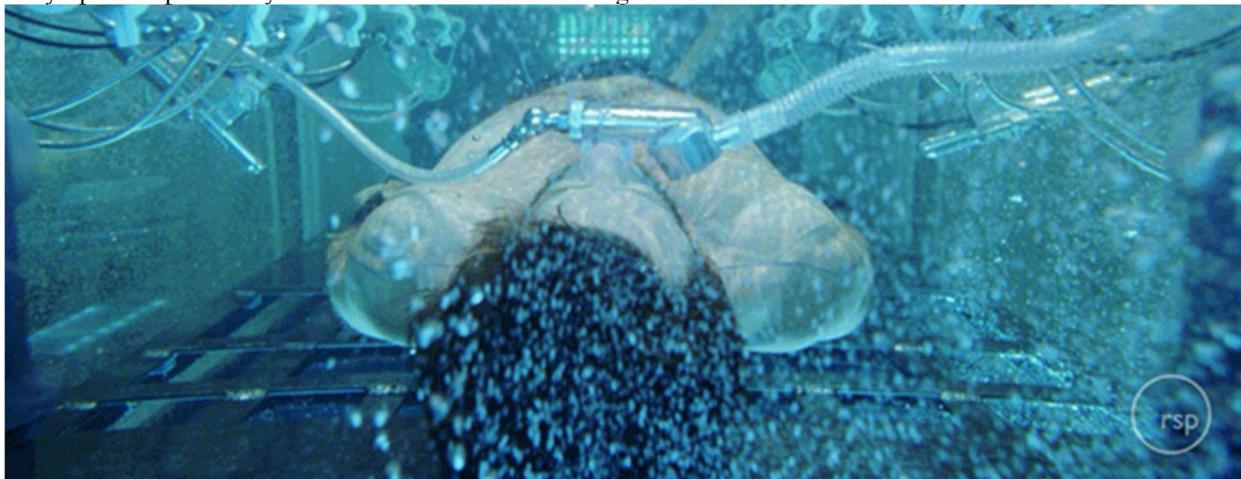
impulse we call the kingdom of God finally struggles with the powerful impulse of negativity, the dream of utopia struggling with the nightmare of nihilism in the battle ground of Jesus' own body and mind and heart and soul until with a last great crashing, echoing splash he dies disappearing down under their combined weight and we watch and wait and wonder in horror what's happened and then...'<sup>16</sup>

### **Illus of incarnation, atonement, suffering**

In the movie *Shawshank Redemption*, we get a picture of what Jesus did. In the movie, there's a character named Andy Dufrane, who goes into prison even though he was innocent. He did a total of twenty years in Shawshank Prison. During that time, he was gang raped by other guys, he was humiliated and alone, he had to reach out for friendship. He befriends one of the guys, Red, played by Morgan Freeman. Red and all the other prisoners have lost hope. They have tried to cover up their guilt, and maintain a cynical indifference. But Andy is different. For years, Andy chips away at the wall of his prison cell with a rock carving tool. He hides his work with a poster. On a stormy night with lots of thunder and rain, Andy manages to escape. He comes to one of the main sewer drains. While the thunder boomed outside, he struck the pipe, made a hole, and climbs in. In the words of Red, 'Andy Dufrane crawled through five football fields' length of shit-smelling filth...' But on the other side, he climbed out into a river, cleansed and free. And because Andy suffered as an innocent man and found a way through, Andy exposed something in Red, the truly guilty one. Red began to hope for change in his own life. Red feels the tension. Could his life really be different? Could he really get paroled and walk out of prison? But then, that would mean he would have to own up to what he had done; but can he truly face *himself*? Similarly, when we look at Jesus, we see the innocent God-man who came into this world and suffered. Like Andy Dufrane, Jesus went through 'five football fields' length of shit-smelling filth.' It was his suffering and death. We, therefore, know our guiltiness because of his innocence. We know our sinfulness because of his cleanness. And because he befriends us and makes a way through for us to the other side of our guilt and sin, in his own resurrection, we can face the reality of who we are. We can have hope. And we can be changed if we receive his Spirit, that is, if we join ourselves to him as he offers himself to us, and if we allow him to carry us through it.

### **Illus of atonement, death and resurrection of Christ, new humanity, Holy Spirit**

In the movie *X-Men Origins: Wolverine*, Logan dies and rises again as Wolverine. Logan wants to beat his enemy, his half-brother Victor Creed, or Sabretooth. And to do that, he needs to receive something indestructible. So he goes into the tank and has adamantium bonded to his skeleton. The adamantium actually kills him (38:48 – 42:33). But because his power is to physically heal, his heart starts beating again at 43:15. Of course the dying and rising parallels Jesus' own experience. Jesus died to fully receive something that would make him indestructible: the Holy Spirit. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aCTDVNgNUeY>



<sup>16</sup> N.T. Wright, *Reconstructing Hope: What is Good in a World that Defies Hope*, Harvard Graduate Fellowship, November 2008 <<http://hgscf.org/ntwright2.mp3>>



### **Illus of atonement, purchase, ransom**

There a story called the story of Bobby and his ‘bought back boat.’ Young Bobby lived near a stream, and he made a little model boat. For days he worked on this wooden model, putting the pieces together, then painting it, then putting the sails on it. Finally it was ready to take out to the water. He tied a string to it, set it on the water, and watched it sail out to the full length of the string. But as the current took it, the string snagged on some branches, and cut the string. Bobby ran along the bank, but he couldn’t keep up with the current. As the stream joined the river, the little boat was lost. Bobby never gave up looking for his boat. For days and weeks, he would walk along the river to see if the water had washed it up on shore. But there was no sign of it. One day he passed a store that sold used clothes and books and other second hand things. In the window he saw his boat. So he went into the store and told the store keeper that he wanted to buy that boat. When he walked out of the store with his boat in his arms, he said, ‘First I made you. Then I bought you.’ That is exactly what God says. ‘First I made you. Then I bought you. And now, I want to dwell in you.’

### **Illus of atonement, cleansing, death and resurrection, Eden, blood**

*Red Dust*

Mako A. Nagasawa

This red dust gets everywhere  
 On my white shirt, on Brian’s hair  
 It follows me in, it waits on the floor  
 To jump back on my feet outside the shower door

These red dirt roads wind on and on  
 Past Kampala’s slums and Murchison  
 Stretching farther than I can go  
 Calling out and saying, Slow

Go slowly over the bumps and holes  
 Eat matoke slowly from your bowls  
 Move slowly to conserve your strength  
 And hear these stories at greater length

Stories of hope along the red dirt road  
 Of mothers dreaming as their children grow  
 Like Irene, who studies while her little girl  
 Plays by the green river of sewage swirls

The red earth bleeds hope into every fruit  
 Mouthfuls of longing sweet but mute  
 Hope hides in the flesh inside mango skins  
 It lingers on banana peels in garbage tins

And Eden’s soil flows in all our blood  
 Thick as the rain and the rich red mud  
 These red dirt roads point to Eden’s soil  
 Despite the dust and despite the toil

For rumors whisper from another land  
 That the Son of God did come and command  
 Our own red blood, in his body, like ours  
 To receive the Father’s cleansing power

So hope lives in the flesh inside his own skin  
 And lingers in an empty tomb in a small garden  
 The Spirit, with whispers sweet and slow  
 Says, Taste and eat, and renewed, go

A church prays for change to flow  
Like the integrity of martyrs bold  
That corruption would one day be no more  
And trust in promises might be restored

Hopes flower and bloom in the dusty red  
From beneath the ground where the sandals tread  
Their roots must draw from a secret store  
Nourishment leaking from behind hope's door

Yes, this red dust sings with whispering voice  
In creation's chorus since Adam's choice  
Groaning for God to one day extend  
The abandoned garden that He alone now tends

### **Illus of atonement, cleansing, active obedience**

#### *Sweat*

Mako A. Nagasawa

On this island I sweat the most –  
My skin already sticky eating breakfast toast.  
The tropical sun and the humid air  
Make me wish for fans everywhere.

I sweated on the dirt roads in Leogane  
And in the classrooms in Anonsiyasyon  
When we taught restavec children under hot metal roofs.  
The smell of their bodies served as proof

That they were older than the usual kids  
But had hopes and dreams that far outdid  
Any shame or fear that their late age  
Might make them look foolish at that stage.

Though my forehead dripped salt into my eyes,  
Haitian teachers had to disguise  
The exhaustion that chikungunya brings  
While teaching children who make the heart sing.

With sweat, fruit and flowers bloom  
On this beautiful island where people make such room  
For us as guests in the heat of the day  
Where using stoves makes me faint away.

I sweated while walking down farming tracks,  
Where cows and goats left nice, warm packs  
Of fertilizer, gift-wrapped to make us wait:  
Good things can come from even waste.

Why then do I not like to see  
Evidence of my own humanity?  
My sweat, my smell, or my teammates' pee  
When we conserve toilet water – it stares back at me.

