

Why the Cross?

The Ransom, the Penalty, and the Satisfaction of Love — Why Christ Had to Die

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I. The Question Beneath the Cross

All Christians agree that Christ died for our sins. The harder question — the one that divides them — is *why*. Why was a death required at all? What, exactly, did the cross accomplish, and by what logic? Behind the shared confession lies a real disagreement about the inner meaning of the atonement, and it is worth setting out carefully, because the answer one gives shapes one's picture of God himself — of his justice, his mercy, and the relation of the Father to the Son.

The very word tells us where the matter ends: “atonement” is the old English “at-one-ment,” the making of those who were estranged “at one” again. Its plainest synonym is *reconciliation*. Whatever else the cross is, it is the act by which God and man, divided by sin, are made one. The question is how a death accomplishes that — and here three answers diverge.¹

The Watchtower's: that Christ's death was a *corresponding ransom*, the exact legal equivalent of what Adam forfeited. Much of Protestantism's: that Christ bore the *penalty* of sin, the punishment we deserved, in our place. And the Catholic answer, given its most careful form by St. Thomas Aquinas: that Christ rendered *satisfaction* for sin by an offering of love so great that it more than repaired the offense. These are not simply three labels for the same thing. They differ about what justice demands, about whether God was compelled, and about whether the Father punished his Son — and the differences matter.

II. The Watchtower's Answer: A Corresponding Ransom

The Watchtower's account is admirably precise, and it begins in Eden. Adam was created with “perfect human life,” and by his sin he forfeited it, selling himself and all his descendants into sin and death. Justice, on this view, requires an exact equivalence: to buy back what Adam lost, “another perfect human life — a corresponding ransom — had to be paid,” one of “the same value as the life that Adam lost.” Jesus, born a perfect man and keeping a clean record to the end, possessed exactly this: a perfect human life, not forfeit under Adam's sentence. By laying it down he paid the price — “nothing more, nothing less” — that balanced the scales of justice.²

Two features of this account deserve note, because they distinguish it sharply from the Catholic one. First, it is explicitly a matter of *equivalence*: one perfect human life redeems the one perfect human life Adam threw away. Second — and this follows from the Watchtower's denial of Christ's deity — the ransomer must be *merely* human. In the Society's own words, “a spirit creature or a ‘God-man’ would not balance the scales of

justice. Only a perfect human ... could offer a corresponding ransom.” The whole transaction is sized to Adam: a finite life for a finite life, a ledger brought back to zero.

III. The Protestant Answer: A Penalty Paid

Much of Protestantism — especially in the Reformed and evangelical traditions — gives a different answer, usually called *penal substitution*, and given its developed form by John Calvin. Here the governing category is not equivalence but *punishment*. God’s justice, it is said, requires that sin be punished; the penalty for sin is death and condemnation; and at the cross God laid that penalty upon Christ, who bore it in the place of sinners. The wrath we deserved fell on him; “the chastisement of our peace was upon him” (Isa. 53:5); “he made him to be sin who knew no sin” (2 Cor. 5:21); he became “a curse for us” (Gal. 3:13). Justice is satisfied because the penalty has been paid — not waived, but transferred and executed upon a willing substitute.³

This is a serious and powerful account, with real roots in Scripture, and it must be engaged in its strongest form rather than dismissed. It rightly insists that sin is grave, that God’s justice is not indifference, and that Christ truly bore what our sin had earned. The Catholic tradition does not deny these things. What it questions is a particular construal of *how* Christ bore them — specifically, the idea, taken literally, that the Father visited *retributive punishment* upon a Son reckoned as personally guilty. For there is a moral difficulty at the heart of that literal claim: one cannot justly punish an innocent person, and Christ “committed no sin; no guile was found on his lips” (1 Pet. 2:22). A God who punished the sinless as though guilty would not be satisfying justice but violating it.⁴

This does not mean punishment-language must be banished from the cross. One may speak, as Aquinas does, of voluntarily bearing another’s “punishment” in a *qualified* sense — as a man may freely pay a fine for his friend — and Scripture itself sometimes speaks of penalty in non-literal, accommodated ways. The point is only that such language cannot be pressed into the literal assertion that the Father, in justice, punished the innocent. Held loosely, as metaphor, it has its place; held literally, it turns the just God into an unjust one. The Catholic answer keeps what is true in it and discards what is not.

