

## STUMP'S FORGIVENESS

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**Abstract.** To love someone, Eleonore Stump tells us, is to have two desires: a desire for her objective good and a desire for union with her. In *Atonement*, Stump claims that loving someone — understood as having these desires — is necessary and sufficient for morally appropriate forgiveness. I offer several arguments against this claim.

### I. STUMP'S FORGIVENESS

In *Atonement*, Eleonore Stump tells us that love is two interconnected desires: (1) the desire for the good of the beloved; and (2) the desire for union with the beloved. As it turns out, these two desires, Stump claims, are also necessary and sufficient for forgiveness. “On my view”, she writes, “love is necessary and sufficient for forgiveness” (Stump 2018, 438, n. 47). This means that the two desires of love are necessary and sufficient for forgiveness. As such, there are two ways to fail to forgive: you fail to desire the objective good of the other, or you fail to desire union with her.<sup>1</sup> Let us then consider:

Basic Claim: Loving someone is necessary and sufficient for forgiving her.

Two initial clarifications about the Basic Claim are in order. Although Stump claims that the two desires of love are necessary and sufficient for forgiveness, she is explicit in denying that forgiveness should be thought of as *nothing but* the conjunction of these two desires (i.e., as nothing over and beyond love). Something else must be added to these desires to get to the thing that *is* forgiveness. She gives the following analogy: “Being risible is necessary and sufficient for being human — anything that is risible is human and nothing that is not risible is human — but being human is not reducible to being risible. Risibility picks out human beings by an accident which is had by all and only human beings, but the nature of human beings is not nothing but risibility” (438, n. 47). Stump is therefore not attempting to give an account of the *nature* of forgiveness.<sup>2</sup> Nor is she giving us a *definition* of forgiveness. We are simply given two conditions that are individually necessary and jointly sufficient for forgiveness.

Second, these necessary and sufficient conditions are intended only to apply to *morally appropriate* forgiveness.<sup>3</sup> That qualifier is crucial: Stump does not claim that these two desires are necessary and sufficient for just any instance of forgiveness. As we proceed then, I will assume that our discussion is about morally appropriate forgiveness. I’ll usually drop the qualifier and proceed to talk simply of forgiveness.

1 “Since love emerges from the interaction of two desires, for the good of the beloved and for union with her, the absence of either desire is sufficient to undermine love. To the extent to which love is implicated in forgiveness, the absence of either desire undermines forgiveness, too”, Eleonore Stump, *Atonement* (OUP, 2018), 81–82.

2 For an overview of recent accounts of the nature of divine forgiveness, see Brandon Warmke, “Divine Forgiveness I: Emotion and Punishment-Forbearance Theories”, *Philosophy Compass* 12, no. 9 (2017) and Brandon Warmke, “Divine Forgiveness II: Reconciliation and Debt-Cancellation Theories”, *Philosophy Compass* 12, no. 9 (2017).

3 “Whatever exactly is required for morally appropriate forgiveness, it must involve some species of love for the person in need of forgiveness”, Stump, *Atonement*, 81.

## II. WHAT IS THE BASIC CLAIM?

Let's clarify the Basic Claim. Consider one flat-footed way of interpreting it:

(1)  $S$  loves  $P$  iff  $S$  forgives  $P$ .

The sufficiency claim — If  $S$  loves  $P$ , then  $S$  forgives  $P$  — is false. This is because the sufficiency claim eliminates the sense in which forgiveness is a response to wrongdoing. If loving as such is sufficient for forgiveness, then the way in which forgiveness is a response to wrongdoing is completely lost. Loving someone as such is not sufficient for forgiveness. It must be love of a *wrongdoer*, as Stump herself makes clear.<sup>4</sup> If you love a young child, this does not mean that you have forgiven the child for anything. Or suppose you love God. According to (1), this is sufficient for forgiving God. But in what sense could it be possible to forgive God? And to the extent that the persons of the Trinity love each other, then they will also have forgiven one another. But for what?

We can address this problem by requiring that the beloved and forgiven person is a wrongdoer, where 'wrongdoer' is a placeholder to denote one who is a candidate for forgiveness, and 'x' is the thing for which  $P$  is forgiven.

(2)  $S$  loves wrongdoer  $P$  iff  $S$  forgives wrongdoer  $P$  (for x).

