

## VIOLENT ATONEMENT IN ROMANS: THE FOUNDATION OF PAUL'S SOTERIOLOGY

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Interpreters of the NT have a long history of being interested in the nature of Jesus' death in Paul's theology.<sup>1</sup> In both the UK and the US, many discussions of Jesus' death in Paul in both scholarly and popular literature have focused lately on penal substitution.<sup>2</sup> A renewed interest in penal substitution has arisen in part because several evangelical and non-evangelical interpreters continue to argue that the NT does not present Jesus' death as a violent substitute.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Secondary literature is plentiful on this issue. For examples, see Leon Morris, *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross* (3d ed.; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1965); Ernst Käsemann, "The Saving Significance of the Death of Jesus in Paul," in *Perspectives on Paul* (trans. M. Kohl; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971) 32–59; James D. G. Dunn, "Paul's Understanding of Jesus' Death," in *Reconciliation and Hope* (ed. Robert Banks; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974) 76–89; Sam K. Williams, *Jesus' Death as Saving Event: The Background and Origin of A Concept* (HDR 2; Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1975); Cilliers Breytenbach, *Versöhnung: Eine Studie zur paulinischen Soteriologie* (WMANT 60; Neukirchener-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1989); Charles B. Cousar, *A Theology of the Cross: The Death of Jesus in the Pauline Letters* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1990); Thomas Knöppler, *Sühne im Neuen Testament* (WMANT 88; Neukirchener-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 2001); Richard H. Bell, "Sacrifice and Christology in Paul," *JTS* 53 (2002) 1–27; D. A. Carson, "Atonement in Romans 3:21–26," in *The Glory of the Atonement* (ed. Charles E. Hill and Frank A. James III; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2004) 127–36; Stephen Finlan, *The Background and Content of Paul's Cultic Atonement Metaphors* (Atlanta: SBL, 2004).

<sup>2</sup> For examples, see Morna D. Hooker, "Interchange in Christ," *JTS* 22 (1971) 349–61; idem, "Interchange and Atonement," *BJRL* 60 (1978) 462–81; J. I. Packer, "What Did the Cross Achieve? The Logic of Penal Substitution," *TynBul* 25 (1974) 3–45; Joel B. Green and Mark Baker, *Rediscovering the Scandal of the Cross: Atonement in New Testament & Contemporary Contexts* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2000); Steve Chalke, *The Lost Message of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003); Hans Boersma, *Violence, Hospitality, and the Cross: Reappropriating the Atonement Tradition* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004); James Beilby and Paul R. Eddy, eds., *The Nature of the Atonement* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2006); David A. Brondos, *Paul on the Cross: Reconstructing the Apostle's Story of Redemption* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2006); Frank S. Thielman, "The Atonement," in *Central Themes in Biblical Theology: Mapping Unity in Diversity* (ed. Scott J. Hafemann and Paul House; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007) 102–27; Steve Jefferey, Mike Ovey, and Andrew Sach, *Pierced for Our Transgressions: Rediscovering the Glory of Penal Substitution* (Nottingham, UK: Inter-Varsity, 2007); Jarvis J. Williams, "Penal Substitution in Romans 3:25–26?" *PTR* 13 (2007) 73–81; Derek Tidball, David Hilborn, and Justin Thacker (eds.), *The Atonement Debate* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008); I. Howard Marshall, *Aspects of the Atonement: Cross and Resurrection in the Reconciling of God and Humanity* (London, UK: Paternoster, 2008); Stephen H. Travis, *Christ and the Judgment of God: The Limits of Divine Retribution* (2d ed.; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2008).

<sup>3</sup> I use the words "violent" and "penal" interchangeably throughout the article to refer to penal substitution.

For example, in his recent essay on atonement, Joel Green asserts that penal substitution “divorces Jesus’ life from the passion event, as though the only significant thing about Jesus was his death. Jesus was born in order to die.”<sup>4</sup> Green asks: Why did God become human according to the penal substitution view? The answer is simple: to bear on the cross the punishment for our sin. “But this proposal,” Green says, “neglects what we know historically, fails to account for the nature of the witness of the New Testament itself, diminishes the significance of the incarnation, and unacceptably truncates the portrait of faithful human life as the imitation of Christ.”<sup>5</sup> Although Green claims that the cross is essential for salvation,<sup>6</sup> he asserts that Jesus did not achieve salvation by means of absorbing the wrath of God on the cross on behalf of sinners.

Over against the model of penal substitutionary atonement, then, God’s saving act is not his response to Jesus’ willing death, as though, in a forensic exchange, our punishment by death was suspended by Jesus’ execution. God sent his son to save, but this is worked out in a variety of purpose statements: to fulfill the law (Matt 5:17), to call sinners to repentance (Matt 9:13), to bring a sword (Matt 10:34), to give his life as a ransom for many (Mark 10:45), to proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God in the other cities (Luke 4:43), to seek and to save the lost (Luke 19:10), and so on. Even the ransom saying is exegeted by the parallel description of Jesus’ mission: ‘The son of man came not to be served, but to serve’ (Mark 10:45). God’s saving act is the incarnation, which encompasses the whole of his life, including but not limited to his death on a Roman cross.<sup>7</sup>

Steve Chalke argues in his essay that “the greatest theological problem with penal substitution is that it presents us with a God who is first and foremost concerned with retribution for sin that flows from his wrath against sinners.”<sup>8</sup> Chalke states that penal substitution does not fit with the words or attitude of Jesus and that if the whole gospel centers on his death, then his disciples could not have preached a message of good news before his crucifixion. Furthermore, if God required an atoning sacrifice to placate his anger, then Jesus could not have forgiven sins before his sacrifice: “In fact, why did Jesus preach at all? The rest of his ministry was ultimately unnecessary if it is only his death that makes things new. Surely, we cannot embrace a theology in which Jesus’ entire 33 year incarnation could be reduced to a long weekend’s activity.”<sup>9</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Joel Green, “Must we Imagine the Atonement in Penal Substitutionary Terms? Questions, Caveats, and a Plea,” in *The Atonement Debate: Papers from the London Symposium on the Theology of Atonement* (ed. Derek Tidball, David Hilborn, and Justin Thacker; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008) 153–71.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* 156.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* 155.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* 159.

<sup>8</sup> Steve Chalke, “The Redemption of the Cross,” in *The Atonement Debate* 36–45.

<sup>9</sup> Chalke also suggests that penal substitution does not do justice to the story of our salvation, but redemption does (“Redemption” 36–45, esp. 43). He thinks that Jesus’ death could effectively function as a ransom apart from being a penal substitute.

Allan Mann argues that Christians should redefine Christian vocabulary for an emergent, postmodern, post-Christian, and post-industrialized culture, because this culture does not think about things with the same categories as the pre-modern, pre-Christian, and pre-industrialized culture. Mann suggests that such redefinitions should include redefining sin and redefining the significance of Jesus' death. Old ways of explaining the atonement (such as penal substitution) do not work anymore.<sup>10</sup> Brad Jersak likewise recently contends that Jesus did not die as a penal substitute. The atonement is non-violent as opposed to penal. The cross was not God's violent solution to sin, but expresses God's nonviolent love through Jesus' peaceful response to his accusers.<sup>11</sup>

In a recent book about redemption in Paul, David A. Brondos rejects that Paul presents Jesus' death as a penal substitute that provides salvation by absorbing God's wrath for those whom he died.<sup>12</sup> Instead, Brondos argues that Jesus' death in Paul should be interpreted in light of Israel's story of redemption. Paul argues in Rom 1:18–3:20 that Jews and Gentiles are under God's wrath and judgment because of their sins.<sup>13</sup> Israel's plight and lack of redemption in the OT should be understood as the result of the people's sins and lack of righteousness.<sup>14</sup> Before Israel's redemption could come, God had to end his wrath against the nation's sins and enable Israel to practice the righteousness that he both required from the nation and would give to the nation.<sup>15</sup> According to Rom 3:21–26, Jesus was the means through which this righteousness and redemption would come to both Jews and Gentiles and the means through which both Jews and Gentiles can now draw near to God and be delivered from God's wrath.<sup>16</sup> However, commenting on Jesus' death for sin in Rom 8:1–4, Brondos makes it clear that in his view, God did not bring about redemption through Jesus' bearing of God's divine judgment on behalf of humanity's sin.<sup>17</sup> Jesus' death was the result of his ministry, not the place whereby God absorbed his wrath in his Son to purchase redemption for his new covenant community.<sup>18</sup> Jesus' faithfulness to carry out God's plan of redemption cost him his life.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Allan Mann, *Atonement for a Sinless Society: Engaging with an Emerging Culture* (London: Paternoster, 2005) 15–59, esp. chapter 3.

