

Tract 16: What I Did Not Steal, Must I Now Restore?

The field of modern theology is replete with varied, often competing, attempts to craft a comprehensive theology of salvation. One could say many things about this phenomenon, but the difficulty of the task arises largely from the fact that Scripture nowhere gives us a tidy soteriology of that kind. Instead, we have a wide variety of ways of speaking about the unique work of Christ, interpreting his life, death, and resurrection “according to the Scriptures.” In keeping with this, we find among the Fathers, and even within single authors, a variety of ways of speaking about salvation and its accomplishment. The Fathers ponder, praise, and marvel at Christ and his work in a variety of literary modes. They sing the praise of the saving triune God in a variety of biblical keys.¹

¹ Gustav Aulen opened the door to the strife among competing “theories” of redemption with his claim that Luther had recovered the patristic schema of *Christus Victor* (*Christus Victor: An Historical Study of the Three Main Types of the Idea of the Atonement* [Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2003]). Recent examples of the tendency to forge a comprehensive theory include: Fleming Rutledge, *The Crucifixion* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2015), who centers her account on the notion of “rectoral justice”; Adam Johnson, *The Reconciling Wisdom Of God: Reframing the Doctrine of the Atonement* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2016), who recognizes the limitations and ineluctable variety of such approaches; Khaled Anatolios, *Deification through the Cross: An Eastern Christian Theology of Salvation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2020). Anatolios’s account of a soteriology of “doxological contrition” is perhaps the most stimulating treatment of salvation in many years. While attempting a particularly Eastern treatment of salvation, the author eschews the false East–West dichotomies that have littered the field of theology since the mid-twentieth century. Anatolios does not attempt to say all that could be said about soteriology, but rather to lay out what must be said in any adequate account of Christ’s saving work, and far beyond that “doxological contrition as constituting the inner form of all Christ’s salvific acts” (377). I read Anatolios’s book only after composing a sketch of this article, originally delivered as a Good Friday meditation. Strong parallels between Anatolios’s elaboration of a soteriology of “doxological contrition” and my elaboration of a view of Christ’s work through

In this essay, I will look at Christ's offering of his life for our salvation from one particular vantage-point, that of Ps 69:4:

What I did not steal,
Must I now restore?

Ps 69 is a striking Messianic psalm.² It shows up in explicit quotations or fairly clear allusions at least eight times in the New Testament (Matt 27:34 and parallels; John 2:17; 15:25; 19:28–29; Acts 1:20; Rom 11:9; 15:13; 2 Cor 6:2), several of which are tied to the Passion in the Gospel of John (2:17; 15:28; 19:28–29). It has close parallels with the servant songs in Isaiah. It is widely seen in the Christian tradition as a psalm that speaks of the sufferings of Jesus Christ, a key text for the apostolic authors' interpretation of Christ.³

Broadly speaking, Ps 69 falls into the category of a psalm of petition in

the lens of Ps 69:4 will be evident throughout this article. They arise from a common scriptural and traditional patrimony and demonstrate what Anatolios calls the "assimilative power" of his schema of doxological contrition (275–76). My comments could be reasonably taken as a gloss on Ps. 69:4 from a perspective largely consistent with that of Anatolios. Please note: unless otherwise stated, all Scripture quotations are taken from the Revised Standard Version translation.

- ² Cassiodorus exclaims: "Who could doubt that this psalm accords with the Lord's Passion, when it is lent such notable and great authority for the expression of this meaning?" (*Explanation of the Psalms*, on Ps. 68 [LXX], no. 1, in *Ancient Christian Writers: The Works of the Fathers in Translation*, vol. 52, ed. and trans. P. G. Walsh [New York: Paulist Press, 1991], 141). Martin Luther articulates the traditional view: "The 69th Psalm is a psalm of prayer in the person of Christ as He spoke on the cross in his suffering. He confesses in our place and laments for His crucifiers and slanderers, who, in His great thirst, gave Him gall and vinegar to drink (So clearly and openly He speaks of His suffering to come)" (*Summaries Of The Psalms*, trans. Bruce A. Cameron [St. Louis: Concordia, 2007]). Interestingly, his claim that Christ confesses in our place is close to Anatolios's idea of "vicarious contrition," and more significantly to Thomas Aquinas. See Bruce Marshall, "The Dereliction of Christ and the Impassibility of God," in *Divine Impassibility and the Mystery of Human Suffering*, ed. James F. Keating and Thomas Joseph White (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009), 246–98, 260n31.
- ³ For the idea that the New Testament authors interpret Christ "according to the Scriptures," see John Behr, *The Way To Nicaea* (Crestwood NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2001), 49–70. Of course, the hermeneutic must have worked in both directions, so that once one has glimpsed Christ and his work, the Old Testament appears in a new light, just as the couplet of Augustine, beloved among medieval commentators says: "The New Testament is concealed in the Old, and the Old Testament is unveiled in the New" (*On the Spirit and the Letter* 18 and 27; *Seven Questions on The Heptateuch* 2.73).

the face of enemies.⁴ The psalmist cries out to God in the midst of severe suffering that threatens to overwhelm him like a flood. He is sunk in deep mire, unable to get a foothold. The foes who surround him outnumber the hairs of his head, and they hate him, he says at first, without cause. Later, he goes on to say that there is, in fact, a cause: his zeal for God's house, which incites his enemies to insult him, mock him, gossip about him. After pleading with God for help, the psalm concludes in a way remarkably similar to the other great psalm that the New Testament takes as a prophecy of Christ's passion, Ps 22, with a great hymn of praise (vv. 30–36). One can imagine this psalm on the lips of Christ, not only on the Cross, but in the garden, where, the author of Hebrews says: "Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard for his godly fear" (5:7).

