

INTERDENOMINATIONAL MATTERS AND HERESY

Chair: Sam Cooper
Reporter: Anthony R. DeKorte

Response to Overture 12 (*deferred from 2021*): Declare Denials of Penal Substitutionary Atonement as Heresy and Instruct Classes to Guard the Reformed Confessional Teaching of the Cross, from Classis Illiana

- A. *Materials: Overture 12 (Deferred Agenda), pp. 479-88*
- B. *Recommendation*

That synod not accede to Overture 12.

Grounds:

1. Denial of Penal Substitutionary Atonement does not meet the nine-point definition of heresy arrived at by the CRCNA Heresy Advisory Committee which reported to Synod 2022. Therefore, to label denial of Penal Substitutionary Atonement as a heresy would be to revert to the CRCNA 1984 definition which reads: "By 'heresy' (heretical) we mean a theological view or doctrine that is in conflict with the teachings of Scripture as interpreted by the Reformed Confessions." (Acts of Synod 2019, p. 819)
2. Atonement is too rich and complex a work of God to reduce to a single theory. To do so also risks damaging our ecumenical relationships with believers who teach biblical alternatives to Penal Substitutionary Atonement.
3. Penal Substitutionary Atonement is already strongly attested to in our Reformed Confessions, almost to the exclusion of any other theory. When Church Order Article 83 states, "Special discipline shall be applied to officebearers if they violate the Covenant for Officebearers, are guilty of neglect or abuse of office, or in any way seriously deviate from sound doctrine and godly conduct." it already provides a mechanism for church councils to discipline those who deny Penal Substitutionary Atonement.

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