

GUILT AND THE SCIENCE OF EMOTION: HOW DOES PRAYER FIT?

by George Tsakiridis

Abstract. This article engages sources regarding evolutionary development of guilt (Richard Joyce's *The Evolution of Morality*, Jesse Prinz's *Gut Reactions*, and others) and how they can be used to dialogue with material on the alleviation of guilt in the Christian tradition using examples in the work of Anselm of Canterbury and John Chrysostom. This raises a few key questions. If guilt is an evolutionary trait created to build reputation and relationship, how does this mesh with some theological approaches to solutions for guilt? To be more precise, guilt possibly evolved to create a motivation for beneficial communal actions, and necessitates belief in the authority of the rules that one breaks to induce it. That said, does religion play a role in awareness of one's guilt, while also providing a solution to that guilt? The possibilities are explored in this article as they relate to issues of repentance, atonement, and prayer.

Keywords: Anselm of Canterbury; atonement; John Chrysostom; guilt; Richard Joyce; prayer; Jesse Prinz; repentance

When thinking about the science of emotion and its connections to religious ritual, guilt is a defining element. This article engages issues of guilt from a philosophical/scientific point of view as well as a theological one, connecting the empirical work of the present with theological writings from the Christian tradition of the past. First, I will engage sources on evolutionary development of guilt (Joyce 2006; Prinz 2004) and how they can be used to dialogue with the study of prayer, both psychologically and in Christian tradition. Second, this article addresses psychological and spiritual approaches to guilt riddance. One example of this is in the work of Fraser Watts (2001), as well as some recent psychological experiments. Third, questions of repentance/atonement are addressed through the work of Anselm of Canterbury and John Chrysostom. Fourth, I connect recent guilt theory with these theological sources in an attempt to show how the Christian past can be interpreted in light of these developments.

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In all of this, I attempt to propose that there are two levels working toward guilt riddance in the Christian tradition: (1) There is an intellectual guilt riddance that addresses the problem of ontological guilt, which Anselm presents. (2) There is day-to-day guilt riddance that is seen in the approach of John Chrysostom. Both of these approaches are essential to both Christian tradition and the psychology of guilt. One shows that there is an intellectual solution to guilt that human beings can access, creating a peace from anxiety. The second shows that there are methods to alleviate guilt in people's everyday lives, and these can be tied to religious tradition. So, ultimately this article creates an opening that addresses both ontological and practical guilt, which we see in both the scientific and theological literature.

Before moving into the thrust of the main discussion, it is also worth explaining the parameters of this study. This article is meant to look specifically at a portion of Christian tradition and a segment of the research regarding the philosophical discussion of the science of guilt. It would also be valuable to ask questions of how other religious traditions deal with guilt and other similar "negative" emotions. For example, in the Buddhist tradition, the overcoming of the world on the path to enlightenment also contains certain meditation practices; in Judaism, ceremonial washing/cleansing has a role. The exploration of these ideas will have to wait for another day, though they are related to this issue in the broader discussion of religion and science. Even within the Christian tradition, there are various ways to view guilt and reconciliation, and this article only addresses some of these possibilities, choosing to explore Anselm's work versus theologies that see reconciliation in a less transaction-based manner.

There are also a few definitions that will perhaps help those who do not hold the same theological framework as I do: ontological guilt, practical guilt, reconciliation, forgiveness, atonement, and soteriology (which I use later in the article). I use the term *ontological guilt* to refer to the kind of guiltiness that is a part of the human condition. Many Christians would call this original sin, although it can take on different incarnations in theological doctrines. For purposes of this article, ontological guilt is a condition present in humanity as defined by a type of sinfulness. In contrast, *practical guilt* refers to the kind of guilt that humans experience in day-to-day life as they commit acts that cause relationships to be severed, both relationally and psychologically. In the Christian tradition, this might be seen as one's "sins"—actions that are committed in one's life, versus "sin"—the ontological condition that often is associated with original sin in this tradition. *Sin* and *sins* are typically used in the context of wrongdoing of some sort.

Related to these two types of guilt are the terms *reconciliation*, *forgiveness*, and *atonement*. These three terms are related to each other, and can also be viewed in both the ontological and the practical sense. Again,

I remind the reader that these terms are being used in the context of Christian theology. Reconciliation is the act of repairing one's relationship either with God or with other human beings. Forgiveness is the action on the part of the offended party to restore the relationship. Atonement is found in the actions of the wrongful party to either repair the broken relationship or at least appease one's own psyche, which it seems some forms of atonement take. All of these terms can be seen in both the ontological sense, where the state of being of the human person must be restored through atonement and forgiveness, causing reconciliation, and the practical sense, where it is not the very nature of the person in question, but particular actions. These terms also have broader usages outside of particular religious traditions (such as the one in question), and readers familiar with those usages hopefully will see these connections and follow my argument.

Finally, the term *soteriology* (stemming from Greek) refers to the study of salvation, and is typically used within the context of Christian theology to refer to the ontological salvation of the human person (or the human race). It is evident how this might be useful in the context of this discussion where ontological guilt is one of the key issues in question. It is my hope that this brief exposition of terms will be beneficial to readers who may not be familiar with some of these aspects of the Christian tradition.

