

This book is important not only because it deals so competently with what lies at the heart of Christ's cross work, but because it responds effectively to a new generation of people who are not listening very carefully to what either Scripture or history says. One of the delightful features of this book is reflected in the subtitle: the authors make no apology for their thesis, but underscore the *glory* of penal substitution. This book deserves the widespread circulation achieved by corresponding contributions a generation ago – the contributions of Leon Morris, Jim Packer and John Stott.

D. A. Carson, Research Professor of New Testament,  
Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Deerfield, Illinois

What a remarkable book! I have always believed in penal substitution in the atoning death of Christ, but have not seen so much useful material brought together before. I was struck by the breadth of biblical evidence, especially the material on the Passover. The book is a remarkable combination of biblical evidence for penal substitution, its integration into the big themes of the Bible, examples from historical theology, its trinitarian context, and answers to current objections.

Peter Adam, Principal, Ridley College, Melbourne

If gospel people are to be clear on the nature of the gospel, then they need to have a clear understanding of penal substitution. This is a timely and magnificent book, which will inform heads and warm hearts about the amazing love of God for us. There is much loose talk in the church about the gospel – this book tells us so powerfully how truly wonderful it is.

Wallace Benn, Bishop of Lewes, and President,  
Church of England Evangelical Council

In every generation, the great truths of Christian faith need to be restated in a fresh way. We are indebted to the authors of this book for the masterly way in which they have lucidly articulated and defended the vital doctrine of the penal substitution of Christ. It is at the very heart of the gospel. Careful reading of this material will captivate the mind, warm the heart and fill the senses with a sense of wonder at what God has done out of love for his people. I warmly commend it.

Lindsay Brown, General Secretary, International Fellowship of Evangelical Students

For all who suspect that penal substitutionary atonement may not be a central biblical truth, think it a Johnny-come-lately doctrine, or judge it objectionable on other grounds, read this book! For all who gratefully believe that 'the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all', read this book – and let your heart sing!

Steve Brady, Principal, Moorlands College, and Trustee, The Keswick Convention

The treatment of the biblical material is in itself worth the price of the book. A model of biblical-theological exposition. They expound the weightiest texts so concisely and so clearly – as they argue for the rugged truth about the rugged cross.

Dale Ralph Davis, Pastor, Woodland Presbyterian Church, Hattiesburg, Mississippi

The Bible historically has been understood to teach explicitly and implicitly that Christ died as a penal substitute for sinners. That's what this excellent volume teaches us, too. Carefully studying the primary biblical texts and then answering numerous objections, this book explains and defends the understanding that Christ died in our place, taking our penalty for us. From the biblical material to patristic quotations, from pastoral implications to present objections, this book is a responsible and comprehensive introduction. All the authors' careful work promises to make this book the new standard text on Christ's atoning work. Now, I can't wait to read it again, devotionally.

Mark Dever, Pastor, Capitol Hill Baptist Church, Washington, DC

As I was sitting on a log in the mountains of the Lebanon, my uncle explained to me, a fifteen-year-old, the gospel. It was the explanation of the cross that struck me and convinced me that I must trust Jesus as my Lord and Saviour. If he had loved me enough to pay the penalty for my sin, then I had to receive him. Since then I have sought to proclaim 'Christ and him crucified' to everyone I can. It is sad that *Pierced for our Transgressions* has had to be written to defend the very heart of the Christian message, but I am delighted that the authors have produced a warm, biblical, thorough and endearing defence of Jesus' great work on the cross. Whilst I would want to passionately argue that Jesus died for everyone, I commend this book and its great theme to all. As D. L. Moody said, 'The main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing.'

Roger Carswell, Evangelist

As secular society bullies the church into air-brushing out the harder elements of the gospel, evangelicals will find themselves tempted to downplay the central importance of penal substitution. If we do, we will lose the authentic, historic gospel for at least a generation. This brilliant book is a timely gift to God's people (not least to students) to help us hold firm. *Pierced for our Transgressions* is set to become one of the most important books for evangelicalism at this critical moment of time.

Richard Cunningham, Director, Universities and Colleges Christian Fellowship

This book is a serious and scholarly defence of one of the fundamentals of the Christian faith. Its exegesis of Scripture is as refreshing as it is thorough. Its defence of penal substitution against various criticisms is sharp, focused and helpful. It has enriched my understanding of Anglican theology and encouraged me in my faith. I recommend it to preachers, apologists and all serious Bible students – it is worth ten times whatever it will cost you!

John Dunnett, General Director, Church Pastoral Aid Society

Agreement on the nature of the atonement has long been a defining feature of evangelical Christianity. Today, however, all is in crisis. For some time the writings of a number of scholars reared in evangelicalism have eroded, even denied, that the heart of the gospel is to be found in Christ's penal substitutionary death and his glorious resurrection. But now – inevitably – this view has begun to appear in books written by popular authors who are viewed as contemporary, cutting-edge leaders. Sadly, much that is said and written unwittingly repeats what was long ago rejected as unorthodox. In the past, those views irrevocably led – within a generation – to a rejection of evangelical faith; unchecked, they will inevitably do so again. The stakes could scarcely be higher – the very nature of the gospel itself. *Pierced for our Transgressions* is a courageous, timely, comprehensive and welcome study. It is biblically sensitive and pastorally astute, with the added strength of being aware of where similar false steps in the past eventually led. Here is a sure-footed guide to the message of the cross – and therefore to Christ himself, and ultimately to God the Trinity. It deserves widespread and careful reading.