IV. What Is Right in Each

Before pressing the difficulties further, it is only fair to gather what is true in each account, for the Catholic view does not reject these answers so much as locate and complete them. The Watchtower is right that the cross is a *ransom* — Scripture says so plainly (Mark 10:45; 1 Tim. 2:6) — and right that what Adam lost is somehow restored in Christ, the “last Adam” (1 Cor. 15:45). Penal substitution is right that sin truly deserves death, that

God's justice is real, and that Christ bore the weight of our sin rather than leaving us to bear it. Each has hold of a genuine strand of the biblical witness.

Indeed, Scripture deliberately uses *many* images — ransom, reconciliation, redemption, victory — because no single one can exhaust so rich a mystery. But the *primary* image of the New Testament is none of the three theories' favorites; it is *sacrifice*. "Christ, our paschal Lamb, has been sacrificed" (1 Cor. 5:7); "when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God" (Heb. 10:12). This matters, because a sacrifice is not in the first place a punishment absorbed or a ledger balanced; it is a gift offered to God in love, to restore communion. Keep that at the center, and the other images fall into their right places around it.¹

The Catholic claim, then, is that each strand, taken alone, is too small for the reality — and that one of them, the Watchtower's, is built on a foundation that cannot bear the weight, because it has removed the one thing that makes the whole intelligible: the divinity of the Redeemer. To see why, we must look at the problem all three accounts are trying to solve.

V. The Problem of an Unpayable Debt

Aquinas, following Anselm, begins not with punishment but with *offense*. Sin is not merely the breaking of a rule; it is the rupture of a relationship of justice and friendship with God, and it incurs a debt — something taken from the order of justice that must be restored. Now the gravity of an offense is measured not only by the act but by the *dignity of the one offended*. An insult to a peasant and the same insult to a king are not equal acts. And because God is infinite, an offense against him carries a weight that no finite creature, drawing on its own resources, can adequately repay.⁵

Here is the impasse, and it is exactly the one Anselm framed: humanity *ought* to make satisfaction but *cannot*; God *can* but does not *owe* it. And here, too, the Watchtower's account quietly fails. If the offense of sin is against the infinite God, then a merely finite "perfect human life" — even Adam's, even a sinless man's — is not large enough to repair it. A ledger sized to Adam cannot measure an offense sized to God. God was free to remit the debt outright—Aquinas says so plainly below. But given what He in fact willed, a true and full satisfaction rather than a waiver, the Catholic tradition insists that the Redeemer had to be what the Watchtower most denies: not a perfect creature only, but the eternal Son made man — a human being, and so a fitting one to pay; and also divine, and so capable of an offering of infinite worth. The "God-man" the Watchtower rules out is the very thing the problem requires.

VI. The Catholic Answer: Satisfaction Through Love

The Catholic answer, then, is *satisfaction* — but Aquinas reshapes that word in a way that changes everything. For a cruder satisfaction-theory, the weight falls on the sheer *magnitude* of the offering needed to match an infinite offense, as though God were tallying a quantity of suffering. Aquinas shifts the center of gravity from quantity to *quality* — from the suffering as such to the *love* with which it is borne.

His decisive text asks whether the Passion brought about our salvation by way of satisfaction, and answers that it did so *superabundantly*. Why superabundantly? “On account of the exceeding charity from which He suffered” — together with the dignity of the life laid down, which was the life of God incarnate, and the greatness of what he embraced. Of these, charity is first: “He who suffered, out of the very great charity from which He suffered, offered to God more than was required to compensate for the offense of the whole human race.” A small act done from great love can outweigh a great act done grudgingly; and the cross is the maximal *expression* of love — “Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13). It is love, not the bare quantity of pain, that reconciles persons; and it is love that the Father receives.⁶

See the contrast with the other two accounts. For the Watchtower, the cross balances a ledger; for the harsher penal scheme, it absorbs a punishment; for Aquinas, it *offers a love* of infinite worth, worth that the Watchtower’s merely human Christ could never possess, and that turns the penal “transaction” into something far greater than a transfer of penalty: the self-gift of God himself.

VII. Not Punishment of the Innocent, but Love Freely Offered

This brings us to the sharpest difference, and the one with the gravest consequences for our picture of God. In the harsher forms of penal substitution, the Father *inflicts* on the Son the punishment due to sinners — pours out upon him the wrath we had earned. Two difficulties attend this. It appears to make God punish the *innocent* (the sinless Son treated as guilty), which is precisely what Scripture elsewhere calls an abomination; and it appears to divide the Trinity, setting a wrathful Father against a loving Son, as though the Son must rescue us *from* the Father.

