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ENTWINING THOMISTIC AND ANSELMIAN INTERPRETATIONS OF THE ATONEMENT¹

Joshua Thurow and Jada Twedt Strabbing

In *Atonement*, Eleonore Stump develops a novel and compelling Thomistic account of the atonement and argues that Anselmian interpretations must be rejected. In this review essay, after summarizing her account, we raise worries about some aspects of it. First, we respond to her primary objection to Anselmian interpretations by arguing that, contrary to Stump, love does not require unilateral and unconditional forgiveness. Second, we suggest that the heart of Anselmian interpretations—that reconciliation with God requires reparation/restitution/satisfaction—is plausible and well-supported by some of her own arguments. Third, we raise doubts about her views of the role of surrender in justification and the nature of justification itself. Finally, we question whether Stump's account can successfully explain how the atonement deals with pre-justification sin. A central theme of our comments is that Stump's Thomistic interpretation can be entwined with Anselmian interpretations to make a stronger account of the atonement.

Eleonore Stump's *Atonement* is a monumental achievement in analytic philosophical theology. At once it builds on her lifelong project of explicating and extending Aquinas's philosophical theology while also offering a novel interpretation of the atonement. Her interpretation—which late in the book she calls a "Marian" interpretation—also constitutes a defense of the doctrine of the atonement. The doctrine and its traditional interpretations, including especially variations on Anselmian interpretations, have long faced a host of objections. Stump repudiates Anselmian interpretations and argues that her Marian interpretation—a Thomistic interpretation—avoids the many objections to other kinds of interpretations. In addition, she argues that her interpretation (a) dovetails with plausible interpretations of a variety of Biblical texts, especially the cry of dereliction and the temptations of Christ, (b) explains how the atonement deals with the problem of shame (not just with the problem of guilt for wrongdoing),

¹A review of *Atonement*, by Eleonore Stump. Oxford University Press, 2018. Pp. xv + 538. \$80.00 (hardcover).



and (c) weaves together the benefits brought about by Christ's atonement and the benefits that justify God in allowing suffering (according to the theodicy she presents in her 2010 book, *Wandering in Darkness*). Insofar as the Marian interpretation is plausible—especially as compared to its rivals—Stump shows the continuing relevance and vitality of Aquinas's work for contemporary philosophical theology (analytic or otherwise).

There is too much in this rich and dense book for us to survey, much less evaluate, in even a lengthy book review. Since the Marian interpretation touches on so many aspects of philosophy and theology—the incarnation, the nature of God's presence, the nature of love, grace and free will, justification, sanctification, satisfaction, sacrifice, interpretation of Biblical passages, shame, guilt, and forgiveness, just to name a few—different readers will be drawn, critically or appreciatively, to different elements of her interpretation. In this review we begin with an overview of the book's primary positive contribution: the Marian interpretation of the atonement. Then we discuss some questions and objections about four pieces of her interpretation: (a) her view on the relationship between love and forgiveness, (b) her repudiation of Anselmian views, (c) her views about surrender and its role in justification, which on her account Jesus's atonement is aimed at securing, and (d) her view of the role that Christ's mind-reading of human sin plays in the atonement. We do not present any objections or questions as decisive refutations of Stump's view; we think that even if our objections are sound many elements of her Marian interpretation will stand. Indeed, we think that most elements of her view can fit into certain Anselmian views. If we're right about that, she has done even more than she thinks—she hasn't simply trimmed one dying branch and tended another growing branch of atonement theory; she has tended both branches and enabled them to intertwine.

1. *The Marian Interpretation of the Atonement*

Christ's atonement solves a problem for humanity, the nature of which is indicated by the meaning of the word "atonement"—"making one of things that were previously not at one."² The problem is that we are not at one with God because of sin and its effects. The goal of Christ's atonement is thus to bring humanity and God back to being at one with each other, and to do so, the atonement needs to deal with the primary obstacle preventing such union—sin. Sin has various elements which all contribute to putting a distance between humans and God, including: occurrent dispositions to moral wrongdoing, guilt (including how it affects one's psyche and its effects on the world), shame, and a stain on the soul (which includes the psychic effects of knowing what is was like to do and want to do something wrong and the continued separation one can experience from other people who are aware of the wrong one has done). The atonement should eliminate these obstacles to union and bring about the desired

²Stump 2018, *Atonement*, 15.

union. Stump argues that the desired union is a union of love between God and humans. Stump here draws on her earlier work defending a Thomistic account of love, according to which love requires two things: desire for the good of the beloved and desire for union with the beloved. God always loves every human being and so has both desires toward each human. On Stump's view, this means that God forgives every human unilaterally and unconditionally. God's forgiveness is not conditional on humans placating or honoring God in order to make up for their sin. So the primary obstacle to union with God lies in humans—they do not possess these desires of love towards God. Thus the aim of the atonement is to produce a full union between humans and God, which requires producing in humans the desires of love for God, while also resolving the problem of sin.

The union of love between two people requires closeness and shared attention. You are close to your beloved only if your beloved (i) shares with you his/her thoughts and feelings that reveal who he/she is and what he/she cares about, (ii) desires you (not just desires certain states of affairs that happen to involve you), and (iii) his/her desire is wholehearted (not just desiring you and desiring things involving you, but also desiring to desire you and those things). Shared attention is a kind of second-person presence to someone; your beloved shares attention with you when she is attentive to you by listening to you and attempting to understand the world through your perspective. This requires empathy and mind-reading.

On this view of love, union of course comes in degrees. You can share your thoughts and feelings with your beloved to various degrees, desire her to various degrees, be more or less wholehearted, and be more or less attentive. Likewise, there are various obstacles that can stand in the way of union.