Sinclair B. Ferguson, Pastor, First Presbyterian Church, Columbia, South Carolina

This is certainly one of the most comprehensive treatments available of the doctrine of penal substitutionary atonement. It presents exegesis, historical theology, and responses to contemporary debate, all in one volume. In all these areas, the book is excellent, both in its exposition and in its argument. It presents a cogent defence of the biblical and historic church doctrine, and in my view it devastates the criticisms of this position. The writing is clear and understandable to non-specialists, but its authors fully understand the technical issues, so that the book makes a real contribution to the academic discussion as well. I am delighted to see this book appear, and I hope that it gets a very wide readership.

John M. Frame, Professor of Systematic Theology and Philosophy,  
Reformed Theological Seminary, Orlando, Florida

The doctrine of the penal substitutionary atonement of Jesus Christ can be abandoned only by eviscerating the soteriological heart of historic Christianity. This teaching has deep roots in both the Catholic and Protestant theological traditions and deserves to be taken seriously in the church's proclamation of the doctrine of reconciliation today. This is an important scholarly contribution to a current doctrinal debate with enormous spiritual and pastoral implications.

Timothy George, Dean, Beeson Divinity School, and  
Executive Editor, *Christianity Today*

A scholarly, detailed, heart-warming and satisfying response to those who deny the penal substitutionary atonement of Christ. The authors have well covered the biblical and historical ground, and opposing arguments are considered and answered. It is an accessible and most valuable addition to the strong defence of the vital Christian doctrine of propitiation. Let all who deny the doctrine respond to this book.

Brian H. Edwards, author of *The Divine Substitute*, and former President, FIEC

A well-thumbed copy of *Pierced for our Transgressions* ought to rest on the bookshelf of every thoughtful Christian. This even-handed, masterful defence of penal substitutionary atonement is clear and convincing. Readers will quickly grasp the theology and the urgency of the issues, and will be especially grateful for the classic objection–response format of Part Two, which makes for easy reference. A crucial read.

R. Kent Hughes, Senior Pastor Emeritus, College Church, Wheaton, Illinois

The authors have given us a wide-ranging and heart-warming treatment of penal substitution. They have a firm grasp of the biblical material, and are thoroughly aware of the current debates and scholarly issues involved. Above all they know the stakes are high, none other than the gospel itself and the health of Christ's church. It deserves to be widely used by serious Christians concerned to know both what the Bible teaches and what the church has preached from its earliest days concerning the cross of Christ.

Liam Goligher, author of *The Jesus Gospel*, and Pastor,  
Duke Street Church, Richmond-upon-Thames

Thoroughly researched and documented, cogently argued and presented with great clarity, this is a timely and much-needed restatement of the central biblical doctrine of penal substitution. Its great strength lies in its comprehensive exegesis of the biblical text itself, explaining the positive content and answering its opponents with gracious fairness, but penetrating force.

David Jackman, President, Proclamation Trust, London

This excellent study is sufficiently thorough to engage seriously with the key issues, and sufficiently accessible for those who might not regard themselves as 'theologians'. Its biblical survey, historical overview, pastoral focus and thoughtful reply to today's questions make it a vital contribution to our understanding of what Christ achieved on the cross. I particularly wish to encourage those who might not usually dip into such a substantial work to read this careful treatment of a central and glorious Christian doctrine. It will strengthen your understanding, warm your heart and increase your devotion to Christ.

Jonathan Lamb, International Director, Langham Preaching, and  
former Chair, Keswick Ministries and Word Alive

In God's mission to have a people that 'no one could number from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages', the penal substitution of his Son in our place, receiving in full the punishment of God's righteous indignation that should have been ours, is absolutely central and critical to the whole enterprise. So this new contribution really does help us rediscover the glory of penal substitution; showing us its biblical foundations, the way that it has been clearly taught by the church for 2,000 years and refuting contemporary objections to it. You will find this book a very useful resource, and an important one in contending for this key understanding of what Christ achieved at Calvary.

Andy Lines, General Secretary, Crosslinks

*Pierced for our Transgressions* is a treasure trove of information and analysis on the important, yet disputed doctrine of penal substitution. As a biblical scholar, I enthusiastically commend the authors for their careful exegesis of the biblical text. From this point on, critics of the biblical teaching must interact with the arguments of this book. Further, every Christian, whether aware of the debate or not, can greatly benefit from this comprehensive and penetrating treatment of this crucial doctrine.

Tremper Longman III, Robert H. Gundry Professor of Biblical Studies,  
Westmont College, Santa Barbara, California

It is difficult to imagine a more important book than *Pierced for our Transgressions*, or a more helpful one. It is important because of its skilful and thorough defence of the doctrine of penal substitution against a growing chorus of objections – objections that threaten our very understanding of the gospel. It is helpful because of its clear and accessible style that illuminates the issues, whether you are a scholar, pastor or simply a Christian who loves the Saviour. I am deeply grateful to God, and to the authors, for this critical and timely book.

C. J. Mahaney, Sovereign Grace Ministries

I commend this book for its comprehensive and fair scrutiny of the many objections brought against the doctrine of penal substitution in recent years. Even those who, like me, would disagree with the authors' belief that a doctrine of particular redemption (or 'limited atonement') is a necessary part of this doctrine will be grateful for this useful contribution to the current debate with its careful demonstration of the weaknesses of so many of the common criticisms made of the doctrine.

I. Howard Marshall, Emeritus Professor of New Testament Exegesis,  
University of Aberdeen

This is a valuable contribution to the defence of a biblical understanding of the atonement. The exposition of Scripture is solid and helpful. The historical section puts to the sword any notion that penal substitution is a modern doctrine, not found in the early church Fathers. The 'objection and response' format of the central chapters is an excellent way of responding to arguments that are widely used but often lack theological substance. Overall, this book will be of great service to the church, especially to those who have been influenced by recent popular works on the subject of the atonement that deny the biblical teaching on penal substitution. We are indebted to the authors of this volume.