Maybe sweat wouldn't be so bad,

Go down those red dirt roads and find  
Those loved by the Father before all time  
And the thick red dust will remind you still  
Of all the places He longs to fill

This red dust gets everywhere  
Though I wash my clothes, it stays right there  
But if it follows me home, perhaps I won't mind  
Red gift of God, stay with me a long time

Mako Nagasawa, June – July 2012

Is sweat a sign of weakness? Or of love?  
That things pass through me from below and above.  
I depend on water's cleansing flow  
To purify and heal me as I grow.

Even the Son of God was thirsty when  
He waited by a well for a Samaritan.  
He was sweaty, for the sun was high.  
He probably smelled the way I always try

Not to – so soaked in chemicals am I:  
In sanitized illusions do I try to hide.  
But Jesus shows me who I was meant to be  
God's true and devoted humanity.

He struggled one lonely night in Gethsemane,  
Drenched in sweat among the olive trees.  
He wrestled against the corruption within,  
Smelling of God's love against our sin.

Through his sweaty death and resurrection,  
Jesus led God's insurrection,  
Rebelling against the ways we hide our sweat,  
And the ways we must be changed yet.

Now every drop of sweat that falls,  
Finds fresh meaning in Jesus' call:  
To love each precious person no matter where:  
We must sweat to show God's love there.

Trudging slowly on days hot or wet,  
Enduring mosquito bites as I sweat,  
Without much thanks and without much pay,  
Without much relief even in the shade.

Have I walked with him to the costly point,

If I could accomplish more than I had.  
Helping dig latrines – they’re nice to see  
But compared to U.S. farm subsidies...

How much more work needs to be done?  
I feel like I should be doing a ton,  
Changing the world for every drop of sweat:  
A reward for my armpits getting wet.

Where my own body does my sweat anoint:  
This earthy baptism through the Spirit’s love  
Is God’s refining fire from above.

Lord, You designed us to sweat, and not to sin,  
Though work in the body can reflect the struggle within.  
For we can sweat out sin – that thing so odd –  
And drink in the love of a sweating God.

Mako Nagasawa, June – July 2014

### **Illus of atonement, death and resurrection of Christ, love, sacrifice, rescue, ransom**

In the 1997 Disney movie, *Hercules*, our hero Hercules descends into death to rescue Meg from Hades. The bigger plot of course is that Hades wants to release the Titans from beneath the ocean and overthrow his brother Zeus and all the Olympian gods. To do this, he sends his minions Pain and Panic to kill the baby Hercules, so that Hercules with his great strength will not thwart Hades’ plan. They succeed in kidnapping Hercules and making him mortal, but they don’t remove his great strength. Hercules becomes a mortal and grows up adopted by mortal parents who are farmers. Years later, Hercules as a teenager is wondering where he came from. He goes to the temple of Zeus to ask for answers. Zeus speaks to Hercules and tells him that he can regain his immortality by becoming a ‘true hero.’ He meets the winged horse Pegasus and the satyr Phil who becomes his trainer. On the way to Thebes, they meet Megara – or Meg – the love interest. Meg is actually a betrayer, who is working for Hades because she sold him her soul to save an unfaithful lover. Meg starts to fall in love with Hercules, who is really just a simple guy in a really strong body. Hades bargains with Hercules to give up his powers for 24 hours so Meg will be unharmed. Hercules agrees, and then is shocked to learn that Meg was working for him all this time. During a battle with the titans, Meg saves Hercules from a falling pillar but is crushed under it. So the last part of the story is that Hercules goes down into the underworld where Hades is. Meg’s soul is now Hades’ property, and she is floating in the famous river of death, the river Styx. Hercules dives into the river Styx, which starts to drain away his life. As he swims down to rescue Meg’s soul, he ages. But his heroic act of sacrificing his own life is what restores his immortality and full godhood. So he rescues Meg and throws Hades into the river instead.

### **Illus of atonement, writing on the heart, union with Christ**

Jesus has just heard the Father say, ‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased.’ So Jesus is not fooled. He doesn’t doubt what God said. He doesn’t ask God to say it again. He doesn’t try to make God prove it by turning stones into bread, by using spiritual power for his own benefit. Jesus receives the word of his Father deep into his heart. The human heart is a tablet. It was meant to be written on by God. When I was younger, I worked in a shop. I engraved words onto metal things: signs, bracelets, and other things. Occasionally, I would make a mistake. So I’d have to throw away the metal thing because I couldn’t melt it down. God allowed us to be in charge of who we allow to engrave words onto our hearts. We listen to other voices telling us who we are, and we write those words in our hearts. Or we believe lies Satan tells us, and we write those words in our hearts. God did not throw us away. He sent His Son to grab hold of a human heart and melt it down in the fires of his love, so he could rewrite the words there. Jesus allowed God to write words on his heart, ‘The Father’s beloved Son, in whom the Father is well-pleased.’ He received that word deep into himself. He erased all the lies of Satan. And now, he can share his own heart with us by his Spirit, when we come to him.

Illus: I have a friend named Jason\*. He is a brilliant neuroscientist. So he knew very well what was happening when he was diagnosed with a brain tumor. Jason and his wife thought that he would have only a little time left to live. As they prayed and looked at Jason’s family’s medical history, they realized that Jason’s dad and grandfather had been involved in a secret society called the Masons. They had both gone deep into the occult, into the realm of the demonic. They would keep secrets, hold onto secret power, and sometimes curse people. There was a curse put onto family members who left the Masons, which Jason did. They really prayed, asking Jesus to erase the curses and words of Satan. The brain tumor disappeared. Jason’s doctors said that it was a medical miracle. But just as importantly, if not more so, Jason became a very different person because of Jesus. He became the opposite of his father and grandfather in the Masons: He didn’t try to hold onto secret power; instead, he wanted everyone to know the power of Jesus to heal. He didn’t curse people, but blessed them. That is the best change: the change that Jesus

makes in a person, which will last into eternity. Jesus rewrites what is on our hearts. He gives us what he has already received: his identity from the Father alone.

That is how Jesus comes into the enemy's camp and sets us free. He becomes one of us, to heal in himself what needed to be healed in us. And if we receive him, he becomes one with us by his Spirit, so that we can share in us what he did in himself.

### **Illus of atonement, story, recapitulation, Israel, new humanity**

Illus: Somehow, we know that in all good stories, the happy ending doesn't just come out of nowhere. It replays the mess ups people had done before. Like with Anakin and Luke Skywalker. How many of you are Star Wars fans? Do you notice that Luke repeats motifs from his father Anakin's life. In Anakin's duel with Count Dooku, Anakin loses his green lightsaber, but he also has Obi-Wan Kenobi's blue lightsaber. During the fight, a power cord is cut, which turns the lights off. So Anakin and Dooku fight in a blue and red lightsaber duel, with blue and red lights reflected in their faces. In that duel, young Anakin loses his right hand. Of course, Anakin later chooses the dark side and becomes Darth Vader. Luke Skywalker replays his father Anakin's story, but redeems it. He has a blue lightsaber, and with it fights Darth Vader, who now has a red lightsaber. So Luke and Darth Vader fight in a blue and red lightsaber duel, with blue and red lights reflected on their faces. They are in a dark room, and replay the same moves that Anakin and Dooku did. In that duel, young Luke Skywalker loses his right hand. So the stories parallel each other. But Luke later does not choose the dark side. He stays on the good side of the force and redeems his father, yes, but also his father's story. The victory echoed the defeats of the past, but reversed them.

Illus: The Red Sox have a lot of history like that. The Red Sox won the World Series in 1916 and 1918, and then traded Babe Ruth to the NY Yankees in 1920. They didn't win another championship for 86 years. It was called 'the curse of the Bambino', i.e. Babe Ruth, and it seemed true. How many of you know that sad story? Whenever the Red Sox went to either the American League championship or the World Series, they lost through some weird fluke, each time. In 1975, the Sox lost to the Cincinnati Reds in game 7, in the 9<sup>th</sup> inning, after being ahead 3-0. In 1986, the Sox lost the American League playoff to the Mets. In game 6, Bill Buckner just had to catch the ball and throw it to home, but he let the ball go through his legs, and the Mets scored the winning run. They lost that game, then lost the next game and lost the World Series. In 2003, in the American League championship, the Sox were beating the Yankees in the 8<sup>th</sup> inning of game 7. They were up 5-2. But the Yankees won in the 9<sup>th</sup> 6-5. It did seem like the Red Sox were just cursed. No matter how well they did, something tragic always happened. But in 2004, as we all know, the Red Sox won the World Series. But they didn't just win, they won in such a way that they replayed many of the past events but redeemed them. They beat the Yankees, their arch-rivals, for the American League Championship after the Yankees had already won 3 games. And the amazing thing is that NO ONE has ever come back to win 4 straight games after losing the first 3. Curt Schilling pitched on a bleeding ankle because he had torn sutures because he had torn tendons. And in the World Series, the Red Sox beat the St. Louis Cardinals in 4 straight games. To add a surreal touch to the World Series victory, there was a total lunar eclipse that colored the moon a deep red color. The moon was red when the Red Sox won the World Series at last. The victory echoed the defeats of the past, but reversed them.