Guilt has been present since the beginnings of Christianity and holds a prominent place in most theological frameworks. It is so central, in fact, that it is often criticized for this from both without and within the tradition for this prominence. For many Christians, at least traditionally, the need to overcome ontological sinfulness is at the root of the Christian message. In addition, the Christian struggles with both individual and corporate sinfulness in his or her life from day to day. The two scholastic examples (Anselm and Chrysostom) that I present in this article address these two major problems for traditional Christianity, and shed light on why this is relevant in the context of modern science.

THE SCIENCE OF GUILT

The science of guilt is contextually set in a broader range of emotions, and thus any discussion of guilt must be thought of as in that setting. My intent in this study is not to give a full presentation of this range, which would be quite lengthy, but to draw ideas from some authors on the science of guilt in order to support the overall thesis of this article. Guilt will be connected briefly with the ideas of sadness and shame, but will not move broadly beyond that.

In Richard Joyce's *The Evolution of Morality*, he presents guilt as something that is self-inflicted. "[O]ne judges oneself to be guilty," and without this judgment there is no such thing as guilt (Joyce 2006, 102). This is

important to note right away. If one does not buy into the moral or legal framework that induces such guilt there will be no sense of guilt. One can be afraid of the consequences of breaking a law without experiencing the emotion of guilt. This is where Joyce adds to Sigmund Freud's view that guilt is just a need to be punished (Joyce 2006, 103). Therefore, it would seem that the person who is guilty has bought deeply into the system of rules for morality which they have "sinned" against. Thus, they feel the emotion of guilt knowing they have broken these rules. Joyce also connects the idea that guilt is not just an emotion or "intellectual power," but an intellectually informed emotion, requiring the use of concepts (Joyce 2006, 102). He takes this a step further, and gives the example of a former Roman Catholic who may no longer believe that contraception is sinful, yet still has recurrent feelings that it is wrong. In this case, Joyce still claims that there is an intellectual hold of some sort over the individual, and it is not devoid of concept (Joyce 2006, 103–04). He further makes this point in his conclusions, where he states that guilt is both an innate mechanism and requires the use of language—that is, "nonlanguage-users cannot have the emotion of guilt" (something he had addressed earlier). He gives the example of his childhood dog, which was not able to have actual guilt, presumably because he did not use language. Connected to the notion that guilt is innate is the idea that human beings make judgments about normative moral frameworks innately (Joyce 2006, 104). It is clear that for Joyce, guilt is both conceptual and emotional. This is brought forth most clearly in the assumption that, in order to feel guilt, one must accept the framework for the offense one has committed. In other words, if one does not buy into the rules, there will be no guilt.

Second, for Joyce, "desert" ties closely to the concept of guilt. He compares communities of humans to communities of other hypothetical creatures. In this he shows that human beings have a strong concept of people getting what they deserve for their actions, which is tied to moral judgment (Joyce 2006, 67–68). This is connected to guilt because in order to feel guilty one must receive or feel like they receive the "deserts" that they are due. One must receive punishment or make amends for the action in question, otherwise justice is not satisfied (Joyce 2006, 68–69). This also links to the idea that language must be necessary for guilt, in that we might raise the question of whether certain animals feel guilt based upon their having a concept of desert and of language.¹

Third, Joyce goes on to argue in the evolutionary realm that natural selection has chosen the conscience as a benefit: first, to satisfy group behavior, and second to build reputation. To the first point, he argues that moral judgments must be seen in a relational context. Even self-directed judgments must be related to a broader network of community beliefs (Joyce 2006, 115–18). He explains this as follows:

No matter how much I dislike something, this inclination alone is not relevant to my judgments concerning *others* pursuing that thing: “I won’t pursue X because I don’t like X” makes perfect sense, but “You won’t pursue X because I don’t like X” makes little sense. By comparison, the assertion of “The pursuit of X is morally wrong” demands both *my* avoidance of X and *yours*. (Joyce 2006, 117)

In this quote we see that there must be common ground within moral judgments, thus making morality a community ideal, not just an individual one. So, when a person makes a self-directed judgment, they are still tied to a communal standard. Thus, the way a person’s actions are received will affect the decisions they make (Joyce 2006, 115–17). This also connects back to the concept that language is a necessary component of morality (Joyce 2006, 115).

To the second point, Joyce states that beneficial moral actions may be an advantage and self-harming moral actions may be detrimental; this is no surprise. What is surprising is that within this argument he states that sometimes “even *imprudent* actions may . . . be to [an individual’s] advantage” (Joyce 2006, 118). The argument, derived from economist Robert Frank, basically states that a person who will pursue action even when it is not to their immediate benefit may still win out in the long term. This is because either the threat of the action will result in their getting what they wish, or they will build a reputation for being trustworthy. Thus, if one was choosing whether to be such a person or not, one would choose affirmatively, even though natural selection is actually doing the “choosing” (Joyce 2006, 119–20).² Joyce takes Frank’s argument even further, connecting it to the need for a cognitive element (which makes sense in light of earlier statements on conceptualization of guilt). He does this by showing that cognitive commitments, even devoid of an emotional element, can still have a powerful hold in the relational realm. He states, “The very fact that abiding by morality is in general a conspicuously costly undertaking gives it obvious potentiality for serving as a public commitment” (Joyce 2006, 122). The point that Joyce makes is that there is an involved commitment to living one’s life and raising one’s family with certain moral beliefs that goes beyond just the emotional responses. There must be a cognitive element. In this, a person shows himself to be a dependable member of a community. He argues that guilt is at the center of the moral conscience, and since guilt does not have the same physiological prominence that other emotions do, it must be complemented with this deeper cognitive element (Joyce 2006, 122–23).³

