

JUSTICE: THE FOUNDATION OF A CHRISTIAN APPROACH TO ABUSE

Paper presented by Rachael Denhollander at the 70th Annual Meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society

While the numerous cover-ups of child sexual abuse in the Roman Catholic Church are notorious and well publicized, evangelical churches are beginning to come to terms with the fact that they, too, have a #MeToo problem. While the decentralized nature of evangelical churches and denominations makes it harder to precisely quantify how widespread sexual and domestic abuse is within evangelical communities, there is growing data and increased awareness within churches that there is a serious problem. In his 2018 dissertation, Wade Mullen documents 179 cases of sexual abuse by pastors in the United States from 2016-2017.¹ Stories of sexual abuse in Christian communities are all too often accompanied by equally distressing tales of how those communities themselves sided with the abuser, protecting them, returning them to positions of leadership and respect quickly and quietly, shielding them from consequences and traumatizing their victims in the process. This sometimes results from good old-fashioned cronyism and outright corruption – however, in many cases, abuse within the church is mishandled as a result of poor theology and misinformation about the dynamics of abuse. A poorly developed understanding of forgiveness can lead to victims being shamed for being “bitter” or “vindictive”—or pressured into premature forgiveness as a key to their healing. In this paper we intend to explore how a doctrine that has historically been central to evangelical theology—namely, penal substitutionary atonement—points to an understanding of God and his justice that provides both comfort and vindication for victims of abuse and serves as an overarching guiding principle for Christian communities as they seek to grapple with acting righteously in the face of abuse.

Accordingly, this paper is arranged into two sections. First, we will examine the claim that Penal Substitutionary Atonement (PSA) is itself a picture of abuse and demonstrate that, properly understood and articulated, PSA is instead a repudiation of the sinful power dynamics that enable abuse and an affirmation of the victim’s longing for justice. In the second section, we will examine 4 ways in which this understanding of justice informs the ways in which Christian communities understand abuse and how they treat victims of sexual abuse.

PENAL SUBSTITUTIONARY ATONEMENT: ABUSE OR *CONTRA* ABUSE?

The idea that Jesus Christ offered himself as a substitute to suffer the penal consequences of sin in place of sinners has come under sustained theological criticism as being the product of unhealthy and abusive patriarchal perspectives on women and minorities. In the late 1980’s, Rita Nakashima Brock labelled any model of atonement in which Jesus is subjected to punishment to satisfy God as “cosmic child abuse”²—an evocative description that has embedded itself into contemporary discussions about the atonement. Elizabeth Johnson claims that an understanding of Jesus as being punished on behalf of sinners is “virtually inseparable from the underlying image of God as an angry, bloodthirsty, sadistic father, reflecting the very worst kind of male behavior.”³ Delores Williams writes that to glorify the idea of Jesus as the helpless surrogate for sinners on the cross is to “glorify suffering” and unacceptably render the exploitation of black women as “sacred.”⁴ This critique of PSA has been accepted by many theologians as necessitating a careful re-formulation—if not outright rejection of—penal, substitutionary views of atonement.⁵ Clearly, any attempts to ground a Christian response to abuse in the justice of God as seen at the cross must at a bare minimum avoid grounding that in an abusive paradigm. Is PSA such a paradigm?

The answer to that question is, “It depends.” What separates an abusive view of substitutionary atonement from a biblical view of substitutionary atonement is the status of the Son. In an abusive paradigm the Father acts against, or on the Son, to bring about an end that accomplishes the Father’s will for Father’s own distinct purposes. The need for justice is seen as something that resides in the Father, a need that is satisfied by the

death of another. In this scenario, the Son is an innocent third party inserted between the Father and humanity, upon whom the Father may pour out his anger and so be reconciled to mankind.⁶ The problem with such a portrayal is that it considers PSA in isolation from orthodox Trinitarian theology that stresses the complete equality and unity of the Godhead, in which no one member dominates or controls the others, and in which the actions of each member is inseparably connected to the others. As Margo Houts observes, “We can expect abusive imagery to run rampant when the controls which Trinitarian doctrine places on atonement imagery are removed.”⁷ This is not to say that this version of PSA exists only in the imagination of feminist theologians – we have personally heard sermons in evangelical churches that dramatically describe the atonement in precisely these subordinationist terms. An evangelistic billboard advertising a church on the interstate near where we live portrays a bleeding man on a cross accompanied by the text, “He was placed into a human body by his Father to be killed in our place.”