As stated, (2) can't be right either. We need to build into (2) the requirement that the lover has the standing to forgive. Merely loving a wrongdoer cannot be sufficient for forgiveness. I can love my neighbor who cheats on his wife, but I cannot forgive him for cheating on his wife. I lack standing to do so. If loving a wrongdoer is to be sufficient for forgiving her, then I must already have the standing to forgive her. So we must assume that  $S$  and  $P$  stand in the right kind of relationship such that  $S$  has standing to forgive  $P$ . I will treat this requirement as implied. We just must keep in mind that  $S$  needs standing to forgive  $P$ .<sup>5</sup>

Even with this addition, there is a further problem with (2), a temporal one. To see this, consider:

(2')  $S$  loves wrongdoer  $P$  at  $t_2$  iff  $S$  forgives wrongdoer  $P$  (for x) at  $t_1$ .

(2') would have it that loving someone at one time is necessary and sufficient for forgiving them at another time. But that is false. Suppose I love you today. That is not a necessary or sufficient condition for forgiving you for something next year. And vice versa. Suppose I forgive you today for something you did today. This is not a necessary or sufficient condition for loving you next year. One way to address this problem is to make the loving and forgiving simultaneous.

(3)  $S$  loves wrongdoer  $P$  at  $t_1$  iff  $S$  forgives wrongdoer  $P$  (for x) at  $t_1$ .

(3) gives us something to work with. It says, roughly, that (at some time) having the two desires of love towards someone who has done wrong is necessary and sufficient for forgiving a wrongdoer (at that time) for that wrong.

I work through these refinements not because I think Stump would at any point disagree. I suspect she would welcome them. But I am going to turn shortly to criticize the Basic Claim, and I don't want us to be distracted by other kinds of objections that one could make against it. With these refinements out of the way, we can begin to see more fundamental problems with the Basic Claim, problems that I do not think can be addressed with some Chisholming. Throughout, I'll speak generally of the Basic Claim, but what I have in mind is something like claim (3).

One small point before I proceed: I take the Basic Claim to be about *all* cases of morally appropriate forgiveness, not just divine forgiveness. Stump's primary interest here is the relevance of divine forgiveness for a theory of atonement, but I believe the Basic Claim is meant to generalize.

4 "So whatever else forgiveness is, it seems to include a kind of love of someone who has done one an injury or committed an injustice against one", Stump, *Atonement*, 81.

5 For more on God's standing to forgive, see Brandon Warmke, "God's Standing to Forgive", *Faith and Philosophy* 34, no. 4 (2017).

### III. IMPLICATIONS OF THE BASIC CLAIM

Let us consider four implications of the Basic Claim. First, the Basic Claim implies that forgiveness is *unilateral*. In other words, the constitutive conditions of forgiveness — whatever those happen to be — can be met solely by the victim. It is easy to see why this is so. If loving a wrongdoer is sufficient for forgiveness, then whatever forgiveness happens to be, the victim's love of the wrongdoer is sufficient to ensure that forgiveness is accomplished.

Second, the Basic Claim implies that (morally appropriate) forgiveness is *unconditional*. Many views of forgiveness claim that for forgiveness to be morally appropriate, certain conditions must be met by either the victim or the wrongdoer. The wrongdoer must apologize or repent, for instance. Or the victim herself must forgive for the right moral reasons. But Stump's forgiveness is not conditional in either of these senses. The appropriateness of loving the wrongdoer (and therefore the appropriateness of forgiving her) does not depend on the wrongdoer apologizing or repenting. Further, there are no other conditions that must be added to loving the wrongdoer for one to forgive appropriately: loving is sufficient for morally appropriate forgiveness.

Third, Stump's forgiveness is *obligatory*. This follows from the fact that love is always obligatory.<sup>6</sup> And since love is sufficient for forgiveness, forgiveness is always obligatory. Indeed, Stump claims that forgiveness and love are “obligatory in the same way and to the same extent” (Stump 2018, 82).

Finally, forgiveness is *automatic*. Because God is loving, God automatically forgives. There is no sense in which a loving God could withhold forgiveness. And to the extent that a human loves her wrongdoer, then her forgiveness will be automatic, too. Loving automatically secures forgiveness. Yet because being loving is an essential aspect of God's being, then God's forgiveness is *fully* automatic. Unlike humans, God cannot refrain from or withhold forgiveness by failing to love.

Stump's forgiveness is therefore unilateral, unconditional, obligatory, and (in the divine case) fully automatic.