On the other hand, in the work of Jesse Prinz, we see a somewhat different approach than Joyce, but still relevant to this study. Prinz views guilt as something that is embodied. He differs from Joyce in that he sees possible facial expressions as visible representations of guilt, in part because

he makes the case that no true emotion can be disembodied (Prinz 2007, 55, 59–60). Prinz states:

We often speak of guilt pangs. One can be wracked by guilt, haunted by guilt, and driven to despair by guilt. Guilt makes us avoid the eyes of those we've betrayed, and it prods us to seek forgiveness. None of these familiar observations prove that guilt is embodied, but they are suggestive. Imagine the killer who testifies to feeling guilty but seems totally unshaken. If every automatic response were at baseline levels, we would be suspicious. The suspicion derives from the fact that we tacitly recognize a bodily disruption when we ourselves feel guilty. (Prinz 2007, 59)

He goes on to state that in an informal study subjects did cite guilt as the emotion being portrayed in a frowning face (Prinz 2007, 59–60). What this tells us is that there is not conclusive evidence of a facial expression for guilt, but the early and anecdotal evidence seems to point in this direction. For Prinz, guilt is clearly somatic, but he does see the representation of “concerns, as cognitive theories maintain” (Prinz 2007, 65). He goes on to distinguish himself from Joyce, however, in stating that although guilt feelings represent concerns, they do not “contain conceptual constituents” (Prinz 2007, 65). In this way he seems to be agreeing with Joyce, but not as deeply. For Prinz, the embodiment of emotion is a key concept, and the problem is that there are not enough somatic states to represent the diversity of emotions; this makes it harder to prove that guilt has a distinct physical expression as it overlaps with the expression of sadness (Prinz 2007, 65). The main point we can garner from all of this is that he holds that emotion must be embodied and have physical representation. This seems to follow from his view of emotion that “noncognitive theories are independently more plausible” than cognitive ones (Prinz 2007, 56).

Moving forward, Prinz also presents the evolutionary development and advantages to guilt. We see some similar concepts to Joyce, but perhaps a more developed version. Both altruism and reputation are important to Prinz's presentation of guilt. According to Robert Frank, altruism is important to natural selection because a society of all cheaters would not be evolutionarily advantageous. The problem is that cheating helps the cheater and there are many opportunities to cheat. For those that are honest, they need a way to represent their honesty. They could say they are honest, but the cheaters also will say the same thing because they do not care if they lie. There are two ways that evolutionary natural selection can do this: one, by facial expressions, and two, by creating a reputation of not cheating (Prinz 2004, 124–25).⁴

The first of these, facial expression, is a bit tricky. As stated earlier, there is some confusion as to whether one can actually make an expression for guilt. In Frank's account, we know someone is more trustworthy if, when caught in a transgression, they show guilt. If they do not, then they

would be less morally inclined (Prinz 2004, 124–25). Still, at the time of publishing of *Gut Reactions* (2004), as well as *The Emotional Construction of Morals* (2007), Prinz has shown us that facial expressions are not a reliable indicator of guilt (Prinz 2004, 126–27). Perhaps, however, the evidence is mounting, as shown above.

The second way of showing that one is not a cheater is by building a reputation for not cheating. This was discussed earlier in Joyce, and here Prinz does the same, drawing on Frank. The argument states that people should have dealings with those who do not make guilty expressions because they are not doing things that cause guilt. Frank states that one can look for marks of sympathy, but there is no facial expression for them (Prinz 2004, 127). In the end, Prinz comes to the conclusion that these examples of the need for guilt to evolve through natural selection are limited and that cultural adaptation might explain them. However, he does seem to move toward the possibility of physical expressions for guilt in his later work, as I initially presented. The other important issue is the question of whether guilt is innate. Prinz seems to state that there are other possibilities for guilt as a combination of other factors: “sadness, a concept of transgression, and associative learning,” which would then leave us with other explanations for guilt’s origins (Prinz 2004, 128–29). If guilt is not innate, then it must be learned. However, indicators of guilt and shame show up very early in life, possibly as early as two years of age (Prinz 2007, 116–17). If true, this still raises the question of whether this is a learned behavior or not. At such an early age, could it be evidence for innateness? In addition, Prinz states, “A person can have moral attitudes without grasping concepts that refer to moral emotions. The crucial thing is not emotion concepts, but the emotions themselves” (Prinz 2007, 116–17). Again, could this hint at some sort of innateness to the emotion of guilt? This perhaps is a question for another day, as the evidence is still inconclusive, but at the minimum, at least for Prinz, it hints at the embodiment of this emotion.