Happy endings don't come out of nowhere – they repair the failures of the past. Adam's race brought evil into the world. Adam's race will help to heal it. Why does it work that way? – Because God is committed to working inside the story. Not from outside it, because He would then overrule humanity's place in the story. He is so committed to us, in love and justice, that this is the way He brings it about.

### **Illus of atonement, story, recapitulation, retelling**

In July of 2014, my friend Chris proposed to his girlfriend Erica. The long awaited proposal had some build up to it because he had faked her out twice before, as if he was going to propose on these other dates! But finally the day came. Chris asked Erica to do a scavenger hunt. First, she was supposed to visit the home of her friend. So Erica went. This friend had thrown a dinner party where Chris and Erica had first met. Their first conversation was instant chemistry because of a Christian spiritual connection and because she respected his love for teaching middle schoolers at an urban school, and living in the city; he admired her desire to be a doctor and possibly serve the underprivileged, and maybe even overseas in Christian mission. Plus they each thought the other was cute. This friend gave Erica a note from Chris saying things about how he felt meeting her, and gave her the next clue. The

next place was a restaurant called Ashmont Grill in Dorchester. That was where they had their first real date, and their second meeting. The restaurant staff gave her a letter from Chris, which she read, and another clue. Third, she went to a park in Dorchester, Pope John Paul II Park near the Neponset River. That's where they had had their second date and third meeting. Then, she went to the beach by South Boston, where they had had their third date. Chris was waiting there. As she drove up and saw him, she started tearing up. She walked from her car to this picnic area where he thanked her for reliving their story, because that's what had been on his mind as he was preparing to get down on his knee and ask her to marry him. Which he did. The story of how they first came together was retold as they decided to be together forever.

That is what God has done for us in Jesus. Jesus retold through his own life the story of how God and humanity first met. God had placed human beings in a garden to grow in trust by listening to God's word. Now, God came in Jesus to bring human nature even closer to Himself in an unbreakable union. Jesus grew in trust by listening to God's word. By so doing, he retold the story of human beings as it was supposed to happen. Because unlike the happy story of my friends Chris and Erica, the story of God and humanity took a very unexpected turn involving deep betrayals and the corruption of human nature. God had wanted to keep human beings in the pristine state that He made us in, and even saturate each person with fresh glory as he or she chose God personally. So Jesus had to not only retell the original story as it should have happened, he had to retell it in the context of repeated betrayals that humanity had actually committed. So instead of starting in a garden, Jesus began in a wilderness.

### **Illus of atonement, healing**

In January of 1951, Henrietta Lacks became the woman who became present everywhere, all around us. She is probably in you. She has probably helped you live. You see, in January, 1951, Henrietta discovered after giving birth to her fifth child that she had cervical cancer. The doctor at Johns Hopkins University took two samples of Henrietta's cervix: one healthy and one malignant. This was done without her permission, which was typical for back then. Henrietta died of cancer on October 4, 1951, at the age of 31. She was buried in a family cemetery in Lackstown, Virginia.

But Henrietta's cells continued to live on and reproduce. Cells from other patients died after a few days, and researchers spent more time trying to keep cells alive than doing actual experiments on them. Henrietta's cells seemed to be 'immortal.' Dr. George Gey, who was the main researcher, and his wife, nurse Margaret Gey, called these cells HeLa after Henrietta Lacks. In 1954, Jonas Salk used these cells in his research, and developed a vaccine for polio. The HeLa cells were put into mass production. In 1955, her cells were the first human cells to be successfully cloned. Scientists around the globe have used her cells for research on cancer, AIDS, the effects of radiation and toxins, gene mapping, and 'countless other scientific pursuits.' (cited on Wikipedia; Van Smith (2002-04-17). 'Wonder Woman: The Life, Death, and Life After Death of Henrietta Lacks, Unwitting Heroine of Modern Medical Science'. Baltimore City Paper. Retrieved 2012-08-19). In 1996, the Morehouse School of Medicine in Atlanta, the mayor of Atlanta, and the state of Georgia all recognized Henrietta Lacks and her family for their contributions to medicine and health research. Henrietta was given posthumous honorary degrees. Buildings and schools were named after her. She was honored by the National Foundation for Cancer Research. She was the subject of a BBC documentary which won Best Science and Nature Documentary at the San Francisco International Film Festival. And her story is now in book form by Rebecca Skloot, called *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*, and movie form where she is played by Renee Elise Goldsberry.

Immortal Life. I wanted to tell that story because I think we ought to appreciate Henrietta and her family, who participated in some studies after her cells became famous. But also because I think there are some parallels to Jesus. The Gospel of John says, 'In him is life' (Jn.1:4). And I think we're used to thinking of that life as ethereal, abstract, and spiritual. But in reality, in Jesus there is an intersection of spiritual and physical such that every cell in his body is saturated with God's divine presence. He shared in our diseased human nature so that we could share in his healed human nature. And it is because there is a power in the physical blood of Jesus, yes even in his very cells, that God can take what is in him and share it with us spiritually. Immortal life.

### **Illus of atonement, eucharist**

Malcolm Guite, *Hide and Seek*

### 1 Love's Choice

This bread is light, dissolving, almost air,  
A little visitation on my tongue,  
A wafer-thin sensation, hardly there.  
This taste of wine is brief in flavour, flung  
A moment to the palate's roof and fled,  
Even its aftertaste a memory.  
Yet this is how He comes. Through wine and bread  
Love chooses to be emptied into me.  
He does not come in unimagined light  
Too bright to be denied, too absolute  
For consciousness, too strong for sight,  
Leaving the seer blind, the poet mute;  
Chooses instead to seep into each sense,  
To dye himself into experience.  
He does not come in unimagined light...

### 2 Hide and Seek

Ready or not, you tell me, here I come!  
And so I know I'm hiding, and I know  
My hiding-place is useless. You will come  
And find me. You are searching high and low.  
Today I'm hiding low, down here, below,  
Below the sunlit surface others see.  
Oh find me quickly, quickly come to me.  
And here you come and here I come to you.  
I come to you because you come to me.  
You know my hiding places. I know you,  
I reach you through your hiding-places too;  
Touching the slender thread, but now I see -  
Even in darkness I can see you shine,  
Risen in bread, and revelling in wine.

### **Illus of atonement, justice, critique of penal substitution**

One thing must surely be plain--that the punishment of the wrong-doer makes no atonement for the wrong done. How could it make up to me for the stealing of my watch that the man was punished? The wrong would be there all the same. I am not saying the man ought not to be punished--far from it; I am only saying that the punishment nowise makes up to the man wronged. Suppose the man, with the watch in his pocket, were to inflict the severest flagellation on himself: would that lessen my sense of injury? Would it set anything right? Would it anyway atone? Would it give him a right to the watch? Punishment may do good to the man who does the wrong, but that is a thing as different as important.... 'Mercy may be against justice.' Never--if you mean by justice what I mean by justice. If anything be against justice, it cannot be called mercy, for it is cruelty. 'To thee, O Lord, belongeth mercy, for thou renderest to every man according to his work.' There is no opposition, no strife whatever, between mercy and justice. Those who say justice means the punishing of sin, and mercy the not punishing of sin, and attribute both to God, would make a schism in the very idea of God. And this brings me to the question, What is meant by divine justice?... Primarily, God is not bound to punish sin; he is bound to destroy sin. If he were not the Maker, he might not be bound to destroy sin--I do not know; but seeing he has created creatures who have sinned, and therefore sin has, by the creating act of God, come into the world, God is, in his own righteousness, bound to destroy sin. (George MacDonald, 'Justice', *Unspoken Sermons* Series 3)

### **Illus of atonement, God's love, God's wrath, difficulty with penal substitution**

Loving sinners

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Peter J. Leithart | @PLeithart

<http://www.firstthings.com/blogs/leithart/2013/04/loving-sinners>

Calvin (*Institutes* 2.16.2-4) works to reconcile the Bible's double testimony about God's attitude toward sinners. On the one hand, God redeems His enemies; on the other hand, this redemption comes out of God. He resolves by saying that while we all "have in ourselves something deserving of God's hatred," yet "out of his own kindness he finds something to love." Like Thomas and many medieval theologians, he concludes that He loves us because "we nevertheless remain his creatures."

He quotes Augustine to express the marvel: "He loved us even when he hated us. For he hated us for what we were that he had not made; yet because our wickedness had not entirely consumed his handiwork, he knew how, at the same time, to hate in each one of us what we had made, and to love what he had made." Total depravity, clearly, does not mean that we cease to be good, and therefore lovable, as creatures.

But Calvin embeds some other premises in his discussion that open up some difficulties.

Righteousness and unrighteousness are utterly irreconcilable. Because of that, the righteous God cannot "receive us completely" so long as we remain sinners. (Atqui si perpetuum et irreconcilabile dissidium est inter iustitiam et iniquitatem: quamdiu peccatores manemus, suscipere nos totos non potest.) God graciously wipes us completely clean by the death of Christ, so that we "may show ourselves righteous and holy in His sight." We can be confident that God is "kindly disposed to us" when we fix our eyes on Christ, who alone enables us to escape the "imputation" (imputatio) of sin that brings God's wrath.