Verse 4 of Ps 69 does not show up explicitly in the New Testament, but I will argue that it neatly encapsulates one dimension of Christ's redeeming work. On the literal level, the couplet simply states that the psalmist is innocent but is treated as guilty; he might even be quoting a proverb to that effect.⁵ Viewed in light of Christ's work as depicted in the New Testament as a whole, however, Ps 69:4 fits into the broad typology of Christ as the second, or last, and sinless Adam, who reverses the effect of the first human's sin. I will approach the topic by asking three questions: What was stolen? How was it restored? In what does this restoration consist?

What Was Stolen?

When Christ cries out in this psalm, "What I did not steal," to what is he referring? What is the stolen good that Christ must now restore? One clear candidate for this is the honor due to God, expressed fundamentally through obedience and worship,⁶ the honor which Adam failed to offer, choosing

⁴ See Pius Drijvers, *The Psalms: Their Structure and Meaning* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1965), 110–11.

⁵ J. W. Rogerson and J. W. McKay, *The Cambridge Bible Commentary, Psalms 51–100* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 95.

⁶ Of course, the notion of sin as creating a debt to God for an offense against his honor is adumbrated most thoroughly and influentially by Anselm of Canterbury in *Why God Became Man*. On debt as an important biblical image of sin, see Gary Anderson's *Sin: A History*. Anderson's important, and to my mind convincing, account of the biblical "history" of sin as debt includes a biblical defense of Anselm's *Why God Became Man*. David Brown comments on three crucial, frequently misunderstood terms used in English translations of Anselm's *Why God Became Man*, in order to re-establish the proper, biblical context for them: debt; honor; satisfaction. In the case of debt,

instead to attempt to seize the glory of God for himself.⁷ Commenting on John 15:29–31, Augustine draws on Ps. 69:4 to make this Christ–Adam contrast:

He had the Father's commandment to die, as the very One of whom it had been foretold, "Then I paid for that which I took not away;" and so appointed to pay death to the full, while owing it nothing, and to redeem us from the death that was our due. For Adam had seized on sin as a prey, when, deceived, he presumptuously stretched forth his hand to the tree, and attempted to invade the incommunicable name of that Godhead which was disallowed him, and with which the Son of God was endowed by nature, and not by robbery.⁸

Augustine speaks here of making the payment of death. Athanasius says something similar.⁹ Behind this lies the notion of death as penalty, and Christ as paying that penalty, though he had not personally incurred it. Adam reached out to steal for himself the glory of God, and fell under the penalty of death. Christ repaid this theft by his death, taking upon himself the due penalty of sin that he did not owe.

Is there another way of conceiving of Christ's offering on the Cross as the payment of that which he did not steal but now restores, thereby canceling our debt? In this essay, I will expound Christ's work as the offering of his

Brown points out that the term in Anselm's Latin, as in the Vulgate, functions in a teleological context in which man's good and his fulfillment of his obligation to God coincide ("Anselm on Atonement," in *The Cambridge Companion To Anselm*, ed. Brian Davies and Brian Leftow [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004], 279–302, at 290–95).

⁷ The analogical term of a payment in the New Testament is often connected to ransom from slavery. The difficulties with the specification of God as the recipient of a ransom are at least twofold. On the one hand, if the price Christ paid is a ransom to gain release from slavery or bondage of some kind, the payment of such a ransom to God would make God our bond-holder under sin, a role in which Scripture never portrays him. Second, if Christ is purchasing the human race from God, this manner of expressing the nature of the redemption could make Christ's work a matter of divine self-interest. I will address the latter problem at the end of this essay. On "analogical description" as a better term than "model" or "metaphor" for such biblical ways of speaking, see Stephen B. Clark, *Redeemer: Understanding the Life, Death and Resurrection of Christ* (East Lansing, MI: Tabor House, 2009), 150–52.

⁸ Augustine, *Tractates on the Gospel of John* 79.2, trans. John Gibb, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, 1st series, vol. 7, ed. Philip Schaff (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature, 1888), 343.

⁹ Athanasius, *On The Incarnation of The Word of God* 9.

life of perfect obedience to the law that commands love of God and love of neighbor, a sacrificial act of worship that honors God and restores God's likeness in man. This does not cancel the notion of undergoing the penalty of death, but shifts the focus of his offering from an excess payment of a penalty to worship and willing submission.

One possible way into this broad biblical theme is to trace it through Paul's Letter to the Romans, where, among his extant epistles, he most thoroughly and systematically lays out what he calls "my gospel" (2:16; 16:25).¹⁰ In the first chapter, after clearly identifying Jesus as the Son of David and Son of God, Paul begins his articulation of the Gospel, not with Israel, or at least not Israel alone, but with an indictment of the human race as a whole in 1:18–25.¹¹

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and wickedness of men who by their wickedness suppress the truth.