Aquinas’s satisfaction-through-love dissolves both difficulties, and it does so by attending to a single, crucial point: the Passion was a *free act of the Son’s love*, not a punishment imposed on him against his will. “It was not in this way that God the Father delivered up Christ — by compelling Him to suffer against His will — but by inspiring Him with the will to suffer for us.” The Father’s “handing over” of the Son (Rom. 8:32) is by eternal will, by the infusion of charity into Christ’s human heart, and by not shielding him from the

malice of others — not by venting retribution upon an unwilling victim. Christ takes on the *consequences* of sin — real suffering, real death — in solidarity with us and out of love, and in bearing them transforms them from a punishment into the very instrument of redemption.⁷

So the Catholic view does not deny that Christ bore the penalty of sin, was “made sin” for us, became “a curse for us.” It denies only that the Father treated his beloved Son as a guilty criminal to be punished. The penal note is real, but *subordinate* — folded into the larger reality of a love that freely takes on death to defeat it from within. The whole Trinity wills the one work of salvation; the Son’s self-offering is itself the Father’s gift of love to the world: “God so loved the world that he gave his only Son” (John 3:16); “God shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8).

VIII. Fitting, Not Forced

There is a further, quieter difference, easy to miss but far-reaching. Both the Watchtower’s ledger and the harsher penal scheme tend to speak as though God were *compelled* — as though justice were a law above God to which even he must submit, so that he *had* to exact a death. Aquinas flatly denies it, and gives three reasons the Passion was not *absolutely* necessary. First, God is omnipotent, and to remit sin’s debt another way involves no contradiction: “it was possible for God to deliver mankind otherwise than by the Passion of Christ.” Second, sin is ultimately against God alone — “Against you, you only, have I sinned” (Ps. 51:4) — so for God to forgive it freely would be not injustice but mercy, no more unjust than a man forgiving a friend’s offense without demanding payment. Third, the dignity of Christ’s person is infinite, so *any* act of his, not the death alone, could have redeemed us. This does not retract the ledger argument above; it locates it. The necessity there is conditional, as Aquinas frames it: not that God had no other way, but that once He willed a true and full satisfaction, nothing short of the God-man could supply it.⁸

Why, then, the cross? Not because God was forced, but because it was the most *fitting* way — the way that most fully manifested, all at once, his justice and his mercy. Through the Passion human beings learn how much God loves them and are stirred to love in return; Christ gives the supreme example of obedience, humility, constancy, and justice; he not only frees us from sin but merits for us the grace of new life; he counters the devil’s pride with humility and his tyranny with justice; he fulfills the Passover as “our paschal lamb”; and the very mode of the victory — overcoming death by dying — displays a wisdom proper to God. “God is love” (1 John 4:8), and love acts in freedom, never under compulsion. The cross is not a price God was cornered into paying. It is the masterpiece of his freedom.⁹

IX. The Many Modes of One Saving Work

One more strength of the Catholic account deserves mention, for it explains why it can do justice to what is true in the others. Aquinas does not reduce the atonement to a single image. He presents the one saving work of the Passion as efficacious in several interlocking modes: it is *merit*, because Christ as head of the body wins grace for his members; *satisfaction*, the loving self-offering that more than repairs the debt; *sacrifice*, the true offering that all the temple rites prefigured, of which the Eucharist is the memorial and presence; *redemption*, the *ransom* that liberates — paid, Aquinas insists, to divine justice and not to the devil; and the *efficient cause* of grace, since Christ's humanity is the instrument of his divinity.¹⁰

Notice what this breadth allows. The Watchtower seizes one word — *ransom* — and makes it the whole, flattening it into a commercial equivalence paid out between Adam and his replacement. But “ransom” is itself a metaphor: Jesus did not hand over literal coin. Aquinas keeps the word, with its full biblical weight, but as one mode among several, and reads it rightly: the price is paid *to God*, in whose justice the debt is held, not to Satan, who held humanity only by a permitted and now-defeated tyranny. The Catholic account is not the enemy of “ransom”; it is its rescue from a reading too small to be true.¹¹

