



Who is Jesus?

Exploring Two Christian Traditions:
Penal Substitution vs. Medical Substitution

Mako A. Nagasawa

Outline

- Jesus: who is he?
- Legal interpretation: penal substitution
- Medical interpretation: medical substitution
- Test case: 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?'
- Summary comparison



BLACK JESUS

The Punished Stand-in



The Son Caught in the Gears



Penal Substitution in Scripture?

- ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’
 - Matthew 27:45; Mark 15:34
 - Jesus quoting King David’s Psalm 22:1 from the cross

Penal Substitution

- ‘God is both loving and just, and needed to resolve this conflict of attributes. He could not love us and forgive our sins **without satisfying His justice**. Therefore, Jesus took on himself the **punishment** for the sins of all those who would ever turn from their sin and trust in him... He rose again from the dead, showing that God accepted Christ’s sacrifice and that **God’s wrath against us had been exhausted**.’
 - Mark Dever, Reformed Baptist pastor, President of 9Marks, <http://www.9marks.org/what-are-the-9marks/the-gospel>

Penal Substitution

- ‘He lived a sinless life and voluntarily atoned for the sins of men by dying on the cross as their substitute, thus **satisfying divine justice** and accomplishing salvation for all who trust in Him alone.’
 - Various Statements of Faith in student orgs

Penal Substitution = Limited Atonement

- ‘The Reformed* position is that Christ died for the purpose of actually and certainly saving **the elect, and the elect only**... they are the only ones whom God has determined to save... It should also be noted that the doctrine that Christ died for the purpose of saving all men, logically leads to absolute universalism, that is, to the doctrine that all men are actually saved.’
 - Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology, Part 3: The Person and Work of Christ*, 6.B.2

* Berkhof does not include Karl Barth, T.F. Torrance, et.al. in his definition of ‘Reformed’