According to Stump, the only obstacles to God's union in love with us come from us. God is fully willing to share who he is with us; we just need to turn to him and to cease resisting his love in order to see who he is. God desires us fully, wholeheartedly. He desires the good for us as well; indeed his desire of the good for us is coextensive with his desire for union with us because, according to Stump (following Aquinas) the greatest good for a human is union with God. Furthermore, God is fully attentive to us. He of course knows all of our thoughts and feelings at all times. But Stump thinks that Jesus's passion provides something distinctive to God's attention with us. She suggests that Jesus's cry of dereliction on the cross—"my God, my God, why have you forsaken me"—can be plausibly interpreted as Jesus' experiencing the loss of shared attention with God, and the cause of that loss is the psychic anguish Jesus experiences from, all at once, using "his human mind and the power of his divine nature to mind-read at once the entire mind of every human being existing at every time and space."³ In such a state, Jesus in a sense bears the sins of

³Stump 2018, *Atonement*, 164.

the world; he isn't literally guilty of any of the wrongs other humans have done, but he knows exactly what everyone has done and what it is like to do those wrong things. The weight of this awareness, given the sheer mass of human sin, is immensely painful. Through this massive mind-reading during the passion, God is sharing attention with every human at all times in all their sinfulness. This aspect of the passion is part of the work of atonement because our minds are in Christ's mind, which is one half of mutual indwelling—the state in which God and a human both manifest a deep shared awareness of each other.

So God loves all humans at all times fully. He has provided his side of union to the extent that he can without human cooperation. Humans simply need to turn to God in love, giving their part of closeness and shared attention. Stump follows Aquinas in supposing that all humans desire the good at some level. When we decide to do something, the intellect presents actions to us as good, and the will is attracted to do something presented to us as good. This implies that whenever someone acts wrongly, they are not wholehearted. The only way a person can be wholehearted is if their desires are united around the good. A lack of wholeheartedness prevents union with others because "if he is internally divided in what he cares about, then whichever part of his divided will another person is in harmony with, she will be separated from some other part."⁴ So in order for a human to be fully united with anyone in love, that person needs to be wholeheartedly in favor of the good. Obviously, humans are not so wholehearted, and thus there is an obstacle to union with God. Furthermore, humans are unable to bring themselves into a wholehearted desire for the good precisely because, in their lack of wholeheartedness, they don't desire it!⁵ Part of what the atonement needs to do to bring about union between humans and God is instill in humans a wholehearted desire for the good.

A wholehearted desire for the good (and for God, since God is the supreme good) requires two things: first, a second-order desire for the good (i.e., a desire to desire the good), and second, integration between one's first and second order desires regarding the good. Stump, following her interpretation of Aquinas, says that post-Fall humans lack the second-order desire to desire the good and are unable to bring themselves to acquire it. It must therefore come from faith, from God's "operative grace" acting on our will. Justification is then constituted by the formation of this second-order desire. As Stump says, "the will of faith is therefore the global second-order will to have, through God's help, a will that wills the good, universally understood. The formation of this will of faith in a person is his justification."⁶ The integration between first-and second-order

⁴Stump 2018, *Atonement*, 59.

⁵Stump 2018 eloquently describes the puzzle humans face in changing their will at *Atonement*, 200.

⁶Stump, *Atonement*, 204–205.

desires occurs through the process of sanctification. Once someone has come to faith (and so is justified), the Holy Spirit comes to indwell that person, giving humans a rich form of second-person attention of God. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit affords the greatest possible closeness between humans and God and enables a human to be directly attentive to God's mind and character. So long as a human continues to allow the Holy Spirit to work within himself, the person will slowly become more integrated around the good. Furthermore, this process preserves the human's free will because, during sanctification, God through the Holy Spirit is cooperating with the human's second-order will for a will that wills the good. This work of the Holy Spirit is God's "cooperative grace."

Faith received through operative grace is also consistent with a person's free will because faith is received when a person surrenders to God. In surrender, a person ceases to resist God's love and grace, but she does not yet accept it either. Her will is "quiescent" regarding God's grace.⁷ God grants faith to those with a quiescent will, and with faith comes a will to will the good, which as we have seen is necessary both for closeness with God (which is one aspect of the union of love) and for the process of sanctification, which over time produces a more integrated, wholehearted union with God.

Union of a human with God in love thus depends on one crucial event: surrender to God. And a person on her own cannot bring herself to surrender to God. How then can this event come about? The atonement, on Stump's view, answers this question. Stump argues that people often reject and resist the love of others, even when at the same time they desire love. Love carries vulnerability—the risk of rejection—because it involves opening up to another and revealing one's warts and flaws and vices. One naturally fears that others will reject oneself after seeing all of these things. Love also involves uniting with the beloved, which means one won't be able to entirely "determine things for himself by himself."⁸ Christ's atonement—in particular his passion and death on the cross—provides the "most suitable remedy, the one most likely to work, for a heart that needs to melt: God incarnate enduring real suffering and real death, in love, and so also in forgiveness, for those in need of that love."⁹ By suffering and dying on the cross, God, the supreme good, shows his concern for humans by living a life like theirs, undistinguished, filled with regular human challenges and pain. And he suffers the worst of it to feel and show his concern for humanity. This naturally evokes human sympathy and empathy and melts our fears of rejection.

So, on Stump's view, one of the primary things Christ's passion and death achieves by way of atonement is that it helps bring about the surrender to God that is required for receiving faith, thus bringing about the

⁷Stump, *Atonement*, 208.

⁸Stump, *Atonement*, 262.