X. How the Cross Becomes Ours

A last difference is easy to overlook but goes to the heart of the Christian life. On a purely transactional model — whether the Watchtower's ledger or a bare penal *imputation* — salvation can look like an accounting entry made *outside* us: a debt cancelled, a penalty credited, while we remain inwardly unchanged. On the imputation model in particular, Christ's righteousness is *reckoned* to our account, but we ourselves are not actually made righteous. Aquinas — and the Catholic tradition after him — will not have it so. What the cross works in us is not a legal fiction but a real transformation: God *infuses* his grace into the soul, truly cleansing and renewing it, so that justification is, in the words of the Council of Trent, “not only the remission of sins, but also the sanctification and renewal of the inward man.”¹²

And this transformation comes about through *incorporation*. Christ saves as *head* of a body, and the life of the head flows into the members. His Passion is the universal cause of salvation, but a universal cause must be *applied* — and it is applied through faith, through charity, and through the sacraments of faith: baptism, which configures us to Christ's death and resurrection (Rom. 6:3–5), and the Eucharist, which makes the one sacrifice of Calvary present to us. So the cross is not a distant transaction filed away in the courts of heaven. It is a living reality into which we are *grafted*, so that what Christ did becomes ours not by a bare crediting but by real membership in him. We are not merely

let off; we are *joined* to the One who loved us and gave himself for us — and in him, the debt is not so much paid as transfigured into a gift.¹³

XI. Conclusion: The Love That Was Required

Why did Christ have to die? The Watchtower answers: to pay an exact price, a perfect human life for the perfect human life Adam lost. Much of Protestantism answers: to bear the punishment our sin deserved. The Catholic tradition, with Aquinas, answers more deeply: because the offense of sin against the infinite God was a debt no creature could repay, and because God, owing satisfaction to no one, freely chose the most fitting way to manifest at once his justice and his mercy — the eternal Son made man, offering to the Father, out of a charity of infinite worth, a love that more than repaired the offense of the whole human race.

The Watchtower's ledger is too small, because it has made the Redeemer too small; a finite life cannot answer an infinite offense, and a merely human Christ cannot offer the love of God. The harsher penal scheme is too forensic, because it can make the Father a punisher of the innocent and divide the God who is one. The truth the cross reveals is larger and kinder than either: not a God compelled to vent his wrath, nor a God balancing a cosmic ledger, but a God who *is* love, freely giving himself for the life of the world. That God did not *have* to save us by the cross is itself the measure of the love that did: love, not necessity, is why he chose it. "He loved me," Paul says, "and gave himself for me" (Gal. 2:20). That — the love that was offered, not the penalty that was extracted — is why the cross saves. "Greater love has no one than this."¹⁴

Endnotes

1. The English word “atonement” is itself a contraction of “at-one-ment” — the making of those who were estranged “at one” again. A good modern synonym is *reconciliation*. See Jimmy Akin, “What Does ‘Atonement’ Mean — And How Did Jesus Do It?” (jimmyakin.com, 2018). Scripture uses several images for this one reality — ransom (Mark 10:45), reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:18–19), redemption, victory — but, as Akin notes, the *primary* New Testament image is *sacrifice*: “Christ, our paschal Lamb, has been sacrificed” (1 Cor. 5:7); “when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God” (Heb. 10:12). No single image exhausts the mystery; they are complementary, not competing.

2. The Watchtower’s doctrine is the “corresponding ransom.” Its publications teach that Adam forfeited “perfect human life,” and that to redeem his descendants “another perfect human life — a corresponding ransom — had to be paid” of “the same value as the life that Adam lost” (citing 1 Tim. 2:6, NWT). Explicitly: “A spirit creature or a ‘God-man’ would not balance the scales of justice. Only a perfect human, someone not under the Adamic death sentence, could offer ‘a corresponding ransom,’ one corresponding perfectly to Adam” (*The Watchtower*, cited from the Watchtower Online Library, “A Corresponding Ransom for All”; cf. *What Does the Bible Really Teach?* ch. 5). The exchange is described as “not a physical exchange, but a legal transaction” balancing “the scales of justice.”

3. “Penal substitution” — the view that Christ saves by being *punished* in the sinner’s place — was given its developed form by John Calvin and is prominent in Reformed and much of evangelical Protestantism. Its principal proof-texts are Isaiah 53:4–6 (“the chastisement of our peace was upon him”), 2 Corinthians 5:21 (“he made him to be sin who knew no sin”), and Galatians 3:13 (“becoming a curse for us”). It is a serious view with real Scriptural warrant, and the present essay engages its strongest form, not a caricature. It can be understood as one species of *vicarious satisfaction* theory — but a distinctive one, in that it makes the satisfaction consist in punishment.