Professor A. T. B. McGowan, Principal, Highland Theological College, Dingwall

Atonement is the central doctrine of the Christian faith, and penal substitution is the heart of this doctrine. It is wonderful to have a whole book on penal substitution.

Roger Nicole, Professor of Theology, Reformed Theological Seminary,  
Orlando, Florida

This is a very significant book. It addresses the subject of Christ's penal substitutionary death, which lies at the heart of the biblical gospel, but which has now come under serious threat in the current theological ferment. The authors have carefully and convincingly evaluated the biblical material on which the teaching of penal substitution has been based and reaffirmed it. They have set the doctrine within the theological framework of creation, sin, redemption and relationships within the Trinity, while adducing key witnesses from two millennia of church history in support. Every major objection to penal substitution has been considered, and courteously but firmly answered. This refreshing affirmation encourages us to praise God in wonder at Christ's atonement for us sinners. The authors have placed us in their debt. Their book deserves to be read widely.

Peter T. O'Brien, Senior Research Fellow in New Testament,  
Moore Theological College, Sydney

At the very heart of the Christian faith is the penal substitutionary atonement of Christ. Those who deny this central doctrine to Christianity are in effect denying the faith once entrusted to the saints. Every generation needs a full defence of this biblical truth and the authors have provided us with an eminently winsome and forthright defence of this glorious doctrine.

Martin Morrison, Bishop, Church of England in South Africa

The authors of this work compel us to take seriously an objective view of the cross of Christ, one that is not simply dependent on how we feel and what the culture around us promotes. The truth of the matter is that God has sent his Son, the eternal Word and the creative Wisdom, in human form so that he could stand in our place, do what we could not and would not do and by his obedience undo the wrongdoing of Adam and Eve. It is this radical act of obedience, with the cross as its climax and fulfilment, that turns away God's anger from our wrongdoing, restores our relationship with the source of our being and makes us God's beloved. The atonement is, of course, multifaceted; Christ certainly defeated sin and conquered the powers of evil. He is an example to us as we carry our own crosses in following him, and the cross manifests the extent of God's love for us. There would, however, be no sanctification, no transformation of self or society, no working out of the social, economic and political implications of the cross unless the fundamental transaction between God and ourselves had been completed and the impasse caused by sin broken by our representative, substitute and champion. Thanks be to God.

Michael Nazir-Ali, Bishop of Rochester

This extended declaration and defence of the penal substitutionary view of Christ's atoning death responds to a plethora of current criticisms, many of them in-house, with a thoroughness and effectiveness that is without parallel anywhere. The book's existence shows that a British evangelical theology which exegetically, systematically, apologetically and pastorally can take on the world is in process of coming to birth. I hail this treatise as an epoch-making *tour de force*, and hopefully a sign of many more good things to come.

J. I. Packer, Professor of Theology, Regent College, Vancouver

This book offers a formidable challenge to the caricatures and misunderstandings of penal substitution that flourish in many Christian circles today. It does so by providing a careful analysis of the relevant biblical material, an exhaustive engagement with the theological objections often raised, and a revelation of the historical pedigree of this doctrine that will surprise some. Such a thoroughly integrated approach to the topic is without precedent. My hope is that it will arouse opponents of this position to reassess their arguments and interact carefully with the case presented here. My prayer is that it will also reassure and strengthen Christians who have long believed that this teaching is at the heart of the gospel.

David Peterson, Principal, Oak Hill Theological College, London

As a preacher, I welcome this book defending the orthodox doctrine of Christ's substitutionary atonement. It is scholarly, but just the kind of scholarship we need: readable, relevant to the whole church, and thus serving the flock of God. Drawing together in one place clear biblical exegesis, careful theological argument, comprehensive historical research, but also real pastoral wisdom, the authors show us that all this matters *in real life*. Go wrong in doctrine here, and our churches will bear the pastoral consequences. That's why we all need to *rediscover the glory of penal substitution*.

William J. U. Philip, Minister, St George's-Tron, Glasgow

*Pierced for our Transgressions* is probably the most significant book on the doctrine of the cross since *The Cross of Christ*. It is timely and urgently needed. Let the exposition of this magnificent doctrine both inform your mind and warm your heart.

Mike Pilavachi, Founder and Director, Soul Survivor

In *Pierced for our Transgressions*, the authors do at least three things for all of us. First, they answer the challenge to the crucial doctrine of penal substitution in a clear, credible, loving and scholarly manner. Second, they do so simply and in an easy to understand manner. In my own situation this means that even those whose first language is not English will be able to follow the reasoning. Third, they focus our attention yet again on the very heart of the gospel, and in doing so not only encourage us as preachers but also give us confidence to stand by our message. This book is superb and, in my view, should always be near the preacher's desk.

Frank Retief, Presiding Bishop, Church of England in South Africa

The doctrine of penal substitution is often maligned and misunderstood today. *Pierced for our Transgressions* is the perfect antidote. The authors defend the doctrine with sparkling clarity and winsome logic. I thank God for this work in which penal substitution is biblically grounded, theologically articulated and historically vindicated. Nor could one object that the authors fail to consider alternative views. Every objection to penal substitution is considered and refuted. In this book we are summoned again to the heart of the gospel.

Thomas R. Schreiner, James Buchanan Harrison Professor of New Testament,  
Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky

Some things are worth fighting for. The evangelical doctrine of penal substitution is one of them. Remove this strand of atonement theology from Christian proclamation and you fairly rip the heart out of the gospel drama. One does not have to agree with everything written here in order to appreciate that *Pierced for our Transgressions* is a methodical and reasoned response to the current debate. To be sure, as our authors point out, penal substitution is not the only way to understand what happens at the cross of Christ, nor must it be detached from a doctrine of creation; but to deny it altogether, as some are now doing, is just plain silly.

