REDEEMED FROM DEATH: ATONEMENT, INCARNATION,
AND THE FATE OF THE DAMNED

Zachary Seals
New College, University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh, Scotland

John Bush
Covenant College, Lookout Mountain, GA, USA

Christ's work of atonement must stand as the utterly unique and defining aspect of Christianity, for it requires and demonstrates the necessity of every other major doctrine revealed in Scripture. It is in reflection on the atonement that we see the beauty of the Trinity, the centrality of the hypostatic union, and the glory of new life won by the death of death. Setting forth a biblical understanding of the atonement requires no less than an overview of the breadth of the story of Scripture, as it rests at the center of the Christian narrative of creation, fall, redemption, and consummation.[1] However, exactly how and why the atonement procures salvation is widely debated. Parsing through the various theories of the atonement presented by the particular streams of the Christian tradition is not the goal of this work. Instead, we attempt to synthesize the penal substitutionary account of atonement (hereafter, PSA) with other doctrines which bear on its shape.

This is especially necessary in light of recent criticisms made by conditionalists, who contend that there is a basic incompatibility between PSA and the doctrine of eternal conscious torment (hereafter, ECT). According to this charge, it is inconsistent to

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1.   As Johnson (*Atonement: A Guide for the Perplexed*, 56) helpfully reminds his readers, "the logic of the atonement is so ubiquitous in Scripture that we guarantee that we will misread Scripture if we focus solely upon those passages that seem to speak most clearly about the atonement."

claim that Christ vicariously bore the punishment of the damned for the elect when in fact he suffered a fate those in hell will never undergo; physical death. How is it that one can claim Christ took the punishment for the elect in a manner of substitution, when the punishment of physical death he experiences is something no one in hell will ever experience? Conditionalists claim that the logical consequence of combining ECT with PSA results in a reduction of Christ's atoning punishment strictly to his torment on the cross, thereby making his death arbitrary and unnecessary. This study intends to address this particular concern.

Here it is important to note that this study is fundamentally not a critique of Conditionalism, nor is it an argument in support of the traditional view. Rather, it is a defense of the internal coherence of the traditional position on hell in light of a particular formulation of the atonement, namely, penal substitutionary atonement (PSA). Though we write intentionally within the broader catholic tradition, we also do so as conditioned from a historic Reformed perspective. We believe careful historical retrieval of the classical Reformed account of PSA will clarify and ultimately alleviate many of the concerns that contemporary accounts of the doctrine face by conditionalists.

With this qualification in place, the rest of the study seeks to present a version of PSA that is not susceptible to the conditionalist's concerns while also presenting a version of ECT that is informed by the truth of Christ's descent into Hades. When these two elements are combined with a consideration of christological anthropology, the traditional view is seen to be coherent, in contrast to the conditionalist charge. Any attempt to understand the atoning work of God in Jesus Christ will require careful summary of humanity's original state and the consequence of our race's fall into sin. We will start at the beginning of humanity's story in the Garden of Eden.

The Fall and God's Remedy

It is widely recognized in modern scholarship that Gen 1, when read in its ancient Near Eastern and canonical contexts, presents Eden as a protological temple in which Adam is to serve as a

priest-king with Eve as his fit helper. This is evident from numerous considerations.[2] First, just as the temple is the place in which God "walks with his people" and is specially present later in the Old Testament (Lev 26:12; Deut 23:14 [23:15 MT]; 2 Sam 7:6–7; Ezek 28:14), so he is said to walk in the garden of Eden (Gen 3:8), the Hebrew word הָלַךְ (*halak)* referring to both phenomena.[3] Second, Adam is presented as a priest who must "work" and "keep" the garden, the same responsibilities reserved for temple priests (Num 3:7–8; 8:25–26; 18:5–6; 1 Chr 23:32; Ezek 44:14). This connection is furthered in that he dons priestly garments (Ezek 28:13). Third, Ezekiel describes Eden as "the holy mountain of God" and refers to it as containing sanctuaries (Ezek 28:13,18). Fourth, just as the eschatological temple of Israel was to be on a mountain and face east (Ezek 40:2,6; 43:12), so too was the entrance to Eden located atop a mountain and oriented towards the east (Ezek 28:14–16, Gen 3:24). There are many additional evidences that could be brought forth—everything from the jewels found in the garden to the river flowing out of Eden speak to its role as a temple—but to argue in greater depth is beyond the scope of this study. The important point is that Eden's primary significance was that it served as the dwelling place of God with humanity. Therefore, Adam's commission was to protect this garden-temple and cultivate it so that it extended to cover the whole earth (cf. Mark 4:30–32).

These considerations subsequently reveal that humanity's primeval gift was not mere biological life, but a particular kind of blessed life experienced in the presence of God. The first estate of humanity involved both a unique quality of life with an experience of God's presence qualitatively distinct from his mere omnipresence. This pairing is important for when we consider the consequences of their Fall. The Serpent claimed that by eating the fruit they would "not surely die" (Gen 3:4). At face value, the Serpent's statement seems true, as atheists and other critics of

2.   The following arguments are taken directly from Beale, *New Testament Biblical Theology*, 617–22. See also Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission*, as well as Alexander and Gathercole, *Heaven on Earth*.

3.   Unless otherwise noted all references are taken from the ESV.

traditional Christianity are quick to point out. Was the serpent right? Although a number of exegetical possibilities have been presented in response to this problem, our view is that a type of death did in fact occur immediately. This death is clearly not the event of physical death so often found elsewhere in the Old Testament. R. W. L. Moberly explains that this view seeks "to interpret death itself in a non-literal, metaphorical way to signify something other than the termination of physical existence."[4] He goes on, "the justification of such an approach is the fact that 'death' and 'life' are both terms that in religious and moral contexts are inherently suggestive of metaphorical sense in which they apply to the quality of human life, rather than its mere presence or absence."[5] He points to Deut 30:15 and 19 which link life and death with blessing and curse, as well as Prov 5:20–23, which seems to link a particular way of life (harlotry) to a way of death. These examples illustrate that in the Hebrew Bible, the term "death" can refer not only to the singular point in time when a person transitions to the absence of physical life, but more broadly to a way of living in a cursed condition. This corresponds well with the pair of ideas noted above: Adam and Eve experienced a unique quality of life rooted in the special presence of God. Immediately after Adam and Eve eat the fruit forbidden to them, they hide from the presence of God (Gen 3:8, 10). Even before God issues his official judicial response to their crime, there is a real and immediate consequence to their action resulting in a separation from the intimacy they once enjoyed in communing with God (Gen 2:19, 22).

Crucially, the judgments that follow not only condemn them to the fate of returning to the dust from which they were created (the event of physical death), but also include a certain quality of life (living in the way of death) apart from the place of blessing they had with God. These curses which include "enmity" (3:15), "pain" (3:16–17), and a cursed ground (3:17) ultimately result in

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4.   Moberly, "Did The Serpent Get It Right?" 16.

5.   Moberly, "Did The Serpent Get It Right?" 16. Moberly further defends his view from criticisms by Barr in "Did the Interpreters Get it Right?" 34–37.