However, when the “Trinitarian controls” are in place, PSA goes from a picture of abuse to its precise opposite: God setting aside his own divine prerogatives to bring about justice. PSA looks like child abuse if the Son is a passive object of his Father’s intention—specifically, the Father’s intention that the Son should suffer and die on the cross as the substitute for sins. However, this simply cannot be the case if—as the church has long taught—Father, Son, and Spirit share a single divine nature and, therefore, the same will. The incarnate Son of God dies on the cross not because he was coerced into it by his Father, but because that was the way God chose to forgive sinners and uphold justice. This was not a decision imposed by the Father on the Son, but a decision of the Triune God to accomplish salvation in this way. There is no innocent third party inserted or coerced into assuming the guilt of another. The atonement represents God’s own action to bring salvation to his people.

A further “Trinitarian control” deriving from the unity of God’s will is the fact that unlike human persons, the three divine persons do not act separately but are each involved in whatever God does.⁸ As Adonis Vidu summarizes, “The actions of the Father, Son, and Spirit must be mutually involved in each other, such that the common action of the Trinity cannot be broken into simpler constituent actions.”⁹ Any articulation of PSA that is explicitly based upon such an understanding of the inseparability of the divine operations cannot resemble child abuse, for this requires an understanding of the Father and Son acting separately, one against one the other—an impossibility according to this doctrine. Rather, at the cross, the Father, Son, and Spirit work to do *the same* work.

Finally, and most importantly for the purposes of this paper, a proper Trinitarian understanding also puts the wrath of God into context, revealing it to be of a completely different nature from the anger of an abuser. If all three persons of the Godhead share one divine nature, it is impossible for one of the members of the Trinity to possess an attribute that is not also possessed by the other persons. If the wrath of God is grounded in his righteous and loving nature—the response of a good and holy being to all that is wrong and evil in the world—then it is wrong to think of the Son as satisfying the wrath of the Father. Indeed, the Bible itself speaks of the “wrath of God” rather than the “wrath of the Father.”¹⁰ At the cross, then, it is not the wrath of the *Father* that is satisfied by the Son, but rather, it is the justice of *God* which is satisfied. The atonement does not represent the Father giving vent to deeply personal emotion; rather, the atonement is the triune God’s fulfillment of his commitment to upholding righteousness and punishing sin while simultaneously upholding his love for humans.

It is precisely at this point that the difference between the motivation of an abusive father and the motivation of God in the atonement can be seen. Abuse often happens because of the cool, calm, and calculated coercion of the abuser, who uses circumstances and the disparity of power to illegitimately satisfy his or her personal desires. As has already been discussed, the atonement is not an instance of the Father coercing or compelling the Son to suffer violence for his own personal purposes, because the Father does not have distinct purposes apart from or over against his Son, nor do the persons of the Trinity act apart from or against one another. However, abuse can also occur when an abuser goes into an ‘uncontrollable’ rage (or is ‘overcome’ with sexual desire) and ‘takes it out’ on their victim—and it seems to be this idea of abuse that critics have in mind when they speak of “cosmic child abuse.” A trinitarian atonement cannot be a picture of a Father having so much pent up frustration and anger that he was bound to take it out on someone, and the Son lovingly inserting

himself into the situation so that the blow would fall on him rather than defenseless humanity—for any anger toward sin and desire for justice must be equally predicated of each person of the Trinity. It is not, as Darrin Belousek asserts, a “violent intra-Trinitarian transaction: The first person of the Trinity, God the Father, punishes the second person of the Trinity, God the Son, to satisfy the first person.”¹¹ It is not the personal anger and frustration of the Father that is satisfied at the cross, but God’s justice. The wrath of God is a declaration of God’s hatred for all unrighteousness, not a mandate for the powerful to take out anger against those who frustrate them. Rather than an abusive God demanding that an innocent subordinate sacrifice himself in order to accomplish his will, we have instead a picture of God himself sacrificing himself to accomplish his loving purpose for his people. In this way, PSA is not a picture of abuse of authority and power, but of the surrender of its prerogatives.¹² In short, the wrath of God vindicates the victim of abuse and stands against the unrighteous, self-centered abuser.