Prinz also states that Frank and Trivers give us “three roles for guilt in facilitating reciprocal altruism. Guilt signals moral character through facial expressions, guilt enhances reputation by deterring us from cheating, and guilt plays a reparative role when we do in fact cheat” (Prinz 2004, 126). It is in the third of these roles that reconciliation behavior is observed. If guilt is a transgression against another person, then in order to repair damage something may need to be done in regard to that personal relationship. The evidence suggests that if one commits a wrongdoing against another person they will feel guilt. If they commit a wrongdoing against nature, they will feel shame. If the wrongdoing is against the community, there is a split between one’s reaction being either guilt or shame (Prinz 2007, 77). This is also tied to the fact that sadness and guilt may be connected. The greatest sadness is caused by losing one whom you love. In guilt, one may feel that they will have great loss if they have harmed someone because

that person may then withdraw affection. Ultimately, Prinz states, "Guilt is sadness that has been calibrated to acts that harm people about whom we care" (Prinz 2007, 78). Thus, guilt is utterly personal and tied to the idea of loss.

Prinz states two ways to reconcile if one does feel guilty: to confess the wrongdoing, or to make amends by doing something good. Interestingly enough, there is some evidence to show that if a person employs one of these strategies, they will be less likely to employ the other. They are not mutually exclusive, but an experiment Prinz refers to, which set up a charity donation stand near a Catholic confessional, found that people were more apt to donate on the way to confession than they were on the way out (Prinz 2007, 103). Although this experiment is not the final word, it is important to our study to note that both confession and making amends are ways of treating the guilt that arises within a person. This guilt reaction might be innate, it might be caused by conceptual frameworks, or it might be a learned emotional response, but in any case guilt is an emotional or cognitive reality and must be treated as such.

In addition, before moving on to the next topic, it must be stated that emotions are a complex and interconnected area of study. As shown in the connections between guilt and sadness and guilt and shame, guilt is tied to other areas of the self's emotions and this could ignite a much broader study of this network of ideas. This can be seen in both the scientific and the theological realm.

So, in the scientific study of guilt there are some clear ideas that can be drawn. First, one must "buy into the rules," so to speak, in order to feel guilty. One will not feel guilt unless one is transgressing against a rule to which they hold. This connects to the idea of "deserts," where one feels that a given punishment against them is a just one within their context. Second, guilt is a community endeavor, as it is at its core a relational emotion. This may cause an evolutionary advantage for some, as it can possibly be shown through facial expressions and building a reputation for honesty. Third, guilt is personal and tied to loss. It can be alleviated through confession or the making of amends. These three ideas are of importance as this discussion moves forward.

PSYCHOLOGICAL APPROACHES TO GUILT RIDDANCE

With the evolutionary science of guilt now in view, it is helpful to look at what recent research in psychology says about ridding oneself of guilt. Blake Riek suggests that guilt is an important motivator for one's seeking of forgiveness (Riek 2010). In his study, he looks at five factors that potentially influence guilty people who seek forgiveness: closeness of relationship, feelings of responsibility for the action, severity of the transgression, the length of rumination over the offense by the perpetrator, and the anger of

the perpetrator toward the victim (247). Riek refers to these, respectively, as closeness, responsibility, severity, rumination, and anger. The first four are obviously indicators of more likely forgiveness, while the last indicates less likely forgiveness (249). The results of the study showed that guilt was a mediating factor for all five, but that closeness of relationship also had a direct correlation to the seeking of forgiveness apart from the need to have guilt as a mediator. In addition, responsibility did not affect feelings of guilt to a great degree (250–52).⁵ One thing that we can draw from this study is that the closeness of relationship is a huge factor in one's seeking of forgiveness. This is true to the extent that a person who values a relationship with another will seek out reconciliation without the added prodding of guilt. This would seem to support Prinz's assertion that guilt is tied to sadness and loss. Relationship is a key factor in seeking reconciliation, which intuitively makes sense.

An earlier study conducted by Chen-Bo Zhong and Katie Liljenquist investigated people's need for absolution of guilt and cleansing. They performed a number of psychological experiments that tested people's desire for cleanliness or reaction to cleaning in the context of unethical/ethical behavior (Zhong and Liljenquist 2006, 1451–52). For example, they set up an experiment where subjects were to describe something unethical they had done and then some used an antiseptic wipe while others did not. In the wake of this, those who used the wipe were less likely to be helpful to someone in need than those who had not used the wipe. This would seem to indicate that those who had washed away their sins, so to speak, did not feel as guilty afterwards (1452). Early in the article they state that “[t]he association between bodily and moral purity may be based not only in cognition, but in emotion as well” (1451). The article goes on to say:

Although the experience of pure disgust devoid of moral connotations can be subjectively and behaviorally differentiated from the experience of disgust with moral connotations, they coincide considerably. Specifically, previous research suggests that pure disgust and moral disgust not only lead to similar facial expressions and physiological activation but also recruit partially overlapping brain regions, mainly in the frontal and temporal lobes. Given the psychological, physiological, and neurological overlap between physical and moral disgust, physical cleansing acts that mitigate physical disgust might also reduce social or moral disgust, thereby alleviating moral condemnation. (Zhong and Liljenquist 2006, 1451)