¹⁰ According to J. D. G. Dunn, the body of the letter "has . . . the form of a treatise"; it constitutes "the fullest exposition Paul had attempted of a theological, apologetic, pastoral explanation for his work as apostle to the gentiles (*Romans* 1–8, Word Biblical Commentary 38 [Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1988], lxi). Despite various theories to the contrary, Dunn makes a strong case for the literary and theological coherence of the letter.

¹¹ Typically, 1:18–32 is characterized as an indictment of the gentiles. See the headings in John Murray, *The Epistle To The Romans*, New International Commentary on The New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1980); Ernst Käsemann, *Commentary On Romans*, trans. and ed. Geoffrey Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1980); Joseph A. Fitzmeyer, *Romans*, The Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 1992). Dunn is an exception, heading Rom 1:18–32 as "God's Wrath on Humankind—From a Jewish Perspective." Sigurd Grindheim points to the close parallel between Ps 105:20–21 (LXX 104:20–21) and Rom 1:23, which both speak of exchanging the glory of God for the likeness of an animal. Psalm 105 applies this to the sin of Israel with the golden calf at Sinai. Thus, Grindheim argues that "this indictment has a universal application, as verse 20 refers to human beings ever since creation, but Paul's description is inspired by a particular example, the Sinai incident" ("A Theology of Glory: Paul's Use of *Δόξα* Terminology in Romans," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 136, no. 2 [2017]: 451–65, at 458). See also, G. K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011), 370–73, who suggests Jer 2 and Hos 4 as further possible background. Wisdom 13–14 is another possible influence on Paul's thought in Rom 1 (*Romans*, 279–81). Of course, none of these possibilities for verbal background are mutually exclusive, and it would be natural for all of them to influence Paul. For an essay that weaves these insights together, seeing both Exod 32 and Gen 3 as part of a larger collection of stories that depict the "human propensity to rebel against God almost immediately after receipt of an extraordinary blessing," see Gary A. Anderson, *Christian Doctrine And The Old Testament: Theology in the Service of Biblical Exegesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2017), 59–74.

¹⁹For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. ²⁰Ever since the creation of the world his invisible nature, namely, his eternal power and deity, has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse; ²¹for although they knew God they did not honor [ἐδόξασαν] him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking and their senseless minds were darkened. ²²Claiming to be wise, they became fools, ²³and exchanged the glory [δόξαν] of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man or birds or animals or reptiles. ²⁴Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, ²⁵because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served [ἐσεβάσθησαν καὶ ἐλάτρευσαν] the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed for ever! Amen.

According to Paul's indictment, the fundamental sin of the human race is the failure to glorify, or honor,¹² God and give him thanks. Human beings owe something to their Creator, as the source of their existence and the existence of the good things surrounding them (Wis 13:1; Acts 17:25). Failure to offer what is due to God (Ps. 7:17; 96:8) leads to the foolishness that is idolatry. "They have turned from the glorification of the immortal God to the worship of images of mortal creatures, human or animal."¹³ This fundamental sin leads to all manner of wickedness [ἀδικία]: sexual disorder; envy; murder; strife; deceit. In the catalogue of evils that Paul lists in verses 29–31, sins between human beings are the fruit of the creature's rejection of the claim of the Creator.¹⁴

In this section of Romans, Paul's discourse seems to parallel the nature and the consequences of the fall of the human race depicted in Gen 3.¹⁵ Verse 25

¹² The RSV translation here reflects the fact that there is substantial semantic overlap in the terms that express the recognition of value or majesty or weightiness of authority in another.

¹³ Fitzmeyer, *Romans*, 271.

¹⁴ Anatolios sums this up well: "The immanent consequences of sin in the corruption of human existence and the breakdown of relations with other nondivine realities [the curse on the ground in Gen 3:17–19, as well as human personal relationships] are the effects of the foundational disruption of the God–human relation that is brought out by disobedience to God. Both the Old and New Testaments generally follow this pattern" (*Deification*, 288)

¹⁵ As Grindheim points out, there are a number of conceptual, if not terminological, parallels between this passage and Gen 3, though the direct verbal allusions to the narrative in Gen 3 are limited and there are lacunae, e.g., Adam did not himself fall

speaks of exchanging the truth of God for a lie, recalling the serpent's deceit in Gen 3:4. The putative wisdom that is, in fact, foolishness is reminiscent of the desire to be wise (Gen 3:3). In believing the serpent, human beings implicitly gave allegiance to the creature, rather than the Creator.¹⁶ There are clear echoes in Rom 1:23 of Ps 105:20–21 (from the Septuagint [LXX], Ps 104:20–21), which recalls the incident of the golden calf at Sinai. This primal sin of idolatry in Israel's history is emblematic and may have inspired the terms of Paul's description. Without the, at least implied, background of the story of temptation and sin in the garden, however, the introduction of the Christ–Adam parallel in the fifth chapter would seem rather abrupt, whereas, taking Gen 3 as the general background to the sinful condition of both Jews and Gentiles described in Rom 1 makes the parallel between Christ and Adam in Rom 5 more natural.¹⁷

As noted by Karl Barth, Gen 3 renders the story of the human race *in nuce*.