⁹Stump, *Atonement*, 266.

human side of the closeness that is required in a union of love with God. The other two primary things the atonement does (mentioned earlier) are to enable humans in their suffering and sin to indwell God by Christ's mind-reading every human throughout history in all their sinfulness (this provides God's part of the mutual awareness love requires), and to bring about the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in humans (which happens consequent to surrender to God and receiving faith), which provides for the human part of the mutual awareness that love requires.

Stump argues that these three aspects of Christ's atonement resolve the problem of sin in all its dimensions. First, the disposition to sin is resolved. This happens through justification and sanctification, and Christ's atonement enables these processes. Second, the guilt of sin is resolved. Christ's atonement brings people to surrender to God, which enables God to infuse them with faith, and faith involves a recognition and repentance for one's sins. This partly resolves guilt. Stump grants that some cases of wrongdoing are serious enough that a full resolution of guilt requires the wrongdoer to make amends (or offer satisfaction). She does not think that satisfaction needs to be offered to God; he unilaterally forgives and is ready to reconcile as soon as they are ready to turn to him. However, humans often need to offer satisfaction to the human victims of their wrongdoing. The second-order will to will the good, as it works through one's first order desires and wills in sanctification, will lead one to do what one can to make amends with the victims of one's wrongdoing. But often people cannot do enough to make full amends—either due to circumstances or due to the severity of the wrongdoing. Christ offers vicarious satisfaction for these wrongs. He offers satisfaction because his atonement is a great good offered to humanity, as it attracts and enables people to enter into a union of love with God, which is the greatest good for a human. So Christ, through his atonement, offers a very great good to every human being; a good that is "more than enough to compensate any human suffering."¹⁰ If a human wrongdoer is united in love with Christ regarding Christ's satisfaction, then this very great good that Christ offers to all counts as vicarious satisfaction for the wrongdoing of the human. Here Stump emphasizes one of the benefits of her Marian interpretation of the atonement—it provides a connection between atonement and theodicy. Part of what justifies God in allowing evil and suffering is precisely that, through their suffering, God can offer people a much better good. Suffering can enable a person in grace to draw closer to God in love. Suffering can also, through identification with the sufferings of Christ, draw one who is not in grace to surrender to Christ, thus bringing them onto a path towards union with God in love.

Third, the problem of shame is resolved. Even if guilt is resolved, a person can still live in shame for being the sort of person who did the wrong she did, or was wronged as she was, or who has some defect of

¹⁰Stump, *Atonement*, 368.

nature, or who is part of a sinful group. Christ's atonement resolves shame because through his passion and death he comes to unite himself with people exactly in the conditions that lead them to be shamed. And since God is the highest good, those who are shamed have their shame defeated by having some other feature in virtue of which they are more supremely honored (what could be more honoring than being united with God?) and where that feature is possessed in part because of their source of shame. Stump writes, "true honor, which is the defeat of shame, results from a person's allying his truest or deepest self with the God who joins himself on the cross to every post-Fall person and shares all that is in that person's psyche, including the shame."¹¹

Fourth, the problem of the stain on the soul is resolved. A human will always remember having sinned in the ways he did, and he will always remember them as wrongful. But through Christ's atonement his memory of those sins will be transformed. "The remembered wrongful acts lost their power to produce pain in virtue of being wrongful, because they have become interwoven into a story of love that is worth prizing."¹² And the stain on the soul that results from ruptured relationships with humans can begin to be resolved through the moral transformation, repentance, and acts of satisfaction that a wrongdoer will perform in virtue of the faith they have been brought to through Christ's atonement. Some of these relationships may never be reconciled in our mortal lives, but they can start to move on that path as much as possible during our mortal lives, and they may be restored fully in the afterlife provided the victims of our wrongdoing open themselves to reconciliation.

Thus go, in summary form, the main elements of Stump's Marian theory of the atonement. Each element is discussed in much greater detail in the book, supported and elucidated with various distinctions and examples involving her favorite pair, Jerome and Paula. We will engage some of the details in later sections—in particular, her views on forgiveness and love, how she distinguishes her view from Anselmian views, her views about surrender and its role in justification, and her views about how Christ's mind-reading of human sin contributes to atonement.

To conclude this section, we want to draw brief attention to a couple of additional pieces that aren't strictly speaking part of the Marian theory, but that build upon and justify it. First, Stump has a chapter in which she discusses how suffering and the Eucharist can assist people in maintaining their surrender to God. She argues, following her work in *Wandering in Darkness*, that suffering can be a medicine that draws humans into a closer relationship with God, which is the greatest good for a human. She also argues that receiving the Eucharist is also a kind of medicine that can remind us of Christ's love while also enabling us to re-enact our original surrender to Christ. It also brings us closer to Christ in his suffering

¹¹Stump, *Atonement*, 361.

¹²Stump, *Atonement*, 374.

because, through transubstantiation and ET-simultaneity (that all events are simultaneous in God's life) we take in us the Christ who is (in the eternal sense of "is") suffering on the cross. Second, in the final chapter, Stump takes on what many readers may well think is the main objection to her view—how does it account for the clear Biblical notion that Christ is a sacrifice? She argues, inspired by Moshe Halbertal's work on sacrifice, that Biblical sacrifices are a gift from a small creature to a much greater being that aim to allay the anxiety and distrust that sinful humans feel before God. On her view, Christ's atonement is a sacrifice because it is a gift to God (paradoxically offered by God himself) that softens human hearts, opening them up to surrender to God, thus reducing their anxiety and distrust.

Now that the Marian theory has been described and explained, we turn to some questions and objections.