Adam and Eve being "banished" (Hebrew: *salah,* 3:23) and "driven" (3:24, *garas*) from the garden. Kenneth Matthews notes the term *salah* and the stronger *garas* are terms of expulsion and exile (Lev 16:10; Gen 21:10).[6] Accordingly, Gordon Wenham observes that "the expulsion from the garden of delight where God himself lived would therefore have been regarded by the godly men of ancient Israel as yet more catastrophic than physical death. The latter was the ultimate sign and seal of the spiritual death the human couple experienced on the day they ate from the forbidden tree."[7] This emphasis on punishment as alienation and exile, rather than mere physical death, is again emphasized in Gen 3:24 where it says God placed a "cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life." Derek Kidner notes, "every detail of this verse, with its *flame* and *sword* and the turning *every way*, actively excludes the sinner."[8] While physical death is certainly a part of the punishment to be experienced later (over nine hundred years after the curse!), undoubtedly the separation from God's blessed presence and experience of physical and emotional pain is the immediate consequence involved. These elements are well captured by the term "spiritual death," which does not refer to the destruction of the immaterial soul, but rather an ethical hostility and enmity with God.

Definitions of Death

Thus there are two concepts of "death" that are often used in theological discourse. Jesus himself seems to utilize these distinct senses of death in Luke 9:60 when he says "let the dead bury their dead." As I. Howard Marshall, along with Robert Stein, Darrell Bock, and Joel Green affirm, "the meaning is simply 'Let the (spiritually) dead bury the (physically) dead'; the use of

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6. Matthews, *Genesis*, 257.
7. Wenham, *Genesis*, 90.
8. Kidner, *Genesis*, 72.

'dead' in a metaphorical sense was known to Jews."[9] Augustine explains spiritual death well while commenting on this passage, "When unbelievers bury a dead body, the dead bury the dead. The body of the one has lost its soul, the soul of the others has lost God. For as the soul is the life of the body; so is God the life of the soul. As the body expires when it loses the soul, so does the soul expire when it loses God. The loss of God is the death of the soul: the loss of the soul the death of the body."[10] Thus, just as God's omnipresence and special redemptive presence must be distinguished, so too must physical and spiritual death remain distinct theological categories.[11] In fact, Ps 119:107 illustrates quite clearly the idea that to be afflicted with pain is to affirm a sense in which one does not have life: I am severely afflicted; give me life, O Lord, according to your word! Although God's special redemptive presence presupposes omnipresence, texts can be multiplied which emphasize only the unique sense in which God is present to commune with his people. For example, when the glory of the Lord leaves the temple in Ezekiel, the text is not saying God left that place in every sense possible. While expulsion from the redemptive/relational presence of God often does result in physical death, this does not occur in every text. For example, both Cain (Gen 4:16) and Jonah (Jonah 2:4) are described as being separated from the presence of the Lord's favor and yet protected from physical death. Consider also, Luke 15:24 which speaks of relational separation as a "death" to be saved from. In like manner, then, all who are spiritually dead and at enmity with God are also physically dying during this life, but this process does not end with their physical death.

So far we have made two clear distinctions. First, there is the distinction between physical death and spiritual death (henceforth D1 and D2). Second, we must remember the distinction between alienation from God's blessed presence and the experience

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9.   Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 411. See also, Stein, *Luke*, 301; Bock, *Luke*, 981; Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 408, although Green grants another possible reading on the basis of Jewish funeral customs.

10.   Augustine, *Sermon on the New Testament XII.2* (NPNF[1] 6:299).

11.   Categories are drawn from Lister, *The Presence of God*, 50.

of physical pain as part of humanity's lived reality while exiled from Eden. With these categories in place, we can consider how the place of the dead is seen in the rest of the OT. Examination of this subject will help us understand the breadth of the human experience post-Fall as well as set the stage for the work of Christ in redeeming this condition.

On Sheol and Hades

The term Sheol appears sixty-six times in the OT and although there are many nuances, it is broadly agreed to be "the realm of the dead deep below the earth."[12] Though some have argued the term exclusively refers to the grave, there is good reason to think such a reading is far too restrictive.[13] Most important for the present work, however, is the question of who goes to Sheol. At least two verses seem to furnish strong support for the idea that Sheol is the universal fate of both the righteous and wicked of humanity.[14] Psalm 89:48–49 and Ecc 9:7–10 both present the realm of the dead as the fate awaiting all humanity. In fact, David himself expected to join his son in Sheol after death (2 Sam 12:23). Consider also Gen 37:35 where Jacob expects to go down to Sheol and find his sons.

In addition to Sheol being the place of the dead, there is ample OT precedent for the personification of Death.[15] Jeremiah 9:21 and Isa 28:15 each utilize this personification, and Hos 13:14 personifies Sheol as well. Isaiah 28:15 is important as it condemns Israel's leaders for making a "covenant with Death," which many scholars have struggled to explain in relation to the historical context of the covenant made with Egypt.[16] Christopher Hays argues on phonological and iconographical bases that "Isaiah was playing on the name of the Egyptian

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12.   Johnston, *Shades of Sheol*, 73.

13.   See Johnston, *Shades of Sheol*, 74. Isaiah 14:9 is one text which presents trouble for this view. For a thorough defense of the view that Hebrews held to the belief in an immaterial soul see Steiner, *Disembodied Souls*, 2015.

14.   Contra Johnston, *Shades of Sheol*, 82–83.

15.   See Tromp, *Primitive Conceptions of Death*, 100.

16.   Smith, *Isaiah 1–39*, 486.

goddess Mut" which "provided the prophet with an irresistible opportunity for *double entendre*."[17] Finally, Justin Bass observes that "Death and Hades" appear frequently together in the OT.[18] This intensifies the likelihood of the OT being the intended background for John's use of "Death and Hades" in Rev 1:18.

To recap, we have argued that the fall of humanity brought about a curse of death that is twofold: one being physical, which entails pain, and the other being spiritual, which results from spiritual opposition and enmity against God. Although the righteous saints in the OT were saved by faith in Gods promise and justified (Gal 3:8) just like believers after the coming of Christ, they hoped for a deliverance from Sheol and the reality of physical death that was common to all humanity. For humanity to be one with God would require an overcoming of physical death through an irreversible wedding of the human and divine, guaranteeing the permanent presence of God.

Incarnation and Atonement

The work of atonement is a singular work of the Triune God toward the end of union with humanity.[19] This unitive function of the atoning work of Christ is described with a number of biblical metaphors. As many have observed, often an entire atonement theory, seeking to offer a mechanism for the attainment of this union, is based on a single metaphoric picture. For example, the picture of the Son of God appearing to "destroy the works of the devil" (1 John 3:18) offers a different perspective from the idea

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17.   Hays, *Death in the Iron Age II*, 292–318.