It is the name of Adam the transgressor which God gives to world-history as a whole. . . . It is Adamic history, the history of Adam. It began in and with his history, and . . . it continually corresponds to his history. It is continually like it. With innumerable variations it constantly repeats it. It constantly re-enacts the little scene in the garden of Eden.¹⁸

into idolatry, and same-sex relations play no part in the narrative ("Theology of Glory," 459n25). If, however, we look at the following chapters of Genesis, the consequences of Adam's sin are broad and perduring, and include the disorders that Paul lists in 1:28–31. On the background of Rom 1 in Gen 3, see Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 53, 61; Morna D. Hooker, *From Adam to Christ: Essays on Paul* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 77–78; Nils Hyldahl, "A Reminiscence of The Old Testament at Romans 1:23," *New Testament Studies* 2 (1956): 285–88; A. J. M. Wedderburn, "Adam in Paul's Letter to the Romans," *Papers On The Gospels*, vol. 2 of *Studia Biblica* 1978, ed. Elizabeth Anne Livingstone, Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement 2 (Sheffield: Journey for the Study of the Old Testament Press, 1980). In response to these claims see Grindheim, "Theology of Glory," 459n25; Douglas J. W. Milne, "Genesis 3 in the Letter of Paul to the Romans," *The Reformed Theological Review* 39, no. 1 (1980): 10–18; Douglas Murray, *The Epistle To The Romans*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996), 109.

¹⁶ Hooker, *From Adam to Christ*, 78.

¹⁷ Anders Nygren, *Commentary on Romans* (London: SCM, 1955), 209–12.

¹⁸ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, vol. IV/1, *The Doctrine of Reconciliation, Part 1* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1974), 508, cited in Milne, "Genesis 3," 11. See also Käsemann, *Commentary On Romans*, 47: "For the apostle, history is governed by the primal sin of rebellion against the Creator, which finds repeated and universal expression."

Barth's naming Adam "the transgressor" derives from Rom 5:14 and points to another, though only implicit, element in Paul's indictment in Rom 1:18–32, which is disobedience to God. In Eden, Adam had received a direct command not to eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil (Gen 2:16). At Sinai, the first imperative of the LORD was to have no other gods, nor to bow down to or serve [LXX: λατρεύσης] an image or likeness of anything in creation (Exod 20:3–5). In both cases, the failure to offer the glory due to God constituted a transgression. And from this transgression, further, diverse sins followed, marking the estrangement between human beings and God and sowing discord and enmity in the relationships of human beings to one another. Those sins are catalogued in Rom 1:39–41 and narrated in Gen 4–11 as the outworking of Gen 3.

How Was the Stolen Honor Due to God Restored?

Romans 5 marks a turning point in Paul's treatise on salvation for Jew and Gentile. Having shown the sinfulness of all, both Jew and Greek (3:23), and the primacy of faith in Christ as the remedy for sin, Paul now demonstrates that Christ opens a new age for the human race. As James Dunn points out, 5:1–11 reverses some of the central themes of the indictment in 1:18–32:¹⁹

- 1:18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and wickedness of men who by their wickedness suppress the truth.
- 5:9 Since, therefore, we are now justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God.
- 1:18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and wickedness of men who by their wickedness suppress the truth.
- 5:6 While we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.
- 1:21 For although they knew God they did not honor [ἐδόξασαν] him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking and their senseless minds

¹⁹ Dunn, *Romans* 1–8, 242.

were darkened. . . .²³[They] exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man or birds or animals or reptiles.

5:2 Through him we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in our hope of sharing the glory of God.

1:28 And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a base mind and to improper conduct.

5:4 And endurance produces character, and character produces hope.

The result of Christ's death for those who had been at enmity with God is reconciliation. Human beings had been "haters of God" (Rom 1:30), but God's love has overcome death, his grace has exceeded the offense of sin, and his act of righteousness has excelled and reversed Adam's act of unrighteousness.

Romans 5:12–21 picks up the reversal theme explicitly in the contrast between Adam and Christ.²⁰ The indictment of 1:18–32 is "more than answered by the abundance of grace through Christ"²¹ in 5:12–21:

Therefore as sin came into the world through one man and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all men sinned¹³—sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law.¹⁴ Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sins were not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come.¹⁵ But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through one man's trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift in the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many.¹⁶ And the free gift is not like the effect of that one man's sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brings justification.¹⁷ If, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive

²⁰ One additional reason for finding at least an implicit Adamic background to Rom 1:18–32 is that, while Adam's name does not appear until 5:14, Paul assumes the background of Gen 3 in 5:12–21.

²¹ Dunn, *Romans* 1–8, 242–43.

the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ.¹⁸ Then as one man's trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one man's act of righteousness leads to acquittal and life for all men.¹⁹ For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by one man's obedience many will be made righteous.²⁰ Law came in, to increase the trespass; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more,²¹ so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

In the reversal of the effect of Adam's sin, Paul does not speak here of Christ's death, but of his obedience. The contrast throughout is between Adam's trespass and Christ's "act of righteousness," and their effects: on the one hand, disobedience, leading to condemnation and death; on the other, obedience, leading to justification and life. So, while Rom 1 is concerned with the *state* of the human race as a whole, Rom 5 is concerned with the *root* of human sins in general in the primal sin of disobedience that stands in diametrical opposition to the gratitude and honor the human race owes to its Creator and Father.²²

Romans speaks only in passing of Christ's work as a sacrifice, by referring to justification "by his blood" (5:9) and "Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as an expiation by his blood" (3:25). In a central passage in the Letter to the Hebrews, however, we find a possible connection among the notions of debt, obedience, and the offering of Christ's life.²³ After treating

²² Mal 1:6

A son honors his father,
and a servant his master.
If then I am a father,
where is my honor?
And if I am a master,
where is my fear?
says the LORD of hosts to you,
O priests, who despise my name.