### IV. WHAT MOTIVATES THE BASIC CLAIM?

As best I can tell, Stump draws on two primary motivations for defending the Basic Claim. The first is that it is

implied by Aquinas's account of love. Whatever exactly is required for morally appropriate forgiveness, it must involve some species of love for the person in need of forgiveness. A person who refuses to forgive someone who has hurt her or been unjust to her is not loving towards the offender, and a person who does forgive someone who has treated her badly also manifests love of one degree or another towards him. So whatever else forgiveness is, it seems to include a kind of love of someone who has done one an injury or committed an injustice against one. (Stump 2018, 81)

This passage relies on two intuitions. First: if you morally appropriately forgive someone, you love them. This would show that love is *necessary* for morally appropriate forgiveness. Second: if you refuse to forgive someone, then you don't love them. The contrapositive says that if you do love someone, then you don't refuse to forgive them. This would come close to showing that love is *sufficient* for morally appropriate forgiveness. So the first motivation for the Basic Claim appears to be two intuitions: if you love someone you'll forgive them, and if you forgive someone, you love them. This is, of course, just the Basic Claim itself.

What about Stump's claim in this passage that the Basic Claim is implied by Aquinas's account of love? I am not sure in what sense the Basic Claim is *implied* by Aquinas's account of love. It does not seem to be an implication, at least in any straightforward sense, of an account of love that love is also necessary and sufficient for *forgiveness*. But I will not pursue that thought here.

<sup>6</sup> “[O]n this account, love is obligatory, in the sense that, for any person, the absence of love is morally blameworthy, and the presence of love is necessary for moral good or excellence”, Stump, *Atonement*, 43.

The second motivation for the Basic Claim is that “on this view of forgiveness, we also get the right reading of the parable of the prodigal son: the father does not need his son to make amends before he can forgive him and be willing to be reconciled with him in morally appropriate ways” (Stump 2018, 82-3). If love is sufficient for morally appropriate forgiveness, then the son need not make amends to the father to appropriately forgive. It seems to Stump that the father could have (appropriately) forgiven his son without the son’s amends. Therefore, the Basic Claim is consistent with the Prodigal Son, for the Basic Claim implies that forgiveness is unconditional. I’ll return to this thought later.

## V. OBJECTIONS TO THE BASIC CLAIM

I believe that the Basic Claim is false. I argue that there are good reasons to reject both the necessity claim (that if you forgive someone, then you love her) as well as the sufficiency claim (if you love someone, then you forgive her).

One reminder: I take the Basic Claim to generalize to all cases of forgiveness. So while some of my objections will take aim at the Basic Claim in the divine instance, others will target the Basic Claim in the human case. Unless Stump claims that the Basic Claim is true only in the divine case, I’ll take objections in the human case to count against the divine case.

### *a. Against Necessity*

According to Stump, if you forgive someone, then you desire their objective good and you desire union with them. I contend that, depending on what Stump means by “appropriate forgiveness”, this is a very high bar for morally appropriate forgiveness.

If by “appropriate forgiveness” Stump means something like “morally praiseworthy forgiveness” or “morally virtuous forgiveness” or perhaps even “morally admirable forgiveness”, then desiring the good of the wrongdoer and desiring union with her are plausibly necessary conditions. But I think this is not what Stump has in mind by “appropriateness.” In one footnote, she uses the terms “morally appropriate” and “morally justified” apparently interchangeably (Stump 438, n. 46). So let us ask: could your forgiveness be morally permissible even if you did not desire union with your wrongdoer, or didn’t desire her objective good?

I believe so. Suppose you are indifferent about union with the person who wronged you or indifferent about her objective good. Mightn’t your forgiveness still be a morally good and permissible thing? Why think it must necessarily be morally unjustified? Naturally, it won’t be good in every way that forgiveness might be good. But that is not what’s at issue. The issue is mere moral appropriateness.

If you don’t think such indifference is consistent with good or permissible forgiveness, suppose we add a second order desire. You *want* to desire union with your wrongdoer (or you want to desire their objective good), but you don’t yet have that desire. Suppose that because of how I treated you, you are having a hard time desiring union with me (or desiring my objective good). But you want to have that desire because you know you should. In such a scenario, are you barred from morally permissibly forgiving me because you don’t yet have the first order desire for union with me? If not, then love is not necessary for morally appropriate forgiveness.

### *b. Against Sufficiency*

I now turn to raise six objections to the claim that love is sufficient for morally appropriate forgiveness.

#### *i. The Felicity Objection*

Suppose I say to you:

(a) “I love you but I’m not ready to forgive you”,

or

(b) “I love you but it will be difficult to forgive you.”

According to the Basic Claim, these statements are infelicitous, or admit of a conceptual confusion, or reveal a lack of self-knowledge. To sincerely assert something like (a) or (b) is to make *some* kind of mistake. According to the Basic Claim, if you love the wrongdoer, then you are mistaken to think that you are not ready to forgive or to think that it will be difficult to forgive. You already have forgiven in virtue of your loving.