<sup>11</sup> Brad Jersak, "Nonviolent Identification and the Victory of Christ," in *Stricken By God? Non-Violent Identification and the Victory of Christ* (ed. Brad Jersak and Michael Hardin; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007) 13–53, esp. 33 and 52. Cf. Michael J. Gorman, *Inhabiting the Cruciform God: Kenosis, Justification, and Theosis in Paul's Narrative Soteriology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009) 145–46.

<sup>12</sup> Brondos, *Paul on the Cross*.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.* 129.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.* 123.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.* 146.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

In a collection of recent essays, scholars from different theological perspectives consider whether violence is necessary to accomplish redemption.<sup>20</sup> J. Denny Weaver argues against an Anselmian view by arguing for a Narrative Christ Victor interpretation of Jesus' death.<sup>21</sup> Hans Boersma argues for a modified Reformed interpretation of Jesus' death.<sup>22</sup> Thomas Finger argues for a non-violent Christus Victor interpretation of Jesus' death.<sup>23</sup> T. Scott Daniels discusses worship that shapes non-substitutionary convictions.<sup>24</sup> Boersma's view is the most interesting in this volume because he argues for what he calls a modified version of the traditional Reformed penal substitution model, but he speaks negatively against the traditional Reformed model. Boersma asserts:

What we have is, essentially, a modified Reformed position. Whereas the juridical aspect continues to hold an important place, the penal aspect needs to be complemented by moral influence and Christus Victor elements. Although certain individuals certainly benefit from Christ's work, there is no direct transfer or imputation that takes place between Christ and the elect individual. Instead Christ suffers the corporate curse of Israel and in rising from death reconstitutes the people of God. And although Christ's work does result in a new humanity, it does so by means of the historical connections between Israel and Christ as her messianic representative.<sup>25</sup>

As one can see from the above quote, one reason that Boersma calls his view a modified Reformed view is that he rejects the category of imputation.

A few African-American scholars have offered their own unique contribution to the discussion of penal substitution.<sup>26</sup> Whether the author is James H. Cone, who blames the oppression of African-Americans by white Christianity in the US in part on (as he calls them) abstract Eurocentric doctrines such as penal substitution, or Delores S. Williams, who argues that a penal substitutionary understanding of Jesus' death embraces the exploitation of black women as forced surrogates in both white and black contexts because penal substitution presents a Jesus who acts as a surrogate for those whom he died, the fundamental point of these scholars is the same: African-American Christians should reject penal substitution because it is part of a white man's theological system that espouses the oppression of African-

<sup>20</sup> John Sanders, ed., *Atonement and Violence: A Theological Conversation* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2006).

<sup>21</sup> J. Denny Weaver, "Narrative Christus Victor: The Answer to Anselmian Atonement Violence," in *Atonement and Violence: A Theological Conversation* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2006) 1–29.

<sup>22</sup> Hans Boersma, "Violence, the Cross, and Divine Intentionality: A Modified Reformed View," in *Atonement and Violence* 47–85.

<sup>23</sup> Thomas Finger, "Christus Victor as Nonviolent Atonement," in *Atonement and Violence: A Theological Conversation* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2006) 87–111.

<sup>24</sup> T. Scott Daniels, "Passing the Peace: Worship that Shapes Nonsubstitutionary Convictions," in *Atonement and Violence* 125–48.

<sup>25</sup> Boersma, "Violence" 56.

<sup>26</sup> J. Denny Weaver, *The Nonviolent Atonement* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001) 99–178 pointed me to the scholars discussed in this section.

Americans.<sup>27</sup> For example, Cone suggests that white theologians developed abstract systems of theology such as penal substitution, and they largely made salvation a spiritual issue that emphasizes the need for satisfaction and for a legal transaction to deliver people from the guilt of sin. The white man's view of salvation is consonant with slavery and accommodates assumptions of white superiority.<sup>28</sup> Similarly, Williams asserts that Womanist theologians "must show that redemption of humans can have nothing to do with any kind of surrogate or substitute role Jesus was reputed to have played in a bloody act that supposedly gained victory over sin and/or evil."<sup>29</sup> Jesus redeemed humanity through his life, not through his cross.<sup>30</sup> As Christians, "black women cannot forget the cross, but they neither can glorify it."<sup>31</sup>

## I. WORKING DEFINITION OF PENAL SUBSTITUTION AND THESIS

In light of the renewed critiques of penal substitution from both evangelical and non-evangelical scholars, this article endeavors to add to the discussion of atonement by arguing in favor of the centrality of violent substitutionary atonement for Paul's soteriology. By violent, penal substitution, I mean that Jesus died a violent, substitutionary death to be a sacrifice of atonement for the sins of Jews and Gentiles. By this death, he took upon himself God's righteous judgment and wrath against the sins of those for whom he died. By dying as their penal substitute, Jesus paid the penalty for their sins, and he therefore both propitiated God's wrath against their sins and expiated their sins so that the sins of Jews and Gentiles would be forgiven and so that they (Jews and Gentiles) would be justified by faith, forgiven of their sins, reconciled to God, participate in the resurrection, and saved from God's wrath. My thesis is that penal substitution is the foundation of Paul's soteriology in Romans and that if one dismisses penal substitution from Paul's soteriology, he or she truncates Paul's foundational theological reason that he proclaimed that God saves by faith all who have sinned. I argue this thesis by an exegetical analysis of selected texts in Romans.

## II. ROMANS 3:21–26

1. *Jesus' blood, redemption, and ἰλαστήριον.* Many scholars agree that Rom 3:21–26 is the central section of Romans.<sup>32</sup> Yet, there is no scholarly

<sup>27</sup> See James H. Cone, *God of the Oppressed* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1997) 42–52, 211–12; Delores S. Williams, "The Color of Feminism: Or Speaking the Black Woman's Tongue," *JRT* 43 (1986) 42–58; idem, *Sisters in the Wilderness: The Challenge of Womanist God-Talk* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1993).

<sup>28</sup> Cone, *God of the Oppressed* 42–52.

<sup>29</sup> Williams, *Sisters* 164–65, esp. 165.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid. 167.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> For an example, see C. E. B. Cranfield, *Romans* (ICC 1; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1975) 199.

consensus regarding the meaning of the text.<sup>33</sup> Paul argues in Rom 1:18–3:20 that both Jews and Gentiles (without exception) are guilty before God. Paul, then, offers in Rom 3:21–26 an antithesis and a solution to humanity’s condemnation before God: viz. justification by faith in Jesus on the basis of his death.<sup>34</sup>

The first piece of evidence in this text that suggests that penal substitution was foundational to Paul’s soteriology occurs in Rom 3:24–26. He states in Rom 3:24 that Jesus’ redemption was the means through which God justifies all who have sinned. The term ἀπολυτρόσις appears for the first time in Romans here (cf. Rom 8:23).<sup>35</sup> Since Paul uses this term to state that redemption through Jesus was the means through which God justifies by faith all who have sinned (δικαιούμενοι δωρεάν τῆ αὐτοῦ χάριτι διὰ τῆς ἀπολυτρόσεως τῆς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ) and since he connects ἀπολυτρόσις with Jesus’ blood (Rom 3:24–25), the phrases διὰ τῆς ἀπολυτρόσεως τῆς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ suggest in Rom 3:24 that Jesus’ death was some sort of sacrificial ransom that was offered to purchase justification for all who have sinned (Rom 3:23–24).<sup>36</sup> Thus, redemption in Christ Jesus accomplished justification (Rom 3:24–24); the redemption and justification came by means of the payment of a ransom with Jesus’ blood (Rom 3:24–25), which he offered for those who were otherwise guilty before God (Rom 1:18–3:20; 3:23), and this ransom was a penal death since Paul states that justification and redemption come to those who were guilty before God *only after* he offered Jesus’ blood for their sin (cf. Rom 3:21–25).

The text of Rom 3:25–26 supports that Jesus’ death was a penal death for sin. The terms ἵλαστήριον (Rom 3:25), αἷμα (Rom 3:25), δικαιοσύνη (Rom 3:25–26), and ἁμάρτημα (Rom 3:25) are important for this premise. There is no scholarly consensus as to how one should translate ἵλαστήριον in Rom 3:25.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>33</sup> For a few examples, see Ernst Käsemann, “Zum Verständnis von Römer 3:24–26,” *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche* 43 (1950–1951) 150–54; G. Klein, “Exegetisch Probleme in Röm 3:21–25,” *ET* 24 (1964) 678–83; Charles H. Talbert, “A Non-Pauline Fragment at Romans 3:24–26?” *JBL* 85 (1966) 287–96; B. F. Meyer, “The Pre-Pauline Formula in Rom 3:25–26a,” *NTS* 29 (1983) 198–208; Robert K. Jewett, *Romans* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007) 269–93.