Calvin is, of course, talking about justification. Justification is complete; we are as righteous in God's sight as Jesus Himself is. Our sins are not imputed to us because we have Christ's alien righteousness imputed. Because God looks at us in Christ, He finds nothing in us to hate. In fact we continue to sin. The righteousness that we have is not yet complete in our actual lived behavior. What do we do about that? Calvin would say that we look to Christ, since in Him our works too are judged righteous.

But there is here an existential and pastoral difficulty, if not a theological one. The righteousness that God loves is, after all, an alien righteousness. God loves His righteous Son, but that might leave me wondering, Does God love me? Since I'm not completely righteous, does God receive me completely? Calvin wants to say yes, but because the thing that God loves seems somewhat detachable from me, he leaves the question. This is not a hypothetical problem; assurance has been a long-standing problem in Reformed piety.

One way to address this would be to make more room than Calvin does here for God's pity. Out of pity, God responds to the groans of His sinful people (Judges 2:18). He has compassion on rebels, and intervenes to deliver them from their own self-destruction. He loves them because they are His creatures; He loves them as His chosen people. Out of His compassion, He completely receives those who are incompletely righteous. The Father's compassion is founded on Jesus' death and resurrection, and the sinner's union with Him. By emphasizing pity, though, it is clear that God loves me even in the midst of my misery.

### **Illus of atonement**

'Stations Of the Cross', by Malcolm Guite, *Sounding the Seasons: Seventy Sonnets for the Christian Year* (Canterbury Press 2012)

I Jesus is condemned to death  
The very air that Pilate breathes, the voice  
With which he speaks in judgment, all his powers  
Of perception and discrimination, choice,  
Decision, all his years, his days and hours,  
His consciousness of self, his every sense,  
Are given by this prisoner, freely given.  
The man who stands there making no defence,  
Is God. His hands are tied, His heart is open.  
And he bears Pilate's heart in his and feels

That crushing weight of wasted life. He lifts  
It up in silent love. He lifts and heals.  
He gives himself again with all his gifts  
Into our hands. As Pilate turns away  
A door swings open. This is judgment day.

II Jesus is given his cross  
He gives himself again with all his gifts  
And now we give him something in return.  
He gave the earth that bears, the air that lifts,  
Water to cleanse and cool, fire to burn,  
And from these elements he forged the iron,  
From strands of life he wove the growing wood,  
He made the stones that pave the roads of Zion  
He saw it all and saw that it is good.  
We took his iron to edge an axe's blade,  
We took the axe and laid it to the tree,  
We made a cross of all that he has made,  
And laid it on the one who made us free.  
Now he receives again and lifts on high  
The gifts he gave and we have turned awry.

III Jesus falls the first time  
He made the stones that pave the roads of Zion  
And well he knows the path we make him tread  
He met the devil as a roaring lion  
And still refused to turn these stones to bread,  
Choosing instead, as Love will always choose,  
This darker path into the heart of pain.  
And now he falls upon the stones that bruise  
The flesh, that break and scrape the tender skin.  
He and the earth he made were never closer,  
Divinity and dust come face to face.  
We flinch back from his via dolorosa,  
He sets his face like flint and takes our place,  
Staggers beneath the black weight of us all  
And falls with us that he might break our fall.

IV Jesus meets His Mother  
This darker path into the heart of pain  
Was also hers whose love enfolded him  
In flesh and wove him in her womb. Again  
The sword is piercing. She, who cradled him  
And gentled and protected her young son  
Must stand and watch the cruelty that mars  
Her maiden making. Waves of pain that stun  
And sicken pass across his face and hers  
As their eyes meet. Now she enfolds the world  
He loves in prayer; the mothers of the disappeared  
Who know her pain, all bodies bowed and curled  
In desperation on this road of tears,  
All the grief-stricken in their last despair,  
Are folded in the mantle of her prayer.

V Simon of Cyrene carries the cross  
In desperation on this road of tears

Bystanders and bypassers turn away  
In other's pain we face our own worst fears  
And turn our backs to keep those fears at bay  
Unless we are compelled as this man was  
By force of arms or force of circumstance  
To face and feel and carry someone's cross  
In Love's full glare and not his backward glance.  
So Simon, no disciple, still fulfilled  
The calling: 'take the cross and follow me'.  
By accident his life was stalled and stilled  
Becoming all he was compelled to be.  
Make me, like him, your pressed man and your priest,  
Your alter Christus, burdened and released.

VI Veronica wipes the face of Jesus  
Bystanders and bypassers turn away  
And wipe his image from their memory  
She keeps her station. She is here to stay  
And stem the flow. She is the reliquary  
Of his last look on her. The bloody sweat  
And salt tears of his love are soaking through  
The folds of her devotion and the wet  
folds of her handkerchief, like the dew  
Of morning, like a softening rain of grace.  
Because she wiped the grime from off his skin,  
And glimpsed the godhead in his human face  
Whose hidden image we all bear within,  
Through all our veils and shrouds of daily pain  
The face of god is shining once again.

VII Jesus falls the second time  
Through all our veils and shrouds of daily pain,  
Through our bruised bruises and re-opened scars,  
He falls and stumbles with us, hurt again  
When we are hurt again. With us he bears  
The cruel repetitions of our cruelty;  
The beatings of already beaten men,  
The second rounds of torture, the futility  
Of all unheeded pleading, every scream in vain.  
And by this fall he finds the fallen souls  
Who passed a first, but failed a second trial,  
The souls who thought their faith would hold them whole  
And found it only held them for a while.  
Be with us when the road is twice as long  
As we can bear. By weakness make us strong.

VIII Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem  
He falls and stumbles with us, hurt again  
But still he holds the road and looks in love  
On all of us who look on him. Our pain  
As close to him as his. These women move  
Compassion in him as he does in them.  
He asks us both to weep and not to weep.  
Women of Gaza and Jerusalem,  
Women of every nation where the deep  
Wounds of memory divide the land

And lives of all your children, where the mines  
Of all our wars are sown: Afghanistan ,  
Iraq, the Cote d'Ivoire... he reads the signs  
And weeps with you and with you he will stay  
Until the day he wipes your tears away.

IX Jesus falls the third time  
He weeps with you and with you he will stay  
When all your staying power has run out  
You can't go on, you go on anyway.  
He stumbles just beside you when the doubt  
That always haunts you, cuts you down at last  
And takes away the hope that drove you on.  
This is the third fall and it hurts the worst  
This long descent through darkness to depression  
From which there seems no rising and no will  
To rise, or breathe or bear your own heart beat.  
Twice you survived; this third will surely kill,  
And you could almost wish for that defeat  
Except that in the cold hell where you freeze  
You find your God beside you on his knees.

X Jesus is stripped of His garments  
You can't go on, you go on anyway  
He goes with you, his cradle to your grave.  
Now is the time to loosen, cast away  
The useless weight of everything but love  
For he began his letting go before,  
Before the worlds for which he dies were made,  
Emptied himself, became one of the poor,  
To make you rich in him and unafraid.  
See as they strip the robe from off his back  
They strip away your own defences too  
Now you could lose it all and never lack  
Now you can see what naked Love can do  
Let go these bonds beneath whose weight you bow  
His stripping strips you both for action now

XI Crucifixion: Jesus is nailed to the cross  
See, as they strip the robe from off his back  
And spread his arms and nail them to the cross,  
The dark nails pierce him and the sky turns black,  
And love is firmly fastened onto loss.  
But here a pure change happens. On this tree  
Loss becomes gain, death opens into birth.  
Here wounding heals and fastening makes free  
Earth breathes in heaven, heaven roots in earth.  
And here we see the length, the breadth, the height  
Where love and hatred meet and love stays true  
Where sin meets grace and darkness turns to light  
We see what love can bear and be and do,  
And here our saviour calls us to his side  
His love is free, his arms are open wide.

XII Jesus dies on the cross  
The dark nails pierce him and the sky turns black

We watch him as he labours to draw breath  
 He takes our breath away to give it back,  
 Return it to it's birth through his slow death.  
 We hear him struggle breathing through the pain  
 Who once breathed out his spirit on the deep,  
 Who formed us when he mixed the dust with rain  
 And drew us into consciousness from sleep.  
 His spirit and his life he breathes in all  
 Mantles his world in his one atmosphere  
 And now he comes to breathe beneath the pall  
 Of our pollutions, draw our injured air  
 To cleanse it and renew. His final breath  
 Breathes us, and bears us through the gates of death.

XIII Jesus' body is taken down from the cross  
 His spirit and his life he breathes in all  
 Now on this cross his body breathes no more  
 Here at the centre everything is still  
 Spent, and emptied, opened to the core.  
 A quiet taking down, a prising loose  
 A cross-beam lowered like a weighing scale  
 Unmaking of each thing that had its use  
 A long withdrawing of each bloodied nail,  
 This is ground zero, emptiness and space  
 With nothing left to say or think or do  
 But look unflinching on the sacred face  
 That cannot move or change or look at you.  
 Yet in that prising loose and letting be  
 He has unfastened you and set you free.