2. *Does Love Require Forgiveness?*

Stump decisively contrasts her Marian view (which she considers to be a kind of Thomistic view) with what she calls "Anselmian" interpretations of the atonement. According to Stump, the "central and irremediable problem" with Anselmian interpretations is that they are inconsistent with God's love.¹³ The problem that Stump identifies has its basis in the connection that she posits between love and forgiveness. On Stump's view, "[W]hatever exactly is required for morally appropriate forgiveness, it must involve some species of love for the person in need of forgiveness."¹⁴ In particular, Stump claims that the absence of either of the desires constitutive of love—the desire for the good of the beloved and the desire for union with the beloved—undermines forgiveness, and more strongly, in an endnote, she says that, on her view, love is both necessary and sufficient for forgiveness, even though they are not reducible to one another.¹⁵ Stump then says that love is obligatory, and so "[g]iven the connection between love and forgiveness, it follows that forgiveness is also obligatory in the same way and to the same extent."¹⁶ The upshot, according to Stump, is that God must forgive unilaterally and unconditionally in order to be perfectly loving. Because God does not forgive unilaterally and unconditionally on Anselmian interpretations of the atonement (because they claim that God's forgiveness requires the atonement), Stump claims that God is not perfectly loving on Anselmian interpretations. If she is correct, that would be devastating for those interpretations.

We think that this objection to Anselmian interpretations does not succeed for a few reasons. To start, for the sake of argument, assume Stump's tight connection between love and forgiveness, such that forgiveness is

¹³Stump, *Atonement*, 79.

¹⁴Stump, *Atonement*, 81.

¹⁵Stump, *Atonement*, 438n.47.

¹⁶Stump, *Atonement*, 82.

obligatory because love is. Contrary to Stump, it does not follow from the fact that forgiveness is obligatory that God forgives unconditionally. Of course, if forgiveness is obligatory, God cannot impose conditions *on potential recipients of forgiveness* without thereby violating the obligation to forgive, since presumably some potential recipients of forgiveness would fail to meet those conditions and God would not then forgive them. However, God could impose conditions *on himself* without violating the moral obligation to forgive as long as he meets those conditions. And that is exactly what proponents of Anselmian interpretations can reasonably say. They can say that God's forgiveness requires, say, God's receiving what is owed to him due to sin, but since God meets this condition in the atonement, then God meets his moral obligation to forgive because, in response to the atonement, he forgives everyone.

Next, we think that Stump is wrong to posit such a tight connection between love and forgiveness. To see why, consider first Stump's discussion of hatred. According to Stump, there are two kinds of hatred, one opposed to love and one a species of love. These two kinds of hatred, she says, both involve the desire not to be united with the other, but they differ in what they *ultimately* desire. For the hatred that is a species of love, Stump says that "[i]t is a matter of desiring not to be united with a wrongdoer now, when he is bad enough that the alienation of others is the best thing for him in the circumstances, *and* one wants this alienation from him *as the best* for him in the hope of ultimate union with him."¹⁷ This kind of hatred is a species of love, according to Stump, because the two desires of love—the desire for the other's good and the desire for union with the other—are there. It is just that alienation or distance, rather than union, is desired for the present, whereas union is desired ultimately. In contrast, for the hatred that is not a species of love, one desires what is ultimately bad for the other and desires not to be united with the other ever.

Assuming Stump's view of love, we think that it is plausible to say something similar about unforgiveness: there is a kind of unforgiveness that is opposed to love and a kind of unforgiveness that is a species of love. The unforgiveness that is a species of love would be a matter of desiring not to have union and so not to reconcile with the other now, while desiring ultimate union and reconciliation with the other and desiring the ultimate flourishing of the other. The unforgiveness opposed to love, in contrast, would involve desiring not to have union and reconciliation with the other ever and desiring what is ultimately bad for the other.

If there is a kind of unforgiveness that is a species of love, then Stump cannot successfully claim that forgiveness is "obligatory in the same way and to the same extent" as love. This would leave room for proponents of Anselmian views to claim that God can be perfectly loving even if the atonement is a condition of God's forgiveness, as long as God's unwillingness

¹⁷Stump, *Atonement*, 85–86, italics in original.

to forgive without the atonement would be a species of love. Would it? We think that proponents of Anselmian views could reasonably make such a claim, given human sinfulness. Given human sinfulness, it is reasonable to suppose that God would desire not to be united and reconciled to us as we are in our pre-justification state while also desiring ultimately to be united and reconciled with us and desiring our ultimate flourishing. In fact, proponents of the Anselmian views could then say that it is precisely because of God's ultimate desires—i.e., his love for us—that he does the work of atonement.

Finally, we think that Stump conflates forgiveness with being forgiving or “forgivingness,” where the latter is a state of character, a disposition or orientation to forgive when it is morally right or morally good to forgive.¹⁸ Surely a perfectly loving God has such a disposition or orientation maximally. After all, a loving being is a forgiving being, and so a perfectly loving being is a perfectly forgiving being. But a perfectly forgiving being may refuse to forgive in some particular case because it is not morally right or morally good to forgive in that particular case. Thus proponents of Anselmian views may say that God is perfectly forgiving but does not forgive us without the atonement on the grounds that it is not morally right or morally good for God to forgive us without the atonement, since simply forgiving us would not, say, uphold God's justice or would, say, undermine God's moral goodness and authority because he would not then uphold the moral status of the victims of wrongdoing.¹⁹

This point ties to the above point because, if God's forgiveness is not morally right or good without the atonement, then God's unforgiveness without the atonement would presumably be a species of love. He would desire not to have union and reconciliation with us unconditionally, without the atonement, for reasons like the kind mentioned above, but he would desire to have union and reconciliation with us ultimately, which is why he does the work of the atonement. With the distinction between forgiveness and being forgiving, we can add that God's unforgiveness without the atonement would then be consistent both with his being perfectly loving and with his being perfectly forgiving.