18.   "1 Sam 2:6; Job 17:13–14; 33:22; 38:17; Pss 6:6; 17 (18):5, 6; 48:15 (49:14); 54 (55):16; 88 (89):49; 114:3 (116:3); Prov 2:18; 5:5; 7:27; Cant 8:6; Isa 28:15, 18; Hos 13:14; Hab 2:5. It should be noticed that מָוֶת 'death' and קֶבֶר 'grave' or θάνατος 'death' and τάφος 'grave' never appear together nor are they ever personified in the OT, NT, or in ancient literature. This demonstrates that the ancient writers did not see Sheol or Hades as the 'grave,' but as a distinct realm where the souls of the dead dwell." Bass, *The Battle for the Keys*, 26.

19.   For further thoughts on the relationship between penal models of the atonement and union between God and humanity, see Stump, *Atonement*, 116–42.

that Christ appeared to give his life "as a ransom for sinners" (Matt 20:28; Mark 10:45). These perspectives are hardly incompatible, of course, but any orthodox theory of the atonement must attempt the nuanced work of integrating the disparate biblical motifs. While the "death" of Christ is undoubtedly essential for union with God, the fullness of Christ's sufferings throughout his life and its consequent pain is also necessary for the atonement to work. Recall that humanity's pain was also part of the curse experienced by humanity since the Fall (D2). The NT characterizes the atoning work of Christ as "ransom" (Matt 10:45), "redemption" (Col 1:14), "salvation" (Acts 4:12), "propitiation" (1 John 2:2), "reconciliation" (Rom 5:9). These terms are fundamentally metaphors which should not be pressed beyond their intended purpose.[20] Noting that these terms are metaphorical does not constrain them in ambiguity either. They are clearly intended to have a "revelatory function."[21] As Boersma explains, a metaphor is simply "a word that is carried over from one semantic field to another."[22] Metaphors, then, have the power to be as beneficial as they are dangerous. Metaphors can clarify through comparison with other concepts, but when made controlling, they often reduce much needed nuance. As applied to the atonement, they are "a set of lenses through which we describe God's acts of resolving sin and of bringing humanity back home in their relationship with God, with self, with others, and with the world."[23] Recognizing the various metaphors provided by Scripture obliges us to confess an account of the atonement which encapsulates both points of similarity and dissimilarity between each picture presented. For the purpose of this study, there are two points to be emphasized: (1) the danger of exclusively focusing on the death of Christ for atonement and; (2) The danger of making commercial metaphors the epicenter of the atonement. To address the first concern we will focus on the Incarnation as a whole being a work of Christ's atonement specifically

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20. See McIntyre, *The Shape of Soteriology*, 26–52.
21. Gunton, *The Actuality of Atonement*, 51.
22. Boersma, *Violence, Hospitality, and the Cross*, 100.
23. McKnight, *A Community Called Atonement*, 36.

considering his many sufferings. Subsequently, we will consider the difference between pecuniary and penal substitution.

Incarnation and Suffering

Christ is Immanuel. He permanently assumes humanity and becomes "God with us." The God-man stands before the Father, mediating in accordance to both his human and divine natures. All the work Christ does in providing atonement, he does as the incarnate God. Until his resurrection, the reverse is also true. All that Christ does as incarnate God is part of his atoning work. Christ's atoning work involves both the fashioning of a perfect righteousness imputed to believers and entering into the fullness of the curse and human pain. All of Christ's suffering he incurs as a result of the curse, and is thus part of his atoning suffering. While it may seem suspect that Jesus cutting his finger in Joseph's carpentry shop might have atoning value, it is specifically the mundane of human life which is subjected to curse in Gen 3. Cultivation of the soil and bringing forth children, a synecdoche for the whole of human experience in exile from Eden, are cursed with pain.

The view that all of Christ's sufferings and not just his death were vicarious is richly attested in Scripture, which portrays his substitutionary atoning work in expansive rather than restrictive language. Isaiah 53:3 speaks of Christ's entire life as "a man of sorrows" and that he bore our "griefs" and "sorrows" (53:4). The Gospels themselves attest that Christ had to suffer not only the cross, but "many things" (Matt 16:21; Mark 8:31; Luke 17:25) in our place. Texts like 2 Cor 8:9 and Rom 8:3 point to the entire time of Christ's Incarnation as that which was done for our sake.[24] The author of Hebrews affirms that Christ's salvation

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24.   Some have used Col 1:20 as an example of proof that some of Christ's sufferings were not substitutionary due to the tension between affirming Christ's substitution was not lacking in anything, but this text affirming some of his sufferings which were lacking. This objection relies on an ambiguity on the term "lacking." The value and efficacy of Christ's substitutionary sufferings are not in any way lacking, but the means by which they are personally presented to those in the world are lacking in the sense that Christ lived at one

was made perfect through "sufferings" (Heb 2:10), whereby he learned obedience (Heb 5:8). This is not to say Christ's presence is atoning as such. Rather it is to say the event of the atonement is coterminous with the entire Incarnation. God was not merely incapable of dying, he was incapable of pain in the fullness of the divine life. The Incarnation is the divine decision to overcome not only the power of death but the curse of the Fall entirely. Secondly, this does not imply that Christ's atonement as seen from a penal substitutionary perspective exhausts the biblical data.[25] Rather, it is one important lens through which Christ's multifaceted work can be considered. It is also legitimate to think about the atonement, for example, as a means of deliverance, an example to follow, or a reality we participate in. Indeed, later in this study we will argue that the substitution and participation themes can be synthesized. Yet, all of Christ's works are fundamentally substitutionary. In other words, it's not that some of Christ's acts were substitutionary and others were exemplary. Instead, like looking through a bifocal lens, Christ's singular work can be viewed through multiple perspectives.[26]

Historically speaking, here it is important to note that this view has been a part of the standard Reformed account of Christ's penal substitutionary sufferings. In the words of Francis Turretin,

> The atoning sufferings of Christ extend to all those which were inflicted upon him, not only in the garden of Gethsemane, but also during his whole life. We cannot approve of the hypothesis which restricts the expiatory sufferings of our Redeemer to the pains he suffered during the three hours in which the sun was darkened, and

moment in time and place. As the Church lives out the call to imitate Christ in his sufferings they show forth his perfect sufferings.

25. This is not, of course, to suggest that penal substitution is unimportant or secondary. For a recent explication of the biblical data undergirding penal substitutionary atonement, see Craig, *Atonement*, 5–21.