Ian Stackhouse, author of *The Gospel-Driven Church*, and  
Pastor, Guildford Baptist Church

Not so much a defence of the doctrine of penal substitution, this book is more a magnificent counter-attack, lifting the siege against it. The authors' comprehensive survey of the evidence successfully calls the bluff of those whose aim is to airbrush the true nature of the atonement from the Bible and church history. Brilliant, passionate and unapologetic, such a response almost makes one grateful for the errorists.

Jonathan Stephen, Principal, Evangelical Theological College of Wales, and  
Director, Affinity

*Pierced for our Transgressions* is a timely, masterful and accessible exploration of the doctrine of penal substitution. It is timely because this doctrine has been under siege in recent years. It is masterful because its handling of the biblical, doctrinal and historical material is impressive. It is accessible because it is written in a way that makes maximum use of scholarly resources without obscuring the issues. This is a much needed and very welcome addition to the doctrine of the atonement. May it be used far and wide to restore confidence in the message that Christ died for our sins. And may the Holy Spirit use it – as he did me – to fill you with a new passion for worshipping God and for sharing the gospel.

Mark Stibbe, author, and Vicar, St Andrew's, Chorleywood, Hertfordshire

The glorious truth of penal substitution lies right at the heart of the authentic Christian faith once for all delivered to the saints. It needs to be reaffirmed in each generation. I am delighted at this well-argued, carefully researched, gracious and thorough defence of the doctrine.

William Taylor, Rector, St Helen's, Bishopsgate, London



A person's attitude to the cross tells you much about their theology as a whole, as it is on Calvary that we see the divine response to the human predicament. Thus the perennial attempts throughout church history to relativize and even deny the propitiatory and substitutionary nature of Christ's sacrifice should not simply be understood as peripheral discussions; they indicate a constant tendency to revise the very essence of the Christian faith to conform to wider cultural mores and shibboleths. It is thus a great pleasure to commend a book such as this, which seeks to defend a biblical, orthodox understanding of the atonement and to reinforce the non-negotiable centrality of God's wrath against sin and his merciful grace towards humanity. Careful readers will find much here that will enable them to articulate with clarity and conviction this important gospel doctrine.

Carl R. Trueman, Professor of Historical Theology and Church History, and  
Dean of Faculty, Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

*Pierced for our Transgressions* is carefully argued and richly edifying. More than that, it is a book sorely needed in the current confusion about the meaning of Jesus' death for us. The authors bring together biblical, theological and historical material in a compelling way, with a clear concern to remain faithful to Scripture and communicate clearly in today's world. They combine deft description with judicious defence as they explore the most important lines of the contemporary critique of evangelical thought on this vital subject. Even in those few places where there is room for disagreement, there can be no doubt that their purpose is to challenge us to a more biblically directed understanding of the wonder of God's mercy to us in the cross of Jesus, and that must always be welcome. This book deserves a wide readership.

Mark D. Thompson, Academic Dean, and Head of the Department of Theology,  
Moore Theological College, Sydney

This book shows how the classical doctrine of the atonement is the most reasonable and honest way of making sense of the Bible, human sin and the character of God. As an evangelist, I gained renewed confidence to preach the glorious gospel of redemption. In this *tour de force* we are shown again why God's grace is so amazing.

Rico Tice, author of *Christianity Explored* and Associate Minister for Evangelism,  
All Souls, Langham Place, London

This is a significant book. At a time when some people seem determined to snuff out this doctrine from what is sung and taught – unwittingly assisted by others who circumvent the issue in the interests of church unity – there is a need for the vital doctrine of penal substitution to be clearly, comprehensively and compellingly explained. This book does the job admirably.

Stuart Townend, Songwriter

At the cross, when Jesus bore the penalty for our sins in our place, the grace of God paid the price his holiness required. This has been the message of the gospel down the ages because this is the message of the gospel as Scripture reveals it. I am deeply grateful for this book, which illumines these facts so well. It is a book faithful to Scripture, knowledgeable of history, conversant with current debate and deeply committed to seeing the church flourish in our day.

David F. Wells, Andrew Mutch Distinguished Professor of Historical and Systematic Theology, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, Hamilton, Massachusetts

Jeffery, Ovey and Sach have produced a careful and well-informed defence of the Christian doctrine of substitutionary atonement. It is a valuable contribution to the current debate.

Gordon Wenham, formerly Professor of Old Testament,  
University of Gloucestershire

Thoroughly researched and well presented, *Pierced for our Transgressions* demonstrates the Scripture's unyielding insistence on the necessity for penal substitution as the only means of removing our guilt and enabling us to be presented faultless before a holy God.

Terry Virgo, Founder, New Frontiers

The need for mission to be directed by a responsible reading of the Bible is essential. This book strives to put an essential doctrine – the penal substitutionary atonement of Christ, in the context of the major themes of Scripture. As an exercise in biblical theology it is very helpful, especially to those who would be using a chronological method of teaching the Bible in a cross-cultural situation. It also shows the importance of the study of church history as an exercise in the tradition of the interpretation of Scripture and in understanding the present. Whilst probably too academic for many mission contexts, it does provide Bible teachers with all they need to know in order to explain the importance of this doctrine and its relationship to other key doctrines of Scripture. As a resource for the missionary it is invaluable, providing the foundation for building up of the church worldwide. It will be up to the missionary to look for those contact points in the host culture that give an opening for the explanation of a vital aspect of the work of Christ.

Chris Wigram, National Director, OMF International (UK), and  
Chairman, Global Connections

The preaching of the cross has always been central to the life and growth of the church. Every generation has had to grapple with the question of why, if God is love, he cannot simply forgive us. This book tackles this question head on – is the cross morally abhorrent, or is it absolutely necessary? The good news that the church has to offer is that Christ willingly and joyfully gave himself up to death on the cross, bearing a punishment that only we deserved, and so securing our salvation and fellowship with God himself forever. This is why we sing and rejoice!