So it is clear that the intention is to connect the psychological and the physiological. The results of this study show conclusively that there was a connection between one's guilt and the need for cleansing, both psychologically and physically. First, they tested to see if after thinking about an ethical or unethical act subjects were more likely to do a word completion exercise by filling in words related to cleansing versus other options. The next study was to see if after writing out a story relating an

ethical or unethical experience and then rating various products if those who wrote an unethical story were more likely to rate cleaning-related products higher. The next study asked participants after thinking about an ethical or unethical act if they would take a pencil or an antiseptic wipe. In all three cases, the participants divided along the lines of “cleanliness.” Those who would be expected to feel guiltier chose the option that would be more cleansing. The fourth experiment, which I noted earlier, showed a clear connection between the feeling of guilt and the need for washing to help absolve that guilt (Zhong and Liljenquist 2006, 1451–52). So, in light of this experiment, it would seem quite possible that a ritual washing of sorts would help to absolve the stain of guilt. The study found the appropriately called “Macbeth effect,” drawing on the literary character of Lady Macbeth who clearly felt subconscious guilt (Zhong and Liljenquist 2006, 1451–52).⁶

Also worth briefly noting are a study by Spike W. S. Lee and Norbert Schwarz (2010), as well as a more recent study by Liljenquist, and Zhong with Adam D. Galinsky (2010). In the Lee and Schwarz study, the authors suggest that not only will cleansing cause guilt alleviation, but that cleansing causes one to be less likely to feel the need to justify their decisions (2010, 709). Thus, cleansing would seem to make one more comfortable with one’s own decision history (Lee and Schwarz 2010, 709). In the second study, Liljenquist, Zhong, and Galinsky (2010) argue that clean scents are more likely to encourage altruistic behavior, such as reciprocity and charity (381–82).⁷ Although not directly related to our study, these articles do suggest that cleansing is related to psychological well-being in different cases.

In addition, the work of Fraser Watts has engaged both psychology and theology. In his essay in his edited volume on prayer (Watts 2001), he addresses this combination. He looks at many different types of prayer, but his discussion on confession is most relevant for this study. In this essay, Watts presents a theological approach to guilt within a psychological framework. He, like the authors I have already discussed, advocates for guilt as a tool to alert one to the need for forgiveness. He states: “It is appropriate to feel guilt in proportion to wrong we have done,” and “Confession is an opportunity for self-appraisal, discernment and penitence, but not just for abject guilt” (Watts 2001, 41). He goes on to discuss the difference between intellectual belief in forgiveness and actually receiving it. He compares this with the psychotherapeutic process of intellectual acknowledgement and “effective insight” where it takes hold (41–42). He then mentions the benefits of sacrament in this process, specifically confession with a priest versus a general, congregational confession (42). Perhaps absolution comes in the knowledge that another person understands the true nature of one’s sins and yet still offers forgiveness versus a general forgiveness that leaves

the transgressor to wonder if one is truly forgiven. As this study moves forward, this may be applied to both the legal understanding of Anselm's work and the repentance seen in the work of John Chrysostom.

In the same vein, Sara Savage presents us with a discussion promoting the benefits of holistic prayer—body and mind. Without going too deep at this juncture, Savage argues for the need to engage body in prayer as well as mind. She draws on the Old Testament tradition, citing that the Church Fathers were averse to engaging the body in prayer (which is debatable, depending on the movement to which she refers), but that the roots of Christianity have this physical component. The dualism of the body-soul divide is a key point of contention in this discussion (Savage 2001, 104). If one accepts the tradition that sees the body, and hence emotions, as something to be overcome in prayer, then this deeply affects how one views these emotions themselves.

In looking at these authors we catch a glimpse at the intersection of psychology and theology through both clinical and research-oriented presentations. Also worth a brief note is the work of Kenneth Pargament, who has done research on the topic of “spiritually integrated psychotherapy” (SIP). In his work, he shows that SIP can be shown to be more beneficial than psychotherapy without a spiritual component (Pargament 2007). This bears much fruit for a discussion on the treatment of guilt through prayer, as it engages a key tool in the battle against guilt for those spiritually minded.

Through experiment and psychological discussion, this section has shown that guilt is relationship-based (in the work of Riek), and can also be alleviated through ritual and prayer, connecting the psychological with the theological (seen in the work of Zhong and Liljenquist, Watts, and Savage).

THEOLOGICAL APPROACHES TO GUILT

In the theological realm, treatment of guilt has been at the center of much of the soteriological, as well as practical discourse. For purposes of this article, I present two ends of the spectrum on the issue of guilt from Christian tradition. One is the forensic or legal approach to guilt, represented by Anselm of Canterbury. On the other end, we have personal, or “practical,” treatment of guilt as it relates to prayer, for which I use John Chrysostom's work as an example.

In Anselm's *Cur Deus Homo* (*Why God Became Man*), he presents the reasons why there was need of a God-man, Jesus Christ, in the setting of the feudal system of the Middle Ages. Although some aspects of this setting are not necessary for other atonement theories (theories relating to the repair of the human–divine relationship), Anselm's work has been widely accepted by many Christian theologians as a basic standard. In *Cur Deus Homo*,

Anselm argues that God's honor has been besmirched by humanity's sin and this honor must be repaid by someone who is able to pay back honor of this magnitude. Because an infinite being has had his honor taken by a finite being, it is impossible for said finite being to repay this debt. In a legal sense, guilt for this sin can never be overcome unless a being who is both God and human—infinite and finite—can repay this debt.