26. Craig (*Atonement*, 73) also points out that other biblical motifs must enrich our understanding of the atonement.

he hung on the cross before his death—while it excludes all the other sufferings of his life.[27]

The influential seventeenth-century Dutch theologian Herman Witsius even goes so far as to say, "This, if I mistake not, is the common opinion of our divines, which our Catechism has also expressed, quest. 37; namely, that all the sufferings which Christ endured both in soul and body, through the whole course of his life, constitute his one and perfect satisfaction"[28] This view was hardly unique to the seventeenth century Reformed. It can be found in the works of nineteenth century Reformed theologians such as W. G. T. Shedd and A. A. Hodge, as well as twentieth century theologians such as Berkhof.[29] Consider Shedds helpful classifications, he writes, "Suffering is of three kinds: (1) calamity, (2) chastisement, and (3) punishment or penalty." One and the same suffering can be a chastisement for one and punishment for another so the question becomes; "what was the nature of Christ's sufferings?" Perhaps they were merely the natural result of living in a fallen world? Shedd argues, "The sufferings of Christ the mediator were vicariously penal or atoning because the intention, both on the part of the Father and the Son, was that they should satisfy justice for the sin of man." Importantly, these vicariously atoning sufferings were not merely related to Christ's experience in the Garden or at Golgotha. Shedd explains,

> The penal and atoning sufferings of Christ were twofold: ordinary and extraordinary. The first came upon him by virtue of his human nature. He hungered, thirsted, was weary in body, was sad and grieved in mind, by the operation of the natural laws of matter and mind. All that Christ endured by virtue of his being born of a woman, being made under the law, living a human life, and dying a violent death belongs to this class.[30]

Christ came to redeem us from the curse of the law by being born under the law (Gal 4:4) so that in his entire life he could not

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27.   Turretin, *The Matter of the Atonement*, 37.
28.   Wistius, *The Economy of the Covenants*, 141.
29.   Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 382.
30.   Shedd, *Vicarious Atonement*, [n.p.].

only live righteously, but suffer righteously in a perfect way his saints never could. Thus, we must affirm that the pains of sensible suffering are as much a part of the punishment for sin, and therefore, the vicarious sufferings of Christ as the pain of loss of life.

Christ's Death as Substitution

Importantly, PSA is often distinguished from a broader Anselmian model in a number of ways. Adonis Vidu notes that for Anselm the idea of punishment and satisfaction were set in opposition to each other. He writes of Anselm's view, "either God punishes the souls of humanity with eternal damnation, or an adequate satisfaction is made for the crime."[31] Louis Berkhof also points out two key differences between Anselm and the view of the Reformers. The first is that Anselm's view is grounded in the honor of God rather than the justice of God. The second is that Anselm's scheme is "one-sided and therefore insufficient in that it bases redemption exclusively on the death of Christ, conceived as a material contribution to the honor of God, and excludes the active obedience of Christ as a contributing factor to his atoning work."[32] This is why Vidu argues it is not until the work of Calvin that the "full logic" of penal substitution is set forth.[33] Of course, Calvin retains the Anselmian idea of the importance of satisfaction, but specifically the way satisfaction was gained was through a penal death. What exactly is required however to claim that a penal death is truly vicarious? Daniel Hill and Joseph Jedwab have recently argued in defense of the claim "God punished Christ," but they do so by carefully defining the necessary conditions for what is meant by "punishment." After surveying various definitions, one of their conclusions is that a punishment occurs when "A implements on B a punishment, x;

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31. Vidu, *Atonement, Law, and Justice*, 59.
32. Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 386.
33. Vidu, *Atonement, Law, and Justice*, 118.

and B suffers x *or something close enough to x*."[34] This flows
from their observation that it seems conceivable for someone to
be sentenced to lethal injection, but the executioner actually im-
plements a hanging. Just because the exact punishment is not fol-
lowed does not mean a punishment did not occur.[35]

Importantly, this distinction was applied historically by Re-
formed theologians concerning the type of penal satisfaction that
Christ provides. A common distinction was drawn between a pe-
cuniary and penal satisfaction. A pecuniary view of the atone-
ment dangerously treats the motif of debt payment as the central
lens through which the work of Christ should be understood.
Most Reformed thinkers viewed this as an insufficient model for
two reasons.

First, it is not clear on a pecuniary view why atonement is
necessary in the first place. As George Payne ably asks, "What is
there to forbid the most honorable and upright judge in the world
to remit any personal debts which an individual may have con-
tracted with him?"[36] If God were merely a man who owed a
great debt, he could forgive without atonement altogether. Some-
thing more fundamental is at play, and this removes the element
of strict exchange often erroneously associated with the Re-
formed view of the atonement, a view common in modern Evan-
gelical constructions of the atonement.

Second, and more fatally, pecuniary theories run contrary to
the words of the Westminster Confession that God "freely justi-
fied" the elect.[37] As John Gibbon noted, we must eschew a pecu-
niary model of atonement in order to safeguard the truth "That
God pardon freely."[38] In his view,

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34.   Hill and Jedwab, *Atonement and the Concept of Punishment*, 147.
Emphasis ours.

35.   Hill and Jedwab, *Atonement and the Concept of Punishment*, 147.
See also the defense of this claim by Williams, *Punishment God Cannot Twice
Inflict*, 499–501.

36.   Payne, *Lectures on Divine Sovereignty*, 145.

37.   Westminster Assembly, *The Westminster Confession of Faith*, 11.1.

38.   Gibbon, *The Nature of Justification Opened*, 27.

> We are not only beholden to Christ for satisfying, but to God, too, in-finitely for accepting of any satisfaction at all. He might have refused it: he had done sinners no wrong, if he had executed the rigor of the law, without hearkening to terms of reconciliation. Quite contrary: a creditor does not pardon the debtor, when the surety has discharged the bond by full payment in kind: the debtor is beholden, indeed, to his friend the surety, but not at all to the creditor, who cannot refuse to cancel the bond; nay, it were wrong and injustice in him if he did.[39]

In other words, it is essential to maintain God's gracious and merciful condescension in choosing to accept the work of Christ's atonement. A pecuniary model binds God as if he were a mere party to a financial transaction and dealt with humanity only in accordance with strict justice. As John Smalley rightly summarizes,

> The thing was, sin could not be pardoned and sinners saved, consistently with just law and good government; and therefore not consistently with the glory of God or the good of the universe. The removal of this just obstacle to the reign of grace, not the laying God under obligation, for value received, was what rendered the redemption of Christ necessary: and the former of these, not the latter, is the end effected by his obedience and death.[40]

Instead of a pecuniary model, the atonement must recognize that the guilt of sinners places them in the place of condemned criminals. Hodge summarizes briefly the difference between these two perspectives in the following ways: (1) In a financial debt the requirement is ended immediately upon the debt being paid no matter who pays it whereas in a legal crime the punishment lands on the person of the criminal; (2) In financial debt the exact payment is due whereas in a legal crime the kind, degree, and duration of the punishment may differ according to each specific case.[41] Robert Dabney further explains,

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39. Gibbon, *The Nature of Justification Opened*, 27.
40. Smalley, "Justification Through Christ," 43–64.
41. Hodge, *The Atonement*, 33–35.

In a mere pecuniary debt, the claim is on the money owed, not on the person owing. The amount is numerically estimated. Hence, the surety, in making vicarious payment, must pay the exact number of coins due. And when he has done that, he has, *ipso facto*, satisfied the debt.[42]

That Christ made a pecuniary satisfaction of this type is precisely what the Reformed frequently denied. Instead, they affirmed that Christ made a penal satisfaction which emphasizes not what is paid, but who paid it. What was necessary was a judicial punishment that would provide satisfaction for the law-breaking rebellion of humankind, not a pecuniary transaction as if humanity's transgression could be abstracted as a finite debt to be repaid in human torment.