Michael Ramsden, European Director, RZIM Zacharias Trust, and  
Lecturer in Christian Apologetics, Wycliffe Hall, Oxford

PIERCED FOR OUR  
TRANSGRESSIONS

He was pierced for our transgressions,  
he was crushed for our iniquities;  
the punishment that brought us peace was upon him,  
and by his wounds we are healed.  
Isaiah 53:5

PIERCED FOR OUR  
TRANSGRESSIONS

*Rediscovering the Glory of Penal Substitution*

Steve Jeffery, Michael Ovey, Andrew Sach

*Foreword by* JOHN PIPER

CROSSWAY BOOKS  
WHEATON, ILLINOIS

*Pierced for Our Transgressions*

Copyright © 2007 by Steve Jeffery, Michael Ovey, and Andrew Sach

First published 2007 by Inter-Varsity Press, Nottingham, England

Steve Jeffery, Mike Ovey and Andrew Sach have asserted their right under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act, 1988, to be identified as Authors of this work.

North American edition published by Crossway Books  
a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers  
1300 Crescent Street  
Wheaton, Illinois 60187

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the publisher, except as provided for by USA copyright law.

Unless otherwise stated, Scripture quotations are taken from *The Holy Bible: New International Version*. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan Publishing House. All rights reserved. The “NIV” and “New International Version” trademarks are registered in the United States Patent and Trademark office by International Bible Society. Use of either trademark requires the permission of International Bible Society.

Scripture quotations marked esv are from *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*.<sup>®</sup> Copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All right reserved.

Cover design: Josh Dennis

Cover photo: iStock

Printed in the United States of America

First printing, 2007

---

**Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data**

Jeffery, S. (Steve)

Pierced for our transgressions : rediscovering the glory of penal substitution / Steve Jeffery, Michael Ovey, and Andrew Sach.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-1-4335-0108-1 (tpb)

1. Atonement. 2. Jesus Christ—Person and offices. 3. Apologetics.

I. Ovey, Michael. II. Sach, Andrew. III. Title.

BT265.3.J44 2007

232'.3—dc22 2007032835

---

DP 17 16 15 14 13 12 11 10 09 08 07  
15 14 13 12 11 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

To Steve's wife, Nicole, and to Mike's wife, Heather, two women who love the Lord Jesus and live every day trusting in his blood.

And to Andrew's godson, Edward Grey, that he would grow up doing the same.

## FOREWORD

Out of the Jewish leadership of Jesus' day had risen teachers of the law who did not know what the law meant. Jesus found himself saying things like 'Are you the teacher of Israel and yet you do not understand these things?' (John 3:10 *ESV*). Some of the teachers had lost all sense of biblical proportion, 'straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel!' (Matt 23:24 *ESV*). And as they lost their bearings, they came under Jesus' most serious charge: 'You have made void the word of God' (Matt 15:6 *ESV*).

Emotionally, Jesus' response was a sinless combination of grief and anger. 'He looked around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart' (Mark 3:5 *ESV*). Why both anger and grief?

The anger was because people were being hurt – eternally. These teachers were supposed to know what the word of God meant, but instead Jesus said they were 'like unmarked graves, and people walk over them without knowing it' (Luke 11:44 *ESV*). This made Jesus angry. Their job was to teach what God had said. Instead, they were blind guides and were leading others with them into the ditch. Jesus loved people. Therefore, he was angry with professional teachers who imperilled people with biblical blunders.

But Jesus was not only angry; he was 'grieved at their hardness of heart'. These were his kinsmen. These were the leaders of his people. These were the representatives of the Jerusalem he loved and wept over. 'Would that you . . . had known . . . the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from



your eyes' (Luke 19:42 ESV). The condition of their heart and the blindness of their eyes were a grief to Jesus.

This is how I feel today about teachers of Christ's people who deny and even belittle precious, life-saving, biblical truth. When a person says that God's 'punishing his Son for an offence he has not even committed' would be as evil as child abuse, I am angered and grieved. For if God did not punish his Son in my place, I am not saved from my greatest peril, the wrath of God.

In part, I write this foreword to defend my Father's wrath against me before I was adopted. He does not need my defence. But I believe he would be honoured by it. On behalf of my Father, then, I would like to bear witness to the truth that, before he adopted me, his terrible wrath rested upon me. Jesus said, 'Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey . . . *the wrath of God remains on him*' (John 3:36 ESV; italics added). Wrath remains on us as long as there is no faith in Jesus.

Paul puts it like this: We 'were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind' (Eph. 2:3 ESV). My very nature made me worthy of wrath. My destiny was to endure 'flaming fire' and 'vengeance on those . . . who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus . . . [and who] suffer the punishment of eternal destruction' (2 Thess. 1:8–9 ESV). I was not a son of God. God was not my Father. He was my judge and executioner. I was 'dead in . . . trespasses and sins', one of the 'sons of disobedience' (Eph. 2:1–2 ESV). And the sentence of my Judge was clear and terrifying: 'because of these things the *wrath of God* comes upon the sons of disobedience' (Eph. 5:6 ESV; italics added).

There was only one hope for me – that the infinite wisdom of God might make a way for the love of God to satisfy the wrath of God so that I might become a son of God.

This is exactly what happened, and I will sing of it forever. After saying that I was by nature a child of wrath, Paul says, 'But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ' (Eph. 2:4–5 ESV). What a grievous blindness when a teacher in the church writes that the term 'children of wrath' cannot mean 'actual objects of God's wrath . . . [because] in the same breath they are described as at the same time objects of God's love'. On the contrary. This is the very triumph of the love of God. This *is* the love of God – the 'great love with which he loved us'. It rescued me from his wrath and adopted me into sonship.