While at first glance the preceding discussion may seem to be a primarily academic point with little bearing on how evangelicals approach abuse, it is in fact highly relevant. As evangelical Christians begin to grapple with the reality of abuse in their own communities, the charge that such abuse is enabled and mirrored in penal substitutionary atonement takes on new urgency. Does addressing abuse also entail a rejection of a doctrine considered foundational by many evangelicals? The reality is that if conservative evangelicals perceive addressing abuse as tied to accepting what they perceive as “liberal” or “feminist” theology, efforts to confront these issues in evangelical communities will flounder. Of course, holding on to PSA ought not a pragmatic move to retain evangelical “bona fides” – being convinced from Scripture that the atonement has penal, substitutionary dimensions is enough to warrant its defense. However, it is our contention that the theological resources needed for confronting abusive paradigms are present in evangelical theology, obscured though they may be under layers of bad application and the conceptual detritus of syncretistic cultural-religious systems. As Donald Macleod writes, while defending penal substitutionary atonement we must “at once concede the justice of the feminist protest against the patriarchy.”¹³ What is incorrect is the identification of the cross as a picture of abuse, not the concern to identify and root out the dynamics that allow abuse to flourish.

JUSTICE AND ABUSE

Thus, not only do we deny that PSA is necessarily a model of abuse, we instead perceive that a sacrificial model of penal substitutionary atonement allows us to make at least 4 observations relevant to the issue of justice and abuse:

1. A victim’s sense of injustice and desire for vindication is upheld at the cross – injustice and unrighteousness is real, and God hates it.

Research has shown that one of the greatest needs for a survivor of abuse is to have their pain and experience validated—affirmed as real. According to a study of sexual abuse victims by Sarah Ulman, “the only social reactions related to better adjustment by the victims were being believed and listened to by others.”¹⁴ A survivor of abuse longs for those around them to affirm that their experience was legitimate, and that it matters. While society and even often the church downplays the evil of abuse, the righteous anger of God validates the cries of the abused for justice. As Fleming Rutledge writes, “It makes many people queasy nowadays to talk about the wrath of God, but there can be no turning away from this prominent biblical theme. Oppressed peoples around the world have been empowered by the scriptural picture of a God who is angered by injustice and unrighteousness.”¹⁵ It is at the cross where we see that sin and evil are no trivial thing.

Survivors of abuse desperately need our response to reflect this aspect of biblical truth. As survivors of abuse are seeking to know if the evil they experienced is seen and believed, desiring to know that it matters, evangelicals can answer with a resounding “Yes!”—pointing to the cross, where God incarnate suffered, and saying, “This is how much it matters.”

2. An affirmation of justice is necessary to accurately reflect God's own righteousness.

C.S. Lewis famously wrote "My argument against God was that the universe seemed so cruel and unjust. But how had I got this idea of *just* and *unjust*? A man does not call a line crooked unless he has some idea of a straight line. What was I comparing this universe with when I called it unjust?"¹⁶ Justice, in its most basic Christian definition, is conformity to what is right, conformity to the "straight line," conformity to the moral measuring stick which is itself measured against the Creator. God's own pursuit of justice reflects His utter holiness and separation from sin.

When our response to victims denies the need for justice, or pits justice against forgiveness as though the two were incompatible or dichotomous, we fail to affirm the holiness of God. God himself does not deny the need for justice, but couples his forgiveness with the satisfaction of the requirements of justice. As Lewis aptly put the matter, we know the crooked line because we first know the straight. But the converse of this is that, if one denies the crookedness, they have minimized the value and reality of that which is straight. Christian responses which minimize the evil of abuse have in turn minimized the righteousness and holiness of God.