The Church affirms every word of those texts—and says what the words mean, rather than merely declining an inference. “Made him to be sin” (2 Cor. 5:21) speaks the Old Testament’s idiom, where the same word serves for sin and for sin-offering: the spotless victim identified with the people’s sin and offered for it, which Christ was and did. “Became a curse for us” (Gal. 3:13) is Paul quoting Deuteronomy’s sentence on the man hanged on a tree: Christ took the curse’s consequences—the accursed death itself, under the law’s own words—without ever being the object of his Father’s condemnation.

4. The difficulty, pressed by many and granted here, is that “one cannot justly punish an innocent person” — and Christ “committed no sin; no guile was found on his lips” (1 Pet. 2:22). Aquinas allows that one may speak of voluntarily bearing another’s “punishment” in a *qualified* sense — as when one freely pays a fine on another’s behalf — but notes this lacks the true penal character, “because the sinful act is something personal” (*Summa Theologiae* I-II, q. 87, a. 8). Scripture itself sometimes uses punishment-language non-literally: Exodus 20:5 speaks of visiting “the iniquity of the fathers upon the children,” yet Ezekiel insists “the son shall not suffer for the iniquity of the father” (Ezek. 18:20). So penal *language* may be used of the cross, provided it is not pressed into the literal claim that the Father punished the innocent Son. See Akin, “What Does ‘Atonement’ Mean.”

5. On the gravity of an offense being measured by the dignity of the one offended, see Anselm, *Cur Deus Homo* I.21, and Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* III, q. 1, a. 2, ad 2, and III, q. 48, a. 2. Because God is infinite, the offense of sin carries a weight no finite creature can, of its own resources, repay — the “unpayable debt.” This is precisely the point at which the Watchtower’s finite “perfect human life” proves insufficient.

6. *Summa Theologiae* III, q. 48, a. 2: Christ’s Passion saves “by way of satisfaction,” and does so *superabundantly* — not because the physical agony was uniquely severe, but “on account of the exceeding charity from which He suffered,” together with the dignity of the life laid down (the life of God incarnate) and the extent of what He embraced. “He who suffered, out of the very great charity from which He suffered, offered to God more than was required to compensate for the offense of the whole human race.” Charity, not quantity of pain, is the hinge.

7. *Summa Theologiae* III, q. 47, a. 3: “It was not in this way that God the Father delivered up Christ — by compelling Him to suffer against His will — but by inspiring Him with the will to suffer for us.” The Father’s “handing over” of the Son (Rom. 8:32) is by eternal will, by the infusion of charity, and by not shielding Him — not the infliction of punishment on an unwilling innocent. Christ bears the *consequences* of sin (suffering, death) out of love, transforming them from punishment into the instrument of redemption; the penal note is real but *subordinate* to satisfaction-through-love.

8. That the Passion was not *absolutely* necessary is argued by Aquinas on three grounds, helpfully gathered by Karlo Broussard (“Did Jesus Have to Die on a Cross?”, Catholic Answers, 2024). (1) God is omnipotent, and remitting sin’s debt another way involves no contradiction: “it was possible for God to deliver mankind otherwise than by the Passion of Christ” (*Summa Theologiae* III, q. 46, a. 2). (2) Sin is ultimately against God alone (“Against you, you only, have I sinned,” Ps. 51:4), so for God to forgive it without exacting satisfaction would be not injustice but mercy — “no more unjust than my forgiving a friend’s offense without willing that he pay for it.” (3) The dignity of Christ’s person is infinite, so any act of his — not the death alone — could have sufficed. “If God had willed

to free man from sin without any satisfaction, He would not have acted against justice” (III, q. 46, a. 2, ad 3).