He gets to the heart of the matter in Book I, Chapter XI, where he discusses the nature of sin. He states: "Thus to sin is the same thing as not to render his due to God" (Anselm 1956, 119). He then goes on to discuss what it means to make satisfaction for sin:

Moreover, as long as he does not repay what he has stolen, he remains at fault. And it is not enough merely to return what was taken away; in view of the insult committed, he must give back more than he took away. For it is not enough for someone who has injured another's health to restore his health without making some recompense for the pain and injury suffered, and, similarly, it is not enough for someone who violates another's honor to restore the honor, unless he makes some kind of restitution that will please him who was dishonored, according to the extent of the injury and dishonor. (Anselm 1956, 119)

In this description, we see that sin is a personal dishonoring of God that must be reconciled by returning the honor taken and then some. Here, the restitution for sin or the guilt imputed on the human subject must be paid in a legal sense. Anselm goes on in Chapter XII to argue that God cannot forgive this debt owed because it would go against His sense of justice. If God were to do something unjust it would prove that He is not God (Anselm 1956, 121).

The argument, as it is relevant to this study, picks up in Chapter XIX. He answers the question from Boso (the foil in this dialogical text) whether one must pray for forgiveness for debts if they actually pay their debt—in a soteriological sense. [At this point Boso is referencing the Lord's Prayer.] Anselm answers:

He who does not pay says, "Forgive," in vain. But he who pays prays, because the very prayer itself is part of the payment. For God is in debt to no one, but every creature is in debt to him, and therefore it is not proper for a man to deal with God as an equal with an equal. (Anselm 1956, 136)

In this passage, we see an interesting reference to prayer as something that is ongoing with payment for one's transgressions. Anselm goes on in Chapter XX to speak of satisfaction in proportion to one's sin. He speaks of "longing to reach that for which you were made—it is with this that prayer has to do—and sorrow because you are not yet there, and fear lest you fail to reach it" (Anselm 1956, 137). Again he speaks of prayer in terms of the Christian's life, but not dealing with the overall need for payment—for satisfaction. This has ramifications for the feelings of guilt that a sinful

person might have in conjunction with repairing a relationship, while not addressing the overall soteriological solution for making satisfaction.

Anselm continues in Chapters XXIII through XXV to address the final part of his argument, culminating with the fact that only Christ saves. For this study, one particular exchange stands out in Chapter XXIV. Speaking about whether repaying a debt that a person is unable to pay is just or unjust, the exchange between Anselm and Boso goes as follows:

A. Perhaps if his inability has no cause in himself, he can be partially excused. But if there is any **guilt** in that inability, it neither lightens the sin nor excuses him when he fails to pay his debt. Suppose that a man enjoins some task on his servant, and charges him not to throw himself into a pit which he points out to him, out of which he cannot possibly escape. But that servant despises the command and the warning of his master and, of his own **free will**, throws himself into the pit that has been shown him, so that he is unable to carry out his assigned task. Do you think that this inability is worth anything as an excuse for not performing the assigned task?

B. Not at all. On the contrary, it increases his **guilt**, since he brought this inability on himself. For he sinned doubly, because he did not do what he was ordered to do, while what he was commanded not to do he did.

A. Thus man is inexcusable, because **he willingly incurred that debt**, which he cannot pay, and by his own fault involved himself in this inability, so that he can pay neither what he owed before sin—namely to refrain from sin—nor what he owes on account of sin For he freely performed the action by which he lost that power and brought this inability on himself. (Anselm 1956, 142, bold emphases mine)

Thus, for Anselm, even in a larger, soteriological (salvific) sense, guilt is imputed on humanity due to free choice, and therefore they are responsible for the weight of reconciliation. Although individual human beings did not directly create this imputed guilt, it is systemically present due to original sin. Ultimately, Anselm builds to the point where he ends this first book (Chapter XXV) by showing that only Christ can save because humans owe a debt they cannot repay alone, and yet they must repay it to achieve salvation (Anselm 1956, 145–46). In Book II, this becomes explicit as Anselm shows that only Christ, the God-man, could make satisfaction (Anselm 1956, 150–52). This legal satisfaction for guilt can be a source of intellectual comfort for those experiencing guilt of an ontological nature often associated with original sin. This ontological guilt was defined earlier in the article as “a condition present in humanity as defined by a type of sinfulness.” In other words, Anselm’s framework addresses this implicit human condition of guilt.

On the other end of the spectrum of reconciliation, we have John Chrysostom, who addresses day-to-day guilt of the sinner in his treatise *On Repentance and Prayer*. In this text, Chrysostom argues for some of the traditional themes of repentance in Christianity within the context of

dealing with reconciliation. Early on he suggests the reading of Scripture for dealing with loss:

The reading of Scripture destroys the excessiveness and the intensity of pain and grants a consolation that is much more delightful and pleasant than any shade. It grants you much comfort not only in the loss of property or in the loss of children, or in any other such loss, but even in the worst circumstances of sin. (John Chrysostom 1998, 43)

The overall thrust of the treatise is comforting those who are suffering in sin or the guilt of sin. Chrysostom argues that one must be penitent before God and that although there is comfort in Scripture and prayer, this is only done with the proper approach to prayer—with a rightly intentioned heart.

