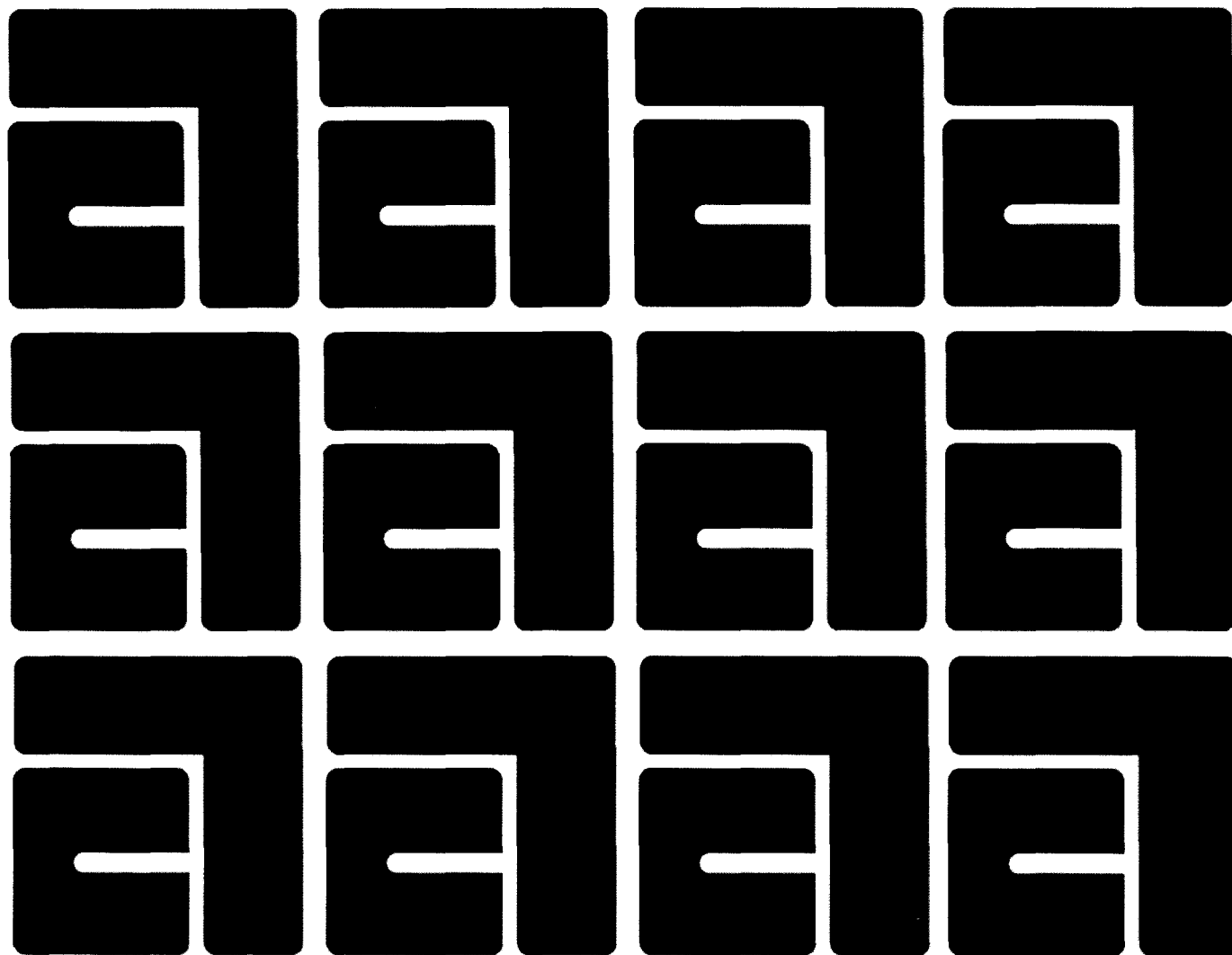


FOUNDATIONS

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FOUNDATIONS

is published by Affinity in April and October. Its aim is to cover contemporary theological issues by articles and reviews, taking in exegesis, biblical theology, church history and apologetics – and to indicate their relevance to pastoral ministry. Its policy gives particular attention to the theology of evangelical churches which are committed to biblical ecumenism.

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Editor's Notes

There is something of a controversial tone to this issue. The first two articles touch on the sad but necessary controversy over the doctrine of penal substitution. Dan Strange's article puts the controversy in its wider theological context and Ian Shaw's on Methodism reminds us that it wasn't only nasty Calvinists who have held to this doctrine. Michael Plant reminds us how any controversy should be conducted. It is sad when evangelicals engage in controversy with a bad spirit and without trying to understand what their opponents are saying. Incidentally Dan Strange's article was originally delivered as the Evangelical Library Lecture for 2005. I commend this admirable institution in London to readers as a rich resource of theological literature. The Library has been undergoing extensive renovations and recently the attractive, comfortable and well-equipped Bob Sheehan Research Room was opened. An annual bursary is available for anyone wanting to use the library for serious research.

It happens that the books I want to mention in these notes touch on two areas of controversy among evangelicals. I do not intend to sound a contentious note or to unnecessarily offend anyone, but there are some matters that divide us and from time to time they will be touched upon.

The first relates to the area of public worship. In recent years the pressure of the charismatic movement has eased, but how or even if Christians worship when they gather continues to be debated. This is especially a matter of contention between conservative and Reformed evangelicals. Some have questioned whether what Christians do together in their meetings is properly called worship when biblical expressions for worship are examined. This has always struck me as something of a sterile argument with antagonists on both sides claiming too much for their position. Those who say that Christians don't come together to worship in any special sense collapse all of worship into the Christian life. That the whole of life is worship is undeniably biblical and something perhaps that those on the other side of the

argument don't emphasise enough. But this position seems to me to be rather pedantic in its refusal to see meetings of Christians as worship. What else is collectively praise, prayer, preaching, the Lord's Supper and fellowship if not worship? Some of those who hold this position seem to be reacting against the excesses of the charismatics and the influence of Anglo-Catholicism within Anglicanism. Practically, this seems to me to lead to rather desiccated meetings where preaching becomes a lecture and there is little expectation of the felt presence and power of God. However those on the other side sometimes seem to claim too much. They give the impression that public worship is more important than how Christians worship in the whole of life. Often books advocating this position begin by saying that worship is the most important thing a person can do. That is of course true, but that doesn't mean that what Christians do when they meet is itself the most important thing. As part of the worship of a Christian it is along with the rest of his or her life. What makes the service special and rightly called worship is its purpose of expressing the corporate worship of God's people. Anyone reading the Bible can see that such public worship is hugely important in the purposes of God.

All of which brings me to the books I want to mention. In *Created for Worship* Noel Due,¹ formerly of the Highland Theological College, gives us a masterly survey of God's unfolding revelation of his purpose for us to worship him. Beginning with creation in Genesis and ending with the consummation in the new heaven and earth in Revelation Due lucidly expounds key passages relating to worship with great exegetical and theological insight. I found him particularly good in dealing with Abraham and the letter to the Hebrews. There are some passages left out that could have merited discussion, but overall this is a superb survey. Throughout Due does justice to both all-life and public worship. Here is a book that helps us to recapture a vision of the big picture of worship.

The authority of the Bible in relation to public worship is another controversy among Reformed evangelicals.

Traditionally Anglicans and Lutherans have been pitted against Presbyterians, Congregationalists and Baptists, but more recently there has been disagreement within the Reformed camp. *The Worship of God*² is a collection of papers delivered at a conference on the subject at Greenville Seminary in South Carolina. In two chapters Terry Johnson expounds the regulatory principle from John 4:23-24. He does a good job although I think he makes the text fit the principle rather than the other way round. As usual Robert Godfrey is excellent on Calvin and on the psalms and contemporary worship. There are also two chapters arguing the case for and against exclusive psalmody. There is much I find I agree with the authors, but as so often in a book of this nature they claim too much. There must be something like a regulative principle for public worship. The classic Anglican/Lutheran position that what is not forbidden is permitted is too broad. Worship like everything else must be regulated by the word of God positively as well as negatively. But its more traditional defenders, such as the contributors to this book, claim too much for it. Most of the chapters lead one to think that the application of the principle is straightforward, but then a number of qualifications are made. They seem to argue for a fairly standard form of historic Reformed service as the most biblical, but I wonder if that can be sustained. Forget about drama and dance, what place do more participatory congregational prayer or interviewing a visiting missionary have in a service or having a time for questions and discussion after a sermon? Although I think his formulation and application of the regulative principle is too strict, Johnson is right to say that it is our theology that must shape our public worship. Sadly that all too often is not the case even in some Reformed churches. A lot more work needs to be done on this issue. Very different in tone and content is *Discerning the Spirits*³ by Cornelius Plantinga, Jr. and Sue A. Rozeboom. This is the fruit of the labours of a working group sponsored by the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship at Calvin College in Michigan. Plantinga and Rozeboom try

to rise above the worship wars raging in American churches by commending wisdom as a way to determine how churches should worship. To some extent this seems like a cop out and the authors are too generously eclectic in what they would accept in public worship. Nevertheless the book is full of wisdom and merits attention. For example, one of the criteria by which to judge worship is if it nurtures godly people. While a bit too liturgical for my tastes, Plantinga and Rozeboom want worship to have biblical and theological integrity that in the end allies them with many of the concerns in the previous book. Their proposal is what they call 'narrative worship', that is, worship that in whatever form its takes tells the biblical story of creation, fall, redemption and consummation. Certainly some of the services in free churches, whether classical or contemporary, could do with reflecting the story of redemption in the way they are ordered.

On this whole subject JC Ryle's little booklet *Worship*⁴ is a reminder of some of the key principles of Protestant worship. Ryle wrote of course for an earlier time but what he says needs to be heard in our context today.

Turning to another area of controversy I would like to mention several books dealing with the subject of Christian Zionism. Since the founding of the State of Israel Christian Zionism has gained prominence particularly in the United States, but it has roots back into the 19th century in Britain. In fact as Stephen Sizer points out in *Christian Zionism*⁵ the first Zionists were British evangelicals who did much to create and encourage British foreign policy in this direction. Very ably Sizer examines the historical roots of the more extreme forms of Christian Zionism in the dispensationalism that emerged from the teaching of Edward Irving, JN Darby and others. Particularly important was the way Darby's teaching was transplanted to America where it has grown into an enormous movement. He also examines the key theological emphases of Christian Zionism and their political significance for today. Sizer is very critical of the movement and highlights its hyper-literalistic approach

to interpreting the Bible in the light of historical developments, and the notion of two covenants for Jews and Gentiles that some of its proponents teach. In places Sizer could be more nuanced in his understanding of premillennialism and less intemperate in his language, but overall this is a most helpful work. Timothy Weber covers similar territory in *On the Road to Armageddon*⁶ but with less theological insight. While beginning in Britain his overview deals mainly with the United States and is valuable for that reason. In Britain we are bemused by the dispensationalism of so many American evangelicals and this book helps us to understand the phenomenon. Both these books tell us why this subject matters, but it is Gary Burge in *Whose Land? Whose People?*⁷ who helps us to see its impact on the lives of people. Burge is a professor at Wheaton College who began to have doubts about the line being fed to him and other evangelicals visiting Israel. He came to see the plight of the Palestinians, especially Palestinian Christians, and appreciate the injustice they have suffered. The book is a very readable exercise that weaves together historical analysis, biblical reflections and the experiences of Palestinians and Jews. If the book has a fault it is that Burge should have given more space to the suffering and fears of Israelis today, but I suspect that he sees the need to redress the imbalance that is common in America. Burge doesn't challenge some of the assumptions of the more extreme forms of dispensationalism as effectively as Sizer does, but he leaves us with the human dimension of what is happening in Israel and the occupied territories today. For me the remarkable thing is that many evangelical Christians seem to have so little concern for fellow believers who are Arab. As Christians we must be concerned for the well-being of the Jewish people. But our prayer must be that Jews come to believe in Jesus as the Messiah and join with Gentile believers in the new covenant as one people of God. It seems to me that on some of the wilder shores of dispensationalism it is the gospel that is being forgotten, especially when the evangelisation of Jews is neglected or even discouraged, bizarre doctrines taught such as a

second chance for conversion after the rapture and hope is lost in an obsession with earthly territory and historical events. On the historical roots of dispensationalism it is worth reading *Prisoners of Hope? Aspects of Evangelical Millennialism in Britain and Ireland, 1800-1880*.⁸ Particularly interesting are two chapters on JN Darby. One on his 'eschatological mysticism' illuminates the spiritual motivation behind his theological innovations and possible influence of Roman Catholicism. Did you know that he was attracted to Catholicism as a young man? The last chapter deals with the premillennialism of Andrew Bonar and its Scottish context.

In his fine book *The Old Evangelicalism*⁹ Iain Murray warns ministers against 'the danger of becoming engulfed in all kinds of controversies'. He does so in an excellent chapter on the doctrine of Christ's imputed righteousness. He has in mind relatively minor controversies such as those mentioned above and his warning needs to be heeded. However there are some issues that sadly are necessarily controversial and challenges to the historic Protestant doctrine of justification is one of them. This book is a collection of addresses and lectures on key issues relating to the evangelical faith. Murray deals with preaching for conversions, Spurgeon on conversion, the doctrine of the cross, John Wesley and the assurance of salvation as well as imputed righteousness. Every minister, church officer and thoughtful member will find this book helpful and salutary reading. A desire to see some of the concerns of the older evangelicalism recovered is not nostalgia but a desire to retain the heart of the gospel. I always look forward to reading a new book by Murray because he always reminds us of what really matters for the church of Christ. This book made me look again at my preaching and priorities in ministry.

The Puritans are part of the lineage of the older evangelicalism and in *The Devoted Life*¹⁰ we are invited to read some of the key ones and their writings. Each chapter is by an authority on a particular Puritan who introduces us to his subject and then expounds one of his key works. All the contributions are of a high quality and include

bibliographies. Inevitably in a book like this some authors are omitted, but overall this is an excellent way into Puritan writings. However as an introduction JI Packer's *Among God's Giants* (published in the USA as *Quest for Godliness*) is still at the front of the field.

Finally I want to mention one book that puts flesh on the older evangelicalism and that is *John E Marshall – Life and Writings*.¹¹ The death of John Marshall in 2003 deprived us of one of the Reformed evangelical world's larger than life characters. John J Murray's biography and the collection of writings by John Marshall in this book is a testimony to a faithful godly ministry. Outside the Reformed evangelical constituency John may not have been well-known, but his ministry is exemplary of single-minded and faithfully persevering devotion to the cause of Christ. Many who heard John's last address at the Banner of Truth conference speak of the deep impression it made on them. His text was 1 Samuel 17:42-47 and it is included in this volume. I urge you to read it. Several things stand out that ministers of the gospel need to take to heart: the reminder that suffering is part of ministry; the mercy of God in Christ to sinners who deserve judgment; the need to fulfil our ministry in the place God has put us; the account we must render to God for the conduct of our ministries; and the sheer sufficiency of God's grace and mercy to us in Christ. Like Paul, John had a deep and well-informed understanding of the godless culture in which he lived, but also like Paul he had unbounding and unashamed confidence in the power of the gospel. May we have that same confidence as we continue to preach the gospel today.

1. Noel Due, *Created for Worship – from Genesis to Revelation to You* (Fearn, Rosshire: Christian Focus 2005), ISBN 1-84550-026-1.
2. Joseph Pipa and others, *The Worship of God – Reformed Concepts of Biblical Worship* (Fearn, Rosshire: Christian Focus 2005), ISBN 1-84550-055-5.
3. Cornelius Plantinga Jr. and Sue A. Rozeboom, *Discerning the Spirits – A Guide to thinking about worship today* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans 2003) ISBN0-8028-3999-1.
4. JC Ryle, *Worship* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth 2005), ISBN 0-85151-906-7.
5. Stephen Sizer, *Christian Zionism – Road Map to Armageddon?* (Leicester: IVP 2004), ISBN -1-84474-050-1.
6. Timothy Weber, *On the Road to Armageddon – how evangelicals became Israel's best friend* (Grand Rapids: Baker 2004), ISBN 0-8010-2577-X.
7. Gary M Burge, *Whose Land? Whose Promise? – What Christians are not being told about Israel and the Palestinians* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press 2003), ISBN 0-8298-1545-7.
8. Crawford Gribben and Timothy CF Stunt, eds, *Prisoners of Hope? Aspects of Evangelical Millennialism in Britain and Ireland 1800-1880* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press 2004), ISBN 1-84227-224-1.
9. Iain H Murray, *The Old Evangelicalism – old truths for a new awakening* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth 2005), ISBN 0-85151-901-6.
10. Kelly M Kapic and Randall C Gleason, *The Devoted Life – an invitation to the Puritan classics* (Leicester: IVP 2004), ISBN 0-8308-2794-3.
11. *John E Marshall, Life and Writings* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth 2005), ISBN 0-85151-902-4.