But it makes perfect sense to tell someone that you love them but that you are not ready to forgive or that you think it will be difficult to forgive. Such a person need not be confused about their own attitudes toward the wrongdoer or confused about what forgiveness is. Imagine your spouse cheats on you, or is fired from their job for sexual harassment. I see no good reason to think that you would be making an error were you to say to your spouse, “I love you but I’m not sure I can forgive you, at least not now. I desire your good and I desire union with you, but forgiveness will take some time.” You can love a wrongdoer without forgiving her. If so, then the Basic Claim is false.

### *ii. The Request Objection*

The Basic Claim implies that, on the assumption that God loves every one of us, God has already forgiven every person for all the sins they have ever committed. (Or at least that God has already forgiven us for every sin which God has standing to forgive.) God has already forgiven you for all the wrong things you have done. I think this is precisely the implication that Stump wants.<sup>7</sup>

Yet consider the fact that Jesus teaches that we should ask God for forgiveness (Matthew 6:12). But why ask for God to forgive you if God has already forgiven you? We cannot ask for forgiveness in the expectation that God will do something God hasn’t already done. God has forgiven us regardless of our asking! Now there may be other kinds of reasons why you are taught to ask for God’s forgiveness. Perhaps you are taught to ask for forgiveness to remind you that you’ve been forgiven. Or perhaps you are supposed to ask to remind you that God’s forgiveness is a gift. But it is still the case, on Stump’s view, that when you ask for forgiveness, you are not asking to be given something that you don’t already have. But it would be deceptive for Christ to teach us to so ask. To believe you are requesting something is to believe you don’t yet have it. To teach us to ask would be to deceive us about what we already have. Christ would not deceive us about this. Therefore, we can ask to receive forgiveness from God that we don’t already have. Therefore, the Basic Claim is false.

### *iii. The Textual Objection*

There are three passages in the New Testament that indicate, if not straightforwardly teach, that in at least some instances, God’s forgiveness is neither unconditional nor automatic. The first is from the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 6:15:

- (a) “But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.”

Consider another passage in Mark 11:25:

- (b) “And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive them, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins.”

And another from 1 John 1:9:

- (c) “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”

These passages indicate that in at least some cases God refuses or withholds forgiveness. But how could this be if God is always loving and that loving a wrongdoer is sufficient for forgiving her? If God can withhold forgiveness, then God’s forgiveness is not automatic. And if God’s forgiveness depends in some way on our forgiving others, then it is not unconditional either. If God sometimes withholds forgiveness,

<sup>7</sup> This implication appears to follow directly from her claim that “Since God is perfectly loving and loves every person that he has made, it follows that God also always has a desire for union with every person”, Stump, *Atonement*, 150.

then either (1) love is a sufficient condition for forgiveness, but God does not always love wrongdoers, or (2) God does always love wrongdoers, but love is not a sufficient condition for forgiveness. We should reject (1) and with it the Basic Claim.

Another passage warrants inspection. Consider Luke 17: 3–4:

- (d) “If your brother or sister sins against you, rebuke them; and if they repent, forgive them. Even if they sin against you seven times in a day and seven times come back to you saying ‘I repent’, you must forgive them.”

I do not think this passage shows that repentance is required for morally appropriate forgiveness. But it does suggest, I think, that in the human case if someone repents then there is something like a moral requirement to forgive. This perhaps suggests that there was not a requirement before repentance. But if this is so, then forgiveness cannot be morally obligatory in just the same way and to the same extent that love is, as Stump claims.

I should point out that Stump does address the Matthew 6:15 passage mentioned above. She concedes that it is “possible to interpret this saying as claiming that God withholds forgiveness from some people” (Stump 2018, 440, n. 61). But her response to this counter-evidence is puzzling. She writes:

But, so understood, the saying would be at least in serious tension with other texts, such as Christ’s telling people to love their enemies so that they will be like God, who sends his good gifts on both the just and the unjust (Matt. 5:45) (Stump 2018, 440, n. 61).

I agree that if Matthew 6:15 said that we shouldn’t *love* those who wrong us, then it would be in contrast with other passages. But that is not what the passage is about. It is about forgiveness. And the unconditional requirement to love doesn’t entail an unconditional requirement to forgive unless you have a view like Stump’s. My point is that Stump’s response to the Matthew 6:15 passage begs the question. The Matthew 6:15 passage, along with the others I have mentioned, clearly place the burden on those who claim that divine forgiveness is unconditional and automatic. Simply restating the Basic Claim is non-responsive.