We see examples of this in multiple places. He states in Verse 10, “Our love and pursuit of wisdom and our disdain for worldly things were great . . . all advanced themselves in the fear of God with prayers and tears” (John Chrysostom 1998, 47). This is in contrast with Verse 11: “When someone repeatedly sins and obtains forgiveness from God . . . God prepares him . . . so he may crush him completely and deprive him of the appointed time for repentance—something which happened to Pharaoh” (John Chrysostom 1998, 47–48). Here, we see that it is proper to approach God with prayer and tears—visible signs of repentance; the one who takes advantage of continual forgiveness will ultimately fail at reconciliation. Perhaps this is because they do not show true repentance.

The visible signs of repentance and the proper intention are made even clearer in Verses 18 through 20. In 18 he speaks of how one must approach humans with flattery and money, while in approaching God “it suffices for you simply to shout with the heart and offer tears, and he will immediately enter into your soul to assist you” (John Chrysostom 1998, 51). He goes on to reference the Sermon on the Mount and the command to pray in secret. This also indicates the intention of the penitent:

Let us pray neither for show nor against our enemies . . . Since we simply tell our affairs to the lawyers, who counsel and speak publicly before secular judges and we leave them to find the means of defense . . . we must all the more act this way toward God. Did you tell Him your injury? Did you tell Him everything you suffered? Do not tell Him these and how to help you, because He realizes exactly your best interest. (John Chrysostom 1998, 52)

He goes on to contrast this with those, presumably pagans, who “recite thousands of verses . . . This is completely absurd” (John Chrysostom 1998, 52). Clearly, for Chrysostom, honesty in prayer and direct discourse is important. He does this by paralleling honest prayer with the direct testimony one would find in a legal trial, where facts are laid plain.

Verse 19 begins with the example of the publican who was fully vulnerable before God. Chrysostom states:

[P]ray and supplicate only as did the publican, who repeatedly said: ‘*God be merciful unto me a sinner.*’ . . . Therefore, in this way, brethren, let us pursue wisdom with toil and humility, beating our breasts like the publican, and we will succeed in getting whatever we ask for; but when we pray filled with anger and wrath, we are hated by God and are found to be an abomination before him. (John Chrysostom 1998, 52–53)

Humility is a key component in a prayer of repentance. Again, this supports the argument that intention is a crucial part of reconciliation. The visible signs, such as tears or the beating of one’s chest, tell God (or another person) that the transgressor is truly sorry and wishes to reconcile. Humility is repeated in Verse 20, where Chrysostom summarizes the argument.

Let us crush our thought, humble our souls, and pray for ourselves as well as for those who have hurt us. For when you want to persuade the Judge to help your soul and take your part, never pit Him against the one who grieved you. For such is the character of the Judge, that, above all, He sanctions and grants the requests of those who pray for their enemies, who do not bear malice, who do not rise up against their enemies. As long as they remain unrepentant, however, God fights them all the more. (John Chrysostom 1998, 53)

Here we see that humility is essential to one who is in prayer. The other side of forgiveness also comes into discussion, as the ones who are repentant for their own sin may also be forgiving for the sins committed against them. This completes the reciprocal relationship that is seen in the parable of the debt forgiven in the Gospels. How can one expect forgiveness for their wrongs, while not being able to forgive others? This seems to be an implicit message in Chrysostom’s presentation.

Overall, we see in Anselm and Chrysostom ways of treating guilt in both a legal and personal sense. Anselm presents a system that allows the human person to alleviate guilt through a form of knowledge acceptance. In *Cur Deus Homo*, he gives a logical presentation of why forensic guilt is eased. In the work of John Chrysostom, guilt is alleviated through repentance and tears, connecting back to some of the physical aspects of the emotion of guilt we see in the discussion of the work of Joyce and Prinz. It is with these in mind that we move back to the dialogue with the science of guilt, and can begin to draw conclusions from this overall study.

THE SCIENCE OF GUILT AND CHRISTIAN TRADITION: WHERE DOES PRAYER FIT?

So, after looking at the sciences concerning guilt and the Christian tradition on guilt, different conclusions can be drawn. First, guilt can be viewed as a concept. This has ramifications for legal applications of treating guilt. Second, guilt can be viewed as a true emotion, which has evolutionary and relational applications for treating guilt. Third, guilt can be viewed as

an embodied emotion, which has important connections to the issue of dualism and wholeness of the body. Fourth, guilt can be viewed as needing both physical and psychological treatments, connecting to ideas of ritual washing and baptism.

If we view guilt as a conceptually created entity, apart from being a physically developed trait via natural selection, this would mean that the treatment of guilt can also be approached in a logical way. Cognitive treatment should appease this guilt, where knowledge becomes power. If one knows what the purpose of guilt is, then rational thought and acceptance of knowledge can appease it objectively. This takes shape in the theological realm in the work of Anselm of Canterbury. Anselm is advocating for the guilt imputed on humanity by sin to be paid in a legal sense by Christ, but there are also hints of treatment for daily sin in prayer. For Anselm, treatment of guilt in a broader sense is a legal transaction that must be paid. The treatise *Cur Deus Homo* explains how and why this is done. The transaction in guilt is between God and humanity. As we see in Joyce, that one must accept the “rules” in order to feel guilty, the overall system of guilt is a legal construct.