3. The example of God at the cross inverts power dynamics at play in oppression and abuse.

Out of every crime committed on a victim who survives, sexual assault causes more severe and long-lasting harmful effects than any other crime.¹⁷ Research has additionally found that, compared to survivors of non-sexual assault trauma, sexual abuse victims are:

- Three times more likely to suffer from depression
- Six times more likely to suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder
- Thirteen times more likely to abuse alcohol
- Twenty-six times more likely to abuse drugs
- Four times more likely to contemplate suicide.¹⁸

The devastating impact of abuse, in large part, is due to the fact that abuse upends the concepts necessary to function as a relational person. Abusers frequently use grooming techniques, utilizing gifts, innocent touch, or manifestations of kindness to condition a victim and prepare them for abuse. More often than not, perpetrators are individuals who are perceived as safe and trustworthy, or even believed to be sacrificially caring for the victim. Concepts of trust, safety, security, love, compassion and care are all twisted by a perpetrator and wielded like weapons to facilitate violation at the deepest level. Every concept we as humans rely on to have healthy relationships with each other, becomes distorted and unsafe – redefined to be tools used to facilitate harm. Perhaps most tragically, in many cases a survivor does not even realize how warped his or her perception of these concepts has become. The twisting and redefining of these values has taken place for so long and has so encompassed the survivor's world, they have no framework by which they can properly understand and define these concepts.

In cases of violent abuse, power, strength, and cunning intelligence are utilized to overpower and subdue for the abuser's own pleasure. In fact, the reason most abusers engage in sexual abuse is not simply about sexual release; they enjoy the imbalance in power and control they are able to demonstrate. It is critical that survivors are able to define, understand, and relearn these foundational concepts. Failure to recognize harmful abuse and manipulation of power can lead to survivors continually reentering abusive relationships, at times becoming abusers themselves, and nearly always being unable to interact relationally with the world around them.

The cross stands in stark opposition to the behavior of an abuser, providing the ultimate example of each of these concepts that abuse destroys. In the incarnation, at the cross, the Son sets aside his divine prerogatives—the strong becomes weak. God himself enters into human brokenness and accomplishes on behalf of mankind what humans neither deserve nor can accomplish by themselves. The one who is owed obedience as creator enters into creation to render that which is due him. At the cross, God acts for others—to overcome evil, uphold justice, free the enslaved, and restore creation. God himself perfectly identifies with the victim because he

himself has willingly subjected himself to injustice. The cross is the ultimate repudiation of the idea that power is to be wielded for the benefit and pleasure of those who possess it. In the cross, victims have the framework and foundation for beginning to properly define and understand concepts which were twisted, subverted and manipulated during their abuse, and begin to heal the damage which was done.

4. Forgiveness does not undermine the demands of justice, but is consistent with them.

Evangelicalism is fraught with examples of pastors and Christian leaders covering up abuse, instructing abuse victims to not pursue criminal charges, asking courts for leniency for a convicted abuser, or refusing to enforce boundaries and restrictions on abuser, all done under the notion that any other action is necessarily a sign of being unforgiving, bitter, or vengeful. Frequently, victims report that leaders, parents, and even the abusers themselves appeal to forgiveness as a reason why everyone should simply move on. Handwaving toward forgiveness is sometimes used by Christians to excuse themselves from getting involved in the messes created by abuse. If the victim has forgiven, everyone can just move on and the problem has disappeared. This point is made with brutal clarity by Sister Dianna Ortiz, a nun who was kidnapped and raped in 1989 by Guatemalan forces under the command of Americans 19:

I was asked by others, friends as well as strangers, not whether I was receiving any justice from my government but whether I had forgiven my torturers. I wanted the truth. I wanted justice. They wanted me to forgive, so that they could move on. I suppose, once I forgave, all would be well—for them. Christianity, it seemed, was concerned with individual forgiveness, not social justice.

This left her feeling helpless, hopeless, abandoned:

I lived in a world created by my torturers. They had told me, as so many other tortured persons have been told, “Even if you survive what we have done to you and tell the world, no one will believe you. No one will care.” That is the world I lived in: No one cared. No law, no God, no justice, no peace, no hope.