The view that God’s forgiveness is conditional and not automatic was held very early in Christian tradition as well. I’ll provide just a small sampling<sup>8</sup>:

- (e) Ignatius of Antioch: “I therefore exhort you in the Lord to receive with tenderness those who repent and return to the unity of the church.” For “to all those who repent the Lord grants forgiveness, if they repent returning to the unity of God and communion with the bishop.” [*Letter to the Philadelphians*, 3]
- (f) Justin Martyr: “If, indeed, you repent of your sins, and recognize this person to be Christ, and observe his commandments, then...forgiveness of sins will be yours.” [*Dialogue with Trypho* 95]
- (g) Origen: “[I]t is impossible to obtain, by praying, the forgiveness of one’s sins if one has not heartily forgiven the sibling who has offended him or her and now asks to be forgiven.” [*De oratione* 8.1]
- (h) John Chrysostom: “Even though your wounds are difficult to be healed, it is not impossible to cure them. Our Physician can: so skilled is he. Only, we should recognize our wounds: even if we should reach the deepest point of evil, he creates many ways of salvation for us. In fact, if you give up your anger towards your neighbors, and forgive them, your sins will be forgiven to you. For if you forgive your fellow humans, your heavenly Father also will forgive you. And if you give alms,

8 Here I draw from and use translations from Ilaria L. E. Ramelli, “Unconditional Forgiveness in Christianity? Some Reflections on Ancient Christian Sources and Practices”, in *The Ethics of Forgiveness: A Collection of Essays*, ed. Christel Fricke (Routledge, 2011). For defense of the claim that “nowhere in the New Testament is it affirmed that an offended person should forgive the offender even if the latter does not repent” (30), see Ramelli, “Unconditional Forgiveness in Christianity?”. I am not convinced that all the evidence Ramelli provides supports the claim that forgiveness in the NT was always understood to be conditional. I do think, however, that she establishes a presumption in favor of forgiveness being conditional, especially in the case of divine forgiveness.

he will forgive your sins...Also if you pray with zeal you will enjoy forgiveness.” [*Homilies on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, PG 61.194–196]

- (i) Augustine: “He announces a baptism of repentance, that repentance may precede forgiveness. For there can be no forgiveness without repentance.” [*Catena in Lucam* 59.13]

What about Aquinas? Stump claims that the Basic Claim “is implied by Aquinas’s account of love.” Perhaps. But Aquinas does speak to this issue and what he says does not, in my view, support the Basic Claim. It is true that Aquinas does say something that looks like a defense of unconditional forgiveness when addressing the question as to whether sin may be pardoned without penance (*Summa Theologica* III q. 86 a. 2).

It would seem that sin can be pardoned without Penance. For the power of God is no less with regard to adults than with regard to children. But he pardons the sins of children without Penance. Therefore He also pardons adults without penance.

However, this comes from one of the three preliminary *objections* concerning the question of whether sin can be pardoned without penance. It is apparently not Aquinas’s own view. For immediately thereafter, he writes:

On the contrary...if man does no penance, it seems that God will not pardon him his sin.

It is impossible for a mortal actual sin to be pardoned without penance, if we speak of penance as a virtue.

Later, Aquinas says that sins can be pardoned without the *sacrament* of penance, as when Christ pardoned the adulterous woman, but that even in this case, Aquinas says, “He did not forgive without the virtue of penance.”

Stump might reply that these claims are only about what is translated “pardon” and so not about forgiveness. So it may be that Aquinas thinks that divine “pardon” is conditional, but that divine “forgiveness” is not. I suppose this might be the case. But I still think there is a problem for Stump. As best I can tell, the English translations of these passages use both “forgive” and “pardon” and their cognates interchangeably for the same Latin word, *remitto*. Now I do not know exactly what *remitto* means, but in the immediate context of the *Summa*, it is whatever Christ does with the adulterous woman’s sin in John 8. And Aquinas uses *remitto* to translate Matthew 12:32, where English translations standardly use “forgive.”<sup>9</sup> These passages seem to be more clearly about forgiveness than pardon from punishment. At any rate, I am happy to leave the Aquinas exegesis to the experts, of which I am not one.

Finally, I note a teaching from the Catechism of the Roman Catholic Church:

There is no one, however wicked and guilty, who may not confidently hope for forgiveness, *provided his repentance is honest*. Christ who died for all men desires that in his Church the gates of forgiveness should always be open to anyone *who turns away from sin*. (Catholic Church 2012, 982, italics added)

Again, it looks as if some divine forgiveness is conditional on repentance. It therefore seems to me that the weight of the New Testament, along with the Church Fathers, and even Aquinas, sides with the view that forgiveness, including divine forgiveness, is at least sometimes conditional and not fully automatic. If so, this is good evidence against the Basic Claim.