For the above reasons, we think that Stump's central objection to Anselmian interpretations of the atonement fails. This objection relies on a tight connection between love and forgiveness, and we have good reason to think that (a) this tight connection does not actually undermine Anselmian interpretations, as Stump claims, and (b) we should reject this tight connection anyway.

¹⁸For a valuable essay that discusses forgivingness, see Nigel Biggar 2001, “Forgiveness in the Twentieth Century.”

¹⁹For an argument for the latter idea, see Strabbing 2016, “The Permissibility of the Atonement as Penal Substitution.”

3. Must Stump Reject the Heart of Anselmian Views?

We have just argued that Stump's main objection to Anselmian interpretations of the atonement fails. In this section, we argue that Stump's interpretation and Anselmian interpretations of the atonement may actually complement each other.

Stump says that all versions of Anselmian interpretations of the atonement make two central claims. "First, without Christ's making amends to God, God would not forgive or accept being reconciled with them. And, second, the main (or only) point of Christ's atonement is to satisfy a condition needed for God's forgiveness and reconciliation."²⁰ Her interpretation clearly rejects both of these claims. She thinks that God unilaterally and universally forgives and accepts reconciliation with everyone. To accept reconciliation, for Stump, is to have a desire for reconciliation that would be efficacious in producing reconciliation so long as nothing outside of the willer prevents reconciliation. Therefore, since God unilaterally and universally forgives and accepts reconciliation, atonement has nothing to do with satisfying a condition for either of these states. On her view atonement has more to do with effecting a union of love between God and humanity.

Although Stump's description of Anselmian interpretations is certainly accurate with respect to many views, and although it is in a certain sense accurate with respect to Anselm's view, it isn't quite apt to the heart of Anselm's view. This isn't a merely scholarly point about how to characterize Anselm and views like his. The heart of Anselm's view has something quite plausible about it; indeed, Stump's own interpretation naturally supports the heart of Anselm's view. Stump's interpretation, we think, would be better presented as a synthesis of Anselmian and Thomistic approaches rather than as a decisive move away from Anselmian approaches toward a Thomistic approach.

It is true that Anselm asserts Stump's first central claim of Anselmian approaches: that without Christ's making amends to God, God would not forgive human sin. However, Anselm describes the goal of Christ's work in several different ways, not just as doing something necessary to obtain forgiveness. He also describes the goal as "the restoration of mankind,"²¹ as humans obtaining a "state of blessed happiness,"²² as "being received into heaven,"²³ and as being reconciled with God.²⁴ Here are just a few apt quotes. Anselm discusses whether mankind can be saved without recompense for sin and he says, "it is not fitting, then, for God to receive into heaven . . . a human sinner who has not paid recompense. For truth does not allow him to be raised up to equality with the blessed ones," nor, he

²⁰Stump, *Atonement*, 74.

²¹Anselm 1998, *Cur Deus Homo*, I.3, I.9.

²²Anselm 1998, *Cur Deus Homo*, I.10; I.24.

²³Anselm 1998, *Cur Deus Homo*, I.19.

²⁴Anselm 1998, *Cur Deus Homo*, I.21, I.22, I.23.

later states, “to any state of blessedness whatsoever, even to that which he enjoyed before he committed sin.”²⁵ Here, Anselm states that recompense is needed not for forgiveness but for being received into heaven and for having a state of blessedness, including the state had before committing sin. He later says, “Judge for yourself whether it is not contrary to the honor of God that man should be reconciled with him so long as he is subject to the charge of having inflicted this insult upon God.”²⁶ Here, the lack of recompense stands in the way of reconciliation, not forgiveness. Lastly, in a fascinating passage that is often overlooked by commentators, he considers a scenario in which God forgives people who cannot repay what they owe to him. About people who are so forgiven he says,

So long, however, as he does not repay, he will either be wishing to repay, or not wishing to do so. But in the event that he has a desire to do what he is incapable of doing, he will be a person in want; in the event that he does not have this desire, he will be a wrongdoer. . . . Now, whether he is in want or whether he is a wrongdoer—in neither case will he be blessedly happy.²⁷

Here, again, the goal that a lack of recompense stands in the way of is blessed happiness, not forgiveness. And someone who is unilaterally forgiven without having been able to offer recompense is incapable of blessed happiness because he will want to have given recompense. Indeed, it seems, he will want to have given recompense because he will rightly judge that his wrongdoing was severe enough that recompense is called for to honor God.

So, for Anselm, recompense isn’t needed so much for forgiveness or for God’s accepting reconciliation with humans, as for the state of achieving blessed happiness in reconciliation with God—i.e., for the state of actually being reconciled. In fact, it is not clear that Anselm would disagree with Stump’s claim that God’s love requires that he forgive unilaterally—in her sense of “forgiveness”—for Anselm seems to have something quite different in mind by the notion of forgiveness. In I.24, just below the passage we quoted above, Anselm says, “we are talking about that final mercy, whereby, after this life, he makes a human being blessedly happy. That this state of bliss ought not to be given to anyone whose sins have not been utterly forgiven, and that this forgiveness ought not to happen except on repayment of the debt which is owed.”²⁸ The sort of forgiveness he has in mind, being “utterly forgiven,” seems to be something that involves the one being forgiven completely separating himself from sin as much possible, and it seems closely connected with shortly attaining blessed happiness. Forgiveness of this sort seems more like God’s saying to a sinful human, “welcome to heaven.” This kind of forgiveness obviously isn’t given unilaterally. So, for all we’ve seen, perhaps Anselm could accept

²⁵Anselm 1998, *Cur Deus Homo*, I.19.