<sup>34</sup> Against the translation “faith in Christ,” see Richard B. Hays, *The Faith of Christ: An Investigation of the Narrative Substructure of Gal. 3:1–4:11* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002). For a recent discussion on the πίστις χριστοῦ debates, see Michael F. Bird and Preston M. Sprinkle, eds., *The Pistis Christou Debate: The Faith of Jesus Christ* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2009).

<sup>35</sup> For other occurrences of ἀπολυτρόσις in the NT, see Luke 21:28; 1 Cor 1:30; Eph 1:7, 14; 4:30; Col 1:14; Heb 9:15; 11:35.

<sup>36</sup> Against ransom, see David Hill, *Greek Words and Hebrew Meanings: Studies in the Semantics of Soteriological Terms* (SNTS 5; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967) 49–81. See rightly Benjamin B. Warfield, “The New Testament Terminology of Redemption,” in vol. 2 of *Bible Doctrines: The Works of Benjamin B. Warfield* (Grand Rapids: Baker 2003) 327–98; Morris, *Apostolic Preaching* 11–64; Finlan, *Paul’s Cultic Atonement Metaphors*, 164–69.

<sup>37</sup> For example, Adolf Deissmann, *Bible Studies* (trans. A. Grieve; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1895) 124–35; W. Sanday and A. C. Headlam, *Romans* (ICC; 5th ed.; London: T & T Clark, 1980) 87–88, 91–94; Hastings Rashdall, *The Idea of Atonement in Christian Theology* (London: Macmillan, 130–32); T. W. Hanson, “ἵλαστήριον,” *JTS* 46 (1945) 1–10; Leon Morris, “The Meaning of ΗΙΛΑΣΤΗΡΙΟΝ

Suggested meanings are “mercy seat,”<sup>38</sup> “a means of propitiation,”<sup>39</sup> and “expiation.”<sup>40</sup> Robert K. Jewett recently proposed that the term does not refer to propitiation or expiation, but reconciliation.<sup>41</sup> That is, by using ἱλαστήριον Paul states that Jesus provided access to God through his death.<sup>42</sup> Daniel Stökl Ben Ezra recently argued that Paul’s use of ἱλαστήριον alludes to the Yom Kippur ritual but that he does not necessarily equate Jesus with the mercy seat.<sup>43</sup> Building on the work of J. W. van Henten, I have recently argued that although Paul alludes to the Yom Kippur ritual when he calls Jesus a ἱλαστήριον, he borrows his main theological understanding of the term from its use in the martyr theology in Hellenistic Judaism since the term is applied to the vicarious death of a human for the benefit of another only in 4 Macc

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in Romans 3:25,” *NTS* 18 (1971–1972) 3–43; idem, *The Apostolic Preaching* 144–213; Hill, *Greek Words* 23–48; Nicole S. L. Fryer, “The Meaning and Translation of Hilastērion in Romans 3:25,” *EQ* 59 (1987) 99–116; Campbell, *Rhetoric* 107–13; Peter Stuhlmacher, “Zur neueren Exegese von Römer 3:24–26,” in *Versöhnung, Gesetz, und Gerechtigkeit* (ed. Earle Ellis; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1981) 117–35; Stanley K. Stowers, *A Rereading of Romans: Justice, Jews, and Gentiles* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994) 206–13; Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996) 230–40; Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans* (BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998) 164–66; Klaus Haacker, *Der Brief des Paulus an die Römer* (THKNT 7; Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1999) 90–92; Knöppler, *Sühne* 112–17; N. T. Wright, “Romans,” in *The New Interpreter’s Bible*, vol. 10 (Nashville: Abingdon, 2002) 272–79; Sam K. Williams, *Jesus’ Death as Saving Event: The Background and Origin of a Concept* (HDR 2; Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1975) 39–41, 165–202, 233–54; Charles H. Talbert, *Romans* (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2002) 110–15; Daniel Stökl Ben Ezra, *The Impact of Yom Kippur on Early Christianity* (WUNT 163; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003) 198–202; Finlan, *Paul’s Cultic Atonement Metaphors* 193–224.

<sup>38</sup> Origen, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans: Books 1–5* (trans. Thomas P. Scheck; Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2001) 216–25; John Calvin, *The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Romans and to the Thessalonians* (trans. R. MacKenzie; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1960) 75; Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans* (trans. Edwyn C. Hoskyns; London: Oxford University Press, 1933) 104–5; Manson, “ἱλαστήριον,” 1–10; Anders Nygren, *Commentary on Romans* (trans. Carl C. Rasmussen; Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1949) 156–62; Stanislas Lyonnet, “De notione expiationis,” *Verbum Domini* 37 (1959) 336–52; F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans* (TNTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1963) 104–7; William Swain, “For our Sins: The Image of Sacrifice in the Thought of the Apostle Paul,” *Int* 17 (1963) 131–39; Lyonnet and Sabourin, *Sin* 157–66; Ulrich Wilckens, *Der Brief an die Römer* (Teilband 1: Römer 1–5, EKKNT 6/1; Zürich: Benziger/Neukirchener-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1980) 191–92; Ernst Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans* (trans. Geoffrey Bromiley; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980) 97; Bernd Janowski, *Sühne als Heilsgeschehen* (2d ed., WMANT 55; Neukirchener-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 2000) 350–54; B. F. Meyer, “The Pre-Pauline Formula in Rom 3:25–26a,” *NTS* 29 (1983) 198–208; Arnold J. Hultgren, *Paul’s Gospel and Mission: The Outlook from His Letter to the Romans* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985) 59–60; Adolf Schlatter, *Romans: The Righteousness of God* (trans. S. S. Schatzmann; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995) 99; Brendan Byrne, *Romans* (SP 6; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1996) 132–33; David J. Williams, *Paul’s Metaphors: Their Context and Character* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1999) 247, 253 n. 19; Daniel P. Bailey, “Jesus as the Mercy Seat: The Semantics and Theology of Paul’s Use of Hilastērion in Romans 3:25” (Ph.D. diss., Cambridge University 1999).

<sup>39</sup> Morris, “The Meaning of ΗΙΛΑΣΤΗΡΙΟΝ” 3–43.

<sup>40</sup> Dodd, *The Bible and the Greeks* 82–95.

<sup>41</sup> Jewett, *Romans* 286.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> Ben Ezra, *Yom Kippur* 198–202; Fryer, “Hilastērion in Romans 3:25” 99–116.

17:22 and in Rom 3:25 and since there are numerous parallels between martyr theology and Rom 3:21–26.<sup>44</sup>

However, regardless of the debates about ἱλαστήριον in Rom 3:25, a point that should not be missed is that the term supports that Jesus' death was a violent sacrifice of atonement for sin, because the term occurs in a violent context in Leviticus 16 in the context of Yom Kippur (cf. LXX Lev 16:14–16), because the term occurs in 4 Macc 17:22 in the context of the martyrs' deaths for the sins of others, and because both the Yom Kippur tradition in Leviticus 16 and the martyr theology tradition most apparent in 4 Maccabees speak of the penal deaths of animals (= Leviticus 16) and the penal deaths of humans (= martyr theology) as the means by which forgiveness is accomplished for those whom the victims die.<sup>45</sup> Leviticus, for example, vividly describes that certain animals should be violently slaughtered and that their blood should be offered as atonement for the sin of others (cf. Leviticus 1–6), and the text of LXX Leviticus 16 specifically states that the priest should sprinkle some of the blood from the sin-offering upon the ἱλαστήριον for the purification of sin.<sup>46</sup>

Moreover, the text of 4 Macc 6:28–29 states that Eleazar (one of the Jewish martyrs who died for the nation) asked God to use his blood to be a ransom so that he would be the means by which he purified, provided mercy for, and to be the means by which he would satisfy his wrath against the nation. The author interprets the significance of the martyrs' deaths in 4 Macc 17:21–22 by stating that they purified the homeland, that they served as a ransom for the nation, and that their propitiatory (ἱλαστήριον) deaths saved the nation. Since the authors of 1, 2, and 4 Maccabees have argued that God poured out his wrath against the nation through the invasion of Antiochus because of its disobedience to his law prior to 4 Macc 17:21–22 (1 Macc 1:1–63; 2 Macc 5:1–7:38; 4 Macc 4:15–6:29), one can infer that when the author asserts that the martyrs' deaths saved the nation in 4 Macc 17:22, he means that they saved the nation from God's wrath that he brought against Israel through Antiochus because of the nation's sin. The narratives of 2 and 4 Maccabees

<sup>44</sup> J. W. van Henten, "The Tradition-Historical Background of Romans 3:25: A Search for Pagan and Jewish Parallels," in *From Jesus to John: Essays on Jesus and New Testament Christology in Honour of Marinus De Jonge* (JSNTSup 84, ed. Martinus C. de Boer; Sheffield: JSOT, 1993) 101–28; Jarvis J. Williams, *Maccabean Martyr Traditions in Paul's Theology of Atonement: Did Martyr Theology Shape Paul's Conception of Jesus's Death?* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2010) 43–63, 85–101; idem, "Martyr Theology in Hellenistic Judaism and Paul's Conception of Jesus' Death in Romans 3:21–26," in *Christian Origins and Hellenistic Judaism: Literary and Social Contexts for the New Testament* (ed. Stanley E. Porter and Andrew W. Pitts; Leiden: Brill, forthcoming).