XIV Jesus is laid in the tomb  
 Here at the centre everything is still  
 Before the stir and movement of our grief  
 Which bears it's pain with rhythm, ritual,  
 Beautiful useless gestures of relief.  
 So they anoint the skin that cannot feel  
 Soothing his ruined flesh with tender care,  
 Kissing the wounds they know they cannot heal,  
 With incense scenting only empty air.  
 He blesses every love that weeps and grieves  
 And makes our grief the pangs of a new birth.  
 The love that's poured in silence at old graves  
 Renewing flowers, tending the bare earth,  
 Is never lost. In him all love is found  
 And sown with him, a seed in the rich ground.

**Illus of atonement**

*The Ballad of Reading Gaol*

Oscar Wilde

<p>I</p> <p>He did not wear his scarlet coat,          For blood and wine are red,          And blood and wine were on his hands</p>	<p>Some love too little, some too long,          Some sell, and others buy;          Some do the deed with many tears,</p>
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<p>When they found him with the dead, The poor dead woman whom he loved, And murdered in her bed.</p> <p>He walked amongst the Trial Men In a suit of shabby grey; A cricket cap was on his head, And his step seemed light and gay; But I never saw a man who looked So wistfully at the day.</p> <p>I never saw a man who looked With such a wistful eye Upon that little tent of blue Which prisoners call the sky, And at every drifting cloud that went With sails of silver by.</p> <p>I walked, with other souls in pain, Within another ring, And was wondering if the man had done A great or little thing, When a voice behind me whispered low, "That fellows got to swing."</p> <p>Dear Christ! the very prison walls Suddenly seemed to reel, And the sky above my head became Like a casque of scorching steel; And, though I was a soul in pain, My pain I could not feel.</p> <p>I only knew what hunted thought Quickened his step, and why He looked upon the garish day With such a wistful eye; The man had killed the thing he loved And so he had to die.</p> <p>Yet each man kills the thing he loves By each let this be heard, Some do it with a bitter look, Some with a flattering word, The coward does it with a kiss, The brave man with a sword!</p> <p>Some kill their love when they are young, And some when they are old; Some strangle with the hands of Lust, Some with the hands of Gold: The kindest use a knife, because The dead so soon grow cold.</p>	<p>And some without a sigh: For each man kills the thing he loves, Yet each man does not die.</p> <p>He does not die a death of shame On a day of dark disgrace, Nor have a noose about his neck, Nor a cloth upon his face, Nor drop feet foremost through the floor Into an empty place</p> <p>He does not sit with silent men Who watch him night and day; Who watch him when he tries to weep, And when he tries to pray; Who watch him lest himself should rob The prison of its prey.</p> <p>He does not wake at dawn to see Dread figures throng his room, The shivering Chaplain robed in white, The Sheriff stern with gloom, And the Governor all in shiny black, With the yellow face of Doom.</p> <p>He does not rise in piteous haste To put on convict-clothes, While some coarse-mouthed Doctor gloats, and notes Each new and nerve-twitched pose, Fingering a watch whose little ticks Are like horrible hammer-blows.</p> <p>He does not know that sickening thirst That sands one's throat, before The hangman with his gardener's gloves Slips through the padded door, And binds one with three leathern thongs, That the throat may thirst no more.</p> <p>He does not bend his head to hear The Burial Office read, Nor, while the terror of his soul Tells him he is not dead, Cross his own coffin, as he moves Into the hideous shed.</p> <p>He does not stare upon the air Through a little roof of glass; He does not pray with lips of clay For his agony to pass; Nor feel upon his shuddering cheek The kiss of Caiaphas.</p>
<p>II</p> <p>Six weeks our guardsman walked the yard,</p>	<p>The loftiest place is that seat of grace</p>

<p>In a suit of shabby grey: His cricket cap was on his head, And his step seemed light and gay, But I never saw a man who looked So wistfully at the day.</p> <p>I never saw a man who looked With such a wistful eye Upon that little tent of blue Which prisoners call the sky, And at every wandering cloud that trailed Its raveled fleeces by.</p> <p>He did not wring his hands, as do Those witless men who dare To try to rear the changeling Hope In the cave of black Despair: He only looked upon the sun, And drank the morning air.</p> <p>He did not wring his hands nor weep, Nor did he peek or pine, But he drank the air as though it held Some healthful anodyne; With open mouth he drank the sun As though it had been wine!</p> <p>And I and all the souls in pain, Who tramped the other ring, Forgot if we ourselves had done A great or little thing, And watched with gaze of dull amaze The man who had to swing.</p> <p>And strange it was to see him pass With a step so light and gay, And strange it was to see him look So wistfully at the day, And strange it was to think that he Had such a debt to pay.</p> <p>For oak and elm have pleasant leaves That in the spring-time shoot: But grim to see is the gallows-tree, With its adder-bitten root, And, green or dry, a man must die Before it bears its fruit!</p>	<p>For which all worldlings try: But who would stand in hempen band Upon a scaffold high, And through a murderer's collar take His last look at the sky?</p> <p>It is sweet to dance to violins When Love and Life are fair: To dance to flutes, to dance to lutes Is delicate and rare: But it is not sweet with nimble feet To dance upon the air!</p> <p>So with curious eyes and sick surmise We watched him day by day, And wondered if each one of us Would end the self-same way, For none can tell to what red Hell His sightless soul may stray.</p> <p>At last the dead man walked no more Amongst the Trial Men, And I knew that he was standing up In the black dock's dreadful pen, And that never would I see his face In God's sweet world again.</p> <p>Like two doomed ships that pass in storm We had crossed each other's way: But we made no sign, we said no word, We had no word to say; For we did not meet in the holy night, But in the shameful day.</p> <p>A prison wall was round us both, Two outcast men were we: The world had thrust us from its heart, And God from out His care: And the iron gin that waits for Sin Had caught us in its snare.</p>
<p>III</p> <p>In Debtors' Yard the stones are hard, And the dripping wall is high, So it was there he took the air Beneath the leaden sky, And by each side a Warder walked, For fear the man might die.</p>	<p>They glided past, they glided fast, Like travelers through a mist: They mocked the moon in a rigadon Of delicate turn and twist, And with formal pace and loathsome grace The phantoms kept their tryst.</p>

Or else he sat with those who watched  
His anguish night and day;  
Who watched him when he rose to weep,  
And when he crouched to pray;  
Who watched him lest himself should rob  
Their scaffold of its prey.

The Governor was strong upon  
The Regulations Act:  
The Doctor said that Death was but  
A scientific fact:  
And twice a day the Chaplain called  
And left a little tract.

And twice a day he smoked his pipe,  
And drank his quart of beer:  
His soul was resolute, and held  
No hiding-place for fear;  
He often said that he was glad  
The hangman's hands were near.

But why he said so strange a thing  
No Warder dared to ask:  
For he to whom a watcher's doom  
Is given as his task,  
Must set a lock upon his lips,  
And make his face a mask.

Or else he might be moved, and try  
To comfort or console:  
And what should Human Pity do  
Pent up in Murderers' Hole?  
What word of grace in such a place  
Could help a brother's soul?

With slouch and swing around the ring  
We trod the Fool's Parade!  
We did not care: we knew we were  
The Devil's Own Brigade:  
And shaven head and feet of lead  
Make a merry masquerade.

We tore the tarry rope to shreds  
With blunt and bleeding nails;  
We rubbed the doors, and scrubbed the floors,  
And cleaned the shining rails:  
And, rank by rank, we soaped the plank,  
And clattered with the pails.

We sewed the sacks, we broke the stones,  
We turned the dusty drill:  
We banged the tins, and bawled the hymns,  
And sweated on the mill:  
But in the heart of every man  
Terror was lying still.

With mop and mow, we saw them go,  
Slim shadows hand in hand:  
About, about, in ghostly rout  
They trod a saraband:  
And the damned grotesques made arabesques,  
Like the wind upon the sand!

With the pirouettes of marionettes,  
They tripped on pointed tread:  
But with flutes of Fear they filled the ear,  
As their grisly masque they led,  
And loud they sang, and loud they sang,  
For they sang to wake the dead.

"Oho!" they cried, "The world is wide,  
But fettered limbs go lame!  
And once, or twice, to throw the dice  
Is a gentlemanly game,  
But he does not win who plays with Sin  
In the secret House of Shame."

No things of air these antics were  
That frolicked with such glee:  
To men whose lives were held in gyves,  
And whose feet might not go free,  
Ah! wounds of Christ! they were living things,  
Most terrible to see.

Around, around, they waltzed and wound;  
Some wheeled in smirking pairs:  
With the mincing step of demirep  
Some sidled up the stairs:  
And with subtle sneer, and fawning leer,  
Each helped us at our prayers.

The morning wind began to moan,  
But still the night went on:  
Through its giant loom the web of gloom  
Crept till each thread was spun:  
And, as we prayed, we grew afraid  
Of the Justice of the Sun.