This distinction between penal and pecuniary models of the atonement is shown to be even more certain when we consider the various differences between the atoning work of Christ and the fate of the damned. A pecuniary debt must be settled in identical currency, but the satisfaction of Christ is different from the fate of the damned in many important ways. First and most notably, the duration of Christ's punishment was only three days, but on both traditionalism and Conditionalism the punishment of the wicked goes on eternally. Second, as Edwards noted, when Christ suffered, he "knew that God was not angry with him personally, knew that God did not hate him, but infinitely loved him."[43] Third, as John Gibbon observed, Christ was not a sinner, but the law required sinners to pay the punishment for sin.[44] Fourth, Christ suffered not only as a man but as the unique God-man, as Acts 20:28 reminds us. It was God that purchased the Church with his blood, a fact which the Westminster Larger Catechism says was necessary to "give worth and efficacy to his sufferings, obedience, and intercession."[45]

These considerations make it clear that the traditional Reformed view of PSA has always affirmed that a sufficiently

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42.   Dabney, *Lectures*, 503–4. Italics original.
43.   Cited in Crawford, *Jonathan Edwards on the Atonement*, 118.
44.   Gibbon, *The Nature of Justification Opened*, 27.
45.   Vos, *Westminster Larger Confession*, 38.

similar rather than identical satisfaction was offered by Christ for the sins of His people. Though his work of atonement was accomplished on the cross, its application was yet to be fully realized in his burial, descent, and resurrection.

Descent into Hades

Although the doctrine of Christ's descent into Hades finds little support among evangelicals, it received unanimous support across theological traditions in the centuries before the Reformation. While it is true that the first Latin edition of the Apostles Creed to include the phrase dates to 758 CE, evidence for a widespread early second-century belief in the doctrine is abundant across the church fathers.[46] Bass writes,

> If we apply the external canons of textual criticism to the doctrine of the Descensus, then we will discover that it is very ancient (Ignatius CE 98–117; Marcion; Irenaeus' presbyter), geographically widespread (Ignatius of Antioch, Polycarp of Smyrna, Melito of Sardis, Irenaeus of Lyons, Irenaeus' presbyter, Justin Martyr, Marcion of Pontus, etc.) and therefore, should be seen as truly bearing witness to the teaching of the autographs (the Apostles).[47]

Importantly, the notoriously difficult passage in 1 Pet 3:18–22 often used to bolster this doctrine is not required to biblically affirm the idea. Traditionally, at least four other texts were used to support this view; three of which will be briefly considered here.[48]

Bass observes that a special theme runs throughout the narrative of Matthew's Gospel concerning the righteous saints of the OT waiting for Christ in hope (Matt 13:17; 8:11). Additionally, many contemporary commentators are unsure of how to interpret "the sign of Jonah" (Matt 12:39). The descent doctrine helpfully explains how these two features of Matthew's account integrate.

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46.   Bass, *The Battle for the Keys*, 5.

47.   Bass, *The Battle for the Keys*, 11. See also, Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, 99 and Ireaneus, *Against Heresies*, 5.31.2.

48.   Emerson, "Mapping Anthropological Metaphysics," 200–16. See also Emerson, *He Descended to the Dead*.

It is only in Matthew that Jesus describes himself as descending ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ τῆς γῆς (12:40) for three days. In fact, the term appears nowhere else in Scripture. Two centuries prior, however, the Jewish text Sir 51:5 used the phrase "heart of the earth" as a synonym for Hades and the LXX itself uses the term ᾅδου (Hades) in Jonah 2:2 in place of the Hebrew שְׁאוֹל (Sheol). If Christ is comparing Jonah's metaphorical descent to Hades with his actual descent to Hades, it would explain why he emphasizes to Peter that "the gates of Hades" will not prevail against the church (Matt 16:18). Strengthening this allusion, as Bass notes, is Matthew's unique reference to Peter as "son of Jonah" (Matt 16:17).[49] So the promise is that the power of Hades will not defeat Jesus or his followers. In fact, the promise of Christ is vindicated when at the end of the Gospel, "many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised" following the resurrection (Matt 27:52). The early church's interpretation of this verse, as exemplified in Cyril's Catechetical Lectures, frequently connected this resurrection with the work of Christ descending to Hades.[50]

The most explicit textual support for the descent doctrine is Acts 2:27–31. Here Peter twice affirms that Christ was not abandoned to Hades. The clarity with which Peter refers to Christ's resurrection from Hades means we can immediately move to considering one of the two most powerful and frequently cited objections to this reading.[51] Those who deny the reference to Hades as "the realm of the dead" see a mere claim that Jesus did not remain in the grave. Even though every major translation (with the exception of the GNT and CEV) renders ᾅδην as "Hades" rather than "grave," many commentators are committed to the idea that Luke has nothing more in mind here than Christ's burial. A wider look at Luke's description of what happens after

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49.   Bass, *The Battle for the Keys*, 66.

50.   Cyril, *Catechetical Lectures* 14.18–20 (NPNF[2] 7:99–100).

51.   The second objection, which Bass responds to specifically, is the claim that for Christ to descend to Hades would flatly contradict his earlier words on the cross that "Today" (Luke 23:43) he would be in Paradise. For the view that Paradise is a compartment for the righteous within Hades, see Bass, *The Battle for the Keys*, 47–56.

death across his writings however, shows such a reading is hardly likely. As Bass points out, Luke frequently "emphasizes the departure of a person's soul at death."[52] Even if we exclude the explicit distinction between burial and Hades found in Luke 16:23, the picture given by Luke is that at death, the πνεῦμα (spirit) "departs" and, at least in two cases, can "return" to the body, apparently to and from somewhere. Luke 8:53–55 and 23:46 both speak of the spirit this way. Surprisingly, Craig Keener admits that in Acts 2:27 the term "Ἅιδης refers to the realm of the dead (Luke 16:23)," and it provides "a fitting rhetorical contrast with [Christ's] his exaltation to heaven (2:34)."[53] Nevertheless, he concludes it "merely means that he was no longer dead."[54] In light of the clear Psalmic background (16:10), this is justifiable only if the Hebrew reference to Sheol also refers merely to the grave. Such is difficult to maintain when David's expectation to join his son in Sheol is recalled (2 Sam 12:23). Thus, Peter is reading Ps 16 as christologically reconfigured. Though David knew he would go to Sheol, which he saw as a type of separation from God (abandonment), he hoped in a future rescue from such corruption (Acts 2:31), and Peter claims that Christ accomplished exactly that. By not being "abandoned" in Hades, Christ demonstrated the victory that he had won at the cross. This is what David looked forward to and it is why believers can be confident that at the moment after death they are immediately brought into Christ's presence (2 Cor 5:8).[55]

The final passage to consider in this survey is Rev 1:18, which alludes, not merely to the fact, but also the outcome of Christ's descent. The Isaianic background to this verse is un-disputed as the claim to be "the first and last" is clearly an appeal to divinity (Isa 41:4; 44:6; 48:12), but the self-ascription as the "living one" only occurs here in Scripture.[56] As was seen in the OT background, Death is personified and regularly paired with

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52.   Bass, *The Battle for the Keys*, 73.
53.   Keener, *Acts*, 949.
54.   Keener, *Acts*, 949.
55.   Bass, *The Battle for the Keys*, 74.
56.   Bass, *The Battle for the Keys*, 105.