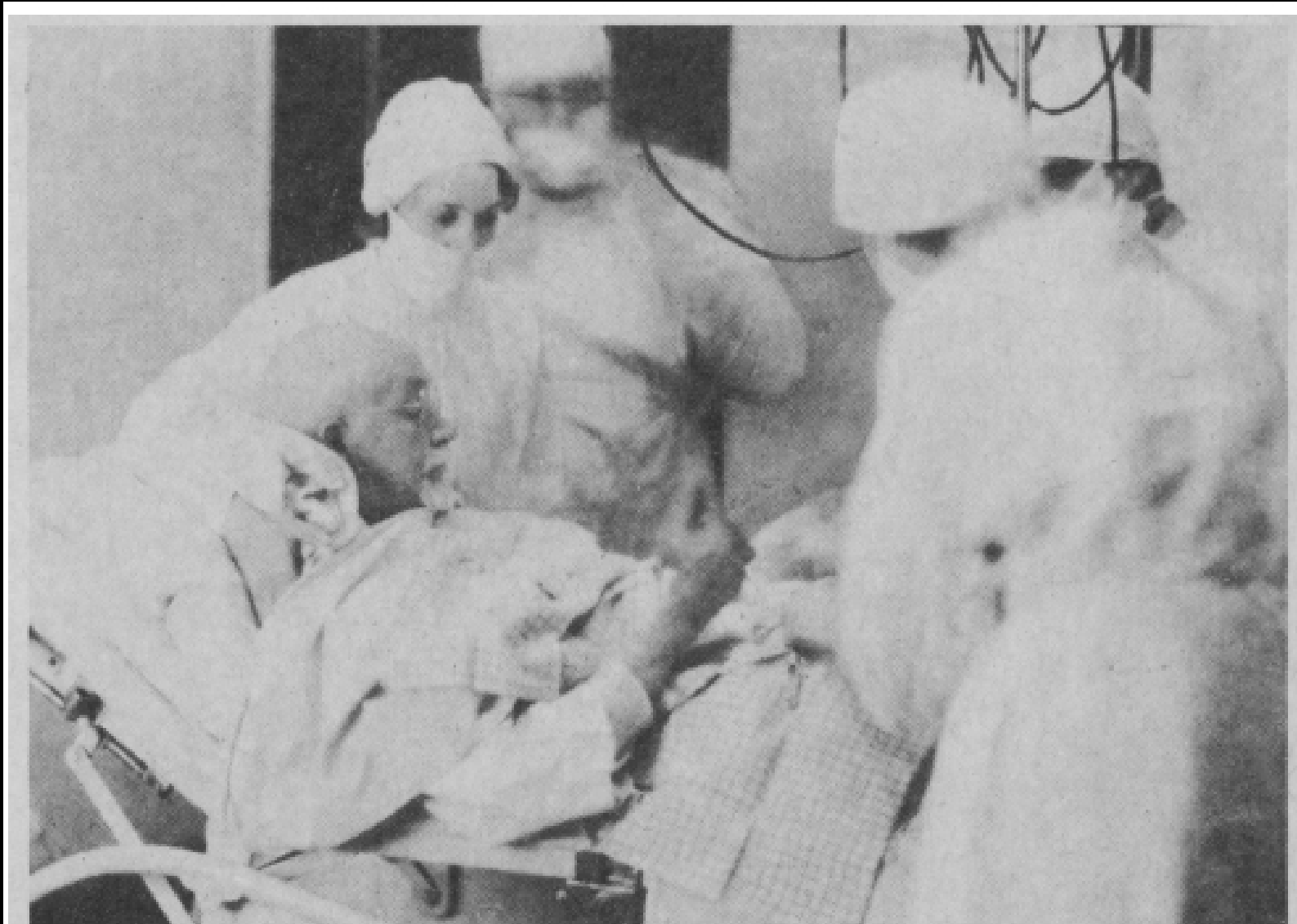
Implications

- Penal Substitution = Limited Atonement
 - Jesus died for some, not all
- Evangelism
 - Can you say, “God loves you – in particular, you”?
- Image of God
 - Does God want to heal all human evil?
 - Is God partly evil?
- Social justice
 - Does God give worth and value to all people?
 - Is retributive justice the highest form of justice?
- Motivation
 - Gratitude for debt-payment

The Doctor Who Becomes His Own Patient



The Doctor Who Becomes His Own Patient



Medical Substitution in Scripture?

- ‘Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered. And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation..’
 - Hebrews 5:8 – 9

Medical Substitution

- ‘**Man, who had sin in himself...** was liable to death. For it behooved Him who was to destroy sin, and redeem man under the power of death, that He should Himself be made that very same thing which he was, that is, **man**; who had been drawn by sin into bondage, but was held by death, so **that sin should be destroyed by man**, and man should go forth from death... Thus, then, was the Word of God made man... God recapitulated in Himself the ancient formation of man, **that He might kill sin**, deprive death of its power, and **vivify man...**’
 - Irenaeus of Lyons (130 – 202 AD), *Against Heresies* 3.18.7

Medical Substitution

- ‘Had it been a case of a trespass only, and not of a subsequent **corruption**, repentance would have been well enough; but when once transgression had begun men came under the power of the **corruption**...No, repentance could not meet the case...Once man was in existence, and... demanded to be **healed**, it followed as a matter of course that the **Healer and Savior** should align Himself with those things that existed already [i.e. become human], in order to **heal the existing evil**. For that reason, therefore, He was made man, and used the body as His human instrument.’
 - Athanasius of Alexandria (298 – 373 AD), *On the Incarnation* 2.7; 7.44

Implications

- Medical Substitution = Unlimited Atonement
 - Jesus died, rose for every single person, has the antibodies
- Evangelism
 - “God loves you, and will always love you”
- Image of God
 - God wants to heal human evil in every person, personally
 - God is 100% good
- Social justice
 - God gives worth and value to all people
 - Restorative justice is the highest form of justice
- Motivations
 - Strengthen your true self; live out of a loving union with Jesus; share in God’s restoration of humanity

Who Believes This?

- Eastern Orthodox (entirety)
 - Kallistos Ware, John Meyendorff, Vladimir Lossky
- Roman Catholic
 - Benedict XVI, Karl Rahner, Yves Congar, Hans Urs von Balthazar
- Protestant
 - Anglican: C.S. Lewis, N.T. Wright
 - Methodist: Roberta Bondi, Thomas Oden, Doug Campbell
 - Pentecostal: Cherith Fee Nordling, John Crowder
 - Reformed: Karl Barth, T.F. Torrance, 'Evangelical Calvinists,' Grace Communion International
 - Lutheran: Tuomo Mannermaa, 'Finnish School'

An Either-Or?