When forgiveness is seen as the opposite of justice, despair ensues. In this way, forgiveness becomes another means of abuse—shutting the victim out, denying the rightness of their cry for justice, and heaping further shame. However, a proper understanding of God’s forgiveness recognizes that ignoring evil, minimizing its impact, and granting evildoers impunity is not the same thing as forgiveness. As Miraslov Volf writes, forgiveness is not a substitute for justice²⁰:

“Forgiveness is no mere discharge of a victim’s angry resentment and no mere assuaging of a perpetrator’s remorseful anguish, one that demands no change of the perpetrator and no righting of wrongs. On the contrary: every act of forgiveness enthrones justice; it draws attention to its violation precisely by offering to forego its claims.”

We would modify this and say that forgiveness is not the foregoing of the claims of justice, but a recognition that in Christ, through the cross, the ultimate claims of justice have been fulfilled. Forgiveness is made possible because the very real debt which did exist, was *paid*. In every possible scenario in Christian theology, the reality of evil and need for justice is upheld. Either divine punishment will be meted out on the individual who has done the wrong, or it is taken up by God upon himself, but even perfect, divine forgiveness rightly seeks and upholds the need for justice.

Nicholas Wolterstorff objects to this, arguing that under such a satisfaction model, “it’s not forgiveness that is taking place but vicarious punishment.”²¹ However, the fact that God takes punishment upon himself, not foisting it onto a third party, entwines vicarious punishment and forgiveness together. A banker cannot be said to have forgiven a loan when a third party pays the loan on behalf of another; however, when the banker himself pays the loan on behalf of another, this is both satisfaction of the debt and forgiveness. As Augustine wondered, “Thou payest debts while owing nothing; and when Thou forgivest debts, lovest nothing.”²²

And yet, Biblical justice compels us to see ourselves on both sides of God's justice: we must move to uphold righteousness and see that sin is condemned, crime punished, and victims restored, while at the same time refraining from viewing criminals and abusers as 'other' or fundamentally different from ourselves—for evil lies within our hearts as well. Alexander Solzhenitsyn, himself a victim of great injustice at the hand of the Soviets, poignantly reflected this thought when he penned²³,

If only it were all so simple! If only there were evil people somewhere insidiously committing evil deeds, and it were necessary only to separate them from the rest of us and destroy them. But the line dividing good and evil cuts through the heart of every human being. And who is willing to destroy a piece of his own heart?

In upholding the justice of God's condemnation of our abuser, we come face to face with the justice of God's condemnation of our own sin. Deanna Thompson notes that "Privilege and oppression often go hand-in-hand. Even victims may participate wittingly or unwittingly in the oppression of others."²⁴ Not only do we harm one another to varying degrees, but "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." In claiming God's free offer of forgiveness for ourselves, we recognize that the same offer is held out to every person, even those who have greater sins.

An attitude of justice longs for wrongs to be made right and for wrongdoing to be punished; an attitude of forgiveness longs for the inclusion and restoration even of our enemies—for them to cross over from death to life. These two are compatible with one another; what is excluded is an attitude of hatred, vengeance and revenge, which longs for the destruction and exclusion of those who have harmed us.

How then does this understanding of forgiveness and justice translate to how a victim of abuse pursues human justice, and how does the church walk alongside him or her? Does the fact that God will ultimately bring justice preclude making use of the criminal or civil court system? Does the fact that God offers everyone eternal life mean that a victim should offer their abuser the opportunity to escape criminal or civil penalties? The short answer to this is a resounding, "No!" The character of God as revealed at the cross demonstrates that justice is good and right. And insofar as human justice reflects God's justice, human justice is good. Thus, in broad terms, the commands to show love for enemy and to not repay evil for evil do not impinge on the pursuit of human justice, but rather, regulate how and why we pursue justice. Human justice is not (or at least ought not to be) an instrument of individual vicarious revenge. Instead, it is a communal declaration of siding with both the victim and God in condemning the evil that was done, punishing the wrongdoer, and defending the rights of the innocent. The decision to punish or not punish a rapist or a child molester does not lie with the victims; instead, it is the duty of police and prosecutors to defend and prosecute. Thus, a victim can have both an attitude of forgiveness—renouncing hatred and bitterness and their claim to vengeance, desiring what is best for their abuser—while simultaneously participating in criminal proceedings.