This passage, quoted by Cabasilas (*Life in Christ* 4.17–18, quoted in Anatolios, *Deification*, 360), demonstrates that the notion of payment of a debt need not be understood as a commercial transaction, but as the fulfillment of a relational duty, a personal obligation, the discharge of which is an act of love. Anselm's soteriology is often dismissed as trading on "feudal" notions of obligation and duty. Mutual obligations and duties are, however, enshrined in the familial language of the Scripture itself, including the commandment to honor and serve the Lord and to honor one's parents.

²³ I am fully aware that, in drawing together Paul's Letter to the Romans and the Epistle to the Hebrews, I am flouting the convention of much modern biblical scholarship of

Christ as the Priest after the Order of Melchisedek, the author tells us, “every priest is appointed to offer gifts and sacrifices; hence it is necessary for this priest also to have something to offer” (8:3). Only in the middle of the following chapter do we hear of what this offering consists, in 9:11–14:

But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) ¹²he entered once for all into the Holy Place, taking not the blood of goats and calves but his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption. ¹³For if the sprinkling of defiled persons with the blood of goats and bulls and with the ashes of a heifer sanctifies for the purification of the flesh, ¹⁴how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify your conscience from dead works to serve the living God.

The language is direct and striking. Under the Law of Moses, the flesh was purified by the offering of the sacrifices stipulated for various needs and occasions, here exemplified by the offering for a skin disease (Lev 9:2). The effective purification of the conscience from “dead works”—that is, those acts of disobedience that call for repentance and that follow from unbelief (Heb 4:6; 6:1)—comes through Christ’s offering of himself to the point of shedding his blood. Christ qualified as an eternal high priest, since he was holy, without sin, and thus not in need of a sin offering for himself (4:15; 7:26–27). Christ qualified as a fitting sacrifice, since he was unblemished (9:24). In fact, under the New Testament’s moral interpretation of the laws of purity, the two qualifications are the same.

In the following chapter, the author returns to the contrast between the sacrifices under the old law and Christ’s sacrifice. He states bluntly: “It is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sin” (Heb 10:4). It is for just this reason (διὸ) that Christ (in the Greek, simply the third-person masculine pronoun, but with obvious referent), “when he came into the world,” declared in the words of Ps 40:6–8:

treating the “theologies” of biblical authors separately, but I happily do so on the basis of a conviction that the New Testament is grounded in a common apostolic tradition, which, for all the diversity of expression and occasion of its books, forms a tightly woven web of revelation.

[Heb 10:5]

Sacrifices and offerings thou hast not desired,
 but a body hast thou prepared for me;
⁶in burnt offerings and sin offerings
 thou hast taken no pleasure.

⁷Then I said, 'Lo, I have come to do thy will, O God,'
 as it is written of me in the roll of the book."

⁸When he said above, "Thou hast neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings" (these are offered according to the law), ⁹then he added, "Lo, I have come to do thy will." He abolishes the first in order to establish the second. ¹⁰And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

"When he came into the world" is clearly intended to speak of Christ, whose pre-existence has already been affirmed in the exordium of the letter (Heb 1:1–4) as a foundation of the whole treatment of Christ and his work.²⁴ The author has probably reworked the text of Ps 40 to fit what follows to the incarnate life of the Son. The extant texts of the Septuagint have "ears you have dug for me," an amplification of the Masoretic Text's "you have given me an open ear," both connoting the readiness of the psalmist to be taught. The shift in language in Hebrews, while it may depend on a variant text we no longer have, in any case brings out more forcefully the thought of the Incarnation and "the perfect functioning of the human body" because, as Donald Guthrie notes: "What Christ did had to be done 'in the body,' i.e., as a human being. It was as man that he was to demonstrate the perfect fulfillment of God's will."²⁵ Christ comes to bring to an end the Levitical sacrifices by fulfilling their purpose through his accomplishment of the will of God. Christ thus offers for all time a single sacrifice, in contrast to the many sacrifices under the Law of Moses.

Thus, Christ offers to God what human beings have always owed to God: the offering of themselves, expressed in gratitude and obedience to God as

²⁴ For a brilliant dogmatic exposition of the exordium, including the assertion of the eternal existence of the Son, and its indispensable role for the whole message of Hebrews, see John Webster, "One Who Is Son," in *God Without Measure: Working Papers in Christian Theology* (New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2018), 59–80. Take note of the repetition of Heb 1:3 in 10:12.

²⁵ Donald Guthrie, *Hebrews*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1986), 204.