<sup>45</sup> Against Stowers, *Rereading of Romans* 202–31; Bradley H. McLean, "The Absence of an Atoning Sacrifice in Paul's Soteriology," *NTS* 38 (1992) 531–53; idem, *The Cursed Christ* (JSNTSup 126; Sheffield: JSOT, 1996); Peter Lampe, "Human Sacrifice and Pauline Christology," in *Human Sacrifice in Jewish and Christian Tradition* (ed. Karin Finsterbusch, Armin Lange, and K. F. Diethard Römheld; Leiden: Brill, 2007) 191–209, esp. 194–95.

<sup>46</sup> H. Gese argues that the Israelite identified with the sacrificial animal in the act of sacrifice, but there was not an actual substitution in the sacrifice itself ("Die Sühne," in *Zur biblische Theologie: Alttestamentliche Vorträge* [Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1989] 85–106).

support that this salvation came by means of the martyrs' violent death for sin (cf. 2 Maccabees 1–7; 4 Maccabees 1–6).<sup>47</sup>

Stanley K. Stowers rejects that the word “blood” supports a violent/penal or sacrificial reading of ἰλαστήριον in Rom 3:25, but that it simply refers to the physical violence of Jesus' death.<sup>48</sup> However, since the authors of LXX Lev 16:2, 16:13–15 and 4 Macc 6:28–29 and 17:22 connect ἰλαστήριον with the blood offered for the sins of another and since Paul likewise connects ἰλαστήριον in Rom 3:25 with the blood offered for the sins of another, Paul surely intends ἰλαστήριον to convey a sacrificial understanding of Jesus' death in Rom 3:25. Additionally, since ἰλαστήριον and blood occur in the same context of salvation (Rom 3:21–22, 3:24) and God's righteous judgment (Rom 3:25–26), Jesus' death should be understood as a penal substitute in Rom 3:25.

*2. Jesus' blood, sin, and God's righteousness.* In support of Jesus' penal death in Rom 3:25, Paul uses the term δικαιοσύνη in Rom 3:25–26 in connection with ἰλαστήριον, blood, and sin. This connection suggests that Jesus' death was penal, for Paul states that God set forth Jesus as a ἰλαστήριον by means of his blood “for the purpose of demonstrating God's righteousness because of the passing over of previously committed sins” (εἰς ἔνδειξιν τῆς δικαιοσύνης αὐτοῦ διὰ τὴν πάρεσιν τῶν προγεγονότων ἁμαρτημάτων).<sup>49</sup> Righteousness here refers to God's judging righteousness, for Paul connects Jesus' death and God's righteousness with πάρεσιν τῶν προγεγονότων ἁμαρτημάτων. Debate exists regarding the meaning of πάρεσιν τῶν προγεγονότων ἁμαρτημάτων. Relying on the work of Sam K. Williams, Stowers argues that the phrase τὴν πάρεσιν τῶν προγεγονότων ἁμαρτημάτων refers exclusively to Gentile sins because πάρεσις does not mean “forgiveness” but “God's restraint” or “holding back” and because 2 Macc 6:12–16 speaks of the calamities that had befallen the nation via Antiochus as God's good judgment of Israel in the current age so that the nation would not accrue a more severe eschatological judgment as the Gentiles, whom God would judge in accordance with a full measure of their sins on the last day (cf. Rom 2:4–9).<sup>50</sup> In the context of Romans, nevertheless, the phrase τὴν πάρεσιν τῶν προγεγονότων ἁμαρτημάτων at least refers to the sins committed during the Mosaic covenant since Paul has forcefully argued throughout Romans 2–7 that the law's entrance into salvation history made the problem of sin worse for both Jews and Gentiles (cf. Rom 3:20). Thus, when Paul states that God set forth Jesus as a ἰλαστήριον “for the demonstration of his righteousness because of the passing over of the previously committed sins,” he means that God set forth Jesus to demonstrate his righteous judgment against all sins (Rom 3:23), but especially against the previously committed sins during the Mosaic

<sup>47</sup> Against Williams, *Jesus' Death* 176–79.

<sup>48</sup> Stowers, *Rereading of Romans* 210.

<sup>49</sup> For an alternative translation, see Werner G. Kümmel, “Paresis and Endeixis: A Contribution to the Understanding of the Pauline Doctrine of Justification,” *JTC* 3 (1967) 1–13.

<sup>50</sup> Stowers, *Rereading of Romans* 204. Cf. Williams, *Jesus' Death* 19–34.

covenant that were left unpunished (Rom 3:25; cf. 3:26). Since Paul connects Jesus' death, forgiveness of unpunished sins, God's righteousness, and his justice in Rom 3:25–26, God's judgment of these unpunished sins in Jesus' cross suggests that Jesus' death paid the penalty for those unpunished sins and meanwhile proved God to be the just justifier (cf. Rom 3:26–4:25). In other words, Jesus' death for the unpunished sins was God's retributive punishment of those sins, and his judgment of these sins in Jesus proved God to be just.

Although admitting that retributive punishment is present in both the OT and in Second Temple Judaism and even though he acknowledges that Paul uses retributive language in Romans 1–13, Stephen H. Travis recently argues against a retributive understanding of God's wrath in Paul, defending instead a non-retributive and intrinsic understanding.<sup>51</sup> The difference between the former (retributive) and the latter (non-retributive/intrinsic) is clear: the former asserts that God externally pays back just punishment for unjust deeds by bringing external judgment upon the offender, but the latter suggests that God brings judgment from within by allowing the transgressions of the offender to reach their full measure.<sup>52</sup> Whether espoused by evangelicals like Travis, Green, or Chalke or non-evangelicals such as Jersak, Cone, and Williams, all non-violent models of the atonement must reject the idea that Jesus' death proved God to be just in that he retributively satisfied his wrath against sin in Jesus, because all non-violent models reject that Jesus' death was a retributive expression of God's violent outpouring of his wrath against sin.<sup>53</sup> Although Travis is correct to point out that God's wrath in Rom 1:18–32 refers especially to the full outworking of the offender's sins and to God's personal judgment of the offender in his giving him up to commit various sins, he imports this understanding on texts in Romans (e.g. Rom 2:6–10) where God's external payment after measuring one's deeds seems to be in view.<sup>54</sup> Travis also fails to realize that God's handing over of the offender to commit various sins in Rom 1:18–32 is in fact retributive language, for God's handing over of the offender to commit various sins is God's retributive payment for the offender's offense.<sup>55</sup> In the text of Rom 1:18–32, God judges the offender by handing him over to the desires of his heart after he suppresses the truth (Rom 1:18–20), after he fails to honor God (Rom 1:21), and after he exchanges the truth of God for a lie (Rom 1:23).

3. *The context of Romans 1–5.* Against Travis and other proponents of a non-violent atonement, the context of Romans 1–5 supports that God's

<sup>51</sup> Travis, *Christ and the Judgment of God* 13–24, 26–45.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.* 3–12, 54–70.

<sup>53</sup> For a few examples, see Green, "Must We Imagine" 153–71; Jersak, "Nonviolent Identification" 53; Cone, *God of the Oppressed* 42–52; Williams, *Sisters* 164–65, esp. 165. Cf. C. H. Dodd, *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans* (MNTC; New York: Harper and Brothers, 1932) 48, 50; *idem*, *Bible and the Greeks* 82–95.

<sup>54</sup> Travis, *Christ and the Judgment of God* 60–70, 74–84.