In the case of abuse, and in particular where children are involved, there is the additional incentive of protecting both current and possible future victims. The nature of abuse is such that those who are abused rarely have anything to offer in response to being believed and advocated for, while those who abuse have much to offer the community. To come alongside the victim in such situations is to self-consciously follow the model of Christ and sacrificially pursue justice because it is right, not because there are immediate pragmatic or material benefits. To minimize or hide abuse out of concern for reputations, money, influence, or mere apathy and a desire to not get involved is to utterly repudiate the witness of Christ.

Furthermore, seeking to undermine the validity of human justice is no mercy to the abuser, especially an unrepentant one. The temporal nature of human justice serves as a picture of God's final justice. It presents the abuser an opportunity to come face to face with the reality and severity of his sin. It is a call to the abuser to repent; to side with both God and their victim and condemn the evil they have perpetrated. It is only in this scenario that the possibility of reconstructing a relationship is possible. So long as an abuser denies the evil they have done and the harm they have perpetrated, they have cut themselves off from the possibility of true love and experiencing the joy of forgiveness. Truly repentant abusers who have come to side with God and their victims do not use their repentance as an excuse to escape human justice or make demands of their victims;

true repentance involves acknowledging the harm they have done and the rightness of punishment. God has provided himself as a substitute to justly suffer the eternal consequences of our sins; no such substitute exists to take up the temporal punishment. It is the tactic of an abuser to claim repentance in order to escape consequences and attempt to exert control over their victims.

However, the courtroom often fails to bring justice. Under the worst circumstances, courts are even an instrument of perpetrating injustice. And even under the best outcomes, it fails to achieve the restoration of what was damaged or broken. Thus, a Christian understanding of justice both acknowledges the good of societally administered justice and also its inadequacies. While Evangelicals ignore the importance of the justice system to their peril, they similarly misplace their trust if they look to it as the final arbiter of how they should judge wickedness. Nor should victims of abuse place their hope and ability to heal in the uncertain determinations of the justice system—rather, their confidence must rest in the perfect justice of God.

Conclusion

In this paper, we have established that evangelicals possess the theological truths needed to bring comfort and hope and truth to survivors of abuse, predicated on a proper understanding of justice as seen in the atonement and character of the Triune God.