Additional Note: Issue 53 of Foundations included an article by Leonardo De Chirico which sought to question whether evangelicals were approaching the subject of bioethics in the most biblical manner. Whatever the implications of this brief paper, Affinity wishes to re-affirm its stance on life issues. The following is an extract from a previously published policy statement:

We believe that it is God who gives life. Because all human beings are made in the image of God, all human life has intrinsic dignity and value. Therefore we seek to uphold and promote the utmost respect for all human life, from fertilisation until natural death. Consequently we are opposed to the deliberate taking of innocent human life, at any of its stages.

Introduction

Birthdays, anniversaries and annual lectures are good opportunities for reflection and taking stock, for looking back and looking forward, maybe even for painful soul-searching. I am both honoured and humbled that the Trustees of the Evangelical Library have invited me to speak on the cross work of Christ celebrating two anniversaries: James Denney's *The Death of Christ* ² (1905) and Leon Morris' *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross* ³ (1955). With the trustees' permission, I would like two more honoured guests to gatecrash the party:

Jim Packer's Tyndale Lecture *What did the Cross Achieve* ⁴ published in 1975, and John Stott's *The Cross of Christ* ⁵ which will be twenty years old in six months time. Here we have before us, spanning a century, four seminal evangelical texts on the work of Christ that have been read and that have influenced what must be hundreds of thousands of believers.

Although stylistically different, they are all fine examples of erudite scholarship and of a nuanced depth that at the same time is wonderfully lucid. Most importantly, they are all soaked in the Scripture, artfully integrating exegesis, biblical and systematic theology. All of them offer detailed and sophisticated defences of a substitutionary understanding of the atonement which is 'penal' in nature: in Packer's words: 'Jesus Christ our Lord, moved by a love that was determined to do everything to save us, endured and exhausted the destructive divine judgement for which we were inescapably destined, and so won us forgiveness, adoption and glory.' ⁶

Comfortably perched on the shoulders of these

giants, who themselves sat on the shoulders of others, reaching back for two thousand years, one might assume that for evangelicals in 2005, debates over the nature of the cross need no longer concern us, any battles having been fought and decisively won by those we remember tonight. Because of their work in defending penal substitution against the old foe of theological liberalism, surely today there is evangelical unanimity, not only on the truth of penal substitution, but unanimity that penal substitution remains a fundamental tenet of the evangelical doctrine of salvation? There is little more to do than cry a big 'Amen' and depart from here, praising God for his saving provision in Christ and proclaiming the scandal of the cross to an unbelieving world.

Uncomfortably, as we are all too well aware, in reality the view is somewhat less scenic, as within 'evangelicalism' we are currently mired in a heated controversy, (some polemically might say 'civil war') over the precise meaning of the cross. There are those who, with sometimes the laudable intentions of our evangelism and evangelical credibility, not only want to downplay the penal character of Christ's substitution, but who want to deny it all together. ⁷

It is not my primary aim in this lecture to defend, once again, penal substitution against its critics. To misquote an oft-quoted preacher: 'Defend penal substitution? I'd as soon defend a lion!' ⁸ I have neither the space nor expertise to think I can substantially improve upon the exegesis and arguments of a Denney, Morris, Stott and Packer, a Nicole or a Murray, let alone a Luther or Calvin. I am at 'cognitive rest' with their analyses of the

biblical data and systematic formulation. If you are wavering on this issue and have not read them, then I urge you to do so.

What I would like to do in this lecture is to attempt some positive theological construction, examining a cluster of issues surrounding the theology of the atonement and the continuing debate over the theology of the atonement. My lecture will consist of three related sections.

I argue that under the sovereignty and providence of God we discern meaningful consequences out of doctrinal controversy. Next, I look to see whether the theological method known as ‘multi-perspectivalism’ or ‘symphonic’ theology can help us in our articulation of the atonement in the midst of such controversy. Finally, and as a worked example, I examine Christ’s death from the perspective of his victory over Satan and the salvation of creation, and argue perspectivally their inextricable link to penal substitution.

Part 1: Understanding misunderstanding

For those of us who continue to teach and preach penal substitution there appears to be a frustrating intuitional incongruity. In light of the works that we are remembering, with their commitment to sola Scriptura, their nuance, depth and presupposed Trinitarian foundations, it is saddening but maybe still understandable that anyone who is ‘formally’ committed to an evangelical theological method, could and would not only suppress, but refute penal substitution. I don’t want to be naïve or idealistic here, I am aware of the perversity and irrationality of unbelief in my own heart, let alone others. I am also theologically shrewd enough to see that in some

recent treatments, denial of penal substitution is simply the tip of a larger theological iceberg, or to put it another way the last domino which must topple from a chain reaction that started way back. Earlier moves include a denial of God’s personal wrath against sin; a re-interpretation of God’s holiness and sovereignty; post-modern sympathies in epistemology; and to be frank, a theological method which descriptively seems more classically liberal than evangelical, and seeks to interpret the Word through the world and not the world through the Word. All of these are consistent with a denial of an understanding of the cross that is founded on trans-cultural concepts such as propitiation and retributive justice. Let me repeat, this is understandable although disorientating especially when within the evangelical constituency, leaders publicly side with a C.H. Dodd rather than a Leon Morris. Although it is a moot point, and itself part of the battle over ‘evangelical history’, what were in the past thought to be clear boundary markers defining evangelical identity, suddenly appear to be a great deal more opaque.

However, what I have described is not the perplexity on which I wish to focus. What is less understandable, is that in many expositions against penal substitution, what is rejected is not in actuality penal substitution but what amount to gross caricatures of penal substitution which are oversimplified, perverted and twisted expositions that at times lapse into both modalism and tritheism, and which overall betray both a systematic and historical theological illiteracy. This is not all, for in terms of a ‘model’ of the atonement, penal substitution is often portrayed as being necessarily narrow and

monochrome, not taking into account the full range of language used to describe the cross work of Christ in the Bible.⁹

What are the sources of such misunderstanding? No doubt theological, historical, and sociological factors are involved. I wonder though whether one trail leads embarrassingly back to our doorstep? While we rightly uphold the best practice of a Packer or Stott, could we entertain the possibility that at times, in our passion and earnestness to uphold the truth of penal substitution, we have provided fuel for this fire?

First, have we been guilty of less than careful expositions and illustrations of penal substitution in our preaching and teaching, what Packer calls 'popular piety' which is 'devotionally evocative without being theologically rigorous'?¹⁰ Are our expositions of penal substitution fully consonant with our understanding of God's triune nature and God's character?

Second, is it possible that because we have not always been totally sure of the precise systematic connections between the cross as propitiating God's wrath and the cross as victory over Satan, that in our insecurity we have tended to default to what we believe to be more central and less peripheral? Could it be that because penal substitution displays 'the offence of the cross' in all its ugly beauty (from Socinus to the present), it has continued to be the most offensive truth about Christ's cross that is constantly under attack? As a result its battle-weary defenders have been defensive and 'tunnel-visioned'. In 1965 Leon Morris could write 'upholders of the penal theory have so stressed the thought that Christ

bore our penalty that they have found room for nothing else. Rarely have they in theory denied the value of other theories, but sometimes they have in practice ignored them.'¹¹

It is not my role to apportion blame here or there. I confess a whiff of autobiography in the above analysis. My question is how I – how we – learn from such situations.

In the current climate, we are being naïve if we posit a simple declinism that pessimistically despairs and which, with embitterment, retreats into a perceived ever-decreasing enclave. We must take advice from the preacher, 'There is nothing new under the sun' (Ecc.1:9) and, 'Say not "Why were the former days better than these?" For it is not from wisdom that you ask this' (Ecc. 7:10). Has the truth of God's personal wrath on a proud rebellious race ever been popular? Are contemporary refutations of penal substitution more devastating than Socinus' *Of Jesus Christ the Saviour*, which was written over 500 years ago? If we were to discern a more cyclical or generational pattern concerning theological controversy, we would be less likely to be taken by surprise, or off-guard, with the inevitable resulting knee-jerk response, and more likely to be well prepared to interpret a situation like ours in a biblically responsible way, and act accordingly in wisdom.

In a recent essay, Wayne Grudem asks why God, in his sovereignty, allows false teachings to come into the church in different ages.¹² Two of his reasons are pertinent to our topic. His first reason is the purification of the church. That includes a belief in doctrinal progression over history which at times

can be gradual and at other times explosive but which invariably comes through controversy: 'As the church has struggled to define its own beliefs clearly in distinction from false doctrine, it has grown in its understanding of the teachings of Scripture. So God has used controversy to purify the church. In the process of controversy old errors have been corrected, and the church has refined its understanding of many things it had believed implicitly but not in a detailed or deeply understood way.'¹³ The recent events within British evangelicalism have certainly deepened and sharpened my thinking on the nature of Christ's cross. With the number of excellent treatments we have that are defending penal substitution, we have the opportunity not only to re-familiarise ourselves with them for apologetic value, but to build on their work, knowing that there are always more riches to be mined from God's Word.¹⁴ Preaching and teaching on the cross should never become a tiresome trial! We must make use of this providential opportunity to understand the biblical complexity and nuances of penal substitution, and resolve to teach, rebuke, correct and train both clearly faithfully and graciously. Put simply, in the words of a friend of mine, 'Don't get bitter, get better!'

The second reason Grudem gives for the emergence of false teaching, is that God permits false teaching to test our attitude of heart toward false teachers. Here he quotes 2 Timothy 2:24–26 (I will include v. 23 also):

Have nothing to do with foolish, ignorant controversies; you know that they breed quarrels. And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, correcting his

opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, and they may escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will.

Grudem writes: 'As we confront others who teach what we consider to be false doctrine today, God is testing not only our faithfulness regarding what we believe and what we write in our doctrinal statements but also how we act toward those with whom we disagree. Will we continue to act toward them in love and kindness, even when we come to the point when we feel we must exclude their teaching from what is allowed in our organisations or our churches? God is testing our hearts toward these people with whom we disagree.'¹⁵ Similarly before quoting the same passage in 2 Timothy, Roger Nicole, (who, like Morris, wrote his defence of penal substitution against C.H. Dodd in 1955) has written elsewhere: 'A Christian who carries on discussions with those who differ should not be subject to the psychology of the boxing ring, where the contestants are bent upon demolishing one another.'¹⁶

In practical terms, we need to take account of a number of things if we are to 'speak the truth in love'. First, before we pronounce judgement, we need to make sure that those denying penal substitution are really guilty of denying a true exposition of the doctrine and not a second-hand and false caricature. Desperate as it is, we cannot presume that leaders and those in influence in our churches have had the quality and quantity of theological training commensurate to their position. Might we seek opportunities to present a biblical, Trinitarian exposition of penal substitution

and so dispel some people's long-held prejudices against this understanding of the cross? Second, we need to realise that 'straw men' can be constructed on both sides of an argument. It is hypocritical for us to accuse some people of caricaturing when we are doing the same thing.¹⁷ We should read the primary sources carefully and not engage in hearsay.

Finally, we need to recognise that in the New Testament error is dealt with in different ways according to the person in error. In a very helpful paper, the late Bob Sheehan offers a five-fold typology of the way the Apostles dealt with theological error. All were treated differently according to their particular context:

- *the sincerely ignorant* (e.g. Apollos in Acts 18). Here the apostles make no condemnation but privately explain the truth more fully.
- *the sincere misinterpreter* (e.g. some of the Corinthian problems). Here Paul removes all reason for misunderstanding by further clarification.
- *the temporarily inconsistent* (e.g. Peter in Gal. 2). Here, because Peter's sin was public and because of his prominence, Paul rebukes him publicly. Paul realises Peter's inconsistency is not a desire to repudiate the gospel but is motivated by fear. Paul does not condemn him as a heretic in confrontation, but shows him the serious implications of his teaching and gains his restoration.
- *the deceived* (e.g. the 'bewitched' Galatians). Here Sheehan notes four strands of arguments in Paul's teaching: 'a positive teaching of truth, a negative denunciation of error, a forthright yet accurate exposure of the false teachers and a warning of the dire consequences of persistence in false teaching.'¹⁸
- *The deceivers* (e.g. the Judaizers). These people are

enemies of the gospel who were fundamentally unwilling to be submissive to Apostolic teaching even after an orderly and responsible process of investigation, testimony and decision (the dogmata of Acts 16:4): 'there should be no doubt that the teaching of the Apostle with regard to these wilful, persistent, stubborn heretics is that they are to be rejected and avoided; that their excommunication from the church is necessary. There is to be no sort of contact with them for religious purposes.'¹⁹

I do not believe that such categorisation is guilty of the death of a thousand qualifications. Indeed against the antiseptic sterility of much theological discourse within evangelicalism (let alone in the wider church and academy), I, like the New Testament, think that we should be willing to call false teaching, heresy and apostasy for what it is, providing we do not use these terms lightly, flippantly or gleefully, but in a technical 'biblical' sense and with the gravity and seriousness they deserve. Sheehan notes that a great deal of discernment is required in these situations but ultimately there are only two types of errorist: 'There are those who are in submission to the Apostles, yet for some reason are not doing what the Apostles had said, and there are those who are not in submission to the Apostles. Those who are biblically submissive, yet in error, and those who are biblically subversive and, therefore, in error.'²⁰

In terms of discipline and censure, I understand the difficulty of ecclesiological 'translation' from the New Testament local congregation setting, to today's diverse ecclesiological structures, not to mention parachurch structures. However I still think there are clear principles that we can follow.

I believe in ‘innocent until proven guilty’, and a biblical procedure for matters of discipline, involving relational contact, noting however that procedures must conclude at some point in time.

If the above analysis is correct, how might we attempt some positive construction which both enhances our understanding of the cross and its penal substitutionary nature, and which, for those who deny this truth, might even clear up some misconceptions which, God willing, ‘may grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, and that they may escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will’?

Part 2: Perspectives on Perspectivalism

Here I would like to draw on the theological approach called multi-perspectivalism or ‘symphonic’ theology, championed by Reformed theologians, John Frame and Vern Poythress respectively.²¹ There are several influences behind this approach, perhaps the strongest is Cornelius Van Til and in particular his thinking on the nature of religious language and epistemology. In terms of theology, multi-perspectivalism argues that there are both continuities and discontinuities between God’s knowledge and our own. Truth is one and yet only God is omniscient, seeing reality simultaneously from all possible perspectives. In summary multi-perspectivalism recognises that ‘because of our finitude, we need to look at things first from one perspective, then another. The more different perspectives we can incorporate into our formulations, the more likely those formulations will be biblically accurate.’²² Frame notes that the Bible presents doctrinal relationships perspectivally because this reflects the

nature of the triune God, ‘God is one God in three persons; He is many attributes in one God-head – the eternal one and many. None of the persons is prior to the other, all are equally eternal, ultimate, absolute, glorious. None of the attributes is “prior to” any of the others; each is equally divine, inalienable, and necessary to God’s deity.’²³ Poythress echoes this:

different perspectives, though they start from different strands of biblical revelation, are in principle harmonizable with one another. We as human beings do not always see the harmony straight away. But we gain insights in the process of trying to see the same material from several different perspectives. We use what we have gained from one perspective to reinforce, correct, or improve what we understood through the other. I call this procedure symphonic theology because it is analogous to the blending of various musical instruments to express the variations of a symphonic theme.²⁴

In summarising the qualities and characteristics of perspectives, the following can be said:

- Each perspective has a separate focus of interest.
- Each perspective is, in the end, dependent on the others.
- Each perspective is, in principle, harmonizable with the others.
- Any one perspective when expanded far enough involves the others and in fact encompasses the others. Each can be viewed as an aspect of the others.
- Because of the tendency to human oversight or one sided emphasis, each perspective is useful in helping us to notice facts and relationships that tend to be further in the background in the other perspectives.²⁵

I recognise that I have had to present this approach quickly and baldly. Because it is relevant to our

discussion on the atonement I would like to note some qualifications given by Frame and Poythress. First, both are at pains to distinguish substantive disagreement from different, but complementary, perspectives. This approach is not relativistic in its understanding of truth. Second, there is not a flat undifferentiation between perspectives in Scripture. Frame, for example, has no difficulty in affirming contextual exegesis and a central message in the Bible which is essentially Christological. However he notes some qualifications:

- To understand the full scope of Christ's redemptive work, we need the whole biblical canon.
- There is perspectival reciprocity between the central message of Scripture and its detailed particular messages. The central message is defined by the particular messages, and the particular messages must be understood in the light of the central message...
- Not all perspectives are equally prominent in Scripture or equally useful to the theologian. It is quite right for a theologian to prefer one perspective to another. He errs only when he gives to that perspective the kind of authority that is due only to the biblical canon as a whole, or when he seeks to exclude other perspectives that also have some validity.
- This sort of talk sometimes sounds like relativism. It is far from that, and the motive behind it is quite the opposite. The main point of my argument for perspectivalism is to defend the absolute authority of Scripture as a whole, against all the pretensions of theologians. It is Scripture that is our authority. It is not a 'theology of' something or other. Nor is it this or that 'context' within Scripture.²⁶

Similarly Poythress nuances his overall approach by

arguing that: in the Bible there is an inequality of perspectives, with some being more prominent than others; not all perspectives are equally useful for all purposes; and it is misleading to say that all perspectives are valid: there are many unbiblical perspectives.²⁷

Is multi-perspectivalism such a revolutionary method and is this method legitimate when looking at the doctrine of the atonement? I say 'no' to the first question and 'yes' to the second. I would argue that what I am suggesting is merely explicitly drawing out what is implicitly present in some of the best recent evangelical expositions of the cross. Let us begin with Packer in his 1975 lecture.