<sup>55</sup> See especially Travis's acknowledgement that Paul uses retributive language in Rom 1:18–32 (*Christ and the Judgment of God* 62).

offering of Jesus as a ἵλαστήριον was in fact a violent expression of God's retributive wrath against sin. First, Paul states in Rom 3:25–26 that Jesus' blood was God's offering for sin for the demonstration of his righteousness and that God's setting forth of Jesus to deal with previous sins proved God to be both just and the justifier. Second, although Paul states in Rom 1:18 that the ὀργή θεοῦ ("wrath from God") currently abides upon all who reject the truth in that God has given unbelievers over to commit various sins (cf. Rom 1:18–32), he likewise states in Rom 2:5 that Jews and Gentiles store up ὀργή for themselves in the ἐν ἡμέρᾳ ὀργῆς (cf. Rom 2:9, 11). This "day of wrath" should be understood as God's future, personal, forensic, retributive act of judgment whereby he declares the disobedient to be guilty and repays those who suppress the truth of the gospel with his eschatological fury because of their unjust deeds (Rom 2:5–6). The personal, forensic, retributive, and eschatological components of God's wrath in Rom 2:5 are apparent because Paul uses a present tense verb along with a future tense verb to emphasize that disobedience in this age results in God's future judgment (θησαυρίζεις in Rom 2:5 and ἀποδώσει in Rom 2:6), because the genitives ὀργῆς, ἀποκαλύψεως, and δικαιοκρισίας modify ἡμέρα (ἐν ἡμέρᾳ ὀργῆς καὶ ἀποκαλύψεως δικαιοκρισίας τοῦ θεοῦ), and because Paul refers to God's "kindness" in Rom 2:4 in contrast to his "revelation" and "righteous judgment" in Rom 2:5 and in contrast to the disobedient ones' "stubborn and unrepentant heart" in Rom 2:5 (κατὰ δὲ τὴν σκληρότητά σου καὶ ἀμετανόητον καρδίαν θησαυρίζεις σεαυτῷ ὀργὴν ἐν ἡμέρᾳ ὀργῆς καὶ ἀποκαλύψεως δικαιοκρισίας τοῦ θεοῦ).

Furthermore, the personal, forensic, retributive, and eschatological elements of God's wrath are seen in Rom 2:7–10. Although there is not a main verb that controls Paul's argument in Rom 2:7–10, because of the μὲν δὲ construction in Rom 2:7–8 it seems likely that Paul has used an ellipsis in Rom 2:7–10 and assumes the main verb ἀποδώσει of Rom 2:6 in Rom 2:7, but expects the hearer and reader of the text to supply a different verb in Rom 2:8–10 that best reflects the syntax. The preceding seems right because the rewards of obedience are in the accusative case in Rom 2:7 (δόξαν, τιμὴν, ἀφθαρσίαν), but the penalties of disobedience are in the nominative case in Rom 2:8–9 (ὀργή, θυμός, θλίψις, στενοχωρία), and the rewards of obedience are repeated in Rom 2:10 in the nominative case (δόξα, τιμὴ, εἰρήνη).<sup>56</sup> Thus, Rom 2:7–10 further describes Paul's statement in Rom 2:6 that God will give (i.e. repay) to each one in the judgment according to his works. On the one hand, God will give glory and honor and immortality to those who seek eternal life in accordance with the endurance of good work (Rom 2:7). On the other hand, wrath and anger will come against those who are also disobedient with respect to the truth by means of selfish ambition and against those who are persuaded with respect to unrighteousness (Rom 2:8). The text

<sup>56</sup> The phrase ζῶν αἰώνιον is also in the accusative case, but it is the object of the participle ζητοῦσιν.

of Rom 2:9–10 repeats Paul's preceding remarks in Rom 2:7–8, for he repeats the penalties of disobedience and the rewards of obedience in Rom 2:9–10. Thus, in Rom 2:6–10, Paul refers to God's personal, forensic, retributive, and future judgment of Jews and Gentiles in accordance to their works in the eschatological judgment.<sup>57</sup>

Third, Paul states in Rom 3:5 that the ἀδικία ἡμῶν demonstrates the θεοῦ δικαιοσύνην in that God will retributively unleash wrath upon those who reject him and suppress his truth. This interpretation is supported by Paul's question in Rom 3:5: "God, who brings wrath, is not unrighteous—is he?" (εἰ δὲ ἡ ἀδικία ἡμῶν θεοῦ δικαιοσύνην συνίστησιν, τί ἐροῦμεν; μὴ ἄδικος ὁ θεὸς ὁ ἐπιφέρων τὴν ὀργήν; κατὰ ἄνθρωπον λέγω). Paul answers this question in Rom 3:6a with an emphatic "No!" (μὴ γένοιτο). The wrath to which Paul refers is not the present, abiding wrath that currently resides upon all who suppress the truth (Rom 1:18–32), but it is God's personal, forensic, retributive, and eschatological wrath that he will unleash on the last day upon all who suppress the truth, for Paul follows his statements in Rom 3:5 about God's wrath with a question pertaining to God's future judgment of the world in Rom 3:6b.

Fourth, Paul again refers in Rom 5:9–10 to God's personal, forensic, retributive eschatological wrath that he will personally bestow upon those who suppress the truth and reject the gospel (cf. Rom 5:6–11). In the text of Rom 5:8–10, Paul states that Jesus' death for the sins of others and his resurrection together serve as the means through which God will save Jews and Gentiles from this wrath and reconcile them to himself.<sup>58</sup> Cilliers Breystenbach argues against interpreting Jesus' death as an atoning sacrifice in Rom 5:8–10 because he states that neither blood nor death signifies anything sacrificial or cultic.<sup>59</sup> However, the argument of Rom 5:8–10 speaks against his interpretation. Paul states that Jesus' death will deliver Jews and Gentiles from God's future wrath. This suggests that they would be the objects of his personal, forensic, retributive, eschatological judgment if Jesus would not have taken upon himself their judgment and if he would have not resurrected from the dead, for Paul states that those for whom Jesus died will be saved from God's wrath through Jesus' blood and life (Rom 5:8–10). Since Jesus offers his blood in exchange for the salvation of others to deliver them from God's wrath, this text should be understood as both sacrificial and penal. Therefore, the contextual evidence of Romans 1–5 supports that God's offering of Jesus as a

<sup>57</sup> Against A. T. Hanson, *The Wrath of the Lamb* (London: SPCK, 1957).

<sup>58</sup> For discussions of the reconciliation motif in Paul, see Jaques Dupont, *La réconciliation dans la théologie de Saint Paul* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer Universitaires de Louvain, 1953); Ralph Martin, *Reconciliation: A Study of Paul's Theology* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1981) 147; Cilliers Breystenbach, *Versöhnung: Eine Studie zur paulinischen Soteriologie* (WMANT 60; Neukirchener-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1989) 40–83; Stanley E. Porter, *Katallavssw in Ancient Greek Literature, with Reference to the Pauline Writings* (Cordoba: Ediciones El Almendro, 1994).

<sup>59</sup> Cilliers Breystenbach, "Salvation of the Reconciled: With a Note on The Background of Paul's Metaphor of Reconciliation," in *Salvation in the New Testament: Perspectives on Soteriology* (ed. J. G. der Watt; Leiden: Brill, 2005) 284–85.

ἰλαστήριον in Rom 3:25 was a penal sacrifice of atonement for sin that ended God's looming retributive wrath against those for whom Jesus died.<sup>60</sup>

### III. ROMANS 8:1–4

1. *No condemnation for those "in Christ."* In the text of Rom 8:1–4, Paul suggests that Jesus' death was penal and that his penal death was foundational to Paul's soteriology. Paul states in Rom 8:1 that "condemnation" no longer exists for those who are in Christ Jesus. He states in Rom 8:2 the reason why condemnation no longer exists: "For the law of the Spirit of life by means of Christ Jesus freed you from the law of sin and of death." Paul explains Rom 8:2 in Rom 8:3 by stating how those in Christ received such freedom: "For God [did] what the law was incapable [of doing] because it was weak through sinful flesh in that he sent his own son to deal with sin in the likeness of sinful flesh, and he condemned sin in [Jesus'] flesh" (brackets mine).

In addition to the penal language of Rom 8:1–2, Paul introduces sacrificial language in Rom 8:1–4 with the phrase *περὶ ἁμαρτίας* in Rom 8:3. With the latter phrase, many scholars agree that Paul alludes to the OT's "sin-offering" (cf. LXX Lev 5:9).<sup>61</sup> Such an allusion would fit nicely with Paul's argument in Romans 7 that the "I" under the law commits sin ignorantly/unintentionally, for the sin offering dealt with ignorant/unintentional sins in the OT (cf. LXX Lev 5:7–8; 6:25 [MT Lev 6:18]).<sup>62</sup> C. E. B. Cranfield rejects the reading of sin offering for *περὶ ἁμαρτίας* in Rom 8:3 in spite of the fact that the LXX often uses this phrase in cultic contexts to refer to a sin offering (e.g. LXX Lev 5:9; 14:31; Ps 39:7).<sup>63</sup> Cranfield argues that a sacrificial reading is forced in Rom 8:3 since the context of Paul's argument does not support such a reading. He argues instead that *περὶ ἁμαρτίας* in Rom 8:3 should be connected to the participial clause *πέμψας ἐν ὁμοιώματι σαρκὸς ἁμαρτίας* and not to the verbal clause *κατέκρινεν τὴν ἁμαρτίαν ἐν τῇ σαρκί*. According to Cranfield, Rom 8:3 simply refers to Jesus' mission, not to his penal death for sin. Thomas

<sup>60</sup> For further discussions of God's wrath, see Timothy Gorringer, *God's Just Vengeance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) 72; Andrew T. Lincoln, "From Wrath to Justification," in *Pauline Theology: Romans* (ed. David M. Hay and E. Elizabeth Johnson; Atlanta: SBL, 2002) 3:156; Simon J. Gathercole, "Justified by Faith, Justified by His Blood: The Evidence of Romans 3:21–4:25," in *Justification and Variegated Nomism: A Fresh Appraisal of Paul and Second Temple Judaism, The Paradoxes of Paul* (ed. D. A. Carson, Peter O'Brien, and Mark A. Seifrid; Tübingen: Mohr, 2004) 2:168.