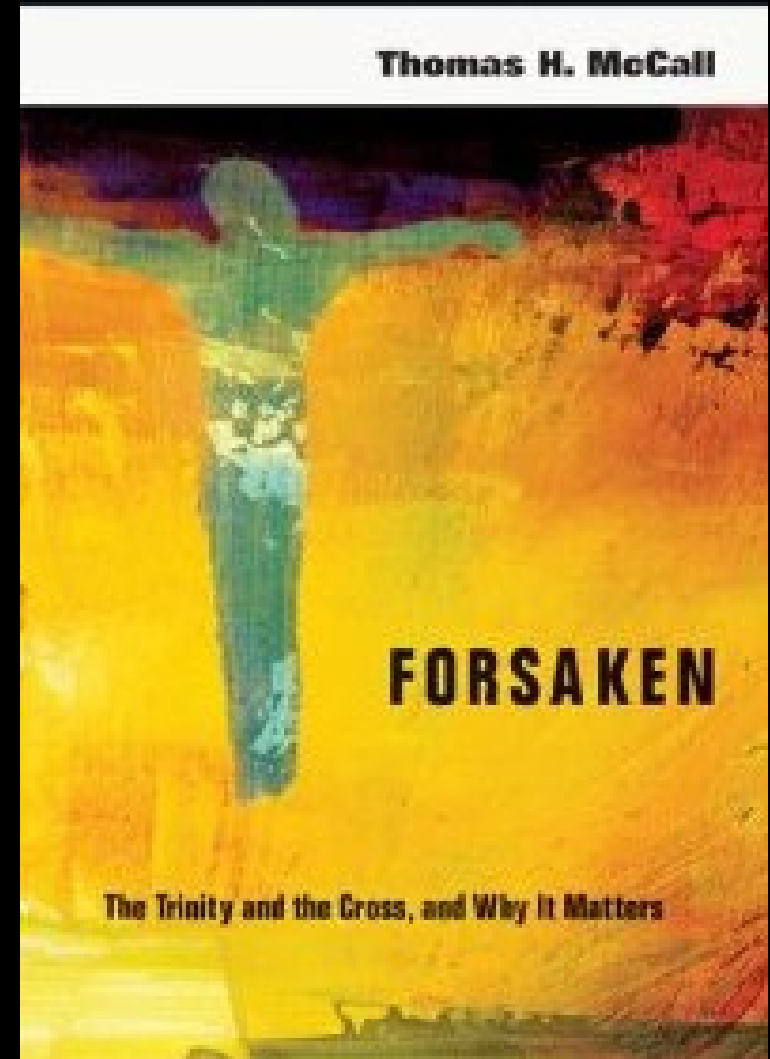


The Test Case

- ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’
 - Jesus quoting King David’s Psalm 22:1 from the cross in Mt.27:45 and Mk.15:34
- The Father turned away from the Son?
 - Opposition?
 - ‘Behold, an hour is coming, and has already come, for you to be scattered, each to his own home, and to leave Me alone; and yet **I am not alone**, because **the Father is with Me**’ (John 16:32)
 - And: What happened to the Holy Spirit in that moment? (bond of love between Father and Son?)

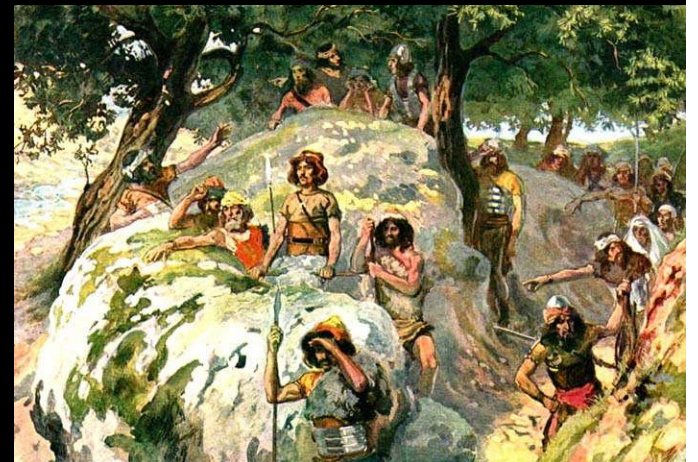
‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’

- No early church theologian believed the Father turned away from the Son
- For more information:



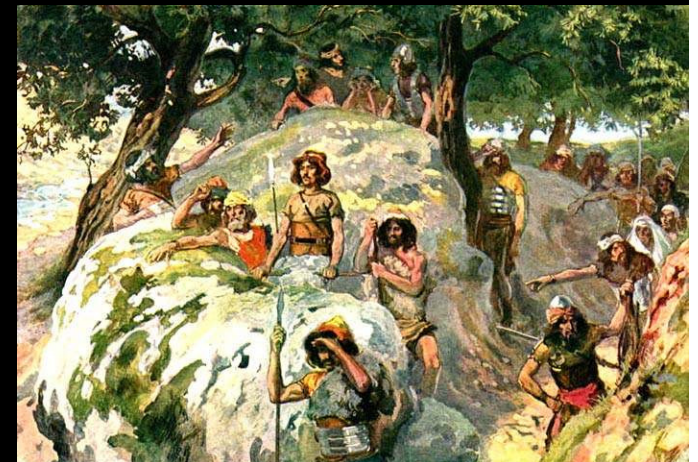
‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me [to the Gentiles]?’

- King David wrote Psalm 22 to reflect his suffering in exile and hope in God for protection
 - He was rejected by Saul and the majority of Israel
 - He was forsaken *to the Gentiles*



‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me [to the Gentiles]?’