The moaning wind went wandering round  
The weeping prison-wall:  
Till like a wheel of turning-steel  
We felt the minutes crawl:  
O moaning wind! what had we done  
To have such a seneschal?

At last I saw the shadowed bars  
Like a lattice wrought in lead,  
Move right across the whitewashed wall  
That faced my three-plank bed,  
And I knew that somewhere in the world  
God's dreadful dawn was red.

So still it lay that every day  
Crawled like a weed-clogged wave:  
And we forgot the bitter lot  
That waits for fool and knave,  
Till once, as we tramped in from work,  
We passed an open grave.

With yawning mouth the yellow hole  
Gaped for a living thing;  
The very mud cried out for blood  
To the thirsty asphalt ring:  
And we knew that ere one dawn grew fair  
Some prisoner had to swing.

Right in we went, with soul intent  
On Death and Dread and Doom:  
The hangman, with his little bag,  
Went shuffling through the gloom  
And each man trembled as he crept  
Into his numbered tomb.

That night the empty corridors  
Were full of forms of Fear,  
And up and down the iron town  
Stole feet we could not hear,  
And through the bars that hide the stars  
White faces seemed to peer.

He lay as one who lies and dreams  
In a pleasant meadow-land,  
The watcher watched him as he slept,  
And could not understand  
How one could sleep so sweet a sleep  
With a hangman close at hand?

But there is no sleep when men must weep  
Who never yet have wept:  
So we—the fool, the fraud, the knave—  
That endless vigil kept,  
And through each brain on hands of pain  
Another's terror crept.

Alas! it is a fearful thing  
To feel another's guilt!  
For, right within, the sword of Sin  
Pierced to its poisoned hilt,  
And as molten lead were the tears we shed  
For the blood we had not spilt.

The Warders with their shoes of felt  
Crept by each padlocked door,  
And peeped and saw, with eyes of awe,  
Grey figures on the floor,  
And wondered why men knelt to pray  
Who never prayed before.

At six o'clock we cleaned our cells,  
At seven all was still,  
But the sough and swing of a mighty wing  
The prison seemed to fill,  
For the Lord of Death with icy breath  
Had entered in to kill.

He did not pass in purple pomp,  
Nor ride a moon-white steed.  
Three yards of cord and a sliding board  
Are all the gallows' need:  
So with rope of shame the Herald came  
To do the secret deed.

We were as men who through a fen  
Of filthy darkness grope:  
We did not dare to breathe a prayer,  
Or give our anguish scope:  
Something was dead in each of us,  
And what was dead was Hope.

For Man's grim Justice goes its way,  
And will not swerve aside:  
It slays the weak, it slays the strong,  
It has a deadly stride:  
With iron heel it slays the strong,  
The monstrous parricide!

We waited for the stroke of eight:  
Each tongue was thick with thirst:  
For the stroke of eight is the stroke of Fate  
That makes a man accursed,  
And Fate will use a running noose  
For the best man and the worst.

We had no other thing to do,  
Save to wait for the sign to come:  
So, like things of stone in a valley lone,  
Quiet we sat and dumb:  
But each man's heart beat thick and quick  
Like a madman on a drum!

With sudden shock the prison-clock  
Smote on the shivering air,  
And from all the gaol rose up a wail  
Of impotent despair,  
Like the sound that frightened marshes hear  
From a leper in his lair.

And as one sees most fearful things  
In the crystal of a dream,  
We saw the greasy hempen rope  
Hooked to the blackened beam,  
And heard the prayer the hangman's snare  
Strangled into a scream.

<p>All through the night we knelt and prayed,      Mad mourners of a corpse!      The troubled plumes of midnight were      The plumes upon a hearse:      And bitter wine upon a sponge      Was the savior of Remorse.</p> <p>The cock crew, the red cock crew,      But never came the day:      And crooked shape of Terror crouched,      In the corners where we lay:      And each evil sprite that walks by night      Before us seemed to play.</p>	<p>And all the woe that moved him so      That he gave that bitter cry,      And the wild regrets, and the bloody sweats,      None knew so well as I:      For he who lives more lives than one      More deaths than one must die.</p>
<p>IV</p> <p>There is no chapel on the day      On which they hang a man:      The Chaplain's heart is far too sick,      Or his face is far too wan,      Or there is that written in his eyes      Which none should look upon.</p> <p>So they kept us close till nigh on noon,      And then they rang the bell,      And the Warders with their jingling keys      Opened each listening cell,      And down the iron stair we tramped,      Each from his separate Hell.</p> <p>Out into God's sweet air we went,      But not in wonted way,      For this man's face was white with fear,      And that man's face was grey,      And I never saw sad men who looked      So wistfully at the day.</p> <p>I never saw sad men who looked      With such a wistful eye      Upon that little tent of blue      We prisoners called the sky,      And at every careless cloud that passed      In happy freedom by.</p> <p>But there were those amongst us all      Who walked with downcast head,      And knew that, had each got his due,      They should have died instead:      He had but killed a thing that lived      Whilst they had killed the dead.</p> <p>For he who sins a second time      Wakes a dead soul to pain,      And draws it from its spotted shroud,      And makes it bleed again,</p>	<p>For three long years they will not sow      Or root or seedling there:      For three long years the unblessed spot      Will sterile be and bare,      And look upon the wondering sky      With unreprouchful stare.</p> <p>They think a murderer's heart would taint      Each simple seed they sow.      It is not true! God's kindly earth      Is kindlier than men know,      And the red rose would but blow more red,      The white rose whiter blow.</p> <p>Out of his mouth a red, red rose!      Out of his heart a white!      For who can say by what strange way,      Christ brings his will to light,      Since the barren staff the pilgrim bore      Bloomed in the great Pope's sight?</p> <p>But neither milk-white rose nor red      May bloom in prison air;      The shard, the pebble, and the flint,      Are what they give us there:      For flowers have been known to heal      A common man's despair.</p> <p>So never will wine-red rose or white,      Petal by petal, fall      On that stretch of mud and sand that lies      By the hideous prison-wall,      To tell the men who tramp the yard      That God's Son died for all.</p> <p>Yet though the hideous prison-wall      Still hems him round and round,      And a spirit man not walk by night      That is with fetters bound,</p>

<p>And makes it bleed great gout of blood And makes it bleed in vain!</p> <p>Like ape or clown, in monstrous garb With crooked arrows starred, Silently we went round and round The slippery asphalte yard; Silently we went round and round, And no man spoke a word.</p> <p>Silently we went round and round, And through each hollow mind The memory of dreadful things Rushed like a dreadful wind, And Horror stalked before each man, And terror crept behind.</p> <p>The Warders strutted up and down, And kept their herd of brutes, Their uniforms were spick and span, And they wore their Sunday suits, But we knew the work they had been at By the quicklime on their boots.</p> <p>For where a grave had opened wide, There was no grave at all: Only a stretch of mud and sand By the hideous prison-wall, And a little heap of burning lime, That the man should have his pall.</p> <p>For he has a pall, this wretched man, Such as few men can claim: Deep down below a prison-yard, Naked for greater shame, He lies, with fetters on each foot, Wrapt in a sheet of flame!</p> <p>And all the while the burning lime Eats flesh and bone away, It eats the brittle bone by night, And the soft flesh by the day, It eats the flesh and bones by turns, But it eats the heart away.</p>	<p>And a spirit may not weep that lies In such unholy ground,</p> <p>He is at peace—this wretched man— At peace, or will be soon: There is no thing to make him mad, Nor does Terror walk at noon, For the lampless Earth in which he lies Has neither Sun nor Moon.</p> <p>They hanged him as a beast is hanged: They did not even toll A reguim that might have brought Rest to his startled soul, But hurriedly they took him out, And hid him in a hole.</p> <p>They stripped him of his canvas clothes, And gave him to the flies; They mocked the swollen purple throat And the stark and staring eyes: And with laughter loud they heaped the shroud In which their convict lies.</p> <p>The Chaplain would not kneel to pray By his dishonored grave: Nor mark it with that blessed Cross That Christ for sinners gave, Because the man was one of those Whom Christ came down to save.</p> <p>Yet all is well; he has but passed To Life's appointed bourne: And alien tears will fill for him Pity's long-broken urn, For his mourner will be outcast men, And outcasts always mourn.</p>
<p>V</p> <p>I know not whether Laws be right, Or whether Laws be wrong; All that we know who lie in gaol Is that the wall is strong; And that each day is like a year, A year whose days are long.</p> <p>But this I know, that every Law That men have made for Man,</p>	<p>With midnight always in one's heart, And twilight in one's cell, We turn the crank, or tear the rope, Each in his separate Hell, And the silence is more awful far Than the sound of a brazen bell.</p> <p>And never a human voice comes near To speak a gentle word:</p>