#### *iv. The Prodigal Son Objection*

As noted above, Stump thinks the Basic Claim gives us the right reading of the Parable of the Prodigal Son. On her view, the father in the parable does not need to wait for the son’s repentance to appropriately forgive. If the two desires of love are sufficient for forgiveness, and if there’s no good reason to think that it wasn’t appropriate for the father to love his son before his son repented, then we do indeed get the result that father appropriately forgave (or could have appropriately forgiven) his son prior to repentance.

<sup>9</sup> “Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but anyone who speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come.”

I want to say a few things about the way Stump uses the Prodigal Son to support the Basic Claim. First, Stump's claim that the parable supports an unconditional forgiveness is complicated by the fact that in the parable, we are not only told that the son *will* repent upon going home, we are also told that he *does* repent directly to his father. Before he returns home, he says:

I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before you, and am no more worthy to be called your son: make me as one of your hired servants (Luke 15:18–19).

And once he arrives, we are told:

And the son said to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in your sight, and am no more worthy to be called your son (15:21).

So it *may* be true that the father appropriately forgave his son before his son repented. But we *do* know that the son repented. And we do *not* know whether and when the father forgave him.

And this leads to a second point. Nowhere in the parable are we told that the father forgives his son. There are three Greek words that are commonly translated as 'forgive' and its cognates in the NT.<sup>10</sup> None of them appear in the parable. Now I don't mean to suggest that the father didn't forgive his son. But I do think that if Stump locates the father's forgiveness prior to the son's repentance, then this conclusion must rely on an argument from silence. Perhaps this is true. But how would we know?

This brings me to a third point. Multiple passages in the NT appear straightforwardly to teach that divine forgiveness is at least sometimes conditional. Yet Stump, as best I can tell, privileges the Parable of the Prodigal Son over those other passages, a passage that is silent on the issue of forgiveness. I find this puzzling. I see no good reason to privilege a passage that is silent about the conditionality of forgiveness (and perhaps is not meant to teach us about forgiveness in the first place) over passages that straightforwardly teach that divine forgiveness is at least sometimes conditional.

One final point. Suppose we grant that the Prodigal Son does teach that divine forgiveness is unconditional and we are justified in privileging this text over many others. This would only show that Stump is correct that divine forgiveness is at least sometimes unconditional. Crucially, it would *not* show that the Basic Claim is correct. The Basic Claim gives us a set of necessary and sufficient conditions on forgiveness. It is a consequence of this claim that forgiveness is unconditional. But to show that forgiveness is unconditional is not to show that the Basic Claim is correct. Forgiveness could be unconditional for a host of reasons that have nothing to do with the truth of the Basic Claim. Indeed, forgiveness could be unconditional and the Basic Claim false.

At best, the parable shows that (appropriate) forgiveness does not require something like repentance. (Although, as I have argued, the text is silent on this issue.) But the Prodigal Son does not provide any *further* evidence for Stump's specific conditions on forgiveness. In saying this, I do not mean to deny that the father in the parable loves his son, or even loves him in the way that Stump has in mind. My point is simply that Stump's interpretation of the parable, even if correct, provides very minimal support for the Basic Claim.

10 Anthony Bash, *Forgiveness: A Theology* (Wipf and Stock, 2015), 105 notes that *aphiemi* (and *aphesis*) are the only words that Matthew uses for forgiveness, and that these are the Greek words for forgiveness used in the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures. Bash points out that these words, "taken from the world of business and commerce", are used when one person remits the debts of another and are commonly taken to mean "to free or release someone from something", Bash, *Forgiveness*, 26–27. Luke also uses *aphesis* at 1:77 and 11:4 in his Gospel. A less commonly used word to refer to forgiveness in the New Testament is *charizomai*, which "carries the idea of giving a gift or giving freely", Bash, *Forgiveness*, 27. Like *aphesis*, *charizomai* can be used of canceling a debt (see Luke 7:42–43), but connotes further the idea of doing something gracious and kind. According to Bash, Apostle Paul uses *charizomai* at Col. 2:14 in conjunction with a phrase that means "to erase the record that stands against us", strengthening the thought that "forgiveness is likened to the erasure of debt", Bash, *Forgiveness*, 28. The word *apoulo* is also used once in the sense of "forgive" at Luke 6:37. Here, the word points to another aspect of forgiveness: "the idea of offering release to someone from that wrong that he or she has done", Bash, *Forgiveness*, 28.