The first thing to note is that the opening half of the lecture concentrates on methodological issues concerning epistemology and religious language with Packer arguing against an over-rationalistic formulation of penal substitution, and for the legitimate place of 'mystery' in our doctrinal formulations. Here Packer's concern compliments multi-perspectivalism's focus on religious language, God's archetypal knowledge and our true but limited knowledge. Next, remember Packer's helpful typology delineating three ways the church have explained the death of Christ, 'each reflecting a particular view of the nature of God and our plight in sin, and of what is needed to bring us to God in the fellowship of acceptance on his side and faith and love on ours....' ²⁸ The first sees the cross having its effect entirely on men, and the second sees the cross having its effect primarily on external spiritual forces. Now note how Packer introduces the last alternative, which is in essence the penal substitution view:

...The third type of account *denies nothing asserted by the other two views save their assumption that they are complete*. It agrees that there is biblical support for all they say, but it goes further. It grounds man's plight as a victim of sin and Satan in the fact that, for all God's daily goodness to him, as a sinner he stands under divine judgement, and his bondage to evil is the start of his sentence, and unless God's rejection of him is turned into acceptance he is lost forever. On this view, Christ's death had its effect first on God, who was hereby propitiated (or, better, who hereby propitiated himself), *and only because it had this effect* did it become an overthrowing of the powers of darkness and a revealing of God's seeking and saving love...²⁹

He continues:

It should be noted that though the two former views regularly set themselves in antithesis to the third, the third takes up into itself all the positive assertions that they make; which raises the question whether any more is at issue here than the impropriety of treating half-truths as the whole truth, and of rejecting a more comprehensive account on the basis of speculative negations about what God's holiness requires as a basis for forgiving sins. Were it allowed that the first two views were misunderstanding and distorting themselves in this way, the much disputed claim that a broadly substitutionary view of the cross has always been the mainstream Christian opinion might be seen to have substance after all. It is a pity that books on the atonement so often take it for granted that accounts of the cross which have appeared as rivals in historical debate must be treated as intrinsically exclusive. This is always arbitrary, and sometimes quite perverse.³⁰

To take an example from a different perspective: Richard Gaffin has recently written a superlative essay on the atonement in Pauline theology.³¹ On the topic of the efficacy of Christ's death, Gaffin again starts with the nature of religious language. Here the aim is not that of refuting an unhealthy rationalism but rather those who wish to stress that Paul's language in describing the meaning of

Christ's death is entirely metaphorical and not subject to 'clinical analysis'. Gaffin's response tackles this view, and in doing so further sharpens our understanding of multi-perspectivalism. He writes:

Paul is quite well aware of the 'dialectic' that marks all sound theological knowledge; it is memorably put, 'to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge' (Eph. 3:19), and surely with his death primarily in view (2 Cor. 5:4) ... considered comprehensively, God gift, in Christ, is 'beyond words'. But – and this is the point to be noted here – Paul *understands* this. He is confident that he not only comprehends, truly if not exhaustively, the incomprehensible mystery of God that Christ is, but he is able to provide his readers with 'the full riches of complete understanding', a 'knowledge' that enables them to recognise and refute spurious though fine sounding arguments. In other words, Paul's gospel involves adequate discursive knowledge.³²

Gaffin also comments on the concept of metaphor:

Much is made today of the great variety of metaphors Paul uses for the meaning of Christ's death. Based on this plurality, it is alleged that no one image is central or captures all the truth of the atonement. In response, at least three things need to be said. First, while it is surely true that Paul speaks of Christ's death in a variety of ways and it is important not to neglect any one, there is no inherent reason why one may not be more predominant than any other ... Second, there is no inherent reason why this variety cannot be accounted for in a body of teaching, a doctrine if you will, that is unified and coherent ... Third, it does not follow from the variety of images Paul uses that no one image is indispensable under all circumstances, that any one, say sacrifice or penal substitution, may be disposable under some circumstances.³³

Are not both Packer and Gaffin instinctively affirming a version of multi-perspectivalism? They are against a pick-and-mix compartmentalisation that under the umbrella of 'contextualisation' allows

one to isolate only those images of the cross that resonates with contemporary culture, ditching others into the dustbin of Christian history. Rather both Packer and Gaffin affirm an organic relatedness which weave together all the biblical metaphors and images concerning the atonement language or in Packer's words 'complementary models expressing different elements in the single complex reality which is the mystery of the cross'.³⁴ Also, they both note that there may well be an asymmetry between these different perspectives on the cross and a particular relational dynamic between them that is not uniform. Elsewhere they both observe that the atonement is just one element in the totality of our understanding of salvation, again organically related to the other elements. So, for example Christ's cross work is inextricably related to his resurrection (remember, for example, Calvin's insight into the synecdochic relationship between the two), and the doctrine of union with Christ that links, in complimentary fashion, substitution and representation, and that through the work of the Spirit binds redemption accomplished to redemption applied.³⁵

Part 3: A Vicarious Victory

Armed with these insights on the divine purposes behind false teaching, and our multi-perspectival approach to doctrine, let us once again return to the frontline of the debate over the nature of the cross. We now have suitable weapons which will not only allow us to plunge deeper into the belly of truth, but which will be able to cut through some unnecessary and unhelpful misunderstandings that exist between those who rightly maintain the truth of penal substitution and those who wrongly do not. On the

latter, Poythress has two useful comments. First he notes that error is parasitic on the truth:

To be at all plausible, errors and lies must somehow look like the truth. They cannot sustain themselves long, and they will not be believed long, unless to some degree they disguise themselves as angels of light (2 Cor. 11:14) ... These illustrations [talking about Jehovah's witnesses and Christian scientists] remind us that there is a distinction between truth and error and that some errors in doctrine are very serious ... We ought never to forget this fact. And yet, even in such cases, we find mixtures of truth and error. It is worthwhile asking what grain of truth makes the error more plausible.

Second, in theological debates, we should preempt the other person's strong points:

As we saw under the previous maxim, sometimes we are dealing with outright error, not just a harmonizable difference of viewpoint. In such cases, it is often worthwhile trying to figure out what other people fear and what are the strongest points in their arguments. We should try to find some grain of truth in their fears, in their strong points, and in the things that they care for most intensely. Even if there is only a distant similarity between what they assert and what is actually true, we can find the primary points of similarity. Starting with the actual truth closest to their viewpoint, we can develop a perspective from which to expand to the truth that we want them to learn. We can, in other words, 'steal their thunder,' or preempt their strong points.³⁶

This final section focuses on one example or case study. Although he is by no means original in his thinking or 'academic' in terms of theological rigour, at a popular level (using the term descriptively and not pejoratively), Steve Chalke's writing and speaking has been at the centre of the current debate over the nature of the atonement, and his influence on sociological evangelicalism is significant. In his article 'Redeeming the Cross' he writes the following:

Has Christ's death on the Cross got any relevance or meaning beyond the individual eternal destiny of his followers? What does it mean, if anything, for wider affairs of our communities; the UK's foreign policy; the war on terrorism; trade justice; people trafficking; the hopes, ambitions and fears of countless millions of people? Can it offer us any direction as we think about the global challenges humanity faces at the beginning of the 21st century? Was there a cosmic reason for Jesus' death? And what are the implications today for us as individuals, as the Church and society as a whole?

But, if penal substitution does not do justice to the story of our salvation through Christ, what other options are open to us? For me, the most empowering and motivating understanding of the atonement is that which most closely resembles the thinking of the Early Church. As they struggled to make sense of Jesus' death and resurrection, the Early Church leaders (notably Irenaeus, Gregory of Nyssa and Origen) wrote about the cross in terms of a ransom. Of course, Jesus said himself that he came 'to give his life as a ransom for many.' (Mark 10:45). But to whom was this ransom paid? The Early Church was adamant that it was not to God. As Origen put it: *'To whom did he give his life as a ransom for many? Assuredly not to God, could it then be to the Evil One? For he was holding fast until the ransom should be given him, even the life of Jesus; being deceived with the idea that he could have dominion over it, and not seeing that he could not bear the torture in retaining it.'*

This early model which, following the work of Gustav Aulen in 1930, has become known as *Christus Victor* (Christ the Conqueror) sees Christ's life, death and resurrection put together as his victory over all the forces of evil and sin, including the earthly and spiritual powers that oppress people. It is Jesus' resurrection that gives the hope of the new heaven and the new earth, where sin is banished and all things are made right again. Jesus' emergence from the grave shows us no political power, no unjust regime, no sinful structure can triumph, even in death. It is Easter Sunday, not Good Friday, that shows the new kingdom in all its glory and God's love in all its fullness. It is the resurrection which finally puts the

Victor in Christus Victor! On the cross Jesus does not placate God's anger in taking the punishment for sin, but rather absorbs its consequences and, in his resurrection, defeats death.³⁷

Rather than an immediate rush of blood to the head, let us aim to understand this type of statement in its best possible light. We need to acknowledge that the social questions Steve asks at the beginning of the quotation are important questions that evangelical Christians need to answer and to answer in the public sphere. An unhealthy pietism that forgets the Lordship of Christ in all areas of life just will not do (and certainly is not 'Reformed'). We read, in Colossians 'For in him the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross' (1:19,20). The idea of cosmic salvation and the salvation of creation is a biblical theme demanding of our attention.

Second we do need to note the not insignificant strand of biblical teaching that speaks of Christ's death in terms of conquest and victory over the powers of darkness and the Evil One. In 1955 no less than John Murray commented, 'It is surely significant ... that the first promise of redemptive grace, the first beam of light that fell upon our fallen first parents, was in terms of the destruction of the Tempter.'³⁸ In the New Testament there are in total eight passages that talk about the work of Christ in terms of conquest and defeat of Satan. (Matt. 12:29; Lk. 11:21–22; Jn. 12:31; 16:11; 1 Cor. 15:24–26; Col. 2:13–15; Heb. 2:14–15; 1 Jn. 3:8). The crucial questions to ask are precisely how does a shameful death on a wooden cross crush

Satan, and whether jettisoning penal substitution is going to help or hinder our answer. Let us attempt to answer these questions.

In our analysis of Christ's victory over Satan, we start with a metaphysical conundrum that is illustrated by Henri Blocher in his majestic essay 'Agnus Victor'

The main query is basic indeed: *How* is the battle fought and the victory gained? If the metaphor is to bear doctrinal fruit, it should yield at least some intelligence in the mode and process. The picture of two wrestlers or duelists is hardly congruous when *spirits* are in conflict. If *quanta* or spiritual 'energy' may be thought of perhaps, in the case of creatures, how can God fight against creatures, even high-ranking ones? There is no common measure between his infinite power – one of his names is *Pantokrator*, Master of all – and the devil's limited power; the fact that the devil can act only on God's sovereign permission (Job!) highlights this radical breach of symmetry.³⁹

What then might we ask is the source of Satan's power that is so powerful and captivating? The answer lies in Satan's title of 'Accuser'. He is the 'accuser of our brothers' (Rev. 12:10).⁴⁰ Satan's role is that of chief public prosecutor, this is the source of his power. As Blocher explains:

How is Satan's role as the Accuser related to his power? If Satan's opposition to the Lord were a matter of mere power, the rebel's finite resources would equal zero confronted with infinity. But the Accuser can appeal to justice...The righteous Judge of all the earth, who can do only right, cannot refuse to hear the charges the Accuser brings without denying himself. In other words, the weapon in the devil's hand is God's own law, God's holy and perfect law...In this light, we may interpret the statement in Hebrews that the devil holds the power (*kratos*) of death (2:14). Throughout Scripture, death appears as a punishment God brings down upon

sinners...the devil...secures their condemnation as the prosecutor of humanity. Using the force of the law, he demands successfully that they die.⁴¹

In this respect then, similar to Satan's *being*, which is preserved in existence by a sovereign God, so Satan's *power* is entirely parasitic, feeding off a theocentric host.

When we come to the cross, I hope we start to see the lines of connection between vicarious punishment and the defeat of Satan. The *locus classicus* is Colossians 2: 13– 15:

And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by cancelling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.

Here we see the so-called 'models' – or might we say melodies – of the atonement, blending together in beautiful harmony. God's triumph over Satan and the forces of evil can only be preserved by the penal-substitution theory.

Millard Erickson summarises this well:

...The message of the cross is that Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law and thus freed us from the slavery in which Satan held us. The Bible makes it clear that we are freed from the curse of the law precisely because Jesus took our place; in him our penalty has been paid; in him we have died and been made alive again. In dying with Christ we are no longer slaves to sin (Rom.6:6–8). 'Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us' (Gal. 3:13). 'Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus' (Rom. 8:1). There is no-one (including Satan) who can condemn, for God justifies us, and Christ, who died and was raised from the dead, intercedes for us. (vv.31–

34). Thus, Paul can challenge the power of death and sin. Christ has fulfilled the law for us, and therefore sin no longer had the power of death.

If Christ's death, on the other hand, had been nothing more than the payment of a ransom to Satan, the law could not have been fulfilled in the process and Satan would not have been defeated. It was not the payment of a ransom to Satan that ensured his defeat and the triumph of God, but Christ taking our place to free us from the curse of the law. By bearing the penalty of our sin and satisfying the requirements of the law, Christ nullified Satan's control over us at its root – the power to bring us under the curse and condemnation of the law. Christ's death was God's triumph over the forces of evil, but only because it was a substitutionary sacrifice.⁴²

From the perspective of contextual exegesis, while it would be entirely legitimate to focus on the cross from the perspective of the defeat of the Evil One, in terms of theological explanation, without the perspective of penal substitution also in view, the cross becomes both incoherent (what is Satan's power and how does Christ overcome it?), and ineffective (Satan might well be defeated on the cross but I am still under God's wrath, in Adam, dead in sin, without God and without hope [Eph. 2:1, 11–12] destined for the judgement of God [Heb. 9:27] and eternal condemnation [Mt. 25: 31–46; Rom. 5:12–21]).

From the perspective of systematic formulation, our theology of atonement is enriched by both the vicarious and the victorious together. As Blocher notes, in an intuitively multi-perspectival way:

The key position of the doctrine of vicarious punishment answers to the privilege of personal-relational-judicial categories, within the framework of covenant, to deal with divine communication over against that of ontological participation and moral assimilation in other

strands of the Christian tradition. This 'mind' is biblical. However, such a position does not make other languages and schemes superfluous, and it does not rule out ontological dimensions and moral influence. The polemic presentation, especially is a welcome complement: When one understands that Christ's victory was based on his sacrifice, one should unfold the fruit of his death as radical and universal victory! Understanding that Satan was defeated as the Accuser may help us to retain the particle of truth in the awkward suggestion that God's attributes of mercy and justice had to be 'reconciled' by the cross: Though God's attributes are one (description of God's essence), once evil entered the world (through God's wholly mysterious, inscrutable permission), his justice became in a way the enemy's weapon – until the divine wisdom (and love) provided the way for God to be both just and the one who justifies sinners through faith in Jesus (Rom 3:26)⁴³

Is it not a glorious and liberating truth to know that in Christ there are no accusations against God's people (Rom. 8:33)? There is no-one, not even Satan, the most cunning legal prosecutor of all time, who can make the charge stick. The case is closed – Christ is our righteousness. We can therefore sing with gusto, 'When Satan tempts me to despair and tells me of the guilt within, upward I look and see Him there who made an end of all my sin.'⁴⁴ Amen!