<sup>61</sup> For a few examples, see Käsemann, *Romans*, 216; Schreiner, *Romans* 401–3; Moo, *Romans* 480; Finlan, *Paul's Cultic Atonement Metaphors* 114; Peter Stuhlmacher, *Der Brief an die Römer* (NTD 6; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1989) 107; James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 1–8* (WBC 38A; Nashville: Word, 1988) 422; N. T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992) 220–25; idem, "Romans" 579; Bell, "Sacrifice and Christology in Paul" 1–27, esp. 5–8.

<sup>62</sup> So Wright, "Romans" 579.

<sup>63</sup> Cranfield, *Romans* 378–90, esp. 382.

R. Schreiner agrees with Cranfield that *περὶ ἁμαρτίας* in Rom 8:3 modifies the participle and not the verb, but Schreiner correctly argues that *περὶ ἁμαρτίας* refers to Jesus as a sin offering since the phrase refers to a sin offering 44 of 54 occurrences in the LXX (e.g. LXX Lev 5:6–11; 7:37; 9:2–3; 12:6, 8; 14:13, 22, 31; 15:15, 30; 16:3, 5, 9; 23:19) and since Paul uses the phrase to refer to Jesus' death for sin in Rom 8:3.<sup>64</sup>

2. *Condemnation in "Jesus' flesh."* Paul further confirms the penal nature of Jesus' death by stating that God "judged/condemned" (*κατακρίνω*) sin in the flesh. The majority of appearances of this verb in the LXX suggests a penal judgment (cf. LXX Est 2:1; Wis 4:16; Pss. Sol. 4:2; Sus 1:41, 48, 53), and other occurrences of the verb *κατακρίνω* or its nominal cognate *κατάκριμα* in the NT supports that those to whom this verb and its cognate are applied would either receive the penalty of judgment (Rom 2:1; 8:34; 14:23; cf. Matt 12:41; 20:18; 27:3; Mark 10:33; 14:64; Luke 11:31; Heb 11:7; 2 Pet 2:6) or would be delivered from the penalty of judgment (Rom 8:1; 1 Cor 11:32). Thus, the concept of sin offering in Rom 8:3 and Paul's judicial language in Rom 8:1 with *κατάκριμα* and in Rom 8:3 with *κατακρίνω* support that Jesus' death was a penal sacrifice of atonement for sin, especially since Lev 4:1–35 and Lev 5:9 state that the sin offering should be slaughtered and its blood should be presented before Yahweh in order to provide atonement for sin (cf. Lev 4:26, 35). Regardless of whether the sin offering was offered for unintentional/ignorant sins, the important point for my argument is that the sin-offering was nevertheless offered as an expression of God's judgment against sin. Yahweh required the animal to be slaughtered for the sins of others and its blood to be shed to make right the unintentional/ignorant wrongs. Likewise, Rom 8:3 states that Jesus was the sacrificial victim in whom God condemned sin to make right the wrongs of those for whom he died.

Against the idea of penal substitution in Rom 8:3, N. T. Wright stresses that Paul says that God condemned sin, not that he condemned Jesus.<sup>65</sup> Contrary to the NIV, Wright correctly acknowledges that Paul states that sin was condemned in Jesus' flesh, but he contends that this does not mean "that God desired to punish someone and decided to punish Jesus on everybody else's behalf."<sup>66</sup> Instead, Wright asserts that in Jesus' cross, God judged sin by rendering it powerless as a power so that sin would no longer take up residence in human beings and consequently produce their death.<sup>67</sup>

Wright is correct to point out that Paul states that God condemned sin, not Jesus. He is also correct to note that contrary to some translations, the phrase "in the flesh" in the clause "God condemned sin in the flesh" refers to

<sup>64</sup> Schreiner, *Romans* 401–3; Stuhlmacher *Römer*, 107; N. T. Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993) 220–25; Bell, "Sacrifice and Christology in Paul" 1–27, esp. 5–8. Against Barrett, *Romans* 156; McLean, *The Cursed Christ* 46.

<sup>65</sup> Wright, "Romans" 578.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

Jesus' flesh (not to humanity's flesh), because the entire context of Paul's argument explains why condemnation no longer exists for those in Christ Jesus (cf. Rom 7:7–8:4). Nevertheless, even if the accent should be placed on God's condemnation of sin in the cross of Jesus in Rom 8:3 instead of on God's condemnation of Jesus, one cannot, and indeed must not, separate God's condemnation of sin in Jesus' flesh from God's condemnation of Jesus in Rom 8:3, because Paul states that God "judged" sin "in Jesus' flesh." In other words, Wright seems to miss the point in this text that the only way that God's condemnation of sin in Jesus' flesh could have effectively condemned sin and thereby make its power inoperative in humanity is if Jesus paid the penalty that sin brought upon all of humanity: namely, God's judgment in death. This argument fits with Paul's earlier argument in Rom 5:12–21 that Adam brought death to all because of his disobedience, but Jesus brought life to all because of his obedience. Neither God's plan to overcome the power of sin in humanity nor Jesus' obedience was complete until his cross-bearing experience of God's wrath (cf. Rom 3:25–26; 8:3).

In a way that is similar to Wright, Richard H. Bell does not think that Paul refers to "a satisfaction theory of the atonement" (i.e. penal substitution) in Rom 8:3 when he states that "God condemned sin in Jesus' flesh."<sup>68</sup> Rather, Bell argues that Paul's theory of atonement in Rom 8:3 reflects the P source, which suggests that the sin offering dealt with the essence of sin in a human, not the human's doing of sin. Bell's view seems to dichotomize falsely between the concept of sin and the doing of sin when in fact Paul himself discusses sin in complex ways in Romans. Paul states that God will repay evil deeds in the judgment with wrath (Rom 2:6–10), and he affirms that everybody sins (Rom 3:23). The preceding evidence seems to emphasize the individual doing of sin. Paul also states that sin should not reign over believers (Rom 6:12), which seems to present sin as a power and thereby focuses on the essence of sin. Bell's view neither takes seriously the divine penal language of Rom 5:12–8:4. Adam's disobedience brought "judgment" and "death" upon everyone (Rom 5:12–21), and the law's entrance only increased the power of sin and the severity of God's judgment (Rom 5:12–21; 7:1–23), but Jesus' death frees from "condemnation" everyone in him who was under God's "condemnation" of sin increased by the presence of the law (Rom 7:24; 8:1–3).

3. *Jesus in sin's likeness.* Paul's words "in the likeness of sinful flesh" (ἐν ὁμοιώματι σαρκὸς ἁμαρτίας) in Rom 8:3 additionally support the penal nature of Jesus' death, because Paul connects God's condemnation of sin in Jesus' death with Jesus' participation within the realm of sinful humanity.<sup>69</sup> Bell rightly argues that the phrase ἐν ὁμοιώματι σαρκὸς ἁμαρτίας refers to Jesus'

<sup>68</sup> Bell, "Sacrifice and Christology in Paul" 6–8 n. 40.

<sup>69</sup> So Bell, "Sacrifice and Christology in Paul" 7–8. The term ὁμοίωμα ("likeness") in Rom 8:3 is used elsewhere to mean similar in copy (LXX Deut 4:15–18, 23, 25; 5:8; Josh 22:28; 1 Kgs 6:5; Ps 105:20; Sir 34:3; Rom 1:23; 5:13; 6:5). For a detailed analysis of ὁμοίωμα, see Schreiner, *Romans* 313–14; F. A. Morgan, "Romans 6:5a: United to a Death like Christ's," *ETL* 59 (1983) 267–302.

“full identity and resemblance” with sinful humanity, for he thinks that Paul is concerned with “the sending of Christ into the area of human existence” and that part of such an existence is indeed sin.<sup>70</sup> Bell does not argue that Jesus committed sin, but correctly identifies functional sinfulness with Jesus.<sup>71</sup> That is, Jesus’ participation in the sphere of sin does not mean that he sinned, but that he functioned as a sinner in his wrath bearing death. Jesus’ functional sinfulness is supported by the rest of Rom 8:3: “he judged sin in the flesh.” As noted above, the phrase “in the flesh” in the clause “he judged sin in the flesh” in Rom 8:3 refers to Jesus’ flesh, not to the sinful flesh of humans. The text of Rom 8:3 does not suggest that Jesus himself was sinful, but affirms that God condemned sin in Jesus’ flesh by sending him in the likeness of sinful humanity and by judging him as the guilty sinner in his death on the cross. That Jesus actually died supports this, because death is both the result of sin’s power over humanity and God’s judgment of humanity (cf. Gen 2:17; Rom 5:12).