<p>Since first Man took his brother's life,  And the sad world began,  But straws the wheat and saves the chaff  With a most evil fan.</p> <p>This too I know—and wise it were  If each could know the same—  That every prison that men build  Is built with bricks of shame,  And bound with bars lest Christ should see  How men their brothers maim.</p> <p>With bars they blur the gracious moon,  And blind the goodly sun:  And they do well to hide their Hell,  For in it things are done  That Son of God nor son of Man  Ever should look upon!</p> <p>The vilest deeds like poison weeds  Bloom well in prison-air:  It is only what is good in Man  That wastes and withers there:  Pale Anguish keeps the heavy gate,  And the Warder is Despair</p> <p>For they starve the little frightened child  Till it weeps both night and day:  And they scourge the weak, and flog the fool,  And gibe the old and grey,  And some grow mad, and all grow bad,  And none a word may say.</p> <p>Each narrow cell in which we dwell  Is foul and dark latrine,  And the fetid breath of living Death  Chokes up each grated screen,  And all, but Lust, is turned to dust  In Humanity's machine.</p> <p>The brackish water that we drink  Creeps with a loathsome slime,  And the bitter bread they weigh in scales  Is full of chalk and lime,  And Sleep will not lie down, but walks  Wild-eyed and cries to Time.</p> <p>But though lean Hunger and green Thirst  Like asp with adder fight,  We have little care of prison fare,  For what chills and kills outright  Is that every stone one lifts by day  Becomes one's heart by night.</p>	<p>And the eye that watches through the door  Is pitiless and hard:  And by all forgot, we rot and rot,  With soul and body marred.</p> <p>And thus we rust Life's iron chain  Degraded and alone:  And some men curse, and some men weep,  And some men make no moan:  But God's eternal Laws are kind  And break the heart of stone.</p> <p>And every human heart that breaks,  In prison-cell or yard,  Is as that broken box that gave  Its treasure to the Lord,  And filled the unclean leper's house  With the scent of costliest nard.</p> <p>Ah! happy day they whose hearts can break  And peace of pardon win!  How else may man make straight his plan  And cleanse his soul from Sin?  How else but through a broken heart  May Lord Christ enter in?</p> <p>And he of the swollen purple throat.  And the stark and staring eyes,  Waits for the holy hands that took  The Thief to Paradise;  And a broken and a contrite heart  The Lord will not despise.</p> <p>The man in red who reads the Law  Gave him three weeks of life,  Three little weeks in which to heal  His soul of his soul's strife,  And cleanse from every blot of blood  The hand that held the knife.</p> <p>And with tears of blood he cleansed the hand,  The hand that held the steel:  For only blood can wipe out blood,  And only tears can heal:  And the crimson stain that was of Cain  Became Christ's snow-white seal.</p>
VI	

<p>In Reading gaol by Reading town  There is a pit of shame,  And in it lies a wretched man  Eaten by teeth of flame,  In burning winding-sheet he lies,  And his grave has got no name.</p> <p>And there, till Christ call forth the dead,  In silence let him lie:  No need to waste the foolish tear,  Or heave the windy sigh:  The man had killed the thing he loved,  And so he had to die.</p>	<p>And all men kill the thing they love,  By all let this be heard,  Some do it with a bitter look,  Some with a flattering word,  The coward does it with a kiss,  The brave man with a sword!</p>
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### **Illus of atonement, need for cleansing, Islam**

The following dialogue is my recollection of a real dialogue I had. I have repeated this basic question about Mohammed's heart needing to be cleansed to various Muslims. In my opinion, this topic leads to very good conversations.

*Muslim:* Do you think there's a real difference between the Christian God and the Muslim God?

*Me:* Isn't it said in Islam that the Muslim God would never become incarnate in human flesh and personally touch human nature?

*Muslim:* Yes.

*Me:* Why is that?

*Muslim:* Because He is too pure, and we are too impure.

*Me:* And that's one reason why Muslims deny that God could become incarnate as Jesus of Nazareth. Maybe he was a prophet, but he could not be God Himself. Right?

*Muslim:* Yes, that is what is taught.

*Me:* So then how does the Muslim God ever resolve the problem of human nature?

*Muslim:* We only have free choices to make. There isn't a problem with human nature.

*Me:* But the Qur'an Surah 94 says that God had to purify the prophet Mohammed's heart before he could receive the revelation of the Qur'an. Two hadiths also say this (Sahih Muslim, Sahih al-Bukhari).

*Muslim:* Yes, that is said. Ibn Ishaq states that two men clothed in white had seized him and opened his chest.

*Me:* What did he need to be cleansed of?

*Muslim:* Just something in his humanness.

*Me:* So then, there's something wrong with human nature. It's somehow impure, right?

*Muslim:* I suppose.

*Me:* And then why does Mohammed get a free ticket for cleansing, but the rest of us need to work pretty hard to be cleansed, through reading the Qur'an, fasting, and all the other things?

*Muslim:* Well, he was the prophet. He had to receive the Qur'an, or so it is said.

*Me:* And if nothing is wrong with human nature, then how do you explain why we're so messed up?

*Muslim:* It's just our bad choices.

*Me:* I agree that we make bad choices, but is that all that there is to us? I don't think so. What this is boiling down to is (1) realism and (2) consistency of ideas. (1) Realistically, if we were just neutral, and made our choices neutrally, then why are we all sinners? It's more realistic to say that we are damaged, corrupted from an originally good design. Even Mohammed called himself a sinner, later in life (Qur'an 40:55; 48:2; 47:19; Bukhari's Hadith 8:335, 379, 407, 408; see <http://www.answering-islam.org/Silas/mo-sinner.htm>). That explains a lot more. Would you agree?

*Muslim:* I follow you. I'll have to think about it.

*Me:* As for (2) Consistency, Christianity seems more consistent and coherent. The Christian God addresses the human nature problem by grabbing hold of human nature in one person, Jesus, fixing the problem, and then sharing Jesus' healed new humanity with anyone who asks. Why? Because Jesus never sinned, and because God wants to saturate human nature and be in us and with us, drawing us into His very life, His radically loving, other-centered life. That's why our process of growth now is a preparation for us to live a holy, radically loving, other-centered life

in eternity. But in the Muslim faith, my impression is that there is incoherence about human nature because Mohammed is treated differently than everyone else. If your God did for Mohammed something that He could do for everyone else but isn't, then by definition He is not doing everything He could to undo human evil. That would make Him at least partly evil. Or at least it would seem that way to me. And then your process of spiritual growth now seems to be delayed gratification. The Qur'an speaks of heaven as a place where you can have lots of sex and wine, and indulge all the desires you didn't indulge in the present. It gives the impression of delayed gratification. But if that's so, then why? Why does the Muslim God tell us to deny those desires now, only to indulge them later? So it's not just that our Gods are different. The elements of (1) realism and (2) the consistency and coherence of our belief systems are different. All because our sense of human nature is different. Would you like to talk more about that?

### **Illus of new heart**

Bride Gets Walked Down The Aisle By A Man With Her Father's Heart In Tearful Ceremony

Nina Golgowski

Huffington Post

August 7, 2016

[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/bride-meets-fathers-heart-recipient\\_us\\_57a72e73e4b021fd9878deb6?section=&](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/bride-meets-fathers-heart-recipient_us_57a72e73e4b021fd9878deb6?section=&)



## **Bride Gets Walked Down The Aisle By A Man With Her Father's Heart**



A Pennsylvania bride who lost her father to tragedy 10 years ago found herself walking down the aisle with the man who received his heart.

Jeni Stepien was unable to hold back tears when she embraced Arthur Thomas for the first time Friday and felt her father's heart beating inside him.

"Can you feel it?" Thomas asked her in a video taken by Pittsburgh TV station KDKA. She tearfully held his wrist and chest and quietly nodded.

Stepien's father, Michael Stepien, was killed in a 2006 robbery when she was 23. After he spent 24 hours on life support, the family accepted the inevitable and donated his organs, Stepien told The Huffington Post.

Jeni Stepien feels her late father's heartbeat inside Arthur Thomas, the organ recipient. At that time, Thomas, who Stepien's family calls "Tom," had been waiting nearly 10 years for a heart transplant at his home in New Jersey.

"He was going to die if he did not receive a new heart in the next several days," Stepien told HuffPost via email Sunday. "Tom received my father's heart within the next 48 hours."

The Christmas following his transplant he wrote to Stepien's family thanking them for what they had done.

The families kept in touch through letters and phone calls over the years but it wasn't until they started planning Jeni Stepien's wedding that she saw the perfect chance for them to meet.

"When my fiancé proposed, one of the first things I thought of was 'but who will walk me down the aisle?' I could think of nobody more meaningful than Tom," she said. "My fiancé suggested I write him a letter; that way Tom would feel in no way obligated or pressured by my request."

A few days after sending the letter she got a phone call, she said. Tom's answer was yes. She met him for the first time on Friday.

"Meeting Tom was so incredible!" she said. "He is such a gracious and kind-hearted man. You could tell he was so thankful for his life, and that radiated from him."

The decision to invite Thomas brought joy to her entire family, Stepien added.

"My mother was very touched by the idea also and thought it was a very appropriate gesture to honor my father. I knew how important it would be for her and my sister to receive this piece of closure by finally meeting Tom as well," she said.

"I wanted to make the day special for everyone, not just for myself."