Stating these inter-connections between models of the atonement is of course not new, (although due to our poor theological education it may seem new). In an essay on Calvin's view of the atonement, Blocher writes that 'the coalescence of the sacrificial, penal and the polemic themes reflects a remarkable inclination and ability of Calvin's thought: broad comprehension that majors on solidarities and does not stumble over artificial separations between topics.'⁴⁵ Conversely Gustav Aulén in *Christus Victor*⁴⁶ was woefully reductionist in his reading and his

claim that Luther had trumped the legal view of the atonement with the 'classic or dramatic view'. As Robert Letham writes:

Certainly Luther regarded Christ as battling with and triumphing over the demonic powers (LW, 26,281, 373; 53, 257). He saw these powers, however, as agents of God's wrath. It was our guilt and the wrath of God that, in his estimation, was the immediate context of Christ's atoning death. He saw freedom from the power of the devil as a fruit of deliverance from God's wrath (LW, 26, 276– 291; 27,4). His stress is on Christ's death as a sacrifice of substitutionary satisfaction for human sin (LW, 13,319; 23, 195; 24, 98; 25, 25,249, 284, 349).⁴⁷

Similarly Althaus' assessment of Luther is more accurate: 'The satisfaction that God's justice demands is the primary and decisive meaning of Christ's work, in particular of his death. All the rest hangs on this, the Powers spoiled of all right and power.'⁴⁸

Part 4: A Re-created Creation

I would like to argue, although in far less detail, that we see the same structure and pattern when looking at the salvation of creation. In summary, from the perspective of creation, the Fall and its consequences can be characterised as a 'double de-creation'.⁴⁹ Sin is a de-creation in that the God ordained hierarchy of relationships of Genesis 1 (God, man, women, creation) are reversed in Genesis 3⁵⁰ (creation, women, man, God) with God's sovereign, effective and good Word (Gen. 1), disbelieved, disobeyed and seen to be disingenuous (Gen. 3). Furthermore, God's direct and interventionist judgement on sin in Gen. 3:14-24, all have de-creating consequences (death as a penalty for sin, the ensuing conflict between men and women, the curse of the ground etc.). The

disbelief and disobedience of Adam and Eve led to what Murray calls a 'cosmic revolution'⁵¹ – an implication of the Fall. In his typical style, Francis Schaeffer puts it like this:

It is interesting to note that almost all of the results of God's judgement because of man's rebellion relate in some way to the external world. They are not just bound up in man's thought life; they are not merely psychological. Profound changes make the external, objective world abnormal. In the phrase *for thy sake* God is relating these external abnormalities to what Adam has done in the Fall...Why is it like this? Because, one might say, you, O unprogrammed and significant Adam, have revolted. Nature has been under your dominion (in this sense it is as an extension of himself, as a king's empire is an extension of himself). Therefore, when you changed, God changes the objective, external world. It as well as you is now abnormal.⁵²

Notice the pattern here: the focus of the Fall centres on humanity and the physical and spiritual death penalty announced by God, the *consequence* of the Fall is the cursing of creation. When we come to the effect of the cross on creation i.e. recreation, or in Irenaeus' word 'recapitulation', we discern a similar pattern: the focus on the salvation of humanity and the exhausting of divine punishment by Christ's cross, and then, and only then, the salvation of creation as consequence. Therefore the cross works in an indirect way on creation. The cross saves creation but through the saving of God's people. It acts on creation through acting on humanity, which is precisely what Romans 8:19-21 is talking about:

For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.

Therefore to compartmentalize the effect of the cross on humanity from the effect of cross cosmically, is to separate something the Bible joins together. There is an inextricable link between the two and a particular dynamic between the two that will affect Christian preaching and praxis. In exploring this theme in relation to penal substitution, Mike Ovey calls 'the exclusive re-creation argument,' any atonement theory which claims penal substitution to be redundant because in God's plan to renew and restore a fallen creation (secured by our union with Christ in his resurrection), 'penalty aims simply at restoring the status quo ante, which does not extend as far as a new, better, recreated world.' However, as he finally concludes, such a view:

presents a false antithesis between penal substitution on the one hand and the restoration of creation on the other. In reality, the very cosmos that is being restored and vindicated is one which upholds a penalty for sin. So a soteriology stressing the restoration of this cosmos has to face the question of what happens to the penalty for sin. A restoration soteriology that does not deal with the aspect of penalty has either failed to achieve a full restoration or, as Guillebaud observed, leaves the penalty still in operation (scarcely an encouraging thought). It is thus clear at this point that restoration of this cosmos, the one God actually created, demands a penal substitution. Restoration may well involve more than penal substitution, but it cannot be less and still be restoration. A restoration exclusive of penal substitution is thus not a full restoration, for it involves a God whose word has been and remains broken. To preach creation restored necessarily involves penal substitution.⁵³

In concluding this section, we are now in a better position to answer Steve Chalke's penetrating questions about the relevance and meaning of the cross in the context of the wider affairs of our communities; the UK's foreign policy; the war on

terrorism; trade justice; people trafficking; the hopes, ambitions and fears of countless millions of people. The answer is not to reject penal substitution but precisely the opposite. We will only be able to speak prophetically and hopefully into a sin-cursed world by proclaiming the One who was cursed by God but who was vindicated, was risen and is alive: Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery' (Heb. 2:14, 15).

Part 5: The Crux of the Cross

Let us join some of the dots. There is a profound depth in the biblical revelation of Christ's cross work that we can view from many perspectives. Let us return to Poythress' qualities of perspectives this time with the cross in focus: Each perspective on the cross has a separate focus of interest, e.g. propitiation presupposes divine wrath, reconciliation presupposes divine alienation, redemption presupposes slavery etc. Each perspective on the cross is, in the end, dependent on the others. Each perspective on the cross is, in principle, harmonizable with the others. Any one perspective on the cross when expanded far enough involves the others and in fact encompasses the others. Each perspective on the cross can be viewed as an aspect of the others.⁵⁴ So we demonstrate the organic and interweaving quality of God's revelation.⁵⁵

However, there is one more thing to say, and that is the distinctive relationships between these perspectives. I would contend that when we talk perspectivally about the cross as say, the victory over

Satan and vicarious punishment, that because of, first, the theological connections between the two perspectives which sees the victory as parasitic on the vicarious, and therefore which, second, explains the reason behind the biblical weight given to vicarious punishment both explicitly (in terms of image, metaphor and typology) and implicitly (possessing the explanative 'workings' of other perspectives), that there is a prominence and centrality to vicarious punishment not given to victory over Satan. I would like to argue the same can be said for other perspectives in relation to penal substitution. How might we describe these perspectival relationships? Musically the difference between major and minor themes? Narratively the difference between major plot and a subplot? Geographically the difference between an epicentre and ripple? Roger Nicole puts it like this:

A linchpin in a mechanical contrivance makes possible the unified function of several other parts. If the linchpin is removed, the other parts no longer perform their own functions but float away in futility. This, I believe is precisely what occurs in the doctrine of atonement... Thus penal substitution of Christ is the vital centre of the atonement, the linchpin without which everything else loses its foundation and flies off the handle so to speak.⁵⁶

On a macro level this idea makes sense if we want to affirm in some sense the God-centred nature of theology, life, the universe and everything. As Poythress notes 'we may state the obvious: the most important and central theme of the Bible is God himself.'⁵⁷ Robert Reymond, therefore, is I think basically correct when in his rich systematic exposition on the character of the cross work of Christ he writes the following concerning propitiation:

All of this means that a major revision is essential in the thinking of Christian minds accustomed to viewing the cross work of Christ as being directed primarily, if not solely, towards men. In light of the fact that Paul and John expressly represent it as a *propitiating* work, it is important to recognise that Christ's cross work had a *Godward* reference. Indeed, if one reflects even for a moment on the sinful condition of the race vis-à-vis that holy character of God, it will become clear that *its Godward reference was the cross's primary reference*. The Bible plainly teaches the wrath of God. It teaches that God is angry, and that his holy outrage against the sinner must be assuaged if the sinner is to escape his due punishment. It is for this reason a death occurred at Calvary. When we look at Calvary and behold the Saviour dying for us, we should see in his death not first our salvation but our damnation being borne and carried away by him.⁵⁸

Pastorally, I think some of the following applications apply. First, in our preaching and teaching, exclusively affirming the cross as vicarious punishment and forgetting (rather than rejecting) the cross as victory over Satan, or the cross as moral example, we are certainly impoverished in our understanding of the atonement and are guilty of not letting the whole counsel of God speak on Christ's cross work. Put a different way, if someone wants to write a book on the atonement as 'moral example' in terms of 1 Pet. 2:21, such a book could potentially be valuable and edifying. However, the usefulness of such a book would be person specific; if the book's perspective did not include the perspective of penal substitution then for someone who needed basic teaching on the cross, the book could hinder rather than help. In the context of what we said earlier about different gradations of 'error', what we might be talking about here is discerning, not so much false teaching, but poor teaching – an incompetence to teach and preach the

whole counsel of God. I am uneasy about putting someone in Christian leadership who does not have a good doctrinal understanding and the skill and motivation to communicate it. The evangelical church has a corporate responsibility here. Alas, we can and do, come up with leadership criteria that do not match biblical criteria, and where theological competence and communication is shoved to the back of the queue.

Second, and with great sadness, we need to say one more thing because in our current situation the issue is not just one of different perspectives but of substantive disagreement: the explicit rejection of penal substitution. In affirming any perspective of the cross, (and remember revelation must guide us as to what are legitimate perspectives on the cross and what are illegitimate perspectives) and denying vicarious punishment, we are guilty not only of exegetical blindness and gross theological incompetence, but also theological bankruptcy. At this point I would contend that given the analysis of the human predicament, without penal substitution we have no 'good news' to offer, but have a different gospel which is really no gospel at all. To continue willingly to teach, preach and lead others astray in an explicit denial of penal substitution is extremely serious and warrants censure and separation.

Conclusion

In writing a new introduction to Packer's monograph, The Chairman of the Trustees of the Evangelical Library defined that a 'good' lecture 'should finish some business and identify further business for others to finish.'⁵⁹ I hope I might have done this in this lecture. In conclusion, let us make some anniversary resolutions.

Let us thank God for those like Denney and Morris, Packer and Stott who have built up the Body of Christ by faithfully exercising their gifts. Let us not be complacent but build on their work. Let us strive for doctrinal excellence and commit ourselves to preach and teach the whole counsel of God. Let us pray that the Holy Spirit will graciously open eyes in our study of the Word. Let us pray for opportunities to speak to those who differ with us and pray that in our discussion and debate we can speak the truth in love.

The doctrine of the atonement is a many-splendoured thing. Let us not settle for a monochrome understanding of the cross, but let us proclaim to ourselves and to an unbelieving world, the scandal and glory of the cross in all its glorious technicolour. And let us never forget that the atonement is not simply doctrine about God's love and provision of salvation, but is doxology, about God's love for me and my salvation, 'intrinsically adequate to meet all the exigencies'⁶⁰ created by a holy God and a sinful people. For I was an object of wrath but Christ took the punishment for which I was destined, I was alienated from God but through Christ I have been reconciled, I was under the curse of the law but have been redeemed by Him who was cursed on that tree. I was a bond-servant of Satan, gripped by the fear of death, yet the Lamb who was slain destroyed him and set me free. Thanks be to our gracious God!

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Appendix 1 - The Definition of the Atonement: Roger Nicole ⁶¹

Moved by his incomprehensible love for mankind the triune God was pleased not to abandon our rebellious and corrupt race to the misery and hell that it justly deserved, but to undertake to save a great multitude of human beings who had absolutely no claim on his mercy. In order to bring this plan into execution, the Second Person of the Godhead, the Son took unto himself a full human nature, becoming in all things like his brethren and sisters, sin excepted. Thus he became the 'second Adam', the head of the new covenant, and he lived a perfect life of obedience to the divine Law. Identifying with his own, he bore the penalty for human sin on the cross of Calvary, suffering in the place of the sinner, the just for the unjust, the holy Son of God for the guilty and corrupt children of man. By his death and resurrection he has provided the basis for the reconciliation of God to humans and humans to God; for the propitiation of a righteous Trinity, justly angry at our sins; for the redemption of a multitude of captives of sin whose liberty was secured at the great price of his own blood. He offered himself as an expiatory sacrifice sufficient to blot out the sins of the whole world and secured the utmost triumph over the enemies of our soul, sin, death and Satan. Those who repent of their sins and believe in Jesus Christ are thus to be absolved from the guilt of all their sins and are adorned with the perfect righteousness of Christ himself. In gratitude to him they are to live lives of obedience and service to their Saviour and are increasingly renewed into the image of Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit. This good news of salvation by grace through faith is to proclaimed indiscriminately to mankind, that is to every man, woman and child that we can possibly reach.

'Unto him that loves us and loosed us from our sins by His blood, and made us a kingdom and priests unto His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen' (Rev. 1:5,6).

1. This lecture is dedicated to my friend and brother in Christ, Bob Horn. A slightly shortened version of this lecture was given at the Swiss Church, Covent Garden, 6th June as the 2005 Evangelical Library Lecture, under the title of 'Creation, Conquest and the Cross'. All biblical quotations are taken from the *English Standard Version* (Collins, 2002).
2. James Denney, *The Death of Christ* (rev. and enlarged edition inc. Atonement and the Modern Mind) (Klock and Klock, 1982).
3. Leon Morris, *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross* (Tyndale Press, 1955).
4. Jim Packer, *What did the Cross Achieve? The Logic of Penal Substitution* (RTSF Monograph, 2002), 58.
5. John Stott, *The Cross of Christ* (IVP, 1986).
6. Packer, op. cit., 35.
7. Most recently a number of works spring to mind: ed. John Goldingay, *Atonement Today* (SPCK, 1995); Joel B. Green and Mark D. Baker, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross: Atonement in New Testament and Contemporary Contexts* (Paternoster, 2003); Steve Chalke, *The Lost Message of Jesus* (Zondervan, 2003); Alan Mann, *Atonement for a 'Sinless' Society: Engaging with an Emerging Culture* (Paternoster, 2005).
8. A quotation attributed to C.H. Spurgeon says, 'Defend the Bible! I would as soon defend a lion.'
9. See above titles in n.7.
10. Packer, op. cit., 36.
11. Leon Morris, *The Cross in the New Testament* (Paternoster, 1965), 401.
12. Wayne Grudem, 'When, why, and for what should we draw new boundaries?' in eds. John Piper, Justin Taylor and Paul Kjoss Helseth, *Beyond the Bounds* (Crossway, 2003).
13. Grudem, op. cit., 355.
14. For example, the Oak Hill Theological symposium ed. David Peterson, *Where Wrath and Mercy Meet: Proclaiming the Atonement Today* (Paternoster, 2001) contains fresh defences of penal substitution. I don't think I am over-stretching to say that the book seems to have been written in response to the St. John's College symposium ed. John Goldingay, *Atonement Today* (SPCK, 1995).
15. Grudem, op. cit., 357.
16. Roger Nicole 'Polemic Theology, How to deal with those who differ from us' in *Standing Forth: The Collected Writings of Roger Nicole* (Mentor, 2002), 25.