### v. *The Obligation Objection*

On Stump's account, love is always morally obligatory. And given the connection between love and forgiveness, it follows that morally appropriate forgiveness is, as Stump says, "obligatory in the same way and to the same extent." This view apparently entails that forgiveness is morally obligatory immediately after offense, even egregious evil. Why? Simply because you should love your wrongdoer immediately after the offense. And, therefore, you should also forgive them.

I have two concerns here. One is simply the moral claim itself. Is forgiveness always morally obligatory? There are a couple of reasons to think not. One reason is simply that in the NT passages discussed above, it is suggested, if not straightforwardly taught, that God withholds forgiveness. But since God cannot violate a moral requirement, then we should reject the view that forgiveness is always morally required. Now turn to the human case. Suppose you are done a horrendous moral evil by someone you trusted, in full knowledge and awareness of what they were doing, and who is not repentant or sorrowful for that they did to you. I'll let you fill in the details of the wrong. The point is that on Stump's view, it is apparently morally required to forgive your wrongdoer immediately upon him wronging you. I concede that this might be morally praiseworthy. But the claim that forgiveness is always morally required goes far beyond this. It claims that there is a moral fault in not forgiving. Such a person has failed morally and is blameworthy (because the "absence of love is morally blameworthy" so too is the absence of forgiveness, given that love and forgiveness are obligatory in the same way and to the same extent). But it is hard for me to fathom that in such a case, a victim *is blameworthy* for not immediately forgiving.

Here's another thought: I suspect that the claim that you are morally obligated to love your wrongdoer will strike you as less radical than the claim that you are morally obligated to forgive that wrongdoer. But if the former claim strikes you as less radical than the latter, then that is some defeasible evidence that you also think that love and forgiveness are, contrary to Stump, *not* "obligatory in the same way and to the same extent." Perhaps we are wrong to think this. But we will need an argument to see why.

### vi. *The Blame Objection*

I now want to consider an untoward consequence of the Basic Claim regarding the relationship between forgiveness and moral blame. To see it, recall Stump's claim that loving someone entails desiring her good and desiring union with her. Sometimes, when people wrong us, the loving response is to blame our wrongdoer: to express disapproval or anger, to request or demand apology, perhaps even to withdraw friendly relations. By 'blame' I therefore do not simply mean a judgment of blameworthiness. Rather, I have in mind what some people sometimes call "overt blame."<sup>11</sup> Such overt blaming can be done, at least in part, for the blamed party's objective good. Overt blame is a crucial means to let people know that they have done wrong and need to make amends. You might think that such blame cannot stem from a desire for union. But this would be a mistake. Overt blame can be a crucial element in helping someone to identify the error of their ways, make amends, and reconcile. The point is that sometimes overt blame is morally consistent with and perhaps even required by love. And I suspect Stump would agree as well.

But here a problem arises for the Basic Claim. On that view, if you love someone, then you forgive them. But as we have just seen, overt blame is sometimes compatible with, and even required by love. This means that forgiveness is also sometimes compatible with overt blame. According to the Basic Claim, then, there is apparently nothing problematic, no tension, between on the one hand, forgiving a wrongdoer, and on the other hand, continuing to openly and intentionally blame them. Imagine confronting your wrongdoer with love: expressing anger, sadness, disappointment, and hurt feelings, requesting and perhaps even demanding apology and restitution, withdrawing friendly relations, and in the very same breath profess that you have forgiven your wrongdoer. I think your wrongdoer would be puzzled. "If you have truly forgiven me", they might say, "Why are you still holding my wrong against me?"

11 For discussion see, e.g., Michael McKenna, *Conversation and Responsibility* (OUP, 2012).

As I have argued elsewhere, forgiveness paradigmatically alters the normative relationship between victim and wrongdoer.<sup>12</sup> When we forgive, we release the wrongdoer from certain obligations (to continue apologizing, feeling and showing remorse, to make further restitution, etc.) and we also give up the right to regard and treat the wrongdoer in certain characteristic ways (to embrace resentment, to demand apology, restitution, etc.). Any theory of forgiveness must explain this fact: that after we forgive someone, certain ways of treating or regarding them (even loving ones) are now off the table. The Basic Claim, however, does not explain why forgiveness typically renders loving blame morally inappropriate.