Creator and Father. This praise and service of God are precisely what have been lacking in the lives of sinful men and women, and it is precisely this that pleases God in Christ. The offering of his body and of his blood—to use the common sacrificial language of the New Testament²⁶—is an expression of the obedience and gratitude that are the heart of sacrifice, even in the Old Covenant.²⁷ Apart from this obedience and grateful honor in the life of the offerer, sacrifice is not pleasing to God; indeed it is abhorrent, as he says in Amos 5:21–24:

I hate, I despise your feasts,
and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies.
²²Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and
cereal offerings,
I will not accept them,
and the peace offerings of your fatted beasts
I will not look upon.
²³Take away from me the noise of your songs;
to the melody of your harps I will not listen.
²⁴But let justice roll down like waters,
and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.

The obedience required of the offerer includes the love of neighbor that is highlighted in the LORD's indictment of Israel throughout the book of Amos, including further on in chapter 5: neglect and mistreatment of the poor (5:11); afflicting the righteous and taking bribes (5:12b). Thus, the opening of the account of the Passion in John 13:1 is apt:

Now before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.

Christ's self-offering is an expression of his love for God, manifest in his obedience even to the point of death. (Phil 2:8) In the Last Supper discourse of John 14:30–31, Jesus speaks of the offering of his life:

²⁶ The following references to blood as indicative of sacrifice in the New Testament are taken from Stephen B. Clark, *Redeemer: Understanding the Life, Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ* (Ann Arbor, MI: Servant, 1991), 318: Matt 26:28 and parallels; 1 Cor 10:16; 11:25; Acts 20:28; Rom 3:25; 5:9; Eph 1:7; 2:13; Col 1:20; Heb 9:12–14, 25; 10:19, 29; 12:24; 13:12, 26; 1 Pet 1:2, 18; 1 John 1:7; Rev 1:5; 5:9; 7:14 (22:14); 12:11.

²⁷ See Anatolios's case for the primacy of the interior disposition of the offerer in exilic and post-exilic Israel in *Deification*, 115–29.

I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming. He has no power over me; ³¹but I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father. Rise, let us go hence.

Obedience is the human form of filial love.²⁸ Christ's return to the Father through his death on the Cross and resurrection is the visible manifestation of love for the Father. It is the apex of a life characterized by doing at all times and circumstances what is pleasing to the Father (John 8:29). "Rise, let us go hence" is the practical conclusion of Christ's declaration that his death would not be the result of external forces, but of his own volition (10:18)

Christ's offering fulfills the law of love of neighbor that constitutes the Second Table of the Decalogue. Christ has loved his brethren perfectly, and will love them "to the end," probably intentionally carrying the double meaning of "to the last moment of his life" and "to the greatest extent" (John 15:13). Ephesians 5:2 explicitly links the love of neighbor and the offering of Christ's life as a pleasing sacrifice: "Walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God."²⁹

Christ's act of obedience, his offering to the Father in perfect, loving obedience (Phil 2:8) and in perfect love of neighbor, itself constitutes the greatest hymn of praise and thanksgiving.³⁰ The song of praise with which

²⁸ John 15:10. Against the Barthian view that obedience is also a feature of the divine Father-Son relation, see Bruce Marshall's careful and compelling case, "Personal Distinction in God and the Possibility of Kenosis," *Angelicum* 98, no. 1 (2021): 65–104.

²⁹ In the Gospel of John, Christ commends his mother to the care of the beloved disciple from the Cross (19:26–27). Undoubtedly, this has figural significance in relating the old covenant, represented by the "woman," the daughter of Zion, to the representative disciple, the beloved. It has a further significance for the ongoing relation of disciples of Christ to the mother of Jesus and the Church. For an exegesis along these lines, with some brief historical notes, see Ignace de la Potterie, *The Hour Of Jesus: The Passion and Resurrection of Jesus according to John: Text and Spirit* (Middlegreen, UK: St. Paul Publications, 1989), 132–52. The Fathers of the Church, however, characteristically read this passage as Christ's fulfillment of the commandment to honor father and mother. De la Potterie is unimpressed with the depth of this interpretation. In light of my reading of Christ's perfect fulfillment of the Second Table of the Law on the Cross, however, this is a weighty interpretation, Christ obeying the commandments and fulfilling the command to honor father and mother to the end.

³⁰ For Christ's expression of thanksgiving in his earthly life, see Matt 11:25 / Luke 10:21; John 11:41, as well as the grace over meals in Matt 15:36 and parallels, and 26:27 and parallels. For thanksgiving as the pleasing aspect of sacrifice, over against the material gift of an animal, see Ps 50:7–23.

Ps 69 ends is not simply annexed to the prayer of petition as an expression of hope for final deliverance, though that is certainly present and fully in line with Heb 5:7 and 12:2. The song in Ps 69:30–31 is also an expression of the heart of sacrifice as an act of praise and gratitude to God, the Creator and Father of men.³¹

³⁰I will praise the name of God with a song;
I will magnify him with thanksgiving.

³¹This will please the LORD more than an ox
or a bull with horns and hoofs.