²⁶Anselm 1998, *Cur Deus Homo*, I.22.

²⁷Anselm 1998, *Cur Deus Homo*, I.24.

²⁸Anselm 1998, *Cur Deus Homo*, I.24.

that God unilaterally forgives in the sense of forgiveness that Stump has in mind; and perhaps God accepts reconciliation in the sense that he is ready to reconcile with humans and reconciliation will occur so long as nothing outside of him prevents it from happening. Until humans offer recompense, they simply will not be blessedly happy because they will judge that they haven't properly honored God; this would be a fact about a human person that prevents reconciliation.

The quoted passage from I.24 gets to the heart of Anselm's view about atonement and recompense: humans need to offer recompense to God because they could not be blessedly happy in reconciliation with God without having offered him recompense, and this is so because, in their love of God, they will judge that they owe him recompense for the sins they committed against him. There is something deeply plausible about this. Indeed, Stump herself admits as much. She writes, "in cases of serious wrongdoing, something in addition to forgiveness may be necessary for reconciliation. Making amends' is one customary name for the additional element that, added to repentance, can effect reconciliation; "satisfaction" is another."²⁹ Some wrongs—like theft, serious injury, spreading lies about someone, deeply unjust discrimination, for example—are so bad that repentance and efforts to become a better person simply aren't enough to reconcile with the victim of the wrong act. To be reconciled with the victim, one needs to honor the victim properly as a person with dignity. To honor them seems to require, in these sorts of cases, that one participate in undoing or redressing the harm or injustice in some way. Indeed, if I have wronged someone in one of these ways and genuinely desire to be reconciled with them, I will deeply desire to make amends/offer recompense/offer satisfaction (we are treating these three phrases as equivalent for present purposes). Making amends is part of the way that I can express to the person that I respect and honor them as a person with dignity.

If Stump grants that we owe recompense to our fellow humans for the wrongs we have committed against them, why shouldn't we also owe recompense to God? Of course we can't harm God in the way we can harm our fellow humans, but we can treat him unjustly and we can, as Stump herself emphasizes, frustrate God's good plans for humanity. Furthermore, harming one of God's children is a great offense toward God as well. So there seems to be just as good a case that we should make amends to God as there is that we should make amends to the human victims of our wrongdoing.

How could Jesus's death on a cross possibly make amends for human sin? Stump herself offers an answer that an Anselmian could take on board:

Christ's offering to human sufferers something that defeats their suffering and their guilt and unites them with God is itself also a gift given to God by Christ's atonement . . . in love for his people, God does nevertheless have a

²⁹Stump, *Atonement*, 101.

desire that can go unfulfilled, namely desire for union with human beings. And so the spiritual regeneration offered to all post-Fall people in Christ's atonement is a worthy gift . . . for a perfect and perfectly loving God.³⁰

The Marian interpretation describes various ways in which Christ's atonement brings about and deepens union with God. That Christ does this to bring humans to God is itself a fitting satisfaction for human sin. It is, as Stump says, the greatest gift anyone could offer to God: restoring into union with him the people he always greatly desired in love.

Does what Stump describes as the second central claim of Anselmian interpretations—that the main or sole purpose of Christ's atonement is to make amends—rule out this appropriation of aspects of the Marian interpretation? No, because the nature of the amends described includes bringing about union (or making available a distinctively effective means for bring about union), with all that involves, with God. Furthermore, it isn't clear that Anselmian views must accept this second central claim. The dialectical structure of *Cur Deus Homo* might be misleading here. Anselm's stated purpose is to explain why it is necessary that Christ become man and through his death restore life to the world.³¹ Notice: his goal is *not* to explain everything that Christ's incarnation and death contribute to human restoration. It is just to explain why his incarnation and death were *necessary*. Anselm develops a line of argument, using the notion of satisfaction, to explain why Christ's death was necessary. But that simply does not imply that the only or main thing that Christ's death does by way of restoring humanity is to offer satisfaction. And in Anselm's prayers and his Meditation on Human Redemption, he shows he is quite sensitive to many other things that Christ's incarnation and death do to bring about human restoration.

In sum, we suggest that the heart of Anselm's interpretation contains the plausible idea that full reconciliation with God requires that humans offer something to make amends to God for their sins. Humans wouldn't be blessedly happy if they could not offer amends, for they would not regard themselves as properly honoring God. Furthermore, Stump's interpretation can easily incorporate this plausible idea; she already accepts the idea that some wrongs are serious enough that reconciliation requires making amends, and she already accepts that Christ's work makes amends to God for human sin (amends that can vicariously count as satisfaction for humans who appropriately identify with Christ's work). She does present various other problems for Anselmian interpretations; we think most of those other problems can be surmounted, especially given that Anselmians can incorporate the Marian interpretation's idea for how Christ's work makes amends and given that Anselmians needn't endorse Stump's second claim about Anselmian interpretations. Stump's Marian theory thus is better seen not as a repudiation of Anselmian approaches,

³⁰Stump, *Atonement*, 372.

³¹Anselm, *Cur Deus Homo*, I.1.

but as a synthesis of Anselmian and Thomistic insights. In addition, this way of seeing her interpretation is perhaps better from the perspective of tradition. The heart of the Anselmian view did not originate with Anselm and has been explicated and endorsed across many theological traditions within Christianity. Given that God guides the Church, it would seem more likely that the true account of the atonement would incorporate rather than repudiate the Anselmian heart.