In sharing her story, Stepien said she hopes it sends a message to others: Organ donors do matter.

"Organ donation can provide an opportunity for a second chance at life. It is an exceptional gift, one that is selfless and generous, and always appreciated by the recipient," she said. "We were able to see how wonderfully Tom was progressing all of these years, simply thriving, and [that] in turn, helped us with our own grief."

### **Illus of organ donor, atonement, new humanity, death and resurrection**

*Olympic Coach Who Died in Rio Has Saved Four Lives*

Laura Donovan

August 17, 2016

[http://www.attn.com/stories/10782/german-olympic-coach-stefan-henze-dies-car-crash-rio?utm\\_source=facebook&utm\\_medium=post&utm\\_campaign=internal](http://www.attn.com/stories/10782/german-olympic-coach-stefan-henze-dies-car-crash-rio?utm_source=facebook&utm_medium=post&utm_campaign=internal)

From Simone Biles' brilliance in gymnastics to Katy Ledecky's dominance in the swimming pool, there's been no shortage of inspiring moments to come out of the Rio Olympic Games.

But the most inspiring moment yet may have stemmed from a tragedy — the sudden, tragic death of German canoe slalom coach Stefan Henze.



Henze, who died from car crash injuries in Rio de Janeiro, was an organ donor, and his organs have already saved the lives of four people, according to several news reports.

"Heart, liver and both kidneys have been successfully transplanted. Thus he has saved four lives," a Brazilian health ministry spokesperson told the German newspaper Die Welt, the Independent reported. Henze's relatives reportedly gave consent to his organ donations.

**Illus of atonement, retelling story, love**

This Adorable "Pride And Prejudice"-Themed Engagement Is Every Book Lover's Dream

Rega Jha

Jan 11, 2014

<https://www.buzzfeed.com/regajha/this-adorable-pride-and-prejudice-themed-engagement-is-every>

When Bethany Albert was home at her parents' house in Tacoma, Wash. for the holidays, she came home on Christmas Eve to a surprise.



Lisa Hepfer

“I walked in the house, not expecting my sister to seize me and start exclaiming that Mr. Bingley had returned to Netherfield at last.”



Via Lisa Hepfer

“I was surprised, as the first photo indicates, but I caught on pretty quickly,” she told BuzzFeed in an email.



Lisa Hepfer

While another sister took photographs, a third sister began putting Bethany into a Regency dress.



Lisa Hepfer

On Reddit, Bethany elaborated that her mother sewed five Regency dresses in the span of two weeks.

David Slater, Bethany's friend of five years and boyfriend of ten months, was hiding in a closet nearby, dressed as Mr. Darcy. "We met swing dancing at the University of Washington."



Lisa Hepfer

“One by one more and more family members joined the scenes. David took the script directly from the text of the book. My family did rehearsals in secret.”



Lisa Hepfer



Lisa Hepfer  
Bethany's brother-in-law as Mr. Bingley.

“I laughed a lot, but everyone else managed to stay in character for half an hour until the actual proposal scene.”



Lisa Hepfer



Lisa Hepfer

Bethany's family recreated half an hour of scenes from *Pride and Prejudice*.



Lisa Hepfer



Lisa Hepfer



Lisa Hepfer



[i.imgur.com](https://www.imgur.com)



Bethany's parents were Mr. and Mrs. Bennett.



Lisa Hepfer

Bethany and her father recreated the scene between Lizzie and Mr. Bennett.



Lisa Hepfer  
Eventually, Bethany, David, and their family moved outside the house.



Lisa Hepfer

And her Mr. Darcy proposed to his Lizzie in her neighbor's backyard.



Lisa Hepfer



Lisa Hepfer

“David first declared his feelings for me on Christmas Eve, 2010,” Bethany said in an email, “when he showed up unannounced on my family’s doorstep with a book box he had carved with an exacto-knife (it was filled with chocolate and pipe tobacco).”



Lisa Hepfer

“I turned him down, but for each subsequent Christmas Eve there was a literature-related gift to me from him.”



Lisa Hepfer

“Pride and Prejudice is one of my favorite books. I loved that it involved family; my sisters, parents, his sister, brother-in-law, nieces... It was so special to interact with them and exchange knowing smiles during the production.”



Lisa Hepfer

“I was an English literature major, so he figured books would be a good way to my heart...”



Lisa Hepfer

Bethany and David are planning an August wedding and will have the same anniversary as Bethany's parents and grandparents.



Lisa Hepfer

**Illus of atonement, advocacy, innocence, guilt, principalities and powers, spiritual warfare, empire**

Tony Bowles

'Wrongfully Convicted Isaac Wright Jr Returns To The Same Courtroom As An Attorney'

Medium, Dec 4, 2017

<https://medium.com/@tjbdaily/wrongfully-convicted-isaac-wright-jr-returns-to-the-same-courtroom-as-an-attorney-985b40c96ed8>

This story has more direct illustrative power of Jesus' innocence in the face of the authorities, the rulers, the empire. It can serve to illustrate Jesus on trial in the Gospels, or Colossians 2 about Jesus triumphing over the rulers and authorities through his cross, the experience of being wrongly accused and sentenced by them. They pretend to be about "justice." Jesus shows them up.



The Newark, New Jersey, law firm of Hunt, Hamlin & Ridley has tapped the legal services of Isaac Wright, Jr.—once wrongfully accused and convicted of being the mastermind behind one of the largest drug distribution networks in the New York/New Jersey areas—to act as co-counsel in the defense of Isaiah Bell.

Wright's remarkable journey to gain his freedom and his legal talents are slated to be depicted in a TV series based upon his life and produced by 50 Cent. Today, they are slated to be on display in defense of Bell, the brother of an NFL player with the Detroit Lions, who is accused of first degree murder in the stabbing death of James Kargbo. As co-counsel, Wright's representation of Bell will be backed by unique experiences no other attorney can lay claim to—an experience that began in the very same county and courthouse Wright will be representing Bell.

In 1991, Wright was tried in a Somerset County courtroom and convicted under New Jersey's drug kingpin law. Wright represented himself at trial and, while serving a Life sentence in prison, he continued to study the law and oversee his own appeal. Over the next several years, Wright also worked as a prison paralegal and won the freedom and reduced sentences of over 20 inmates, many serving life sentences. Some of his legal arguments made new law that lawyers now argue and courts follow.

Attorney Gilbert G. Miller, then Assistant Somerset County Prosecutor appointed to oppose Wright's appeals and other court action, said it best: "I found Mr. Wright to be highly intelligent and...a better brief writer than most attorneys I have encountered. I was most impressed with Mr. Wright's ability as a legal strategist. Mr. Wright

developed the legal strategy and authored a defense pro se brief in an attack on the king-pin jury instruction in *State v. Alexander*, 136 N.J. 563 (1994). Mr. Wright's arguments prevailed in *Alexander*. Mr. Wright used his success in *Alexander* to have his own kingpin conviction reversed."

After Wright's kingpin conviction was vacated, several other convictions remained that carried sentences totaling over 70 years and kept him imprisoned. To overcome this obstacle, Wright succeeded in doing what the most experienced attorney would never even attempt—he extracted a confession from a veteran police officer. During a 1996 evidentiary hearing, Wright cross-examined detective James Dugan, convincing Dugan to break the code of silence and confess to police misconduct in his case. Dugan's confession opened revelations of wide and systematic misconduct and cover-up in Wright's case, pointing the finger specifically at Somerset County's head prosecutor Nicholas L. Bissell, Jr.

Bissell was fingered as being the orchestrator of the misconduct, directing police officers to falsify their police reports while he personally dictated the false testimony of witnesses and made secret deals with defense attorneys to have their clients provide false testimony to jurors that Wright was their drug boss and they had also pled guilty and were facing prison time. Truth is, those stories were fabricated and none of the people who testified faced even a day in jail.

Dugan pled guilty to official misconduct in order to escape prison and Judge Michael Imbriani, who oversaw the trial, was removed from the bench and was sent to prison on theft charges. Bissell, after learning of Dugan's confession on TV news, took flight with federal authorities in pursuit. As police were kicking in the door of his Las Vegas hotel room, Bissell shot himself in the head, committing suicide.

Wright's charges were dismissed after spending over 7 years in prison. He then spent another seven years pursuing his law degree and got his undergraduate degree in 2002. He began law school in 2004 and graduated from Saint Thomas University School of Law in 2007. The law school renamed its cafeteria in his name. Wright then passed the New Jersey Bar in 2008, but spent the next nine years being investigated by the New Jersey Bar's Committee on character before being granted admission to the bar by the New Jersey Supreme Court on September 27, 2017, where he was officially sworn in as a licensed attorney.

"I went to law school for one reason and one reason only," says Wright. "To slay giants for a price. And if the giant is big enough and the cause is important enough, I'll do it for free, especially when it involves helping those who cannot help themselves."

Wright is scheduled to be in Court for the first time in the Bell case on December 1, 2017. He is currently Of Counsel with the law firm Hunt, Hamlin & Ridley located in Newark, New Jersey.