Hades (Rev 6:8; 20:13, 14).[57] Additionally, in light of the rich OT and extra biblical background to personifying Death and Hades the debate whether they are merely personified entities or locations is not necessary, for both can be integrated.[58] Particular attention then needs to be paid to Christ's claim that he has the "keys" of Death and Hades. The keys here are certainly a reference to "power, authority, and dominion over all" that Death and Hades have in store.[59] First Samuel 2:6 is a helpful illustration here, "The LORD kills and brings to life; he brings down to Sheol and raises up." Importantly, John shares the same three tiered geography as Paul who refers to creatures in heaven, and on earth, "and under the earth" (Rev 5:13; Phil 2:10). This authority to use the keys is most clearly demonstrated in Rev 20:14 where Christ commands Death and Hades to give up their dead and then be thrown into the lake of fire.

At this point we need to state what John says at the outset of Revelation that his writings were meant to communicate through symbols (ἐσήμανεν) what can be shown (δεῖξαι) rather than merely told (Rev 1:1). Apocalyptic literature regularly uses metaphors that are intended to demonstrate "more than one point of comparison."[60] Thus, although Death, Hades, Satan, Demons, and wicked humans, are all thrown into the Lake of Fire (Rev 20:10; 21:8), that does not mean the Lake of Fire must symbolize the exact same reality for each participant. Just as it means very different things for one to "destroy" an argument and to destroy an apple, so too can the destruction symbolized by the Lake of Fire be different according to the realties represented. As was argued above, Death is primarily a personified entity that represents those whose souls have departed from their bodies and descend to the realm of Hades, which it has the power over. For Death to be destroyed, then, is to say that there will no longer be any separation of the soul from the body, for the place of the dead is

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57. Note in Rev 21:4 death is articular and thus likely meant to be personified there as well. Bass, *The Battle for the Keys*, 106.

58. Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 214–15.

59. Bass, *The Battle for the Keys*, 110.

60. Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 56.

now gone. The abstract concept of physical death can only be utterly removed when personified as well as the place of the dead.

This brings us to the question of "the second death," which requires some careful parsing. That the two deaths in view here are not fundamentally ontologically similar seems evident from at least two considerations: (1) Satan, the demons, Death, and Hades experience the Lake of Fire which is called the "second death." These are personified abstract entities, locations, and spiritual beings which never physically died, so the second death cannot be referring to physical death. That Satan and the demons share the same Lake of Fire that the damned populate is plain from the words of Jesus (Matt 25:41). (2) Rev 21:4 says "the death" (articular) shall be no more in the new heaven and new earth. Yet, the Lake of Fire, which is the second death, is an eternal punishment (Matt 25:46). Therefore, the particular kind of death referred to as the second death cannot be the qualitatively same kind as that which is done away with entirely. Thus, the second death refers to a spiritual torment and separation from God. In the words of Henry Alford, "As there is a second and higher life, so there is also a second and deeper death. And as after that life there is no more death (ch. xxi.4), so after that death there is no more life."[61] That Christ descended into Death and Hades only strengthens this reading that he can thereby destroy the realm of the physically dead.

At this point it should be noted that some conditionalists have claimed only humans are said to experience the second death, whereas Death, Hades, and the Satanic forces experience the destruction of the lake of fire in their own manner. Although it may be granted, the text does not *explicitly* state that the other entities experience the second death, the reasoning which leads to this conclusion is rather straightforward. It runs along these lines: A is subjected to B and B is C. Therefore, A is subjected to C. This transitive reasoning is hardly special pleading. To the contrary, if greater precision is insisted upon by the conditionalists, then they fall into the problem of not being able to produce *any* text in Revelation which states the wicked are thrown into "the second

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61.   Alford, "Apocalypse of John," 735–36.

death" with the kind of clarity they are requiring. After all, Rev 2:11 and 20:6 only explicitly say the conquering saints will not suffer the second death; it says nothing clearly of what the damned will experience. Surely this requirement for an explicit connection between the second death and the damned, Death and Hades, and Satan is unnecessary at best. The symbol of the Lake of Fire was intended to provide just that sort of connection between the punishment and what/who is punished.

Additionally, it should be noted that contemporary extra biblical Jewish literature of this time was split regarding the nature of second death. Thus, there was no single background with which John's audience would have expected his term to be interpreted within. After an examination of a number of passages within the Targums of Isaiah and Ps 49:11, J. David Woodington has recently argued that at best, the Targums are divided in their conclusions regarding the second death either as eternal fire in Gehenna or annihilation. Although he concludes that interpretive priority should be given to the Targums of Isaiah as the background to John's writing, such a conclusion is not necessary, for all that matters at this point is that there is sufficient ambiguity within the Jewish context to warrant either view.[62] What is important to consider however, is that although the lake of fire (19:20; 20:10) and second death (2:11; 20:6) have both already been introduced independently in two passages prior to 20:14–15, it is not until John introduces Death and Hades being thrown into the lake of fire that he explains it is "the second death."[63] Why would John wait until this point to introduce the connection between the second death and the lake of fire, if not to connect them both to Death and Hades? Ironic and unexpected twists are common in prophetic imagery and particularly in Revelation, so such a reading makes sense here. As Woodington concludes,

> John has structured the finale of the eschatological judgment to leave the reader with an incredible message: Death will face the second death, and Hades a lake of fire. Their double defeat comes at the hands of a coupled fate orchestrated by God that recalls their own

62.   Woodington, "Crafting the Eschaton," 501–18.
63.   Woodington, "Crafting the Eschaton," 513.

traits. Death and Hades, the twin forces of mortal despair in this world, now meet their final reckoning in the form of another corresponding pair: the second death and the lake of fire.[64]

To recap, in this section we have argued that Sheol/Hades is the realm of the dead to which both the righteous and the wicked depart until the time of Christ's descent. Rather than continuing and finishing the atoning sufferings of Christ, the descent into Hades is the proclamation to all in "the lower regions" (Eph 4:9) that the cross has defeated the power of death, and the hope of resurrection which the OT saints longed for has now arrived. Additionally, Revelation's picture of Christ's authority to destroy the very realm of those who physically died demonstrates that the kind of second death which persists for eternity cannot be the same physical death whose power Christ destroyed by rising from the dead. To put it in terms used earlier, although Christ's substitutionary work uniquely applies to the elect for taking their punishment in the D2 sense, the D1 sense has been universally changed by what Christ accomplished on the cross, in his descent, and resurrection. Before moving on to apply these conclusions to the conditionalist's criticism specifically, however, a brief word should be said on how Early Church Fathers saw Christ's resurrection as related to the general resurrection.