4. Surrender and Justification

Stump endorses what she takes to be Aquinas's view of justification. On this view, recall, our justification is a matter of forming a global second-order desire for a will that wills the good, which justifies us because it begins the process of moral and spiritual regeneration. (Sanctification, recall, is then the process of undergoing moral and spiritual regeneration, which requires maintaining this global second-order desire.) How do we form this global second-order desire? According to Stump, this desire cannot originate in our will because "[i]f what needs to be explained is the ultimate origin of a moral and spiritual rebirth, then it is hard to see how it could be explained as a function of the will of the person whose moral and spiritual regeneration it is. As I explained above, any will that wants to will the good is already in the process of regeneration."³² Thus, Stump says, this second-order desire must originate from outside of our will. On her view, God acts on our will to produce this second-order desire, and this action is God's *operative grace*. Yet, importantly, Stump says that God cannot act against our will, and so he cannot produce this second-order desire in us while we are resisting God's grace.

The question, then, is how this second-order desire can originate solely from outside of our will without God acting against our will. Stump's solution, which she attributes to Aquinas, is to say that God gives us this global second-order desire when and only when our will is *quiescent*—i.e., when our will is inactive or turned off with respect to God's grace, neither refusing nor accepting it.

On the face of it, this idea sounds a bit unsettling. A will may become quiescent towards God's grace for different reasons or even no reason at all, and how a will becomes quiescent seems relevant to the acceptability of God's infusing operative grace into our will. After all, plausibly, we should consent to God's infusing our will with operative grace in order for it to be morally permissible for God to do that, and merely having an inactive will towards God's grace does not rise to the level of consent. To put the point another way, Stump understandably does not want to accept that God violates our will in giving us operative grace, but how is it better to say that God waits until our will is switched off? It seems that, in order for God's infusion of operative grace to be acceptable, we must

³²Stump, *Atonement*, 206.

turn off our wills *because* we desire God to infuse us with his grace and reasonably believe that turning off our wills is the only way to make that happen. The upshot is that it does not seem right to say simply that God gives us operative grace when and only when our will is neither refusing nor accepting God's grace. There must be some role for consent, and thus our motivation for ceasing to resist God's grace matters.

This is perhaps what Stump actually has in mind. After all, to illustrate the state of quiescence in the will, she draws the following analogy: Jerome is having a dangerous allergic reaction to a bee sting, but because he has an extreme fear of needles, he fights the injection that has the antidote that he needs. In the example, Jerome cannot bring himself to accept the injection, but he can bring himself to stop resisting it, becoming quiescent with respect to it.³³ Stump then says that, like for the bee sting victim Jerome, the inactivity at issue in quiescence of the will "is a surrender, not a mere calm or indifference, because in moving into that quiescence Paula feels her quiescence as a letting go of resistance to God and God's grace, just as the bee-sting victim understands his quiescence as a letting go of resistance to the injection he fears."³⁴ Again, we think that more needs to be in place than just "feeling a letting go of resistance to God and God's grace," since by itself that is not enough for consent. A person's motivation for letting go of that resistance matters. However, on the natural way of understanding the bee sting victim analogy, Jerome consents to the injection. The right motivation for consent is plausibly there. After all, it is reasonable to think that Jerome becomes quiescent with respect to the injection because (a) he desires to cease resisting the injection and (b) his desire to cease resisting the injection stems from his desire to receive the injection plus his belief that ceasing to resist the injection is the only way that he can receive the injection. Thus, his becoming quiescent with respect to the injection is plausibly rooted in his desire to receive the injection.

Analogously, then, Stump's idea may be this: God infuses us with operative grace when and only when our will becomes quiescent *as a result of* a desire to cease resisting God's grace, where this desire in turn stems from a desire to receive God's grace along with the belief that ceasing to resist God's grace is the only way that we can receive it. If that is what Stump has in mind, if that is what surrendering to God's love is, then we plausibly have the motivation required for consent. But if Stump does not require this motivation for ceasing to resist God's grace, then we think that her view of justification is problematic.

If we are right in what we say above, then God's giving us the global second-order desire for a will that wills the good is a direct result of our wanting to receive God's grace and so wanting to receive that global second-order desire. Therefore, our receiving that second-order desire (if not the second-order desire itself) would have some origin in our will. Stump

³³Stump, *Atonement*, 208.

³⁴Stump, *Atonement*, 209.

may accept that result, even intend it, but we are not sure. It depends upon what exactly she means when she says that “[i]f what needs to be explained is the ultimate origin of a moral and spiritual rebirth, then it is hard to see how it could be explained as a function of the will of the person whose moral and spiritual regeneration it is.”³⁵ If we are right in what we say above, then Stump should say that the ultimate origin of a moral and spiritual rebirth would not *just* be a function of the will of the person; it would instead be a function of God’s responding to a person’s desire for grace, a desire which motivates the person to enter the state of quiescence. Only then do we get a picture in which God obtains the appropriate consent from us to infuse us with operative grace.

The above discussion took for granted Stump’s claim that, without God’s operative grace infusing us, we cannot have the global second-order desire for a will that wills the good. However, we are not sure that we should accept this claim. Recall that, on Stump’s Thomistic interpretation, when we are motivated to do something, the intellect presents it to us as good, and the will is then attracted to it because it is presented as good. We therefore have a global first-order desire for the good and to do good; it is just that our sinfulness keeps us from recognizing the good, resulting in wrongdoing. Given that we have this global first-order desire for the good, we think that, contrary to Stump, we plausibly also have a second-order desire to desire the good already, without God having to give it to us.