Although Paul possibly refers both to Jesus’ incarnation and to his death in Rom 8:3 with the phrase ἐν ὁμοιώματι σαρκὸς ἁμαρτίας (cf. Phil 2:7),<sup>72</sup> the cross appears to be the emphasis,<sup>73</sup> because the phrase gives the impression that Jesus fully identified with sinful humanity by taking upon himself God’s condemnation/judgment for humanity’s sin and by being judged/condemned as a sinner (cf. Gal 4:5–6; Phil 2:5–9).<sup>74</sup> Jesus identified with sinful humanity by becoming human, by submitting to the sinful realm of existence, and by going to the cross to take upon himself God’s death penalty for humanity’s sin (cf. Rom 5:12–21; 1 Cor 15:26). Unlike Adam and the rest of humanity, Jesus remained free from the act of committing sin (cf. Rom 5:12–21; 2 Cor 5:21), and his sinlessness explains why his death on the cross could deliver from the law those who were condemned by it (cf. Rom 7:1–8:10). However, like Adam, Jesus paid a severe penalty for the problem of sin: namely, God’s judgment in death (cf. Rom 5:12–21; Rom 8:3).

4. *Fulfillment of the law.* In Rom 8:4, Paul states that God’s purpose of condemning sin in Jesus’ flesh was to fulfill the righteous requirement of the law in “us who are not walking according to the flesh but according to the Spirit” (ἵνα τὸ δίκαιωμα τοῦ νόμου πληρωθῇ ἐν ἡμῖν τοῖς μὴ κατὰ σάρκα περιπατοῦσιν ἀλλὰ κατὰ πνεῦμα). Since the entrance of the law into salvation history increased the power of sin (Rom 1:18–7:25; esp. 3:20, 4:15, 5:12–5:21, 7:7–25, Gal 3:19), God sent Jesus to overcome the power of sin and death and to fulfill the law’s demands in us who live according to the Spirit (cf.

<sup>70</sup> Bell, “Sacrifice and Christology in Paul” 6–7.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid. See, in contrast to Bell, V. P. Branick (“The Sinful Flesh of the Son of God [Rom 8:3]: A Key Image in Pauline Theology,” *CBQ* 47 [1985] 246–62, esp. 251).

<sup>72</sup> So Bell, “Sacrifice and Christology in Paul” 7–8.

<sup>73</sup> Against Bell, “Sacrifice and Christology in Paul” 8. Bell does not emphasize the importance of the cross-event in Rom 8:3, but he thinks that Paul refers both to the incarnation and to the cross-event. However, rightly Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Romans* (AB 33; New York: Doubleday, 1993) 486–87; Schreiner, *Romans* 404.

<sup>74</sup> Cf. Jewett, *Romans* 483–84.

Rom 5:12–6:23). Scholars debate whether Christ's active obedience or Christian obedience is in view in Rom 8:4.<sup>75</sup> Regardless of the position that one takes, the point remains that foundational to the fulfillment of the law's righteous requirement in us who walk according to the Spirit is Jesus' penal death for sin, which Paul mentions in Rom 8:3, because God fulfills the righteous requirement of the law in us by means of his condemnation of sin in Jesus' flesh. This interpretation is supported by the fact that after Rom 8:3 discusses God's work of defeating the power of sin by condemning sin in Jesus' flesh, Rom 8:4 states that the purpose for which God condemned sin in Jesus' flesh was to fulfill the righteous requirement of the law in us who walk according to the Spirit. Romans 8:4 supports penal substitution in that Jesus' life paid a price for those in Christ who were otherwise condemned by the law and his death for those in him fulfilled in them and on their behalf the law's righteous requirement (Rom 8:1–3), for he took upon himself their condemnation by means of his death for them so that they would receive in themselves the law's fulfillment (Rom 8:4).

#### IV. ROMANS 8:31–34

1. *Jesus' death and soteriological blessings.* The text of Rom 8:31–34 further supports that penal substitution is the foundation of Paul's soteriology in Romans. Paul asserts that God did not spare his own Son, but gave him up in death "for us all." God gives over (παρέδωκεν) in wrath those who suppress the truth to practice their sinful desires (Rom 1:24, 26, 28), but God handed over (παρέδωκεν) his Son in death to give us freely "all things." The phrase "all things" (τὰ πάντα) at least refers to the soteriological blessings mentioned in Rom 8:29–30 (foreknowledge/predestination, calling, justification, and glorification), because Rom 8:28–34 emphasizes why everything works out for the good for those who love God by emphasizing God's great work of salvation for them in Jesus' cross and resurrection. That penal substitution is foundational to Paul's soteriology in this text is evident from Paul's connection of soteriological blessings with the legal language in Rom 8:33–34 in conjunction with Jesus' death in Rom 8:32 and in Rom 8:34. Paul uses legal/forensic language in Rom 8:33 with the verbs ἐγκαλέω ("to bring a charge") and δικάιωω ("to declare to be in the right") and in Rom 8:34 with the verb κατακρίνω ("to condemn").<sup>76</sup> After he asks who condemns God's elect (cf.

<sup>75</sup> For a recent discussion of this debate and for an argument in favor of Christian obedience, see Kevin W. McFadden, "The Fulfillment of the Law's *Dikaiōma*: Another Look at Romans 8:1–4," *JETS* 52 (2009) 483–97.

<sup>76</sup> For examples of this with ἐγκαλέω, see LXX Exod 22:8; 2 Macc 5:8; Prov 19:5; Wis 12:12; Sir 46:19; Zec 1:4; GNT Acts 19:38, 40; 23:28–29; 26:2, 7; with δικάιωω, see LXX Gen 44:16; Exod 23:7; Deut 25:1; 1 Kgs 8:32; Isa 1:7; 5:23; 43:9; Sir 1:22; 7:3; 9:12; 10:29; 13:22; 23:11; 26:29; 31:5; 42:2; Pss. Sol. 8:26; GNT Matt 12:37; Acts 13:38–39; Rom 2:13; 3:4, 20, 24, 26, 28, 30; 4:2, 5; 5:1, 9; 8:30, 33; 1 Cor 4:4; 6:11; Gal 2:16–17; 3:8, 11, 24; 5:4; Tit 3:7; James 2:21, 25; and with κατακρίνω, see LXX Est 2:1; Wis 4:16; Pss. Sol. 4:2; Sus 1:41, 48, 53; GNT Matt 12:41–42; 20:18; 27:3; Mark 10:33; 14:64; Luke 11:31; Rom 2:1; 8:34; 14:23; Heb 11:7; 2 Pet 2:6.

Rom 8:33–34), he states that God justifies (i.e. declares to be in the right) in Rom 8:33 and that Jesus died and was raised in Rom 8:34. Since Paul has already stated that God offered Jesus in death “for us,” one can be confident that Paul speaks of substitution in Rom 8:34 and because of the legal/forensic language of Rom 8:33–34 one can be certain that Jesus’ substitutionary death was penal. Thus, Jesus’ penal death for sin is foundational to receiving these soteriological blessings for the following reasons: (1) Paul mentions Jesus’ death in Rom 8:32 and in Rom 8:34 in context of legal language in Rom 8:33–34; (2) Paul states in Rom 8:29–34 why all things work together for the good for God’s people. The text of Rom 8:31 begins with the question of who is “against us,” followed in Rom 8:32 with a statement about Jesus’ death “for us,” followed in Rom 8:33 by another question about who can bring charges “against God’s elect” in the law court, followed by the statement in Rom 8:33 that God “justifies,” followed by the question who “condemns” God’s people in the law court, which culminates in Rom 8:34 with a reference to Jesus’ death. Thus, all things work together for the good for God’s people because he is the author of their salvation, and no one can condemn God’s elect in his law court because Jesus was condemned for them in death and because his death exonerates (i.e. justifies) them in God’s judgment.

#### V. GREEK, GRECO-ROMAN, AND JEWISH PRECEDENT BEHIND VIOLENT ATONEMENT IN ROMANS<sup>77</sup>

That Paul presents Jesus as a violent sacrifice of atonement for the sins of others should not surprise his interpreters, because the belief that a human and (more importantly) that a righteous or noble human would die for the sins of others to save them from divine wrath was a common idea in the Greek, Greco-Roman, and Jewish world that preceded Paul and in the Greco-Roman and Jewish world in which he lived.<sup>78</sup> Although the gods in the Greek tragedies are often capricious, unpredictable, and arbitrary in their anger, both the Greek tragedies and philosophical writings of certain Greek, Greco-Roman, and Jewish authors affirm that humans voluntarily offered themselves to the gods or/God in death as penal sacrifices for the benefit of others and that their sacrifices afforded salvation for those whom they died because they achieved the mercy of the gods or/God. The salvation achieved was victory for the people in war, deliverance from death, or atonement for the sins of those for whom these humans died.