17. In Nicole, op. cit., the author gives three helpful questions to follow: 1) What do I owe the person who differs from me (e.g. an obligation to understand what they mean, to understand their aims); 2) What can I learn from them (e.g. what are the true things they do say? What are the dangers for me to learn?); 3) How can I cope with those who differ from me?
18. Bob Sheehan, 'Dealing with False Teaching' unpublished manuscript from BEC Conference.
19. Ibid., 13.
20. Ibid., 15.
21. John Frame, *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God* (P&R, 1987), 89-90, 191-194, 200-204, 206-212, 235; Vern S. Poythress, *Symphonic Theology: The Validity of Multiple Perspectives in Theology* (P&R, 1987).
22. John Frame, 'Machen's Warrior Children' in ed. Sung Wook Chung *Alistair McGrath: A Dynamic Engagement* (Baker, 2003), 142.
23. Frame, op. cit., 192.
24. Poythress, op. cit., 43.
25. Ibid., 36.
26. Frame, *Doctrine*, op. cit., 192ff.
27. Poythress, op. cit., 43f.
28. Packer, op. cit., 29.
29. Ibid., 30.
30. Ibid., 31.
31. Richard Gaffin, 'Atonement in the Pauline Corpus' in eds. Charles E. Hill & Frank A. James III, *The Glory of the Atonement* (Apollos, 2004), 140-163.
32. Ibid., 154.
33. Ibid., 155.
34. Packer, op. cit., 32.
35. See Packer, op. cit., 31f, 42ff; Gaffin, op. cit., 141-145.
36. Poythress, op. cit., 89,90.
37. Steve Chalke, 'Redeeming the Cross' available at {<http://www.oasistrust.org/temp/RedeemingspthespCross.pdf>}.
38. John Murray, *Redemption Accomplished and Applied* (Banner of Truth, 1955), 49.
39. Henri Blocher, 'Agnus Victor: The Atonement as Victory and Vicarious Punishment' in ed. John Stackhouse, *What Does It Mean to Be Saved? : Broadening Evangelical Horizons of Salvation* (Baker , 2002), 78.
40. Cf. Ps. 109:6; Zech. 3. For more details on the verb satan see Blocher, op.cit.,82.
41. Ibid., 83.
42. Millard Erickson, *Systematic Theology* (Baker, 1998), 839.
43. Blocher, op. cit., 90.
44. These words form the second verse of the hymn 'Before the Throne of God Above' by Charitie Bancroft, 1863.
45. Henri Blocher, The Atonement in John Calvin's Theology in John Stackhouse, *What Does It Mean to Be Saved?: Broadening Evangelical Horizons of Salvation* (Baker, 2002), 292.
46. Gustav Aulén, *Christus Victor: A Historical Study of the three main types of the idea of the Atonement* trans. A.G. Hebert (SPCK, 1931).
47. Bob Letham, *The Work of Christ* (IVP, 1993), 162.
48. Quoted in Blocher, 'Agnus Victor', op. cit., 89.
49. This terminology and argumentation comes from Mike Ovey, 'The Cross, Creation and the Human Predicament' in ed. David Peterson, *Where Wrath and Mercy Meet: Proclaiming the Atonement Today* (Paternoster, 2001), 100-135.
50. Ovey, op. cit., 106-111.
51. John Murray, 'The Fall of Man' in John Murray, *Collected Writings* Vol. 2 (Banner of Truth, 1977), 72.
52. Francis Schaeffer, *Genesis in Space and Time* (IVP, 1972), 95.
53. Ovey, op. cit., 124f.
54. Ibid., 36.
55. For more details on the exact correlations of biblical terminology see Roger Nicole, 'The Nature of Redemption' in Roger Nicole, *Standing Forth: Collected Writings of Roger Nicole* (Mentor, 2002), 245-282.
56. Roger Nicole, 'Postscript on penal substitution' eds. Charles E. Hill & Frank A. James III, *The Glory of the Atonement* (Apollos, 2004), 446.
57. Poythress, op. cit., 38.
58. Robert L. Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith* (Thomas Nelson, 1998), 639.
59. Paul Helm's introduction to Packer's *What did the Cross Achieve?*
60. John Murray, op. cit., 57f.
61. Roger Nicole, 'A Definition of the Atonement' in Roger Nicole, *Standing Forth: Collected Writings of Roger Nicole* (Fearn: Mentor, 2002), p. 244.

In the recent debate over the nature of the atoning work of Christ, it has been suggested that the doctrine of penal substitution belongs particularly to the Reformed tradition, especially to a line leading from John Calvin, through to Charles Hodge.¹ This appears to be an attempt to marginalise the doctrine into belonging to only one strand within evangelicalism, and to suggest that today's understanding of penal substitution is the historically unrepresentative child of nineteenth-century American Reformed thinking. Certainly the understanding of the atonement as a work of propitiation has been strongly held by those in the Reformed tradition (to which this writer is happy to belong). However, there is clear evidence that a much wider constituency of evangelicalism, whilst not ignoring other biblical images for the work of the Cross, have consistently seen penal substitution as central to the gospel.

The eighteenth-century Evangelical Revival ably demonstrates this. From great names such as Whitefield and the Wesleys, to unheralded and obscure lay preachers, from Calvinist to Arminian, all preached the gospel urgently, convinced, as John Wesley put it, that nothing in the Christian system 'is of greater consequence than the doctrine of the Atonement'.² Crucial to their understanding was that the saving work of Christ on the cross was a propitiatory sacrifice.

For both John and Charles Wesley, penal substitution was of great importance.³ On 21st May 1738, after a long spiritual struggle, Charles Wesley was able to trust in Christ alone for salvation. The blessing that came from this was immense, as he confided in his Journal that day, 'I now found myself

at peace with God, and rejoiced in hope of loving Christ... I saw that by faith I stood'; as he later wrote in a famous hymn, 'No condemnation now I dread: Jesus, and all in him, is mine!' ⁴ His brother John's conversion came a few days later as he heard Luther's Preface to *Romans* being read aloud. He felt his 'heart strangely warmed' and was able to trust for salvation in Christ alone, who had taken away his sins and saved him 'from the law of sin and death'. ⁵ The dawning realisation that through the cross, Jesus Christ had freed them from the condemnation due for their sins, set the hearts of the Wesley brothers aflame, and liberated their ministries. It inevitably became key to their message. Within a year of his conversion Charles Wesley found himself boldly declaring the theme before the University of Oxford: 'all the world being wrapped in sin by breaking of the law, God sent his only Son our saviour Christ into this world to fulfil the law for us, and by the shedding of his most precious blood, to make a sacrifice or amends to his Father for our sins, and assuage his wrath and indignation conceived against us for the same'. ⁶

The same emphasis echoes through John Wesley's sermons. This is important, because these were not simply published as a record of what the great leader of Methodism had preached, but they were to be expository models for other preachers, and a summary of Methodist teaching. So in Sermon V, on Justification by Faith: 'To him that is justified or forgiven... God will not inflict on that sinner what he deserved to suffer, because the Son of his love hath suffered for him'. The language of propitiation is much used by John Wesley. He writes in the same sermon: 'Jesus Christ is described as the one, 'whom

God hath set forth for a propitiation, through faith on his blood', and again as 'the whole and sole propitiation'. In Sermon CXIX, Wesley summarises the plain tenor of the new covenant, the gospel message, as 'Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, whom God hath given to be the *propitiation* for thy sins, and thou shalt be saved'.⁷

Such teaching cannot simply be dismissed as the enthusiastic utterances of the pulpit. In his *Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament*, the same views are set out with startling clarity. So on Romans 3:25, Wesley writes:

'25. *Whom God set forth* – before angels and men, *a propitiation* – To appease an offended God. But if, as some teach, God never was offended, there was no need of this propitiation. And if so, Christ died in vain. *To declare his righteousness* – To demonstrate not only his clemency, but his justice, even that vindictive justice, whose essential character and principal office is, to punish sin.'

The atonement demonstrated both God's justice towards sin, which had to be punished, and his mercy, for the just punishment for sin was willingly paid by his Son. It was crucial to Wesley that God should be seen to maintain his justice, as he adds in his comments on the next verse:

'The attribute of justice must be preserved inviolate. And inviolate it is preserved, if there was a real infliction of punishment on our Saviour. On this plan all the attributes harmonise. Every attribute is glorified, and not one superseded no, nor so much as clouded.'⁸

The only way God could show forth his justice and mercy in perfect harmony, without destroying the

integrity of either, was through the propitiatory sacrifice of Christ. Merely forgiving, or doing away with sin, without the due punishment being dealt with, would not have maintained the integrity of God's character. Such thinking is echoed in his understanding of the work of atonement in the Old Testament. Of the 'mercy seat', the covering of the ark in Exodus 25:17-18, John Wesley comments: 'This propitiatory covering, as it might well be translated, was a type of Christ the great propitiation, whose satisfaction covers our transgressions, and comes between us and the curse we deserve'. He also contemplates the awesome nature of what is foreshadowed by the mercy-seat: above it are the cherubim, facing each other, but looking downwards towards it. Here is depicted the longing of the angels of glory 'to look into the mysteries of the gospel, which they diligently contemplate, 1 Peter 1:12.'⁹ John Wesley rightfully shows that here we are handling deep mysteries. We should tread carefully and reverentially, for we have entered into the holiest place.

The teaching of penal substitution was something the founder of Methodism was keen to defend. When Andrew Ramsay in his *Principles of Religion* rejected the view that the death of Christ was designed 'to appease vindictive justice and avert divine vengeance' as 'frivolous and blasphemous notions', Wesley objected strongly. 'These "frivolous and blasphemous notions" do I receive as the precious truths of God. And so deplorable is my ignorance, that I very believe all who deny them, deny the Lord that bought them'.¹⁰ Early in his life, John Wesley had found the writings of William Law helpful. However, in 1756 Wesley protested over

the denial of the doctrine of justification by faith contained in some of Law's later statements, such as, 'There is no wrath in God, no fictitious atonement, no folly of debtor and creditor'. To counter what Law had written, Wesley quotes an unnamed sixteenth century author: -

'As man owed his Creator the perfect obedience of his whole life, or a punishment proportioned to his transgression, it was impossible he could satisfy him by a partial and imperfect obedience... There was need, therefore, of a Mediator who could repair the immense wrong he had done to the Divine Majesty, satisfy the Supreme Judge, who had pronounced the sentence of death against the transgressions of His law, suffer in the place of His people, and merit for them pardon, holiness, and glory'.

Yet, for Wesley, the propitiatory work of Christ was no cold, legal transaction – it was the 'inmost mystery of the Christian faith'. It was the supreme proof of the love of God, and came through 'the grace of the Son, who freely took our curse upon him, and imparts His blessing and merits to us'. The propitiatory death of the Saviour was no personal act of violence inflicted on him by the Father: it was an act of free, willing, loving submission within the Trinity. Wesley amplifies this loving act in which Father, Son and Holy Spirit were at one, by reference to Isaiah 53. Although mankind had forsaken God, and so was liable to the highest punishment, 'the Mediator voluntarily interposed himself between them and the just Judge. And the incomprehensible love of God, that he might spare them, 'spared not his own Son'. ... 'The Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all'.¹¹

The same emphasis remained strong in the next generation of Wesley's followers. The famous

Methodist scholar and commentator Adam Clarke, takes up the strain. Commenting on Romans 3:25-27, he explains the way of salvation: 'faith alone, in the mercy of God, through the propitiation made by the blood of Jesus is that, by which you can be *justified*, pardoned and taken into the Divine favour'.¹²

When dealing with the words of Isaiah 53:6, 'The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all', Clarke's comments are unambiguous:

'He was the subject on which all the rays collected on the focal point fell. These fiery rays, which should have fallen on all mankind, diverged from Divine justice to the east, west, north, and south, were deflected from them, and converged in him. So the Lord hath caused to meet in Him the punishment due to the Iniquities of ALL'.¹³

The teaching of John Wesley, repeated in the work of Adam Clarke and others, became foundational to the army of lay preachers and class leaders, who were the key players in the local Methodist circuits and societies. One such circuit was that around the Shropshire town of Madeley, scene of the faithful ministry of John Fletcher, for a time the right-hand man of Wesley. Manuscripts from some of the sermons of these lay preachers still exist. They show how cross-centred Methodist lay preaching of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries was, and the way in which they understood the atonement. As one preacher, using Romans 3:25 as a text, put it - 'A Propitiation means an atoning sacrifice, by which the Wrath of God is appeased. But how did He become this propitiation? I answer, by putting Himself in our Place, and drinking the Cup of Justice due to our sins'. Then, referring to Romans 8, 'God spared not his own son...', the preacher amplified the theme - 'He spared Him not

– But laid the whole weight of vindictive justice on His sacred Head – and He valiently [sic] accepted the dreadful Task’. The cost, the preacher emphasised, was awful and immense, ‘He must drink the whole cup to the very Dregs – that He might become in the fullest sense our Propitiation’. The challenges to love and obedience that flowed naturally from such an understanding were strongly put: ‘how cold are our returns of love to him who hath given Himself to bear our curse and suffer all our punishment... Here is the foundation of all our Blessings. The Saviour hath put himself in our place and born all the curse due to our sins... He is at once our atonement and our righteousness’. ¹⁴

Not only did the early Methodists delight to preach the Cross, they loved to sing its story. In singing of the saving work of Christ, the language of ‘penal substitution’ was never far away–

For what you have done
His blood must atone:
The Father hath punished for
 you his dear son,
The Lord, in the day
Of his anger, did lay
Your sins on the Lamb, and he bore
 them away’. ¹⁵

Or again:

‘Accomplished is the sacrifice,
The great redeeming work is done;
‘Tis finished! All the debt is paid;
Justice divine is satisfied;
The grand and full atonement made;
God for a guilty world hath died’ ¹⁶

This awesome message these lay preachers gladly sang, and earnestly shared. They proclaimed it to the agricultural workers, the colliers, the tradespeople, of Madeley and the growing industrial Black Country. They and countless other Methodists across England preached what they had learned from Wesley, and Fletcher and Clarke, but more than that, they proclaimed the fruits of their plain reading of the Bible, which echoed with their personal experience. This evangelical message was spiritually liberating, and propelled them out into barns and cottages and kitchens, to tell what God had done through Christ for them. Their sermons brought comfort in distressing and troubled times, and hope of an eternal future with Christ. They filled Methodist class meetings and chapels: many ordinary, hurting, struggling, needy people heard them gladly, and embraced their message. The awesome teaching of penal substitution brought blessing to souls then, and lovingly, wisely, and reverentially preached now, evangelicals can have every confidence that it will continue to do the same.

References

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2. J. Wesley, *Letters of John Wesley*, Vol. 6, London, 1931, p. 297.
3. C.W. Williams, *John Wesley's Theology Today*, London, 1962, p. 83.
4. C. Wesley, *Journal of Charles Wesley*, entry for May 21, 1738, wesley.nnu.edu/charles_wesley/journal; C. Wesley, 'And Can it Be', Hymn 201 in *Wesley's Hymns*, London, 1876.
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7. J. Wesley, *Sermons on Several Occasions*, London, 1771, Sermon V, 'Justification by Faith', ii, 5; iv, 1; iv, 8. See also Sermon XVII, 'Circumcision of the Heart', i, 7; Sermon LXI, 'The Mystery of Iniquity', ii; Sermon CXXVIII, 'Free Grace', xxix; etc.
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13. A. Clarke, *Commentary of the Old Testament*, London, 1825, Isaiah 53.
14. Sermons 'Propitiation' in Names of Christ Collection, and 'Quickened' in Names of the Church Collection, manuscripts in John Rylands Library, Manchester.
15. C. Wesley, 'All ye that pass by', Hymn no.707 in *Wesley's Hymns*, London, 1876.
16. C. Wesley, 'Tis finished, the Messiah dies,' No 706 in *Wesley's Hymns*, 1876 edition.

Introduction

I have been asked to speak about challenges to evangelical theology today. Evangelical theology I understand to be the theology that, revealed in Scripture, was taught by the church fathers at their best and rediscovered at the Reformation in the 16th century and then renewed and revived in subsequent generations. It is living, orthodox Protestant Christianity as essentially expressed in the great confessional statements. Today there are many challenges to this theology that demand serious attention. There are theological challenges such as open theism, the new perspective on Paul's theology in relation to justification, the questioning of penal substitution, pluralism, the revising of traditional evangelical teaching on homosexuality and so on. From outside there are the challenges of issues arising from our encounter with Roman Catholicism, other religions, secularism, globalisation and post-modern culture. The subject is vast and daunting. I have chosen to address an issue that touches on many that I have mentioned, but is to my mind one that is urgent. That is the challenge of recovering a vision of godliness. When evangelical theology loses sight of this vision it loses its way, but when it keeps it in sight it stays on the right path and fulfils its purpose.

My approach in dealing with this subject is straight-forward. After defining what I mean by godliness and offering a few general comments, I intend to reflect on the subject in the light of Paul's Letter to Titus. The third and shortest of Paul's

pastoral letters, Titus is concerned with the nurturing of godliness among God's people. While not dealing with godliness in a comprehensive way, the letter nevertheless focuses on four key areas in which godliness needs to be nurtured – ministry, leadership, lifestyle and citizenship. These are areas that especially demand theological reflection in the light of the vision of godliness.