The General Resurrection of the Righteous and Wicked

All streams of orthodox Christianity affirm that there will be a bodily resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked to stand in judgment before God. The Nicene Creed itself requires nothing less. Yet, exactly why and how it is the case that the wicked will rise bodily to face judgment is a significant question worth considering. One option is that they rise merely as a result of the omnipotent divine decree due to God's desire not to judge his creatures in a state unlike how he created them. This option explains a mechanism, but hardly fits neatly into the flow of the biblical writings. To the contrary, although the passages which

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64. Woodington, "Crafting the Eschaton," 513.

speak to a general resurrection of the righteous and wicked are frequently lacking in details, there are a number of scriptures that hint toward how this comes about. Here the language of Christ as the "first-fruits" (1 Cor 15:20, 23) and "firstborn from the dead" (Col 1:17; Rev 1:5) are powerful indications that although the elect undoubtedly rise in a unique and salvific sense (their bodies are glorious transformed unlike the wicked, Phil 3:21) the wicked nevertheless do rise because Christ rose. Paul's reflection in Col 1:16–20 shows this most clearly. All things (types and tokens) were created by Christ and for Christ (v. 16). He holds all things together (v. 17) and rose from the dead to be the preeminent one in "everything" (v. 18). Furthermore, this work reconciled "all things" to himself. Is Paul here merely referring to all "types" of things (human, demonic/angelic, natural order) or to all individual instances? Surely both are in view, for there will be a physical resurrection for every human being which follows Christ as the "firstborn."[65]

This view that Christ's resurrection fundamentally reshaped and affected human nature itself is well attested in the early church.[66] In his work, *On the Incarnation*, Athanasius writes, "he now on behalf of all men offered the sacrifice and surrendered his own temple to death on behalf of all, in order to make them all guiltless and free from the first transgression, and to reveal himself superior to death, showing his own incorruptible body as first-fruits of the universal resurrection"[67] In another striking passage, from the same work, he writes,

> For since the Word is above all, consequently by offering his temple and the instrument of his body as a substitute for all men, he fulfilled the debt by his death. And as the incorruptible Son of God was united to all men by his body similar to theirs, consequently he endued all men with incorruption by the promise concerning the resurrection. And now no longer does the corruption involved in death hold sway

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65. For how Christ's work reconciled demonic forces see Johnson, "Where Demons Fear to Tread," 37–55.

66. See Cortez, *Christological Anthropology in Historical Perspective* and *ReSourcing Theological Anthropology*.

67. Athanasius, *Contra Gentes*, 183.

over men because of the Word who dwelt among them through a body one with theirs.[68]

Ben Myers helpfully cautions readers, however, not to take these statements as a description of how the atonement took place. Here the mechanism is not being addressed as much as the universal effects of the work done.[69] Nevertheless, do these universal effects end up forcing Athanasius into an inevitable universalism?[70] Extended reflection on Athanasius' work cannot be developed here, but his view in this regard was hardly unique.[71] Indeed, Cyril of Alexandria has been found to make this exact connection between Christ's descent into Hades and eternal punishment for the damned. Daniel Keating has demonstrated that while Cyril affirmed Christ's descent into Hades had a universal effect "granted to all nature," he also affirmed that those who do not believe in the Son will be raised to punishment.[72]

Let us take a moment to review the ground we have covered thus far. We started by arguing there are at least two legitimately biblical ways of speaking about "death" in light of the "punishment as separation" motif found early in scripture. We have used the categories D1 for separation of the soul from the body, and D2 for the experience of God's wrath against one's soul. Although both the righteous and the wicked experience the effects of D1, and in the OT went to the same place Sheol/Hades, the righteous do not experience this as a judicial consequence for sin and thus, their physical death is not a punishment. We have also argued that the D1 sense of death is part of the universal "defeat of death" motif as depicted in Revelation, where the power and place for those who physically die is entirely destroyed by the lake of fire. Though Christ raises humanity as a whole to

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68.   Athanasius, *Contra Gentes*, 155.

69.   Myers, *The Patristic Model*, 85.

70.   See, for example, Ramelli, *The Christian Doctrine of Apokatastasis*.

71.   For readings of Athanasius which cut against Ramelli's universalist interpretation of the patristics, see Steenberg, *Of God and Man*, and Anatolios, *Athanasius*.

72.   Cyril, *Commentary on the Gospel According to St John*, 73–74, cited in Keating, *Despoiling of Hades*, 258.

physical resurrection through their participation in his resurrection, and will maintain them in such a state so long as he remains in such a state (forever!), the strictly substitutionary element of the penal punishment is that of death in the D2 sense. Even here, however, Christ's experience of D2 is not strictly identical to the damned, for his punishment differed in duration, degree, and phenomenologically. We have emphasized the necessity to affirm all of Christ's sufferings as vicarious and thus admit that the pain of sensible experience is part of God's punishment of sin. Though the pain of loss (physical death) was universally destroyed by Christ, the pain of sensible anguish is an eternal punishment that will be experienced by the damned in the second death forever. With our position made clear, all that remains is to examine the specific criticisms made by the conditionalist and see how they might be defused by our available resources.

Reconciling ECT and Penal Substitutionary Atonement

The literature on Conditionalism has grown considerably in recent years largely due to the work of Rethinking Hell.[73] Instead of engaging widely with the sources, we will closely examine Chris Date's article "The Righteous for the Unrighteous," which seeks to demonstrate a fundamental incompatibility between PSA and ECT. To start, it is important to say there is much in Date's article by way of explanation and biblical support for the doctrine of PSA, which we enthusiastically affirm, so no attention needs to be spent reviewing the biblical case Date makes for the doctrine. Instead, we want to summarize his central criticism so we can offer a series of responses.

Date opens his article by setting out six objectives he hopes to accomplish with his article. Since we already agree with his first, second, third, and sixth objectives, which pertain to the biblical support for PSA and clarification of why believers still die, we will only specifically address his fourth and fifth points. These are, in order, that

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73.   See, for example, Date et al., eds., *Rethinking Hell*; Date and Highfield, eds., *A Consuming Passion*.

(4) by applying his [Christ's] infinite worth to his *torment*, traditionalists risk unintentionally denying the substitutionary nature of his *death*, a denial conservative evangelicals are not typically willing to countenance; (5) because Jesus was to be raised, he did not wholly cease to be when he died, but since no resurrection will follow the *second* death, the bodies *and* souls of the unredeemed will be destroyed in hell.[74]

Before responding to each of these points, we will begin by offering a few general comments on Date's presentation of PSA.

In his article Date emphasizes the substitutionary death of Christ by a number of arguments, but perhaps most persuasively by an emphasis on the grammatical use of the prepositions ἀντί and ὑπέρ taken in the sense of substitution.[75] While we would fundamentally agree with Date that substitution is a key element of the various texts he cites, it is important to note that a sense of "equivalence" should temper any tendency to read substitution as being an exact one-for-one exchange. Conceptually, it should be clear that nothing about the ideas of "in the place of" and "in exchange for" intrinsically require the exact same performance. For example, consider in a sport when one team member goes in to play "in the place of" another player. They cover their spot, but they are not required to play in exactly the same way the other player would. This is why the distinction was brought up earlier between a pecuniary and penal satisfaction which we will address again below. For now all that needs to be noted is that on the linguistic level there is no reason to prefer Date's view of an exact exchange over ours of an equivalent exchange.