<sup>77</sup> Some of the content in this section overlaps with my recent book *Maccabean Martyr Traditions*, which is published by Wipf and Stock and used by permission.

<sup>78</sup> The following works pointed me to the above ancient Greek, Greco-Roman, and Jewish texts: Martin Hengel, *The Atonement: A Study of the Origins of the Doctrine in the New Testament* (trans. John Bowden; London: SCM, 1981, 6–32); J. W. van Henten and Friedrich Avemarie, *Martyrdom and Noble Death: Selected Texts from Graeco-Roman, Jewish, and Christian Antiquity* (New York: Routledge, 2002) 9–41, and Henk S. Versnel, “Making Sense of Jesus’ Death: The Pagan Contribution,” in *Deutungen des Todes Jesu im Neuen Testament* (WUNT 181; ed. Jörg Frey and J. Schröter; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005) 227–56.

1. *Euripides (480–406 BC)*. Euripides (a Greek play writer in the 5th century BC) presents humans as dying vicarious, penal deaths for the benefit of others. Their deaths were often the means by which the gods granted favor to Greece. In *Iphigeneia in the Tauri*, some citizens thought that the father of Iphigeneia slew Tyndareus and presented her to Artemis (the goddess of light) for the sake of Helen (*Iphigeneia in Tauri* 3–10). Consequently, Calchas told king Agamemnon (captain of the Grecian army) that he would not win the crown of victory in battle until he offered his daughter (Iphigeneia) to Artemis as a sacrifice (*Iphigeneia in Tauri* 11–20). Artemis responded that Clytemnestra must bear a child whom she must sacrifice to the gods (*Iphigeneia in Tauri* 21–24), for the gods would not permit Agamemnon to achieve victory in battle unless he presented his daughter as an atoning sacrifice. This sacrifice would in turn achieve the mercy of the gods for the people (*Iphigeneia in Tauri* 21–24; cf. 1368–1401; *Phoenissae* 968–75).<sup>79</sup>

In another play titled *Alcestis*, Euripides demonstrates that a human's penal death for others could benefit those for whom the death was offered. *Alcestis* was ready to die for Admetus (her husband). Death is personified and beckons for him. It declares that he would spare Admetus from dying only if he exchanged (διαλλάξαντα) another human life for his (*Alcestis* 14). After a long search, Admetus finds no one who would give his or her own life as a penal substitute for him, except his wife who "was willing to die" (ἤθελε θανεῖν) for Admetus and whose voluntary death would deliver him from death (*Alcestis* 1–36; cf. *Iphigeneia at Aulis* 1553–556; *Hecuba* 38–41, 367–78, 484–582).<sup>80</sup>

2. *The Roman devotio*. The Roman *devotio* was a form of self-sacrifice in the Greco-Roman world.<sup>81</sup> The *devotio* basically referred either to a voluntary human sacrifice for the benefit of others or for the benefit of an important cause. It was an act whereby members of the military dedicated themselves to the gods and to anonymous deities. The Romans believed that this death was the climactic act that provided victory for the soldiers in battle.<sup>82</sup>

The Roman historian Livy (59 BC–AD 17) explains the *devotio* in his history of Rome.<sup>83</sup> The commander of the Roman army would dress himself in the *devotio* toga; he would place a covering on his head, stand on a spear, and place his hand against his chin while awaiting the priest to articulate a *devotio* formula/prayer. Afterwards, the commander would pursue death in battle against the enemy (*History of Rome* 8.9.4–9). The *devotio* sacrifices

<sup>79</sup> Iphigeneia does not die in the end, but the goddess Artemis places a deer on the altar before she is sacrificed.

<sup>80</sup> For more texts in *Alcestis* that support that the vicarious deaths of humans benefited others, see also 178, 280–82, 339, 383, 434, 524, 620, 644, 649, 682, 690, 698, 701, 710, 716, and 1002.

<sup>81</sup> For a survey of the Roman *devotio*, see Henk S. Versnel, "Two Types of Roman *Devotio*," *Mnemosyne* 29 (1976) 365–410.

<sup>82</sup> So van Henten and Avemarie, *Martyrdom and Noble Death* 19–20.

<sup>83</sup> So Titus Livius *History of Rome* 8.9 (ed. Ernest Rhys; trans. Canon Roberts; New York: E. P. Dutton and Company, 1926) 2:117–19, esp. 2:118.

voluntarily gave themselves on behalf of the army and the empire; their sacrifices served as an atonement to the gods, and they brought salvation to the people for whom they died (*History of Rome* 8.9.9–10; 10.28.18). The death of the first Publius Decius Mus expresses the essence of the *devotio* sacrifice.<sup>84</sup> Decius voluntarily offered himself to the gods on behalf of Rome in battle against the Latins (1) to expiate sin; (2) to appease the anger of the gods; (3) to avert destruction from Rome; and (4) to turn anger toward the enemies of Rome (cf. *History of Rome* 8.9.13–14).<sup>85</sup>

3. *Jewish texts.* The books of 2 and 4 Maccabees record that God judged the Jews through Antiochus Epiphanes IV because of the nation's religious apostasy (cf. 1 Maccabees 1; 2 Macc 7:32). The Jewish martyrs express that they die vicariously as sacrifices of atonement for the sins of others (2 Macc 5:1–8:5; 4 Macc 6:28–29). The seventh son specifically states in 2 Macc 7:32 that the martyrs suffer because of sins. A passage in 4 Macc 6:28–29 states that Eleazar offers his "blood" to be a "ransom" so that God would "be satisfied." A passage in 4 Macc 17:21–22 states that the Jewish martyrs die a propitiatory death for the nation. Thus, we can infer that the martyrs die as penal sacrifices of atonement for the nation's sins because the fundamental reason behind their deaths was Israel's disobedience to Torah, and they died to end God's judgment against the nation's sin and to save the nation from his wrath (2 Macc 7:32–38; 4 Macc 6:28–29; 17:21–22). Furthermore, the Epistle of Jeremiah, Wis 3:6, MT Dan 11:32–35, LXX Dan 3:20–40, 1QS 1:1–3:10, and *As. Mos.* 9:6–10:10 express that humans suffer because of sin and are willing to die to pay the penalty in death for sin to end God's judgment against the sinful community. In the Wisdom of Ben Sira, the author states that sins need to be propitiated (Sir 5:5–6) and that the Lord will dispense his wrath against those who sin (Sir 5:7). Therefore, in light of the above evidence from Greek, Greco-Roman, and Jewish texts, non-violent models of the atonement fail to realize that the idea that Jesus' death was a necessary, violent, penal sacrifice of atonement for sin that absorbed God's wrath to achieve salvation for those whom he died has historical precedent in the Greek, Greco-Roman, and Jewish world that preceded Paul and in the Greco-Roman and Jewish world in which Paul lived and wrote Romans.

## VI. CONCLUSIONS

In spite of the arguments of non-violent models of the atonement from both evangelical and non-evangelical scholars, the evidence from Romans supports that violent atonement is foundational to Paul's soteriology. I have

<sup>84</sup> Van Henten and Avemarie, *Martyrdom and Noble Death* 19–20.

<sup>85</sup> For further analysis of the above ancient texts, see E. A. M. E. O'Connor-Visser, *Aspects of Human Sacrifice in the Tragedies of Euripides* (Amsterdam: B. R. Grüner, 1987); Warren Joel Heard, Jr., "Maccabean Martyr Theology: Its Genesis, Antecedents, and Significance for the Earliest Soteriological Interpretation of the Death of Jesus" (Ph.D. diss., University of Aberdeen, 1989); Hengel, *Atonement* 11–28.

argued this premise by providing evidence that Paul discusses Jesus' death in the context of redemption, God's eschatological wrath, God's judgment in the law court, and salvation in important soteriological texts in Romans. The evidence affirms that (1) Jesus' violent death for sin provides the necessary atonement for sin; and (2) every soteriological benefit in Romans (redemption, justification by faith, forgiveness of sins, reconciliation with God, the resurrection of the dead, deliverance from God's wrath, predestination, and glorification) comes to Jews and Gentiles by faith only because Jesus died as a penal substitute for their sin. Without violent atonement, Paul's soteriology is incomplete and the argument of Romans 1–8 breaks down because penal substitution is foundational to his soteriology in Romans and central to the Pauline gospel.<sup>86</sup>

<sup>86</sup> A portion of this article was presented at the 2008 national meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society (ETS) in Providence, RI during a Pauline Studies group. I would like to thank Thomas R. Schreiner for reading both the version that I presented at ETS and the current article and for offering helpful suggestions.