Thus, Christ's sacrifice is his offering of himself, the Cross being the consummation of a life of full and perfect love of God and love of neighbor.³² It is not the death per se that is pleasing to God, but the life of obedience that culminates in this particular death.³³ Even in the case of the sacrificial

³¹ See Anatolios's summary of Matthias Scheeben's theology of sacrifice, which combines, precisely as does the Letter to the Hebrews, the death of Christ, his resurrection, and his ascension as a single sacrificial act, in which he is both priest and victim (*Deification*, 313–31). In Hebrews, Christ is priest by the power of an indestructible life (7:16) and in the Spirit offers his unblemished life to God (9:14). By his resurrection, he is capable of entering into the very presence of God on our behalf (9:24). Christ's offering is perfectly efficacious not only because of the quality of his human life, but because he is divine.

Maurice de la Taille sees every sacrifice, at least under the condition of sin, as at once "latreutic," that is, an act of glorification of God, and propitiatory, an act of appeal for forgiveness of sin (*Mysterium Fidei I* [London: Sheed & Ward, 1941], 2–3). De la Taille applies this notion to his theology of the Eucharist, as both an act of divine worship and a participation in Christ's propitiatory sacrifice.

³² For an outstanding biblical and Thomistic presentation of Christ's work as fulfilling the Torah and temple of the Old Testament, see Matthew Levering, *Christ's Fulfillment of Torah and Temple* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002).

³³ Aquinas quotes Ps 69:4 (Vulgate 68:5) in *Summa theologiae* [ST] III, q. 47, a. 2, ad 1: "Christ also by His Passion fulfilled the judicial precepts of the Law, which are chiefly ordained for making compensation to them who have suffered wrong, since, as is written Ps. 68:5: He 'paid that which' He 'took not away,' suffering Himself to be fastened to a tree on account of the apple which man had plucked from the tree against God's command." At least one aspect of Aquinas's interpretation of the atoning value of Christ's offering is in accord with what I am suggesting. "He properly atones for an offense who offers something which the offended one loves equally, or even more than he detested the offense. But by suffering out of love and obedience, Christ gave more to God than was required to compensate for the offense of the whole human race. First of all, because of the exceeding charity from which He suffered; secondly, on account of the dignity of His life which He laid down in atonement, for it was the life of one who

offerings under the Law of Moses, it is not the death of the animal, but the life that is offered in the outpouring of the blood in which the life resides (Lev 17:11).

This is by no means meant to vitiate the costliness and horror of the crucifixion of the incarnate Son of God. Under the conditions of a sinful world, in solidarity with a sinful race, and at the hands of sinful men, Christ's offering is necessarily one of suffering, humiliation, and grief. The depth and breadth and horror of the suffering is a measure of his love for the Father and of the love of Father and Son for us. Yet, by the power of his sinless life, this death, folly to Greeks and scandal to the Jews (1 Cor 1:23), constitutes a victory over the power of sin and death and the devil. It is the vindication of God's goodness, and the glory of him who enters the heavenly gates as the King of Glory.³⁴

was God and man; thirdly, on account of the extent of the Passion, and the greatness of the grief endured. . . . And therefore Christ's Passion was not only a sufficient but a superabundant atonement for the sins of the human race; according to 1 Jn. 2:2: 'He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world'" (ST III, q. 48, a. 2).

³⁴ As Daniel Keating points out, Anatolios's soteriology would be strengthened by the rightful integration of the *Christus Victor* theme (Review of *Deification through the Cross: An Eastern Christian Theology of Salvation* by Khaled Anatolios, *The Thomist* 86, no. 1 [2022]: 139–43). In fact, integration of the *Christus Victor* theme would fit well with Anatolios's stress on glorification of God. The Exodus would have provided Anatolios a ready context for uniting the themes of God's victory over every spiritual adversary and God's glory. God's judgment on the gods of Egypt is an act of judgment and warfare by which he gains glory over his foes (Exod 12:12; 14:4, 17–18; 15:6, 11). One could hardly express the parallel more forcefully than the Book of Revelation, where the hymn of praise in heaven at the outset of God's final acts of judgment is the "song of Moses and of the Lamb" (15:3). While the *Christus Victor* theme laid out by Aulen is the battle of Christ as God with the enemies of the human race, we can extend this to the victory of Christ considered as man. While Christ's offering, and his life as a whole as a "man of sorrows, acquainted with grief" (Isa 53:3), functions as a model of grief over sin for our imitation, as Anatolios stresses, his battle with temptation, his perseverance in the face of opposition and threats, and his courage and fidelity under pressure function in the same way. In Anatolios's book, this aspect appears by way of Cabasilas's account of suffering. Nonetheless, the more militant strains common to the New Testament do not figure largely in Anatolios's account of the Christian life. According to Athanasius, St. Antony of the desert models the imitation of Christ as spiritual combat. See, for example, *Life of Antony* 5, 19, and 34. The deifying effect of Christ's work is evident as well, according to Athanasius, in the conquest of idolatry through the preaching of the Gospel and in the martyrs whose fearless confrontation with death is grounded in the Word who triumphed over death (*On The Incarnation* 28; 47; 48; 52). An interesting aspect of the Passion considered as a triumph is in relation to the malice of Christ's enemies, according to Aquinas: "Christ's love was greater

What Is Restored to Whom?