Why do we think this? We think this because people just naturally have higher-order desires. We form desires about our desires. We want certain desires to lead to action and other desires not to lead to action. As a result, it is implausible that we lack a second-order desire with respect to our first-order desire for the good. Further, it is implausible that we would want our first-order desire for the good to be defeated by contrary motivation. Such a second-order desire would not sit well with the human tendency to see and justify our actions as good. The upshot is that it is reasonable to think that we not only have a global first-order desire for the good but also have a second-order desire that our global first-order desire for the good lead to action. We want, so to speak, our desire for the good to “win out” against any contrary motivation. If this is right, then it is reasonable to think that we already have, pre-justification, the second-order desire for a will that wills the good, and so Stump’s account of justification as God’s giving us this desire would be implausible. Furthermore, if we already have the second-order desire for a will that wills the good pre-justification, it would not be plausible to say that Christ suffers and dies on the cross in part to motivate us to acquire such a second-order desire. Some revision in her account of the atonement would be called for. Perhaps she could appeal to some other mental state produced in justification in place of the second-order desire for a will that wills that good, e.g., ceasing to resist God’s will for us (appropriately motivated).

³⁵Stump, *Atonement*, 206.

5. *Mind-Reading and Pre-Justification Sin*

One final question that we have is whether, on the Marian interpretation, the atonement successfully deals with our pre-justification sin. We worry that it does not because mutual indwelling—the goal of the atonement on the Marian interpretation—does not seem to require Christ’s mind-reading our pre-justification sins. To see this, recall that mutual indwelling requires closeness and shared attention. Neither closeness nor shared attention require that Christ take on, via mind-reading, pre-justification human sin. Closeness, recall, is a function of sharing your thoughts and feelings and what you care about with the other, as well as desiring the other wholeheartedly, and closeness with God is not possible pre-justification because we are not integrated around the good. Further, shared attention with God is not possible pre-justification because, lacking the Holy Spirit, we cannot mind-read God. Stump acknowledges all of this, noting that what prevents mutual indwelling is on our side. In particular, she thinks that

[O]n the cross . . . Christ establishes at one and the same time an indwelling in God of all human beings even in their sinfulness. Then, when at any other time a human person Paula surrenders to God in faith and is open to God, the circuit for mutual indwelling between God and Paula is completed, because then the Holy Spirit comes to indwell in Paula.³⁶

Yet why should God establish “an indwelling in God of all human beings even in their sinfulness” for humans in their pre-justification state, such that humans are just left to “complete the circuit”? After all, here is another possibility that brings about mutual indwelling: God stands ready and willing to be close to us and share attention with us in our pre-justification state, and our indwelling in God and God’s indwelling in us both take place at the moment of justification. On this alternative, the circuit is completed from both sides at the moment of justification, and God, due to his love for us, stands ready to complete his side before we are justified. The fact that this alternative is available shows that Christ need not suffer the agony of bearing our pre-justification sin in order for mutual indwelling to occur. Instead, it would only require him to mind-read our post-justification sin in order for us to have closeness and shared attention with him. That is a problem, we think, since the Marian interpretation then seems to obviate the need for Christ to deal with pre-justification sin even though the atonement is traditionally thought to deal with pre-justification sin. It also leaves Stump with the question of why, on her account, Christ mind-reads all human psyches at all times, if that is not necessary to establish mutual indwelling.

Stump could respond in either of two ways. First, she could claim that the atonement need not deal with pre-justification sin and revise her position to say that Christ does not mind-read all human psyches at all

³⁶Stump, *Atonement*, 166.

times. We think that this approach is unpromising and would not appeal to Stump, given that she rightly desires to explain “the theological claim that on the cross Christ bore the sins of all human beings at all times.”³⁷

Second, she could respond that Christ has good reason to mind-read both our pre-justification and post-justification sin. What kind of reason could that be? One option is that mind-reading the sins of everyone at all times indirectly contributes to people’s justification, since people will more easily find their hearts melted by the love that Christ shows us through his willingness to mind-read us at every moment. This response might work. Yet, it also raises a concern. Plausibly, what melts our hearts is God’s willingness to suffer in order to do what it takes to achieve mutual indwelling with us. Why would God’s taking on more suffering than necessary to achieve mutual indwelling further contribute to melting our hearts?

Another reason could be that Christ’s mind-reading all of our sin, including our pre-justification sin, makes us closer to God or increases the shared attention that we experience with him post-justification. Yet that does not seem quite right either. Closeness with God is a function of our sharing our thoughts and feelings and what we care about with him, which would be different post-justification, when we have begun our moral and spiritual transformation. And shared attention is a second-personal presence, and it is implausible that the depth of this second-personal presence depends upon Christ’s mind-reading us at times when we are unable to experience it.

We think that one potentially good reason for Christ to mind-read all of our sin, both pre-justification and post-justification, can be found by combining the Marian interpretation with an Anselmian interpretation. If bearing all of human sin is necessary for Christ to make amends to God, or if punishment for all sin is necessary in order to satisfy God’s justice, then it would make sense for Christ to suffer the agony of bearing both pre-justification and post-justification sin. Hence, if our argument in this section is right, we may have provided another reason to see the Marian interpretation as complementary to Anselmian interpretations. Together, they could produce a powerful interpretation explaining why mutual indwelling requires Christ to bear all sin by mind-reading the psyches of all people at all times.

Although we have raised a few objections to Stump’s interpretation of the atonement, those objections do not detract from Stump’s incredible achievement with this volume. We believe this interpretation contains many insights; it will be an enduring contribution to philosophical and theological work on the atonement for years to come.

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³⁷Stump, *Atonement*, 164.

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