'But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son . . . to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons' (Gal. 4:4 ESV). God sent his Son to rescue me from his wrath and make me his child.

How did he do it? He did it in the way one writer slanderously calls ‘cosmic child abuse’. God’s Son bore God’s curse in my place. ‘Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law *by becoming a curse for us* – for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree”’ (Gal. 3:13 ESV; italics added). If people in the twenty-first century find this greatest act of love ‘morally dubious and a huge barrier to faith’, it was not different in Paul’s day. ‘We preach Christ crucified, a *stumbling block* to Jews and *folly* to Gentiles’ (1 Cor. 1:23 ESV; italics added).

But for those who are called by God and believe in Jesus, this is ‘the power of God and the wisdom of God’ (1 Cor. 1:24 ESV). This is my life. This is the only way God could become my Father. Now that his wrath no longer rests on me (John 3:36), he has sent the Spirit of sonship flooding into my heart crying Abba, Father (Rom. 8:15). *I thank you, heavenly Father, with all my heart, that you saved me from your wrath. I rejoice to measure your love for me by the magnitude of the wrath I deserved and the wonder of your mercy by putting Christ in my place.*

Those who try to rescue the love of God by minimizing the wrath of God, undermine not only the love of God, but also his demand that we love our enemies. It is breathtaking to hear one of them say, ‘If the cross is a personal act of violence perpetrated by God towards humankind but borne by his Son, then it makes a mockery of Jesus’ own teaching to love your enemies, and to refuse to repay evil with evil.’ Those are deadly words, which, if they held sway, would take enemy love out of the world.

Why? Because Paul said that counting on the final wrath of God against his enemies is one of the crucial warrants for why we may not return evil for evil. It is precisely *because* we may trust the wisdom of God to apply his wrath justly that we must leave all vengeance to him and return good for evil. ‘Never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.” To the contrary, “if your enemy is hungry, feed him”’ (Rom. 12:19–20 ESV). If God does not show wrath, sooner or later we shall take justice into our own hands. But God says, ‘Don’t. I will see to it.’

Every section of this book yields another reason to thank God for the labours of the authors and for IVP in Britain. I pray that the Lord will give the book success in the defence and honour of God, and that Jesus Christ will be treasured all the more fully when he is seen more clearly to be *Pierced for our Transgressions*.

John Piper  
Pastor for Preaching and Vision  
Bethlehem Baptist Church  
Minneapolis, Minnesota

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Like the apostle Paul, we thank our God and pray with joy for many who have been our partners in the gospel (Phil. 1:6). The completion of this book in its present form is testimony not only to their theological insights, but also to their gracious encouragement at those times when the project seemed very daunting. Particular mention must be made of Steve's wife, Nicole, who bore with extraordinary patience and grace the protracted absence of a distracted husband, and without whose support the project would have been impossible. In a similar vein, Mike is thankful for his wife Heather, and Andrew for his housemates Andrew Towner, Patrick McBain and Phil Allcock. Phil made a particular contribution to our understanding of the relationship between divine retribution and God's fatherly discipline, the subject of his BA dissertation.

We are grateful to God for those of a previous generation whose writings first taught us the glory of penal substitution, in particular Leon Morris, J. I. Packer and John Stott. We heard news of Leon Morris's death just as we were preparing the final version of chapter 2, in which his outstanding scholarly work plays a significant part. We dare to hope that he would have approved our attempt to take up the cause for which he contended with such boldness and godliness throughout his ministry.

David Field, Chris Green and Garry Williams, all on the faculty of Oak Hill College, London, have given substantially of their time and wisdom – there

was a period when barely an afternoon went by without a knock on one of their study doors. Garry is engaged in ongoing research on the theology of the atonement, and our historical survey owes much to his Oxford DPhil dissertation. Wendy Bell, the librarian at Oak Hill, has assisted us many times and even showed genuine compassion when Andrew paid a rather substantial library fine for overdue books on Isaiah 53!

John Piper agreed to meet us during his sabbatical at Tyndale House, Cambridge, and greatly encouraged us with his concern to see the doctrine of penal substitution defended against criticisms from both sides of the Atlantic.

Tom Schreiner responded warmly to an email from complete strangers and has since become a valued friend. He made an essay of his available to us prior to publication, and has responded helpfully to many other enquiries along the way. He introduced us to Frank Thielman, who also sent us useful material. Ian Shaw and Brian Edwards allowed us to see the manuscript of their book *The Divine Substitute* before it went to press.

We thank God for Phil Duce, our editor at IVP, who has been patiently supportive throughout, and has spurred us on with his own personal commitment to the defence of the doctrine of penal substitution. Eldo Barkhuizen checked and corrected the manuscript with meticulous care.

Lyndon Drake and Chris Slater lent us their expertise in computing and graphic design respectively, enabling the launch of [www.piercedforourtransgressions.com](http://www.piercedforourtransgressions.com)

There are many others who have helped in different ways throughout the project – Tim Ambrose, Angus and Liz Barnard, Ken Campbell, Paul Clarke, Ros Clarke, Emma Desmond, Charles Dobbie, Matt Fuller, Greg Haslam, Marc Lloyd, Matthew Mason, Thomas Renz, James Robson, David Russell, Steve Smith, Dan Strange, Chris Thomson and Tom Watts. We are thankful to God for all of them.

Above all, of course, we praise our Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, for ‘God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God’ (2 Cor. 5:21).