The word 'godliness' or *eusebeia* is used most frequently in the New Testament by Paul in his pastoral letters. Broadly it means reverence or piety or religion, but as usual with Paul he fills a word in general use with Christian meaning. In his commentary on the pastoral letters Robert Mounce quotes several definitions of godliness, beginning with Spicq's that godliness is about being 'totally consecrated to God, to his worship, and to the fulfilment of his will' with an emphasis on 'the outward appearances of worship and piety in honour of God' and 'an extreme devotion to accomplish the divine will'. Particularly important is the emphasis on the ethical outworking of faith as expressed in Foerster's definition of godliness as 'a lifestyle that stems from faith'. Stressing this horizontal dimension Towner defines godliness as 'a fully reverential attitude and behaviour stemming from a true knowledge of God'. As such, godliness is the goal of every believer as Paul makes clear (1 Tim. 2:2; 6:11; 2 Tim. 3:12; Tit. 2:12) and in which he must train himself both for the benefit it brings for this life and even more for the life to come (1 Tim. 4:7-8). The opposite of godliness is of course ungodliness which characterised the false teachers

and their adherents that Paul and his associates opposed.²

My own definition of godliness is *devotion to God actively expressed in a good life motivated by the gospel*. The godly life is one that is centred on the Triune God revealed in Scripture and as such is a Godward life in its orientation. It is a devotion characterised by fearing, trusting and loving God. Such devotion is actively and not merely passively expressed in the kind of good life described in all its life-affirming richness in the Bible. The good life may or may not be attended with material prosperity, but it will be a life in which our relationships with God, others and ourselves are being restored from the consequences of the fall. But this good life must be motivated by the gospel. Only a person redeemed by Christ and indwelt by the Holy Spirit can live the good life that pleases God. Godliness is not man-centred piety but God-centred devotion. What Paul describes as godliness in the pastorals is described elsewhere in the Bible by him and others in terms of discipleship or holy living or loving God with our whole being and our neighbour as ourselves.

My contention is that this godliness must be recovered as the vision of evangelical theology. Sadly this has not been and is not always the case. To read much theology one would think that the vision of theology was itself. One of the reasons theology is something of a dirty word among Christians is because of its seeming disconnection with the life of the church and the believer. However this

disconnection is largely the result of the enlightenment and the rise of rationalistic philosophy. 'Before then,' as Stephen Chen points out, 'theologians conceived their task as a profoundly spiritual exercise....A merely academic theology would have been quite alien to them, since theology is simply the rational and precise expression of the believer's reflection on God'.³

This is what we find by even a cursory survey of the classical theologians. Summing up the teaching of Athanasius Ellen Charry says that for him theology was about how 'God saves us from ourselves by renewing us in his image, reforming our minds, and shaping our actions to their proper ends'. For Basil of Caesarea it was about 'drinking in the majesty and grace of God'. Fundamental to Augustine of Hippo's theology was the distinction between *scientia* or knowledge and *sapientia* or wisdom. Both are necessary in theology, but sadly much modern theology has emphasised the former at the expense of the latter. Augustine didn't do this. According to Charry, 'A central goal of Augustine's treatise [on the Trinity] is to persuade the reader that revelation and doctrine work together to reshape our minds and affections and thereby our identity'. For him 'the goal of life is knowing and enjoying God'.⁴

We discover this same emphasis in the Protestant Reformers. One of the most influential books in the history of theology has been John Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Contrary to the common image of Calvin it would be mistaken to think that the purpose of this work was to discuss rarefied

aspects of theology. In his prefatory address to King Francis I of France in the 1536 edition he wrote: 'My sole purpose was solely to transmit certain rudiments by which those who are touched with any zeal for religion might be shaped to true godliness'.⁵ Later in the 1559 edition he wrote that he had 'no other purpose than to benefit the maintaining of the pure doctrine of godliness' and to 'spread [God's] kingdom and to further the public good'.⁶ As John Leith has said, 'Calvin wrote his theology to persuade, to transform human life.'⁷ No one can read the *Institutes* without being impressed with how Calvin was concerned to help Christians understand their salvation and live it out in the real world. In his commentaries Calvin was not content only to explain the text of Scripture but also to apply its message to the Christian, the church and the world. The goal that Calvin set for himself was taken up by his theological and spiritual heirs among the Puritans. Puritanism was in many ways a movement concerned with godly living. Perhaps sometimes they could be overly scrupulous and too introspective and sowed some seeds of moralism, but in their theology they aimed to help people live holy and godly lives. For William Ames, in his widely used *Marrow of Theology*, theology 'is the doctrine of living to God'.⁸ Or as David Clarkson said at the funeral of his late colleague John Owen, the greatest of all Puritan divines: 'It was his great Design to promote Holiness in the Life and Exercise of it among you'.⁹ I could cite many more examples such as Cotton Mather's emphasis on doing good and Jonathan Edwards' on experiential knowledge of

God. Suffice it for me to mention Lewis Bayly's *The Practice of Piety*, one of the most popular and influential Puritan devotional manuals that simply sought to help Christians live godly lives. First published around 1611, there were 71 editions by 1792 by which time it had also been published in Dutch, French, German, Polish, Italian and Hungarian as well as in some Indian languages in New England. What is striking about the book is how doctrine is applied to everyday Christian living and experience in an accessible and warm-hearted way.

Theology has not always been done this way, but happily there has been in recent years a renewed interest in godliness as the purpose of theology. I have mentioned Ellen Charry's book *By the Renewing of Your Minds* with its significant subtitle, *The Pastoral Function of Christian Doctrine*. Her argument is that theology is not an end in itself, but to promote moral excellence as it nurtures Christian virtue. She writes: 'Theology is a form of proclamation that aims particularly at interpreting God's word to assist Christians in godly living.'¹⁰ David Wells has written of the inability of much of evangelicalism to nurture moral virtue because of its loosening grip on biblical theology.¹¹ Among indicators of a turn in the theological tide are two recent books. The first is *The Moral Vision of the New Testament* where the author, Richard B Hays, states: 'The goal of this entire project is to encourage the church in its efforts to become a Scripture-based community, to allow its life to be more fitly conformed to the stories narrated in the New

Testament'.¹² That's a fresh breeze from an 'academic' book of theology. A sustained and successful attempt to make godliness the goal of theological prolegomena is David K. Clark's *To Know and Love God*. Clark sees *sapientia* or wisdom as the goal of theology. Several quotes: 'The point of gaining knowledge of Christian truth is to be found by the knowledge of the Father, to be conformed to Christ, and to experience the power and presence of the Spirit'; 'godly wisdom is knowledge directed to salvation and Christian living'; 'a major purpose of theology as *sapientia* is to shape and guide the faith, experience and character of Christians'; 'I claim that theology is *sapientia* - that it serves the purposes of godly living'; 'I say that the transformation of lives and communities - *sapientia* - is the ultimate function of theology'; 'A goal of theology as *sapientia* is that persons grow in godliness and in their relationship with God and others'.¹³ Theology that is biblically faithful and done for such a purpose cannot but be of benefit to the churches.

I would like to turn now to Titus in order to map out how having godliness as a goal in theology can help churches and Christians. Paul wrote this letter to his younger colleague Titus, who, as we're told, had been left on the island of Crete to 'put what remained into order' (1:5). What exactly Titus's circumstances were we cannot be sure. It seems that the churches were only being formed, but already they were being harassed by false teachers of the 'circumcision party' who were probably teaching some 'faith plus' doctrine of salvation. Whatever the case, from what Paul writes of his own ministry

(1:1) and later of what Titus was to teach, Titus was to nurture godliness among the Christians on Crete. From what we know Crete was not a congenial place to do that. Quoting one of their own poets, Epimenides, Paul reminds Titus that 'Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons' (1:12). This morally corrupt social environment had infected the false teachers, but it was also the environment out of which the new Christians had been converted. Titus was to help these believers in this context to become godly.

I believe that there is much that we can learn from what Paul wrote to Titus. We live in a culture in Europe that is increasingly morally and intellectually uncongenial to godly living. Nevertheless this is where we live and this is where we are to become godly. In our culture we are to be devoted to God and to actively express that devotion in good lives motivated by the gospel. In this, evangelical theology should help us. From Paul's letter to Titus I suggest that it can do so in four ways.

1. Evangelical theology must help to nurture godly *ministry* (1:1-4)

Paul's greetings in his letters are always significant in relation to the rest of what he writes in them. Here in writing to Titus Paul expands on the apostolic nature of his ministry not only to affirm his authority, but also, I suggest, to remind Titus of the apostolic foundation of his own ministry as well as that of the churches for which he was responsible. Like Titus and the Cretan churches we too are

engaged in ministry that is built on the foundation of the apostles and one of the roles of evangelical theology is to nurture such ministry or service for the Lord in its various forms.

The purpose of ministry is, like Paul's, to nurture godliness (1:1) or devotion to God that is actively expressed in good lives motivated by the gospel. Fulfilling this purpose involves preaching the gospel so that God's elect come to faith and those who believe know the truth that enables them to become godly. In other words the purpose of gospel ministry is twofold: evangelism (seeking to bring the elect to faith) and edification (helping believers to become godly by knowing the truth). This is the purpose of every minister of the gospel and of every gospel church. As with Paul, preaching is the way the purpose is fulfilled. Ministers of the gospel and churches do many good things, but preaching is the focus of their ministries. In God's sovereign purposes preaching the gospel is the way that his promise of eternal life is manifested to human beings so that they can be saved (1:3). We must never forget the place of preaching in God's redemptive purposes. It is always an awesome thing to preach the word, whether to a congregation or in a personal conversation. Such ministry is not in vain because it is based on the truthful character of God himself (1:2). It is impossible for God to lie and therefore it is impossible for his promise of eternal life to fail.

One of the purposes of evangelical theology is to nurture this kind of ministry. Too often this has been forgotten. On the one hand for some academic

achievement or respectability has been the purpose. On the other hand for others practical things such as church growth, psychological wellbeing or political or cultural relevance have been the purposes. But the great purpose of evangelical theology is to nurture godliness and as such the ministry that will bring it about. Those of us engaged in ministry as well as theological institutions, missionary agencies, para-church organisations and churches need to regularly assess themselves in this light. Is this ministry being nurtured by evangelical theology?

2. Evangelical theology must help to nurture godly *leadership* (1:5-16)

From the placing of what Paul says about elders in the churches at the beginning of the letter it would seem that leadership in the churches was a priority if godliness was to be nurtured on Crete. The leadership of the churches was a deep concern for Paul as the Pastorals in particular bear witness. Leadership in churches remains a priority. Our prayer must be that the Head of the church gives the churches the leadership they need and without which godliness will decay and at best retain the form without the power (2 Tim. 3:5) and at worst die out altogether.

What kind of leaders or elders is needed in the churches? First, they need to be godly men. Here as in 1 Timothy 3 Paul emphasises the importance of godly character in regard to behaviour, attitudes and relationships. While gifting is obviously important character is more important. Better a leader who is a godly but modestly gifted man than one who is brilliantly gifted but ungodly in some ways. The

former can do much good for a church while the latter can do untold damage. Secondly, a leader must be sound in the faith or as Paul puts it: 'He must hold firm to the trustworthy message as taught' (1:9). Theological understanding and soundness is vital if a man is to be a godly leader. Sincerely and without reservation he must believe in the apostolic faith. Thirdly, a leader must positively 'be able to give instruction in sound doctrine' and negatively 'to rebuke those who contradict it'. A godly leader needs to be able to teach the believers, both publicly and privately. Some elders will have a more public ministry of the word and may be remunerated for it (1 Tim. 5:17), but all elders need some ability to teach. Sadly that is not all they need to do. Sometimes they must also rebuke those who oppose the truth.

Evangelical theology must help to nurture this kind of leadership. However leaders are trained they must be thoroughly grounded in the faith by means of the different theological disciplines. Positively they need to understand the evangelical faith but negatively they also must understand the false teachings they will have to oppose. It is interesting that Paul gives considerable space to exposing the ungodly character of the false teachers. This training is a ministry-long process. Theological education cannot be left once a course of training is over; the godly leader is always learning. Our theological institutions must keep the nurturing of such leadership in view. They don't exist only as academic institutions (although such institutions are needed), but also as institutions preparing men for gospel leadership in the churches.

The curriculum needs to be developed with the training of godly leaders in mind. Within churches we need to be constantly looking out for and nurturing men for leadership. This is where mentoring and apprenticeships play a key role.

3. Evangelical theology must help to nurture godly *lifestyle* (2:1-15)

As I have defined it godliness is about devotion to God actively expressed in a good life motivated by the gospel. It is to such a good life that Paul turns in chapter two. Titus is to 'teach what accords with sound doctrine' (2:1). What that involves is unfolded in the following verses. In other words, doctrine must be practical and practice must be doctrinal. Doctrine must be practical in that it must never simply be abstract, but rather truth that transforms our lives. The danger for many who love theology is to forget its purpose to nurture godly living. But equally practice must be doctrinal. Some pragmatic types grow impatient with theological discussion and sometimes rightly so. However they are in danger of slipping the theological moorings that are necessary if Christians and churches are not to drift away on the currents of ungodly culture. Our practice as churches and Christians needs to be constantly tested and shaped by Scripture.

In verses two to ten Paul sketches the godly lifestyle that Titus was to nurture in the believers on Crete. No doubt what he writes relates in some degree to the context of Crete. Considering the moral environment in which these Christians lived that is probably why he emphasises the virtue of

'self-control' several times (2:2,5,6,12). My purpose here is not to go into detail about the different aspects of a godly lifestyle, but simply to mention that every Christian was expected to live in a godly way whatever their gender, age, or social status. Titus was to set an example to the others as Paul himself did (2:7). Work life as well as home life is included. What Paul wrote for the slaves in the Cretan churches is applicable to every believer in every age and culture. In the way we live we are to 'adorn the doctrine of our God and Saviour' (2:10). A godly lifestyle should be something compellingly attractive to unbelievers. I am reminded here of someone like William Wilberforce whose winsomeness commended the faith to all who had anything to do with him.

What we are dealing with here is something that is very culturally subversive. Evangelical Christianity is a revolutionary movement, but its strategy and tactics are not like those of the revolutionary movements that in the end have done so much harm in the world. On the contrary Christians aim to change the culture not by force of arms or even legitimate political action or cultural domination, but subversively by means of a godly lifestyle. Listen to how Thomas Oden puts it in his commentary on verses 1-6:

Sound teaching is to be brought situationally to bear upon each and every class, gender, race, lifestyle, viewpoint. No lowly position should bar one's capacity to bear this good news.... Some would argue that it would do little good to begin in Crete, of all places, with the

tinest bits of behaviour and try to shape the world towards godliness from the ground up. It might seem at first that the pastoral effort was too microscopic, inordinately micro-managed, and that systemic, institutional, or political evils might better have been first addressed. Yet this is just the point misunderstood by 'systemic' reformers who have not adequately grasped the apostle's way of transformation: only by descending to reshape social existence beginning with the smallest, least conspicuous matters of daily social conduct is the society changed. This has longer, surer consequences than legislative and ideological posturing.¹⁴

I find this very encouraging. As evangelicals we seek to nurture godly lifestyle. That is where the real action is in the world. That time spent with a young person or visit to an older member of the church or conversation about the pressures of work with a middle aged Christian has significance far beyond what we can imagine. Evangelical theology should help Christians develop a culturally subversive godly lifestyle. This will mean addressing issues such as work, marriage, singleness, sexuality, parenting, spending, health, leisure and so on. The Puritans were very good at this and there is much we could do to become like them today in our very different cultural context. Evangelical theology embraces the whole of life.

But the danger here is moralism. In our reaction against the antinomianism of our culture it is all too easy for us as evangelicals to become moralistic. That's why we need to read, mark, learn and inwardly digest what Paul writes in verses 11-14.

Here Paul magnificently summarises the gospel that is to motivate the godly lifestyle described in verses 2-10. In Jesus Christ God's grace has appeared in human flesh to teach us to say 'no' to ungodliness and 'yes' to godliness. Indeed the reason Jesus gave himself up to death on the cross was 'to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for himself who are zealous for good works' (2:14). Godliness is the goal of our redemption. As God's grace in Christ grips our lives through the transforming presence and power of the Holy Spirit within us we become the godly people he intends. The gospel is the motivation for godly living. It is the work of evangelical theology to unfold the riches of God's grace in the gospel so that believers, in Calvin's words, 'might be shaped to true godliness'.