- David not forsaken by God in an absolute sense
 - God is still accessible
 - ‘You are He who brought me forth...upon You I was cast from birth; You have been my God from my mother’s womb; Be not far from me, for trouble is near..’ (Ps.22:9 – 11)
 - God still loves and protects David
 - ‘For He has not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; nor has He hidden His face from him’ (Ps.22:24)
 - God’s Spirit spoke through David
 - Psalm 22 is in the canonical Bible
 - If David was inspired, he was not forsaken



‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me [to the Gentiles]?’

- Jesus helps others connect him to David

- Jesus’ kingdom like David’s kingdom

- King in exile, forming a new kingdom
- Jesus quotes 1 Sam.21 – 22 in Mt.12:3 – 4

- Jesus suffers like David suffered

- David suffered at the hands of Gentiles
- How much more the greater David?
(Mt.27:37 – 46; Mk.15:29 – 34)

- Quotes Ps.22 for others, not himself

- Engages the two crucified criminals
- Note Luke and John don’t quote Psalm 22:1
 - John doesn’t narrate the criminals
 - Luke narrates one criminal’s faith already



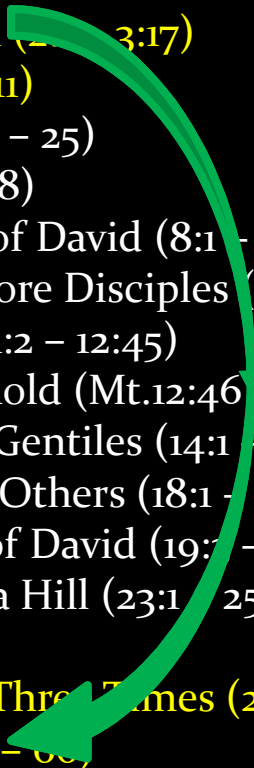
‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me [to the Gentiles]?’

- Jesus was not abandoned by the Father in an absolute sense, even on the cross
 - The Spirit spoke through Jesus to retell David’s story
 - The Spirit helped the Son kill the sinfulness in himself through death (Rom.8:3; 6:6)



Literary Support

The Gospel of Matthew: Literary Structure

- A. Jesus, Israel & the Gentiles, Fulfillment, God With Us (1:1 – 25)
 - B. Jesus as King, Rejected by Herod, Acknowledged by Magi, Baptism (2:1 – 3:17)
 - C. Jesus Overcomes Three Temptations in the Wilderness (4:1 – 11)
 - D. Jesus Gathers and Prepares the Disciples for Ministry (4:12 – 25)
 - E. Discourse #1: Blessings, the New City on a Hill (5:1 – 7:28)
 - F. Jesus Calls to Israel as the Prophet Like Moses, Heir of David (8:1 – 9:34)
 - G. Discourse #2: Jesus Trains the Disciples to Call More Disciples (9:35 – 11:1)
 - H. Jesus as Messiah & Temple, Jews & Gentiles (11:2 – 12:45)
 - I. Discourse #3: Kingdom Growth as a Household (Mt.12:46 – 13:58)
 - H.' Jesus as New Temple Presence of God, Jews & Gentiles (14:1 – 17:27)
 - G.' Discourse #4: Jesus Trains Disciples to Shepherd Others (18:1 – 19:2)
 - F.' Jesus Calls to Israel as the Prophet Like Moses, Heir of David (19:7 – 22:46)
 - E.' Discourse #5: Woes, Fall of Jerusalem, the Old City on a Hill (23:1 – 25:46)
 - D.' Jesus Prepares His Disciples for His Death (26:1 – 35)
 - C.' Jesus Overcomes Three Temptations in a Garden, Peter Fails Three Times (26:36 – 75)
 - B.' Jesus as King, Rejected by Jewish and Gentile Leaders, Death (27:1 – 31)
 - A'. Jesus, Israel & the Gentiles, Fulfillment, God With Us (28:1 – 20)
- 

Comparison: Why Did Jesus Die?

Penal Substitution

Medical Substitution

We are...

On trial

Corrupted, sick

Jesus saves us from our...

Punishment

Evil

God's wrath went
from...to...?

**Father to Son, or
God to God**

**The united Trinity to the
corruption in Jesus'
human nature**

Jesus is the...

Victim

Victor

God forgives us for...

Breaking His law

Obeying the corruption

Implications

- Medical Substitution = Unlimited Atonement
 - Jesus died, rose for every single person, has the antibodies
- Evangelism
 - “God loves you, and will always love you”
- Image of God
 - God wants to heal human evil in every person, personally
 - God is 100% good
- Social justice
 - God gives worth and value to all people
 - Restorative justice is the highest form of justice
- Motivations
 - Strengthen your true self; live out of a loving union with Jesus; share in God’s restoration of humanity

More Info

- Mako Nagasawa
mako.nagasawa@gmail.com
- New Humanity Institute
newhumanityinstitute.org