Secondly, before offering defensive remarks concerning whether PSA and ECT make the death of Christ "irrelevant, unnecessary, and arbitrary," we want to offer a criticism of Date's view that exclusively sees the substitutionary sufferings of Christ as the work he does on the cross.[76] As was noted above, this fundamentally undermines the full breadth of Christ's incarnation and entire state of humiliation on our behalf. The Old Testament

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74. Date, "The Righteous for the Unrighteous," 71.
75. Date, "The Righteous for the Unrighteous," 65.
76. Date, "The Righteous for the Unrighteous," 81.

sacrificial animals could die to typologically reflect Christ's death, but lacking a rational nature they could not suffer the way Christ did. Christ is the better sacrificial Lamb, not merely because his death sheds a perfect blood, but because his entire life was one of voluntary submission to the pain of the curse brought by the Fall. The death of animals could not bring true spiritual union with God because they were unable to address the true spiritual separation humanity suffered from God. It is only when Christ is found to be our substitute in his full life of obedience and suffering that we can confidently know our life of suffering with Christ (1 Pet 4:13) has been freed of condemnation and now calls us to union with him as in his death (Rom 6:3–4).

In light of this, we can directly address the charge that Christ's death is not substitutionary because it does not reflect the punishment of the damned. Our response, is threefold.

First, Dates' argument seems to ignore that unbelievers die physically as a punishment for their sins in this life. The wrath of God is not only carried out in ultimate final judgement but carries forth a decree of death for the wicked during their life as well. On the one hand, nearly every sinner who has ever lived will physically die as a punishment for their sins. So at a face value level, the dilemma can be resolved by saying Christ experiences exactly what the damned experience so that the elect will not experience it as judicial punishment. Date could point to the last generation which will be alive at Christ's return as an exception to this rule. Do they not stand as a counterexample because they never experience physical death? Perhaps, but the charge from Date is that of arbitrariness, so certainly the acts of God are fitting even if not strictly necessary if they apply to the vast majority of what is experienced in human history. Additionally, we believe this troubles the traditional view no more than it troubles the conditionalist view. Afterall, both sides have to explain how it is that the last generation of the wicked alive at Christ's return can go through the "second death" without experiencing physical death. The traditionalist can appeal to Christ's destruction of the power and realm of physical death in the destruction of Hades and thereby naturally accept that the last generation would immediately go into the second death because the first is done

away. Date's view, however, seems to entail ambiguity on this point, which leads us to his understanding of the second death.

On the one hand, Date is led by the biblical text to assert a meaningful ontological distinction between the first and second death, and thus wants to include the death of the soul in the idea of the second death. On the other hand, Date's definition of "death" is quite clear: "the privation of embodied or psychosomatic life."[77] This is true regardless of whether the death is temporal or eternal.[78] However, a problem arises for dualism, which Date presumes for the sake of his article, the loss of psychosomatic life is not equivalent to the destruction of the soul.[79] Although Date wants to affirm what Conditionalism requires, that upon entrance into hell the body and soul "cease to exist altogether," his stated definition of death seems to require is the eternal lack of psychosomatic unity.[80] It appears to be the case, therefore, that this basic definition would constrain the conditionalist to the belief that the "first death" and "second death" are fundamentally ontologically similar.[81] In so far as the first and second death are fundamentally *physical* deaths the question remains: "how would the last generation of the wicked experience a second death when they never experienced a first?" Date does not have recourse to the same resources the traditionalist does here and is required to find another answer.

Our second, and more direct response, is that Date's argument relies on a univocal understanding of Christ's bodily death. That is to say, his argument works only if Christ's death aligns in one-to-one correspondence with the punishment of the damned. To

77.   Date, "The Righteous for the Unrighteous," 76.

78.   Date, "The Righteous for the Unrighteous," 83.

79.   Date ("The Righteous for the Unrighteous," 83) defends what is called a "holistic" or "anthropological" dualism.

80.   Date, "The Righteous for the Unrighteous," 82.

81.   Here we want to recognize that although Date does not accept this conclusion, and would not characterize his own view as such, we fail to see how it may be consistently avoided given his own premises. We understand Date includes the destruction of the soul in his definition of the second death, but fail to see how such is consistent with his stated definition and find this to be an ambiguity worth resolving.

construct substitution this way is to allow a pecuniary metaphor to control the entire doctrine. It should be said that the conditionalist already accepts that certain conditions for Christ's punishment are not exactly the same for the damned; namely, that they are dead for eternity, but Christ only died for three days. Date offers a reason for why this is the case, but it is beside the current point, for at the end of the matter he still affirms that though the duration of the punishment is different for the damned, it is qualitatively the same punishment; they both lose psychosomatic life. Here we do not wish in any sense to deny the importance of Christ dying physically, rather we want to affirm that his sacrifice was accepted by the Father as being an equivalent satisfaction for the wrath that would have been poured out on the damned, not the exact same experience. Consider the words of the late twentieth-century theologian Loraine Boettner, who writes,

> Jesus did not suffer the pangs which are experienced by lost souls in hell, but in paying the penalty for His people, He did suffer death in its most essential nature, which is separation from God. And while His sufferings were not identical, either in intensity or in length of time endured, with those which His people would have suffered had they been left to their own sin, in view of the infinite worth and dignity of the Sufferer they were nevertheless a full equivalent to those sufferings.[82]

Finally, and perhaps most directly, Christ's descent into and conquering of Hades explains why the state of physical death changes after final judgement. On the traditional view, the first death is qualitatively different than the second death that Satan, demons, Death, and Hades all experience. Since Death and Hades are personified abstract entities, their destruction looks different than the destruction of rational agents that are tormented in tribulation and distress (Rom 2:8–9) for all eternity. Not only so, Christ's resurrection from the dead has a universal effect on human nature, for all rise with him. These considerations are

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82.   Boettner, "Not Merely a Martyr's Death," [n.d.].

deeply integrated, such that it is unwarranted to say that Christ's death is not substitutionary because the damned do not die.

Conclusion

The Christian church has wrestled for millenia to understand the words of Jesus that his blood was the "blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins" (Matt 26:28). If it were successfully demonstrated that a traditional perspective on the fate of the damned was inconsistent with a full-orbed and orthodox doctrine of the atonement, it would be a fatal objection. In some ways, shallow and uncareful articulations of penal substitution from modern evangelical theologians has made addressing this objection more difficult. It is our view, however, that this objection can be clearly answered with *ressourcement* of the great tradition of Christian thought.

Christ the incarnate God effectuated his atoning work throughout his whole life. As the God-man, he worked a perfect righteousness for his people and suffered through the breadth of the Fall's painful work. His death on our behalf was the culmination of his experience of the Fall and accepted by the Father as a fitting exchange for the souls of Christ's people. Christ having died, the power of physical death has been broken for all of humanity. All will rise because all participate in the one humanity which has been renewed in Christ. After this general resurrection, humanity will taste either the fullness of life in the presence of God's blessing or the fullness of death in alienation from the source of all goodness, beauty, and joy.

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