4. Evangelical theology must help to nurture godly *citizenship* (3:1-15)

In chapter three Paul turns his thoughts outward and considers how Christians are to live as citizens or members of the *politeia*. In verse 1-2 he outlines the nature of Christian citizenship. Christians are to submit to the governing authorities as ordained by God as his servants (compare Romans 13:1-7) and they are to obey the law, do good to everyone and be civil in their relationships with other citizens. I want to highlight Paul's exhortation that the Christians on Crete 'be ready for every good work' (verse 1). Seven times in this letter Paul had reminded Titus of the importance of Christians doing good (1:8; 2:3,7,14; 3:1,8,14). Doing good was not only to be done within the family and

church, but also within the wider community. Three times in chapter three Paul makes this point. In verse 1 Christians are to be 'ready for every good work'; in verse 8 Christians are to 'be careful to devote themselves to good works'; and in verse 14 Christians are to 'learn to devote themselves to good works'. What are these good works? The term is almost a technical expression for public benefactions.¹⁵ As citizens, Christians are to be public benefactors in the good they do to others outside as well as inside the church (Gal. 6:10). Such good works would include individual acts of kindness, helping people in need and service to the community or government. Examples from the Bible of the last kind are Joseph, Daniel and Erastus, 'the city treasurer' mentioned by Paul in Romans 16:23. As citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem and exiles in the cities of this world Christians are to do good to others.

Here, as with the nurturing of a godly lifestyle, it is essential that our public engagement is rooted in the gospel. In verses 3-7 Paul again summarises the gospel. Christians are not naturally better people than others. Like everyone we are sinners. But because of his 'goodness and loving kindness' God has mercifully saved us in Christ by regenerating and renewing us, pouring out his Holy Spirit on us when we believed and justifying us by his grace so that we have become the heirs of eternal life. The emphasis here is on the application of redemption to the believer. The point is that it is the gospel that makes Christians godly citizens or people eager to do good to others in their city.

One of the functions of evangelical theology is to nurture public godliness. Christians need to be equipped theologically to live as active citizens in the world. We have a rich theological tradition to draw upon. The Reformers actively sought to transform their societies as did the Puritans. In the 19th century, evangelicals were very active in social reform and political movements. The examples of Thomas Chalmers in Scotland and Abraham Kuyper in the Netherlands are especially instructive.¹⁶ It is no coincidence that it is when the gospel has been rediscovered that Christians have been publicly active in doing good. Of course it is recognised that sometimes Christians have made mistakes in this area and not least in too closely identifying their society with Christ's kingdom. The appropriate paradigm for the relationship of God's people today to the world is that of the exile of the Jewish people. Such a paradigm allows Christians today to live distinctively as God's people while participating in public affairs with people of other religions or none. We don't seek to establish Christ's reign through politics or impose our convictions on others, but rather to display Christ's reign in our lives and churches and commend the teaching of God's word to others for their good.

One of the greatest challenges to evangelical theology today is to nurture this kind of public godliness in those areas of the world where

Christianity is growing fastest. There is at present a shift taking place of the centre of gravity of evangelical Christianity to Africa, Asia and Latin America.¹⁷ Christians from these areas need an evangelical theology that will help them live as godly citizens who will influence their nations for good. Evangelical theology must deal with issues such as political power, corruption, bioethics, economics, the environment, human rights and so on and do so not by baptising conventional political thinking, but by reflecting deeply on Scripture and drawing on the wisdom of the Christian tradition. That is a task needed as much in Europe as in other parts of the world. While deeply personal, being a Christian is not a private matter. Like the Cretan Christians we are called to be godly citizens today.

Conclusion

Here then are four areas – ministry, leadership, lifestyle and citizenship – where evangelical theology must help to nurture godliness today. Paul mentions these areas in his letter to Titus whose work it was to nurture godliness in the morally uncongenial environment of Crete. Our environment is just as uncongenial and our task is just the same. In our lives, families, churches, agencies, schools and communities we must pray and work to see godliness nurtured among God's people here in Europe and across the world.

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Why write about this?

One of the heartbreaks in my life has been seeing churches, and church groups, torn-apart by disagreement. All disunity is tragic but doctrinal disagreement is doubly sad because, instead of Christians turning to the Bible and either coming to agreement or settling for principled disagreement, matters often deteriorate and become vicious and destructive. All church leaders at some point will find themselves confronting error, a few will be called to do so in writing and in a very public way, but most of us will face unhelpful teaching finding its way into our churches. There are dangers attached to this – there is the obvious danger presented by the teaching itself but another less obvious danger is the way in which we may react.¹ Obviously some of the principles are widely applicable to how we handle varied disagreements with one another – although Nicole and Newton refer mainly to writing, the principles apply to all debate and disagreement.

Our duty and danger

We agree that it is our duty to contend earnestly for the faith and so, while seeking to be peacable, we must not fail to stand for God's truth. However this brings certain dangers and John Newton starts his letter: 'As you are likely to be involved in controversy, and your love of truth is joined with a natural warmth of temper, my friendship makes me solicitous on your behalf. You are of the strongest side; for truth is great and must prevail; ... I am not therefore anxious for the event (outcome) of the battle. But I would have you more than a conqueror, and to triumph, not only over your adversary, but

over yourself.' Later in the same letter he writes: 'we find but very few writers of controversy who have not been manifestly hurt by it. Either they grow in a sense of their own importance, or imbibe an angry contentious spirit, or they insensibly withdraw their attention from those things which are the food and immediate support of the life of faith, and spent their time and strength on matters which at most are but of a secondary value. This shows that, if the service is honourable, it is dangerous. What will it profit a man if he gains his cause, and silences his adversary, if at the same time he loses that humble, tender frame of spirit in which the Lord delights, and to which the promise of his presence is made!' So we face the dangers of arrogance, a quarrelsome spirit or decline in our spiritual lives – those are certainly dangers to be aware of and to avoid! Nicole has three basic and widely-applicable principles for engaging in controversy :

1. What do I owe the person who differs from me?

How many churches have had such fierce disagreements that if you overheard the disputes going on you would not know those involved were Christian brothers? As a basis for our attitude and actions, we owe fellow-Christians love (Romans 13:8) and we should treat them as we wish to be treated (Matthew 7: 12). This includes a duty of prayer for those we are in disagreement with. John Newton recommends that: 'before you put pen to paper against him, and during the whole time you are preparing your answer, you may commend him by earnest prayer to the Lord's teaching and blessing. This practise will have a direct tendency

to conciliate your heart to him and pity him; and such a disposition will have a good influence upon every page you write.' If Jesus told us to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us (Matthew 5: 44-45) how much more should we be praying for those we regard as brothers and sisters who are being led astray.

This duty to love means *we should seek to understand what the person is saying* and so we listen carefully. If they say there are books, or speakers, that express better than they can what they want to say then we take time to read the book or to listen to tapes and do not try and trap them for using words less accurately than they might. We should try and understand their aims. Many discussions start wrongly because one side and/or the other are defensive and hostile but often we could find a point of contact and shared concern. When I read David Watson's autobiography: *You are My God*, I was deeply moved by his honesty and desire for spiritual reality. I strongly disagree with some of his conclusions but I wish I felt his concerns more deeply – that is a point of contact. Roger Nicole summarises: 'I would say that we owe to our opponents to deal with them in such a way that they may sense that we have a real interest in them as persons'. One very concrete piece of advice is that if when speaking of other people's views (as we may do in sermons occasionally) we do so with the aim that anyone with that view listening would say: 'That expresses my point of view perfectly'. I remember reading of John Thomas, a former minister of Sandfields, that when he explained the Baptist viewpoint he was thanked for the best exposition of the position a Baptist hearer had ever heard. John Thomas was a Paedo-Baptist!

This duty to love also means that we do not use offensive illustrations to make our point and to put other people down. We must always remember that we are to desire to win people to the truth and some of the put-downs ministers have administered to their church members make great stories but illustrate poor pastoring.

2. What can I learn from the person who differs from me?

Sometimes I may be wrong! There are fixed points in Christian theology, such as the deity of Christ and salvation by grace, on which the gospel depends but this doesn't apply to everything. I've hotly debated some subjects, being a debater by nature, and later changed my mind completely. We can and should be convinced of the major points of belief but our understanding will – God willing – be growing throughout our lives. Gresham Machen, shortly before he died, thanked John Murray for convincing him that he had not placed sufficient emphasis on the active obedience of Christ. So the next point is that we may be right but failing to present the subject in Biblical proportion. A Calvinist should never sound like a fatalist but he can do so. We should be grateful if we are made aware that we are failing to do justice to all of God's truth. *Then we should be aware of dangers and lack of clarity in what we may be heard to say.* We are liable to indignation and exasperation if we are misunderstood but Paul frequently responds to possible misunderstandings and supplies explanations. For example (Romans 6:1): 'Shall we go on sinning that grace may abound?' and Romans 9:6;14,19. Such considerations should make us

careful in what tone and words we express ourselves and make us willing to protect our position from misunderstanding and to be responsive to questions and reactions.

We should remember that controversy, in God's providence, leads to clearer understanding of the truth.

Historically the clear understanding of the truth by the church has advanced as the church deals with the problem of false teaching. The doctrine of the person of Christ was clarified in the early centuries of the church in debate with those who denied Christ's deity, or his real humanity. The doctrine of salvation was clarified by the Reformation church in reaction to Medieval Catholicism and in ongoing debate with the Roman Catholic Church.

Personally I've had to work my way through many theological subjects because I've been confronted with teaching that I am unhappy about. So in our discussions we proceed on the basis that we are grateful for the opportunity to explore further some area of the Bible's teaching.

3. How can I cope with the person who differs from me?

This involves protecting our own position and constructively explaining it. Our resources are:

The Bible. We must use it reverently and carefully, which means we have a responsibility to interpret God's Holy Word correctly and that we must seek to rightly understand, not explain away, texts that seem to disagree with our position. Nothing makes me more suspicious of a writer than apparent misuse of scripture and nothing makes me more confident about a writer than a willingness to face up to parts

of scripture that appear to be against their viewpoint.

Logical reasoning. There may be logical results from a person's viewpoint that can be pointed out – although here we must be careful to distinguish between what someone is saying and what we believe is the logical result of their position. For example most of us who do not accept that the gift of prophecy is for today believe that there are damaging implications for the doctrine of the sufficiency of scripture. We may say so but must in fairness accept that Wayne Grudem, who does accept prophecy for today, accepts the sufficiency of scripture and seeks to safeguard what he teaches from such implications.

Appeals to history and statements of faith.

This doesn't mean that historical arguments or even agreed statements of faith can finally settle a matter. What they often do is to indicate clearly what the issues are and then enable those issues to be resolved in the light of scripture – they mean we don't always need to reinvent the wheel because often what is at stake in a discussion, and the crucial texts involved, have already been laid out for us.

Getting our attitude right. John Newton makes it very clear that our manner as well as our matter is very important in our dealing with disagreements. We must be concerned as to our readers. **Firstly**, there will be those who disagree with us: 'If you write with a desire to be an instrument of correcting mistakes, you will of course be cautious of laying stumbling-blocks in the way of the blind, or of using any expressions that may exasperate their passions, confirm them in their prejudices, and thereby make their conviction, humanly speaking,

more impracticable.’ Secondly, there are those as yet unconvinced: ‘There will likewise be many who pay too little regard to religion, to have any settled system of their own These are very incompetent judges of doctrines; but they can form a tolerable judgement of a writer’s spirit. They know that meekness, humility, and love, are the characteristics of a Christian temper:from us, who profess these principles, they always expect such dispositions as correspond with the precepts of the Gospel. They are quick-sighted to discern when we deviate from such a spirit, and avail themselves of it to justify their contempt of our arguments. ... If we can satisfy them that we act upon these motives (we wish well to their souls, and contend only for the truth’s sake), our point is half gained; they will be more disposed to consider calmly what we offer: and if they should still dissent from our opinions, they will be constrained to approve our intentions.’ Thirdly, there are those who agree with us who will see what is going on: ‘You may be instrumental to their edification, if the law of kindness as well as truth regulates your pen, otherwise you will do them harm. ... I hope your performance will savour of a spirit of true humility, and be a means of promoting it in others.’

Summarising our concerns

We can all see the dangers accompanying false teaching and it would be wrong not to feel a duty to respond to it. Are we as aware of the dangers that accompany our response to false teaching? This is particularly relevant with the current controversy over Steve Chalke’s views on the atonement. Already we have Joel Edwards counter-accusing others, in our constituency of churches, of being concerned to exclude Steve rather than to win him over. I am not impressed with the Evangelical Alliance’s handling of the situation because books already in print delineate clearly the doctrinal positions involved and further discussions will simply involve restating known positions. However we need to be very careful about our approach at such a time because countless great and godly men have marred their testimony by the way they have (mis)handled theological controversy. Historically, theological controversy has been marked by abusive language towards fellow believers and the dishonest distortion of their arguments. Writers have failed to live by Christ’s golden rule (Matthew 7: 12): ‘do to others what you would have them do to you.’ No wonder that John Newton wrote: ‘we find but very few writers of controversy who have not been manifestly hurt by it.’ Let’s try to avoid being in that number!

1. See Roger Nicole, *Standing Forth* (Fearn Ross-shire: Christian Focus, 2002), pp9-26 and John Newton’s, *Works*, vol.1 (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth), pp.268ff.

This year's selection highlights the growing divergence within evangelicalism. I suppose, in saying this, I betray a theological perspective of my own. While some may view the recent history of evangelicalism with a sense of comfort that we now have, in part, embraced 'a generous orthodoxy', I tend to see evangelicalism moving further away from its 'Reformational' roots. These widening differences in theology and perspective within the evangelical community can readily be seen in the collection of works and especially within edited works.

David C. Clark's *To Know and Love God* is a major new work addressing theological method;¹ latest in the Crossway series, Foundations of Evangelical Theology. His approach appears to reflect a mainstream intellectual's engagement of postmodern and global Christianity. While I did not find myself agreeing with everything he said, particularly concerning foundationalism and contextualization, I did in the main. More importantly, he expanded my own horizons and succeeded in engaging new ideas with a careful eye to biblical fidelity. His treatment, for example of contextualization, brilliantly simplified a tangled mass of theological and anthropological presuppositions, distilling everything down to two major choices. He then introduced biblical and theological data that helped us decide. Given the mountain of confusing and contrary writing in this field, his treatment was most welcome. The same can be said for his critique of John Hick, pluralism and world religions. The book is characterized by sanity, humour, and an elegant simplicity (given the complexity of its contents). Buy it now.

Ecclesiology has been a seriously neglected field. Several new works attempt to redress the shortfall. A work edited by John G. Stackhouse, *Evangelical Ecclesiology: Reality or Illusion*,² attempts to tackle the subject straight on. Contributors represent different poles within evangelicalism and each espouses significantly different perspectives that showcase the disparity within the evangelical camp. Edith Humphrey, Kerry Dearborn, Roger Olson, and Paul Zahl seem to run the gamut of American ecclesiology. The first two adopt a kind of 'high church' sensibility, though Humphrey's approach is more satisfactory in grounding her opinion in solid theology and history. She basically argues for the primacy and exclusivity of church over and against a consumerist age that generates parachurch organizations, but seems impotent to stand against the forces of the age. Zahl, a self-confessed low church Episcopalian, fairly ridicules Dearborn and her 'smells and bells' It is not so much that she has a liturgical orientation. Rather, it is that her support for 'Celtic' spirituality is completely divorced from any concrete historical reality. Zahl contends that what she describes never, in fact, ever existed. Olson, takes up the free church, Anabaptist position. His own work is oriented in two directions. First, he ably, I think, articulates the free church ethos, that focuses on voluntarism and the individual believing community. Second, and more disturbing, he articulates where he think that independent, individual orientation leads, a 'generous orthodoxy,' typified by centred identity based on shared experience of new birth rather than a bounded identity, shaped by adherence to doctrinal standards such as creeds or confessions. Perhaps most telling is

his response to questions about whether an idea is heretical. He thinks the question now sounds 'quaint'. Perhaps less clear in the work is the answer to the question, 'Reality or Illusion?' One confronts something of the tension between trans-denominational, often anti-ecclesial evangelicalism and the idea of 'church', but the book yields few satisfactory answers. Skip it.