Steve Jeffery  
Mike Ovey  
Andrew Sach

## THE AUTHORS

Steve Jeffery gained a degree in Materials Science and a doctorate in Experimental Physics at Oxford University before spending three years working at a church in South London. He is currently studying at Oak Hill Theological College in preparation for full-time Christian ministry. He is married to Nicole, and they have two children, Ben and Becki. When he's not teaching his son to play cricket or his daughter to make animal noises, he enjoys football and jazz piano.

Mike Ovey is Principal-elect and Lecturer in Doctrine and Apologetics at Oak Hill Theological College, and holds a PhD in trinitarian theology from King's College London. He once worked as a lawyer drafting government legislation, and subsequently served as a curate at All Saints, Crowborough, before teaching at Moore Theological College, Sydney. Married to Heather, they have three children, Charlie, Harry and Anastasia. His interests include Arsenal Football Club, really complicated whodunnits and strong coffee.

Andrew Sach graduated in Natural Sciences from St John's College, Cambridge, before completing a doctorate at the University of York exploring brain mechanisms involved in human hearing. He then spent three years in Christian ministry before embarking on theological studies at Oak Hill Theological College. He will soon be joining the staff of St Helen's, Bishopsgate, in central London, and is co-author of *Dig Deeper!* (IVP, 2005), a popular book on how to understand the Bible. His current

obsessions include the BBC drama *Spooks*, a particularly tricky piano piece by Prokofiev (which he can't play) and his three godsons, Eden, Edward and Thomas.

# Part One: Making the Case

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### Setting the scene

The doctrine of penal substitution states that God gave himself in the person of his Son to suffer instead of us the death, punishment and curse due to fallen humanity as the penalty for sin.

This understanding of the cross of Christ stands at the very heart of the gospel. There is a captivating beauty in the sacrificial love of a God who gave *himself* for his people. It is this that first draws many believers to the Lord Jesus Christ, and this that will draw us to him when he returns on the last day to vindicate his name and welcome his people into his eternal kingdom. That the Lord Jesus Christ died *for us* – a shameful death, bearing our curse, enduring our pain, suffering the wrath of his own Father in our place – has been the wellspring of the hope of countless Christians throughout the ages.

It is therefore unsurprising that many have been deeply troubled in recent years to hear dissenting voices raised against this teaching. We fear that Christ will be robbed of his glory, that believers will be robbed of their assurance and that preachers will be robbed of their confidence in ‘the old, old story’ of the life-transforming power of the cross of Christ. The great Baptist preacher Charles Spurgeon foresaw the devastating consequences of losing penal substitution well over a century ago, in a sermon that now takes on an eerily prophetic tone.

If ever there should come a wretched day when all our pulpits shall be full of modern thought, and the old doctrine of a substitutionary sacrifice shall be exploded, then will there remain no word of comfort for the guilty or hope for the despairing. Hushed will be for ever those silver notes which now console the living, and cheer the dying; a dumb spirit will possess this sullen world, and no voice of joy will break the blank silence of despair. The gospel speaks through the propitiation for sin, and if that be denied, it speaketh no more. Those who preach not the atonement exhibit a dumb and dummy gospel; a mouth it hath, but speaketh not; they that make it are like unto their idol . . .

Would you have me silence the doctrine of the blood of sprinkling? Would any one of you attempt so horrible a deed? Shall we be censured if we continually proclaim the heaven-sent message of the blood of Jesus? Shall we speak with bated breath because some affected person shudders at the sound of the word ‘*blood*’? or some ‘cultured’ individual rebels at the old-fashioned thought of sacrifice? Nay, verily, we will sooner have our tongue cut out than cease to speak of the precious blood of Jesus Christ.<sup>1</sup>

Mercifully, that ‘wretched day’ has not quite arrived – at least not yet. For ‘the old doctrine of a substitutionary sacrifice’ has not been ‘exploded’; it is still preached faithfully and fervently in churches all over the world. However, an increasing number of theologians and church leaders are calling it into question.

Where did these dissenting voices come from? Many of them can be traced to the rise of liberal theology in the middle of the nineteenth century. Liberalism had little time for the motifs of sacrifice, divine wrath and propitiation entailed in penal substitution. As Henri Blocher observes, ‘Liberal Protestants . . . felt outraged at the doctrine and complained about a “blood” theology, in their eyes an ugly relic of primitive stages in man’s religious evolution.’<sup>2</sup>

During the decades that followed, various alternative accounts of the atonement emerged, none of which left room for penal substitution, and some of which explicitly attacked it. Among the most prominent were John McLeod

- 
1. C. H. Spurgeon, ‘The Blood of Sprinkling (part 1)’, Sermon no. 1888 in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit: Sermons Preached and Revised by C. H. Spurgeon during the Year 1886*, vol. 32 (London: Passmore & Alabaster), pp. 121–132 (p. 129), italics original.
  2. Henri Blocher, ‘The Sacrifice of Christ: The Current Theological Situation’, *European Journal of Theology* 8.1 (1999), pp. 23–36 (p. 25).



Campbell's *The Nature of the Atonement* (1856), Horace Bushnell's *The Vicarious Sacrifice* (1866), R. C. Moberly's *Atonement and Personality* (1901) and Gustav Aulén's *Christus Victor* (1931).<sup>3</sup>

In the mid-twentieth century, the case against penal substitution was articulated most strongly by the biblical scholar C. H. Dodd.<sup>4</sup> In his commentaries on Romans and the letters of John,<sup>5</sup> Dodd argued against the traditional rendering 'propitiation' for the Greek *hilastērion* word group, thereby obscuring the references in Romans 3:25, 1 John 2:2 and 4:10 to the fact that Christ's death averted God's wrath from sinful people. Dodd's view was vigorously challenged by evangelicals such as Leon Morris and Roger Nicole, and was later opposed by popular preachers, particularly Martyn Lloyd-Jones, but nonetheless proved influential, not least because Dodd directed the committees that produced the New English Bible. His understanding of these texts was also reflected in the Revised Standard Version, produced in 1946.