On the other hand, if we accept that guilt is an emotion with possible embodiment and the need for visual representation, as we see in Prinz, and to a lesser degree in Joyce, Chrysostom’s view of prayer and repentance fits nicely. The transaction is still relational, between God and humanity, but humans must visibly show their remorse through tears and actions. In fact, Chrysostom states that if one continues to transgress, he or she will be beyond forgiveness, which may fit in an evolutionary model in which one needs to build a reputation for honesty. Anselm addresses this daily approach to guilt in part, but not to the same depth as Chrysostom. As we see in Joyce and Prinz, the communal relationship and laws that ultimately govern guilt would apply to the relationship between God and humanity as they do to human relations. This bears a bit more exploration, but on another day.

In the same vein, if guilt is embodied it raises questions about dualism and the body-soul relationship. If guilt is an emotion that is embodied, it has far different ramifications than if it is only a conceptual construction. This applies both in the question of what makes us human, as well as how we treat guilt for transgression. Is guilt something to be purged or embraced? Can we defeat guilt with thought alone or does it require physical attention? The evidence would seem to point in both directions. Work with the Greek philosophical tradition may be helpful as this study moves to the next stage.

In addition, there would seem to be a connection between Chrysostom’s presentation of the true sadness shown in repentance and the relationship between the emotions of guilt and sadness discussed by Prinz. This relation bears further study in the context of Christian tradition.

As a side note, but still relevant to this discussion, what about the question of washing away guilt? The study by Zhong and Liljenquist (2006) seems to demonstrate that ritual washing, and maybe even cognitive “cleansing,” is a necessary part of guilt removal. This ties in closely to the Christian (and for that matter Jewish or Sikh) ritual of baptism. Does the tradition show us that cleansing for guilt is necessary? This, perhaps, is another project.

Tapping into the knowledge of Anselmian forgiveness may give a person peace that their guilt is taken care of, in an ontological sense, even if individual cases of guilt are not satisfied and must be dealt with in prayer or confession on an individual basis. The current science seems to show that guilt is both a cognitive and a somatic entity and must be treated in a variety of ways. It is not necessarily a bad thing, but may be a signal of needed reconciliation for both evolutionary and spiritual benefit. So where can prayer fit? Prayer gives the transgressor an avenue of relief that treats both the body and the spirit, addressing both evolutionary and spiritual needs.

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NOTES

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1. This is reminiscent of the work of Paul Ricoeur’s work in Ricoeur (1969, 348). There he states that “[t]he symbol gives rise to thought.” In other words, there must be a foundation with which to begin description of a reality. In fact, Ricoeur specifically mentions guilt as one of the foundational symbols of evil. The exposition of this connection will wait for another day.

2. Robert Frank’s work can be found in Frank (1988).

3. On these pages he also states that guilt does not have a facial expression related to it, unlike fear, anger, and joy. Prinz may disagree with this in part, as we will see later in this article.

4. Prinz is citing Frank (1988), which was mentioned previously by Joyce. See also Trivers (1971).

5. I do wonder how much the sample in this experiment affected the results. Since 48 “undergraduate students at a mid-western Christian college” (Riek 2010, 249) were the ones involved in the study, I raise the question of whether they had prior beliefs or Christian cultural influences that could have affected the results. Still, this does not negate the study, but one wonders what the results might look like with a different sample. The author does admit the limitation of the sample size (252), which may also implicitly include this concern.

6. On the other hand, a more recent study shows that these results were not repeatable (Fayard et al. 2009). At first glance this raises some serious questions for the work just described, but the reasons for the different results will bear more research. In Fayard et al.’s study, they recreated the third and fourth studies from Zhong and Liljenquist (2006) in which (1) a subject was asked to recall a memory and if they recalled an unethical one they took a hand-wipe as a free gift versus a pencil, and (2) a subject recalled an unethical action and then either cleansed their hands or did not (Fayard et al. 2009, 22; Zhong and Liljenquist 2006, 1452). In both experiments, which Fayard et al. labeled “Study 1” and “Study 2,” a larger sample size was used. Study 1 had 210 participants and Study 2 had 119 participants, as opposed to Zhong and Liljenquist’s sample sizes of 32 and 45, respectively, a significant increase (Fayard

et al. 2009, 21–22). In addition, other data was obtained about the background of the subjects, such as their conscientiousness for Study 1, and extra conditions (clean scent and the rubbing of one's hands) to Study 2 (Fayard et al., 22–25). As previously stated, the conclusions of both studies showed that Zhong and Liljenquist's findings were not repeatable under this adjusted testing. This experiment did not test the first two of Zhong and Liljenquist's studies, nor were they "exact replications" as the authors state (Fayard et al., 27). Still, these results are worth noting for our study and show that the experiments surrounding guilt and absolution are not fully clear. That said, in general, scientific experiments tell us certain truths within their defined scope, and one must be careful not to extrapolate too far beyond what is actually being stated.

7. It also might be interesting to study what scents are associated with cleanliness, as this may be a culturally determined variable.

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