The Community of the Word: Toward an Evangelical Ecclesiology, similarly looks at differing traditions and differing ecclesiologies as well.³ This book addresses the issues with more detail and success. Each of the offerings was worth reading, but a few stand out. **D.G. Hart** does what he seems to do best, serve as the agent provocateur of evangelicalism. He carefully demonstrates how evangelicals have, over time, succeeded in moving the focus of believers from the centrality of church and doctrine to one balanced in favour of its subjective, pietist, rather than its reformational roots. Two 'meaty' offerings by **John Webster**, professor of systematic theology at Aberdeen are particularly noteworthy. His first, 'The Church and the perfection of God' explores the relationship between gospel and church. He underscores the importance of having an adequate biblical foundation for church that, in turn, depends on a secure doctrinal base. How refreshing! What a thought! In an age of theological indifference, doctrine matters. He also performs a real service in sketching for us, 'communion theology', largely behind modern initiatives for the recovery of liturgy. This and his second article, 'The visible attests the invisible', rewards careful study. Neither is easy to plough through, but both are worth the effort.

The second explores the 'spiritual visibility' of the church, the way in which the visible church attests to God and his truth. The church is characterized by real, spiritually-based holiness. He throws the gauntlet down, challenging those who seem to see the church almost exclusively in terms of social theory. Webster, thankfully, will have none of it. He also brings the focus of church back to the basics, the preaching of the Word and the right administration of sacraments. The point he makes through this is not the support of traditional forms. Rather, it is the belief that the foundation for the church is God speaking and doing. It is about his initiative, not ours. Perhaps, his most significant contribution is his explanation of the clarity of scripture and the importance of the church as a 'hearing' community to listen to what it says and communicate it faithfully. It does not decide anything. Rather, it hears and obeys. If you are up for a challenge, buy it.

Robert Letham has produced a major work, *The Holy Trinity: In Scripture, History, Theology, and Worship*.⁴ The book, to be clear, is more characterized by thoroughness, balance, and biblical soundness, rather than innovation or creativity. The author writes from a conservative, Reformed position. Excluding appendices, the work is divided into four parts. These cover biblical foundations, historical development (the largest section), modern developments (ranges from Barth to Torrance and includes Roman Catholics), and a topical discussion of four 'critical issues'. The biblical section contains a very satisfying exploration of the cumulative testimony of scripture attesting to the deity of Christ. Given the recent initiatives of scholars to

atomize the text and subsequently reduce the recognition of God the Son, Letham's observations are most welcome. His balanced evangelical discussion, concerning explicit 'Binitarian' and 'Trinitarian' texts is welcome and timely. The author's foray into the complexities of Trinitarian formulaic development is likewise careful. Letham, like Torrance and Bray, works back and forth between Eastern and Western theologians, often showing how they interrelate. He is also not intimidated by great churchmen such as Augustine and usefully explores weaknesses in his methodology. All-in-all, the book should serve as an excellent resource for pastors, educators, and students alike. Save it for Boxing Day.

Soteriology is the subject of several new works. Intervarsity/Apollos have two edited offerings, one addressing justification and the other the atonement. Both subjects have been the focus of recent heated controversy, largely involving the 'new perspective' concerning Paul. *Justification: What's at Stake in the Current Debates* is the smaller and more coherent of the two.⁵ Imputation and non-imputation are clearly debated, on biblical grounds, in detail by Robert Gundry and D.A. Carson. The value of their articles lies less, however, in the quality of their arguments than it does in considering the nature of the gulf in methodology between them. In other words, it is well worth reading the book just to see how differently the two use scripture to justify their respective positions. My money is on Carson, but Gundry ably, if unsuccessfully, argues for his position. Other interesting articles are provided by Tony Lane and Bruce McCormick, each of which addresses

Justification from a historical and theological perspective. McCormick also adds the interesting but depressing concern that the debate may signal the beginning of the end of the Reformation itself and of its central tenets. *The Glory of the Atonement* is, by far, a much larger work.⁶ Similar in structure to the work on justification, it is divided into sections concerned with biblical, historical and practical orientations. The last section concerned with the practical implications of the atonement is the shortest and, to my mind, the least practical. The offerings by Packer, Ferguson, and Nicole (normally three of my favorites) I found to add little value. It is not that they said anything wrong, it is that I heard nothing new from them. The first two sections, by contrast, are excellent and recommended. Standouts in the biblical section include the articles on the Pentateuch by Emile Nicole, Carson on Romans 3:21-26, Michaels on John, and Groves on Isaiah 53. Historical treatments were generally workmanlike, but two stood out. They include an entertainingly speculative article concerning Augustine by Stanley Rosenberg that explores Augustine's engagement of ideas, more reminiscent, however, of Eastern Orthodoxy's recovery of the divine image than Latin Christianity's forensic ideas. Perhaps the most stimulating offering was by Timothy George in an examination of Luther's views concerning the atonement. Most interesting was his appraisal of Luther's balancing of ideas related to Aulen's *Christus Victor* and penal substitution. Recent work tends to champion one over the other. George gives us a picture of different possibilities. Luther still continues to surprise.

Violence, Hospitality, and the Cross, by Hans Boersma, could not approach the same topic, the atonement, more differently.⁷ The author, sports a reformed background, complete with Dutch surname, but that is where his reformed thinking ends. Though paying some 'lip service' to reformed sensibilities, to include a tepid endorsement of some idea of penal substitution, the work seems to embody every sort of anti-reformed thinking. Just look and you will find it: praise for Catholic ecumenicalism, the New Perspective, Eastern Orthodox deification, preference for Irenaeus over Augustine, and dismay over the Constantinian settlement. While espousing support for all three of the major views concerning the atonement, Boersma's real agenda is acceptance by people with a reformed background of Eastern Orthodox-style theosis. Unfortunately for the author and all those like him, his methodology founders on one simple biblical reality. Each of the positions he espouses requires a discounted understanding of the impact of the Fall on individuals. In other words, the fact of total depravity renders most of these ideas ultimately impotent. If you wish to know what hurdles reformed theology has to surmount, read it. Otherwise, give yourself a break. In any case, stick to the library for this one. Similar, but even less Reformed is Joel B. Green and Mark D. Baker's *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross: Atonement in New Testament and Contemporary Contexts*, a spirited, badly flawed refutation of penal substitution.⁸ Despite my objections, this is a major critique of traditional Anselmian atonement. Like Boersma's offering, Anselm and Abelard are contrasted. Ultimately it seems as though *Christus Victor* faces off against Charles Hodge and Hodge

loses. Why is it that whenever someone wants to refute a Reformed position, Charles Hodge is in variably the whipping boy? I think the answer of course is that Hodge seems to sum up Calvinism in all of its archaism and obscurantism. Better and more honest is an examination of the shame motif later in the book. Good for Green and Baker. Too much work supporting penal substitution ignores the shame dimension to the biblical text. I must say, however, that the treatment founders on the same rock as Boersma, namely total depravity. Buy it, take two aspirin, and call me in the morning.

Several works represent traditional expressions of Reformed theology. One, Peter Golding's *Covenant Theology: The Key of Theology in Reformed Thought and Tradition* is a modern restatement of traditional covenantal theology.⁹ The other is a reprint of an earlier work, Herman Bavinck's *Reformed Dogmatics: God and Creation*.¹⁰ The two represent a sort of role reversal, however. Golding's work, though it is barely a year old, feels much older. Little of the work engages recent works or challenges. The explanations contained are sound, but one wishes for a bit more help with postmodernism. Bavinck's writing, by contrast, is astonishing in the freshness and vitality of the approach. Though Bavinck was a contemporary of the great Abraham Kuyper, his treatment of subjects, such as Trinitarian relations, still has much to teach us. The structure of the work shows its age (e.g. evolution versus creation, debates with modernism etc.) but it, nevertheless, retains its power and a bit of elegance. Take out a loan and get it. Robert L. Reymond's *Contending for the Faith* is a collection of occasional writings, classroom

lectures posed from an apologetic point of view, not my cuppa really.¹¹ While some of the short pieces such as those discussing Trinitarianism have drawn significant criticism, most lack the gravitas that would make the purchase satisfying. It is a very uneven work. The article, for example, concerning Islam, only impresses as being pedestrian. On the other hand, the article concerning Sanders/Dunn and the 'fork in the road' is penetrating and useful. The same could be said of his critique of Gerstner's affection for Aquinas. Unfortunately, the unevenness creates a 'Cut and Paste' feel that is, more than anything else, annoying. Skip it.

The growing interest in global Christianity, sparked in the West by Phillip Jenkins' *The Next Christendom* has generated several new theologically-oriented works exploring the issue. Amos Yong has produced a fascinating and important work, *The Spirit Poured out on All Flesh*, connecting Pentecostalism with global theology.¹² I have to note that I am not persuaded by Pentecostal argumentation. Nevertheless, this book is to be commended for its successful articulation of Pentecostal theology, no mean feat, given the preponderance of affective, emotional works that give us little to think about. Yong, like Gordon Fee, is a serious, competent theologian who rewards careful reading and deserves serious answers. Given the current propensity for shapeless, colourless evangelicalism, this work offers much more. It has become my standard work on Pentecostal theology. Bravo. A second work, *The Global God: Multicultural Evangelical Views of God*, edited by Aida Besançon Spencer and William David Spencer, takes a completely different approach.¹³ Its

concern is to present evangelicalism as expressions of different global cultures. What difference does cultural perspective make in our understanding of our faith? The answers provided are worth considering and reflect the beliefs of the contributors, all of whom seem to reflect conventional evangelicalism. These voices are not those threatening to engulf the West with some sort of syncretism, a growing concern among western believers, but rather express faith we can both recognize and learn from. Find it, second-hand.

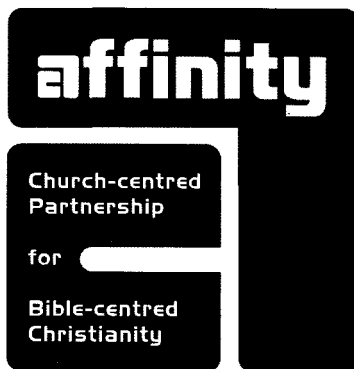
Evangelical Landscapes: Facing Critical Issues of the Day, by John G. Stackhouse is a prickly critique of American evangelicalism.¹⁴ A host of worries has Stackhouse exercised: the corrupting influence of money, evangelical division showcased by a burgeoning parachurch presence, a shallow interaction with sub-Christian American culture, and obstructionist conservatism that represents the inability of conservative evangelicals to engage new things. His viewpoint is that of one who is attempting to engage, rather than reject the implications of postmodernism. His comments are reminiscent of the *missio dei* thinking popularized by Newbigin. In general, it appeared to do well in pricking consciences in a few cases, provoking thinking in a few more, and offering few clear solutions to problems. As this did not appear to be the aim of the book, it should not be viewed as a criticism. Perhaps the greatest detractor is the fact that it does reflect rather strongly an American milieu. Extrapolation can be made, but the process might be a bit annoying. Accept it as a gift. *Pilgrims on the Sawdust Trail*, edited by Timothy George is a kinder, optimistic treatment of evangelicalism's

many faces.¹⁵ I am not sure I like it any better. To be honest, I often find 'broad' evangelicalism annoying. I find 'generous orthodoxy' revolting. This fits closer to the first category, but it does annoy. George, a daring and brilliant evangelical seems to find 'trueness' in civility and catholicity. This is reflected in the large section dealing with Evangelicals and Catholics together. As George sees it, Christianity has three main voices, Roman Catholicism, evangelical Protestantism, and Eastern Orthodoxy. Eastern Orthodoxy's main influence is largely geographically confined. Therefore, George concludes that it is in the world's best interest for Catholics and Protestants to talk, since the faith essentially comes down to them and the way they get along. I confess that I am not so sure. George reflects at one point on why it is difficult for Protestants to engage with Roman Catholics. He contrasts the forthright commitment to truth by *Ut Unam Sint* with the wishy-washiness of mainstream Protestantism. I agree, but I see in the contrast the seed of a different problem. If evangelicalism is a 'renewal movement' as George contends and Roman Catholicism continues to develop as the voice of the Christian West, what is there that necessitates seeing Protestantism as anything other than a critique of the true church? Why won't Catholicism, given the time, swallow up all but the rigorously Reformed? All in all, the extreme broadness, with the exception of an excellent dissenting article by Kevin Bauder, was not encouraging. Let someone talk you into accepting a complimentary copy.

Our last offering is an enormously evocative festschrift in honour of Alister McGrath. *Alister E. McGrath & Evangelical Theology: A Dynamic*

Engagement, edited by Sung Wook Chung is evocative because McGrath seems to embody all of the promise and pathos of evangelicalism in his remarkable career.¹⁶ The transatlantic selection of contributors is superb, encompassing a wide range of evangelical perspectives and denominational traditions. Bray's critique of McGrath's writings on justification seems to sum up everything positive about McGrath. Bray characterizes it as the work of a young man who has not only more to produce, but more growing to do. Given the enormous volume of writing McGrath has contributed, we forget that the book only celebrated his 50th birthday. Implicit in Bray's comments is the recognition that McGrath's work did not reflect a fully mature thinking. Roche, on McGrath's foray into scientific theology notes his wide-ranging, synthetic thinking, and a courageous willingness to engage intellectually with science. It was a good reminder of the difference between evangelicalism and fundamentalism, albeit not always a happy one. 'Machen's Warrior Children', by John Frame moves from a tribute to McGrath to an examination of Reformed American evangelicalism. It serves as a very satisfying, compact analysis of Reformed controversy in the 20th century, culminating with his wish list for a Reformed Theological ethos. Bravo for Frame. Chung made an outstanding editorial choice in placing a relatively conciliatory article by Clark Pinnock immediately following Frame; or was it just humour? As to Pinnock, I found the tone of his offering 'whining', complaining that traditional Calvinists were not being fair to him. More to the point, they would not accept his views as representing mainstream evangelicalism. Good for them. Buy it anyway.

1. David K. Clark, *To Know and Love God: Method for Theology Foundations of Evangelical Theology* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2003). ISBN 1-58134-484-8.
2. John G. Stackhouse, Jr., *Evangelical Ecclesiology: Reality or Illusion?* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003). ISBN 0-8010-2653-9.
3. Mark Husbands and Daniel J. Treier, *The Community of the Word: Toward an Evangelical Ecclesiology* (Apollos: Leicester, 2005). ISBN 1-84474-082-X.
4. Robert Letham, *The Holy Trinity: In Scripture, History, Theology, and Worship* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: P&R, 2004). ISBN 0-87552-000-6.
5. Mark Husbands and Daniel J. Treier, *Justification: What's at Stake in the Current Debates* (Apollos: Leicester, 2004). ISBN 1-84474-027-7.
6. Charles E. Hill and Frank A. James III, *The Glory of the Atonement* (Apollos: Leicester, 2004). ISBN 0-8308-2689-0.
7. Hans Boersma, *Violence, Hospitality, and the Cross* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004). ISBN 0-8010-2720-9.
8. Joel B. Green and Mark D. Baker, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross: Atonement in New Testament and Contemporary Contexts* (Cumbria: Paternoster, 2000). ISBN 1-84227-246-2.
9. Peter Golding, *Covenant Theology: The Key of Theology in Reformed Thought and Tradition* (Ross-shire, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2004). ISBN 1-85792-923-3.
10. Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics: God and Creation Vol.2.* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004). ISBN 0-8010-2655-5.
11. Robert L. Reymond, *Contending for the Faith: Lines in the Sand that Strengthen the Church* (Ross-shire: Christian Focus, 2005). ISBN 1-84550-045-8.
12. Amos Yong, *The Spirit Poured Out on all Flesh: Pentecostalism and the Possibility of Global Theology.* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005). ISBN 0-8010-2770-5.
13. Aida Besançon Spencer and William David Spencer, *The Global God: Multicultural Evangelical Views of God* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998). Reprint 2002. ISBN 0-8010-2163-4.
14. John G. Stackhouse, *Evangelical Landscapes: Facing Critical Issues of the Day* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002). ISBN 0-8010-2594-X.
15. Timothy George, ed., *Pilgrims on the Sawdust Trail: Evangelical Ecumenism and the Quest for Christian Identity* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004). ISBN 0-8010-2764-0.
16. Sung Wook Chung, *Alister E. McGrath & Evangelical Theology: A Dynamic Engagement* (Cumbria: Paternoster, 2003). ISBN 1-84227-202-0.



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