In reply, Stump might advert to a defense she gives in the book for the compatibility of forgiveness and punishment. Since forgiveness is consistent with punishment, it is also consistent with blame, and so my objection fails. But this would be too quick. I agree with Stump that punishment is sometimes consistent with forgiveness, for reasons I've given in a series of papers.<sup>13</sup> But I think overt blame is a different matter, for reasons I won't explain here. But the general thought is this: Imagine someone claiming to forgive you and then continuing to engage in various overt blaming behaviors done out of love. They may not doubt that you love them even as you blame them, but they would have reasonable doubts that you had forgiven them.

Notice that it is not responsive to show that *unloving expressions* of blame are not consistent with forgiveness. Unloving expressions of blame are of course not consistent with love or forgiveness. What is at issue are loving expressions of blame. If there are such expressions, then love and forgiveness appear to come apart in ways not permitted by the Basic Claim. In my estimation, this is another reason to reject the Basic Claim.<sup>14</sup>

## VI: FORGIVENESS AND SATISFACTION

Let me conclude by drawing attention to the relevance of the Basic Claim to Stump's larger theory of atonement. Stump defends what she calls a Thomist View of Satisfaction. In doing so, she rejects what she calls the Anselmian View. On the Anselmian View, satisfaction is required if we are to be reconciled to God. Swinburne (1989) has notably defended such a view. The basic idea is that because we owe a debt to God due to our sin, we must make up for it with apology, repentance, restitution, and penance. At this point, God forgives us and reconciles with us. Crucially, for our purposes, on the Anselmian view, satisfaction precedes forgiveness. Divine forgiveness is conditional on something like repentance and perhaps more besides.

Stump rejects the Anselmian View. On the Thomistic view she prefers, the logic of satisfaction is reversed. Forgiveness *precedes* satisfaction. According to this view:

God always loves every human being; and, for this reason, God also always forgives every wrongdoer. Nothing else is needed for God's forgiveness and acceptance of reconciliation with sinful human beings, including even with those who are unrepentant. On the Thomistic approach, the role of satisfaction has to do not with providing a condition needed for God's forgiveness or acceptance of reconciliation. Rather it has to do with helping to repair the wrongdoer's damage, the damage he has done in the world and the stain on his soul. So understood, satisfaction has a role in reconciliation, but it has this role because it alters something in and for the wrongdoer, not because it gives God a needed condition for God's forgiveness. (Stump 2018, 102)

<sup>12</sup> See Brandon Warmke, "The Economic Model of Forgiveness", *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 97, no. 4 (2016) and Brandon Warmke, "The Normative Significance of Forgiveness", *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 94, no. 4 (2016).

<sup>13</sup> See Brandon Warmke, "Is Forgiveness the Deliberate Refusal to Punish?", *Journal of Moral Philosophy* 8, no. 4 (2011), Brandon Warmke, "Two Arguments against the Punishment-Forbearance Account of Forgiveness", *Philosophical Studies* 165, no. 3 (2013) and Justin Tosi and Brandon Warmke, "Punishment and Forgiveness", in *The Routledge Handbook of Criminal Justice Ethics*, ed. Jonathan A. Jacobs and Jonathan Jackson (Routledge 2017).

<sup>14</sup> The Felicity, Request, and Textual Objections also count against similar views of divine forgiveness, such as Strabbing's claim that to forgive is to be open to reconciliation, see Jada T. Strabbing, "Divine Forgiveness and Reconciliation", *Faith and Philosophy* 34, no. 3 (2017). I believe that revised versions of the above argument against necessity, as well as the Obligation and Blame Objections also count against a claim like Strabbing's. Like Stump, Strabbing also draws inspiration from the Prodigal Son to support an unconditional account of forgiveness. But as argued above, the text is silent about the conditionality of forgiveness.

Here, satisfaction plays a different role. It is not what we do to make God's forgiveness of and reconciliation with us morally just. Rather it is what we do after we have been forgiven that makes us fit for relationship with God.

Crucially, the Thomistic View, as Stump understands it, does not require anything like repentance for God's forgiveness to be morally appropriate. So here is the problem. I have argued that the Basic Claim is false. The Basic Claim is consistent with the Thomistic View of Satisfaction since the Basic View says that God's forgiveness is unconditional. The Thomistic View, it should be noted, does not *require* us to endorse the Basic Claim, however. We could endorse the Thomistic View and reject the Basic Claim, and endorse some other view of forgiveness instead. If Stump is committed to the Thomistic View of Satisfaction, then this is what I recommend, given all the good reasons to reject the Basic Claim.

However, this is not the whole of the problem. I have also argued that there is good reason to think that divine forgiveness is at least sometimes conditional on human repentance. If this is true, then not only is the Basic Claim false, but so is the Thomistic View of Satisfaction.<sup>15</sup>

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