Footnotes

- 1 Wade Mullen, "Impression Management Strategies Used by Evangelical Organizations in the Wake of an Image-Threatening Event" (Capital Seminary and Graduate School, 2018), 183–224.
- 2 Rita Nakashima Brock, *Journeys by Heart: A Christology of Erotic Power* (New York: Crossroad, 1988), 56; Rita Nakashima Brock, "And a Little Child Will Lead Us," in *Christianity, Patriarchy, and Abuse: A Feminist Critique*, ed. Joanne Carlson Brown and Carole R. Bohn (New York: The Pilgrim Press, 1989), 52.
- 3 Elizabeth A. Johnson, "Redeeming the Name of Christ," in *Freeing Theology: The Essentials of Theology in Feminist Perspective*, ed. Catherine Mowry LaCugna (New York: Harper Collins, 1993), 124.
- 4 Delores S. Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness: The Challenge of Womanist God-Talk* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2013), 148.
- 5 Oliver D. Crisp and Fred Sanders, eds., *Locating Atonement: Explorations in Constructive Dogmatics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015), 13–14.
- 6 This view of penal substitution as setting the Father against Son is not unique to feminist theologians, and appears in many different nuanced versions. It is also a very popular argument amongst Anabaptist-influenced theologians committed to nonviolent theories of atonement. For instance, Vee Chandler writes that "A division in the Godhead is just what the penal-substitution theory creates causing it to stand in direct and open contradiction to a fundamental understanding of the Christian faith, that Christ is one with God, one in character, purpose, and disposition toward humankind. The theory places a gulf between God and Christ, representing God as a judge who insists on punishment, and Christ as the volunteer who endures God's wrath." Vee Chandler, *Victorious Substitution: A Theory of the Atonement* (Newburgh, IN: Trinity Press, 2012), 54. The accusation is clear: penal substitution teaches us to think of God the Father acting against God the Son for the benefit of the Father. Thus, both feminist and nonviolence theologians reject penal substitutionary atonement; the latter because they see PSA as violating the unity of the Trinity, the former because they see it as consistent with a patriarchal 'Trinity'.
- 7 Margo Houts, "Atonement and Abuse: An Alternate View," *Daughters of Sarah* 18.3 (1992): 30.
- 8 Gregory of Nyssa wrote that when men work together to accomplish a common goal their actions are still properly called 'many', because they are distinguished by the differing character of the individual actors. It is not so within the Divine nature, however: "But in the case of the Divine nature we do not similarly learn that the Father does anything by himself in which the Son does not work conjointly, or again that the Son has any special operation apart from the Holy Spirit; but every operation which extends from God to the Creation, and is named according to our variable conceptions of it, has its origin from the Father, and proceeds through the Son, and is perfected in the Holy Spirit. For this reason the name derived from the operation is not divided with regard to the number of those who fulfil it, because the action of each concerning anything is not separate and peculiar, but whatever comes to pass, in reference either to the acts of His providence for us, or to the government and constitution of the universe, comes to pass by the action of the Three, yet what does come to pass is not three things." Gregory of Nyssa, "On 'Not Three Gods,'" in Gregory of Nyssa: *Dogmatic Treatises, Etc.*, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, vol. 5 of *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004), 334.
- 9 Adonis Vidu, "The Place of the Cross Among the Inseparable Operations of the Trinity," in *Locating Atonement: Explorations in Constructive Dogmatics*, ed. Oliver D. Crisp and Fred Sanders (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015), 24.
- 10 See e.g. Ps 7:11, Ez 25:17, Jn. 3:36, Rom 1:18; 12:18.
- 11 Darrin W. Snyder Belousek, *Atonement, Justice, and Peace: The Message of the Cross and the Mission of the Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 293.
- 12 Here, we find ourselves sympathetic with Elizabeth Johnson's description of the cross as the "kenosis of patriarchy." Elizabeth A. Johnson, *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse* (New York: Crossroad, 1992), 160–61.
- 13 Donald MacLeod, *Christ Crucified: Understanding the Atonement* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2014), 62.
- 14 Sarah E. Ullman, "Social Reactions, Coping Strategies, and Self-Blame Attributions in Adjustment to Sexual Assault," *Psychology of Women Quarterly* 20.4 (1996): 524.
- 15 Fleming Rutledge, *The Crucifixion: Understanding the Death of Jesus Christ* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017), 129.
- 16 C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 2001), 38.
- 17 See e.g. Dean G. Kilpatrick et al., "Victim and Crime Factors Associated with the Development of Crime-Related Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder," *Behavior Therapy* 20.2 (1989): 199–214.
- 18 National Victim Center and Crime Victims Research and Treatment Center, "Rape in America: A Report to the Nation," 23 April 1992, 7–8, <https://victimsofcrime.org/docs/Reports%20and%20Studies/rape-in-america.pdf>.
- 19 Dianna Ortiz, "Theology, International Law, and Torture: A Survivor's View," *Theology Today* 63.3 (2006): 346.
- 20 Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), 123.
- 21 Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Justice in Love*, ed. John Jr. Witte, *Emory University Studies in Law and Religion* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 192.
- 22 Augustin, "The Confessions of St. Augustin," in *The Confessions and Letters of Augustin.*, vol. 1 of *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* 1, ed. Philip Schaff (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004).
- 23 Aleksandr I. Solzhenitsyn, *The Gulag Archipelago, 1918-1956: An Experiment in Literary Investigation*, 1st ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), 1:168.
- 24 Deanna A. Thompson, *Crossing the Divide: Luther, Feminism, and the Cross* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2004), 114.