9. Though not necessary, the Passion was supremely *fitting*. Aquinas (gathered by Broussard) gives many reasons, among them: it manifests at once God’s justice (the debt is truly paid) and his mercy (“man of himself could not satisfy”), *Summa Theologiae* III, q. 46, a. 1; it manifests how much God loves us (q. 46, a. 3; John 15:13; Rom. 5:8); it gives an example of “obedience, humility, constancy, and justice” (q. 46, a. 3; 1 Pet. 2:21); it counters the devil’s pride and tyranny with humility and justice; it fulfills the Passover, Christ being “our paschal lamb” (1 Cor. 5:7); and it merits for Christ the glory of exaltation through lowliness (q. 46, a. 1; Luke 24:26; Phil. 2:8–10). Love, John says, is the key: “God is love” (1 John 4:8), and love acts in freedom, not compulsion.

10. *Summa Theologiae* III, q. 48, treats the Passion as efficacious in several interlocking modes: merit (a. 1), satisfaction (a. 2), sacrifice (a. 3), redemption (a. 4), and efficient causality (a. 6). Aquinas gathers the whole biblical and patristic vocabulary — from Anselm satisfaction, from Augustine sacrifice and the definition of true worship, from the Greek Fathers headship and divinization and the language of ransom, from Aristotle the metaphysics of instrumental causality — and refuses to let any one image swallow the rest. The result is broader than penal substitution and richer than a bare exemplarism.

11. *Summa Theologiae* III, q. 48, a. 4, and q. 49, a. 2: Christ’s death is the *pretium* (“price”) of 1 Peter 1:18–19 and Mark 10:45 (“a ransom for many”). But Aquinas corrects the cruder “ransom paid to the devil” notion of some earlier Fathers: the price is paid to God, in whose justice the debt was held, not to Satan, who had no rights over humanity but only a permitted tyranny justly overthrown. So the biblical word “ransom” (which the Watchtower rightly emphasizes) is retained — but as one mode among several, and read theologically rather than as a bare commercial equivalence. Note too that “ransom” (*lutron*, “price of release”) is itself a metaphor: Jesus did not hand over literal coin, but gave “his life as a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45).

12. On the difference between being *made* righteous and merely being *declared* righteous, see the Council of Trent, *Decree on Justification* (Session 6), which defines justification as “not only the remission of sins, but also the sanctification and renewal of the inward man.” The Catholic doctrine of *infused* grace (Rom. 5:5; Titus 3:5–7; 1 Cor. 6:11) holds that God really cleanses and renews the soul, making it holy, rather than merely crediting Christ’s righteousness to an account while the person remains inwardly unchanged (“imputed” righteousness). This is why, for Aquinas, the cross saves by *incorporation* into Christ — a real transformation — and not by a legal fiction. See *Catechism of the Catholic Church* §§1987–2011.

13. *Summa Theologiae* III, q. 48, a. 1, and q. 8 on the grace of Christ as Head (*gratia capitis*). Because Christ is head of the Church, his Passion is the universal cause of salvation; it reaches individuals through faith, charity, and the sacraments of faith — above all baptism, which configures the believer to Christ’s death (Rom. 6), and the Eucharist, which makes the one sacrifice sacramentally present. Salvation is thus not a bare external imputation but real incorporation into the body of Christ.

14. On the Catholic doctrine of redemption, see *Catechism of the Catholic Church* §§599–623 (“Christ’s Redemptive Death in God’s Plan of Salvation”), especially §615 (Christ’s satisfaction and substitution understood through charity and solidarity, not as the punishment of an innocent), and §§616–617 (the love of Christ as the source of the cross’s saving value). The Council of Trent drew on Aquinas’s synthesis for the theology of merit and the sacrifice of the Mass.

For Further Reading

Summa Theologiae, St. Thomas Aquinas (on the Passion of Christ). Free online at <https://www.newadvent.org/summa/4046.htm>.

Doctrine of the Atonement, The Catholic Encyclopedia. Free online at <https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/02055a.htm>.

Cur Deus Homo, St. Anselm of Canterbury. Free online at https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/anselm_cur_deus_homo.htm.

Catechism of the Catholic Church, §§599–623 (Christ’s redemptive death). Free online at <https://usccb.cld.bz/Catechism-of-the-Catholic-Church2>.

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“Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.” — John 15:13

*Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,
as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be,
world without end. Amen.*

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A Note on Authority

This essay represents the author's articulation of the Catholic faith, drawing on Scripture, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, and especially the theology of St. Thomas Aquinas (*Summa Theologiae* III, qq. 46–49). It is offered as a personal defense, not as an official statement of the Church's teaching. Where this defense aligns with the magisterial teaching of the Church, the credit belongs to the tradition that formed it. Where it falls short, the responsibility is the author's alone.