In one respect, the self-offering of Christ on the Cross restores to God what was owed to God: the honor and thanks due to God, Creator and Father, and the love expressed in obedience to his will. Thus, the offering of Christ is not a payment extrinsic to the human creature's relation to his Father and Creator, but is the fulfillment of the natural religious duty of man. It is a restoration of the relationship in which the human being offers what belongs to God: his very self. Thus, it reconciles us to God (Rom. 5:9–11) through the gift of one who represents us and affects our race from within, as Adam did. It is an act of rectification, a fulfillment of the despised human duty of justice.³⁵

Yet, it belongs to God's goodness as Creator and Redeemer (Isa 44:24) that the gift of Christ to the Father as our representative should result, not in an enrichment of God, but in the blessing of man. The payment by the Son of Man of what is due to the Father is not a commercial transaction that enriches God,³⁶ but the fulfillment of our nature as his sons, and so enriches us, restores our lost dignity, and makes for our perfection.³⁷ As Athanasius puts it:

than His slayers' malice: and therefore the value of His Passion in atoning surpassed the murderous guilt of those who crucified Him: so much so that Christ's suffering was sufficient and superabundant atonement for His murderer's crime" (*ST* III, q. 48, a. 2, ad 2). This robust notion of the power of Christ's love in the face of murderous, sinful passions counters sentimental notions of love.

³⁵ *ST* II-II, q. 81, a. 1.

³⁶ Job 35:5–7

⁵Look at the heavens, and see;

and behold the clouds, which are higher than you.

⁶If you have sinned, what do you accomplish against him?

And if your transgressions are multiplied, what do you do to him?

⁷If you are righteous, what do you give to him;

or what does he receive from your hand?

See Aquinas, *ST* II-II, q. 81, a. 7: "We pay God honor and reverence, not for His sake (because He is of Himself full of glory to which no creature can add anything), but for our own sake, because by the very fact that we revere and honor God, our mind is subjected to Him; wherein its perfection consists."

³⁷ Aquinas asks whether God might have simply forgiven us by decree, and admits that this would not have been an injustice. In this, it would seem, he quietly differs from Anselm. Nevertheless, it would not have been so perfect a means as that by which God has reconciled us to himself, in part because by redeeming us through a representative of our race, God restores our dignity. See *ST* III, q. 46, a. 2, ad 3; a. 3. See also Augustine, *De Trinitate* 13.10.

As when the likeness painted on a panel has been effaced by stains from without, he whose likeness it is must needs come once more to enable the portrait to be renewed on the same wood. For, for the sake of his picture, even the mere wood on which it is painted is not thrown away, but the outline is renewed upon it. In the same way, also, the most holy Son of the Father, being the image of the Father, came to our region to renew man once made in his likeness and find him as one lost by the remission of sins. As he says himself in the gospels, "I came to find and save the lost."³⁸

What Christ restores, ultimately, is restored to us as well. We had lost the glorious image of God, but now, through the sacrifice of the true Son of the Father made man, man is restored to his full, privileged sonship. The conclusion of this in the spiritual life is that we may now render to God what is his due. As Jesus says of the ones who bear God's image: "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's" (Matt 22:21)

Finally, let us return to Paul's Letter to the Romans. Through the first eight chapters, Paul has explicated the story of the human race from its fall, through its dismal history of infidelity to the covenant of Sinai and the general ignorance and futility of life among the gentiles, to its salvation and new life through the obedience of the last Adam. After an excursus on the current state and future destiny of Israel, Paul now exhorts his audience to live the obedience of faith that open and close the letter (12:1–2):

I appeal to you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. ²Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

The essence of that obedience is to offer one's body—note the parallel here with the language of Hb 10:5—as a living sacrifice, which constitutes the spiritual (*logikos*) worship the human race owes to God, an offering which is bound up with the renewal of the mind that had been darkened by sin.³⁹

³⁸ Athanasius, *On The Incarnation* 14.

³⁹ The "works done in the body" will also be the basis of future judgment (2 Cor 5:10; Matt 16:27; Rom 2:6; Eph 6:8; Rev 2:23; 20:12; 22:12). In the age of what Philip Rieff calls "psychological man," when many people are inclined to think of a body as a possession or a dwelling place of the "true person," the use of the term body (*σῶμα*) in

This passage is full of the reversal motif that characterized Rom 5:1–11. G. K. Beale lays this out in a table:⁴⁰

Romans 1:18–28	Romans 12:1–2
²⁴ that their bodies would be dishonored among them	¹ present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice to God
²⁵ they worshiped and served the creature, rather than the Creator	your spiritual service of worship
they worshiped and served the creature, rather than the Creator	^{2a} and do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind [in God]
²⁸ just as they did not approve [it proper] to have God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a disapproved mind [a mind not approved by God]	^{2b} be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may approve what the will of God is

This grand reversal is possible on the basis of the mercy and perfect wisdom of God in Christ, who restores us by restoring the order of justice broken by man's original and ongoing theft of the honor due to God, an honor expressed in perfect, loving filial obedience to his wise and gracious will. What Christ did not steal he does indeed restore, and in the most marvelous manner possible. N.V.

Heb 10:5 and Rom 12:1 as denoting the human being as a whole is not unimportant (*The Triumph Of The Therapeutic: The Uses of Faith after Freud* [New York: Penguin, 1973]).

⁴⁰ Beale, *New Testament Biblical Theology*, 375.