In recent years this tide of criticism has intensified with the appearance of works such as Stephen Travis's *Christ and the Judgment of God* (1986); Eleonore Stump's essay 'Atonement According to Aquinas' (1988); Colin Gunton's *The Actuality of Atonement* (1988); Paul Fiddes' *Past Event and Present Salvation* (1989); Vernon White's *Atonement and Incarnation* (1991); Stephen Sykes's 'Outline of a Theology of Sacrifice' (1991) and *The Story of Atonement* (1997); Timothy Gorrings's *God's Just Vengeance* (1996); Tom Smal's *Once and*

3. John McLeod Campbell, *The Nature of the Atonement* (Cambridge: Macmillan, 1856); Horace Bushnell, *The Vicarious Sacrifice* (Alexander Strahan, 1866); R. C. Moberly, *Atonement and Personality* (London: John Murray, 1901); Gustav Aulén, *Christus Victor: An Historical Study of the Three Main Types of the Idea of the Atonement*, trans. A. G. Herbert (London: SPCK, 1945; first pub. 1931). This was not the first time that penal substitution had come under criticism. A notable example from the Reformation period is Faustus Socinus, the Unitarian theologian who attacked the doctrine in *De Iesu Christo Servatore, in Opera Omnia*, vols. 1–2 of *Bibliotheca Fratrum Polonorum Quos Unitarios Vocant*, 8 vols. (Irenopoli: post 1656), despite the positive case put forth by the Protestant Reformers.
4. This paragraph is indebted to John Stott's helpful outline of Dodd's position and his influence on biblical interpretation, in John R. W. Stott, *The Cross of Christ* (Leicester: IVP, 1986), pp. 170–172.
5. C. H. Dodd, *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1932), pp. 54–55; *The Johannine Epistles* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1946), pp. 25–26, 112.

for *All* (1998); Joel Green and Mark Baker's *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross* (2000); J. Denney Weaver's *The Nonviolent Atonement* (2001); and Martin Davie's article 'Dead to Sin and Alive to God' (2001).<sup>6</sup> John Goldingay, then Principal of St John's College, Nottingham, edited *Atonement Today* (1995),<sup>7</sup> many of the contributors to which are wary or explicitly critical of penal substitution. John Carroll and Joel Green collaborated with Robert Van Voorst, Joel Marcus and Donald Senior to produce *The Death of Jesus in Early Christianity* (1995).<sup>8</sup>

In one sense, it is no surprise that the Bible's teaching should be criticized in this way, for foundational truths of the Christian faith always come under attack from time to time – witness the debates that have raged in the past over the Trinity, the deity of Christ, the bodily resurrection, and so on. The apostle Paul warned that 'the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear' (2 Tim. 4:3).

- 
6. Stephen H. Travis, *Christ and the Judgment of God: Divine Retribution in the New Testament* (Basingstoke: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1986); Eleonore Stump, 'Atonement According to Aquinas', in Thomas V. Morris (ed.), *Philosophy and the Christian Faith* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988), pp. 61–91; Colin E. Gunton, *The Actuality of Atonement: A Study of Metaphor, Rationality and the Christian Tradition* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1988); Paul S. Fiddes, *Past Event and Present Salvation: The Christian Idea of Atonement* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1989); Vernon White, *Atonement and Incarnation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Stephen W. Sykes, 'Outline of a Theology of Sacrifice', in Stephen W. Sykes (ed.), *Sacrifice and Redemption: Durham Essays in Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 282–298; *The Story of Atonement* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1997); Timothy Gorringer, *God's Just Vengeance: Crime, Violence and the Rhetoric of Salvation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Tom Smail, *Once and for All: A Confession of the Cross* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1998); Joel B. Green and Mark D. Baker, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross: Atonement in New Testament and Contemporary Contexts* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2000); J. Denney Weaver, *The Nonviolent Atonement* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001); Martin Davie, 'Dead to Sin and Alive to God', *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology* 19 (2001), pp. 158–194.
7. John Goldingay (ed.), *Atonement Today* (London: SPCK, 1995).
8. John T. Carroll and Joel B. Green, with Robert E. Van Voorst, Joel Marcus and Donald Senior, C. P., *The Death of Jesus in Early Christianity* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1995).

The more disturbing thing is that some of the more recent critics of penal substitution regard themselves as evangelicals, and claim to be committed to the authority of Scripture. Moreover, whereas criticism of penal substitution was once confined largely to academic books and journals, it has now found its way into popular Christian books and magazines, creating confusion and alarm among Christians.

One of the most significant books of this kind is *The Lost Message of Jesus* by Steve Chalke and Alan Mann (2003).<sup>9</sup> Although not written explicitly as a critique of penal substitution, its description of the doctrine as ‘a form of cosmic child abuse’<sup>10</sup> provoked considerable disquiet, not least because Steve Chalke is well known as the founding director of the Oasis Trust and a contributor to several popular Christian magazines. The Evangelical Alliance (EA) responded to the controversy by hosting a public debate in London in October 2004, attended by hundreds of Christians from both sides of the dispute. Both positions were aired but with little resolution. The following summer, the EA organized a symposium at the London School of Theology, attended by over a hundred evangelical scholars, pastors and laypeople. The EA’s own research showed that the vast majority of those present affirmed penal substitution, but the controversy remains firmly on the evangelical agenda, and shows no sign of receding.<sup>11</sup>

Other criticisms of penal substitution at a popular level have come from Alan Mann in his *Atonement for a ‘Sinless’ Society* (2005), Stuart Murray Williams in his contributions to the public debates, and Brian McLaren, a leading figure in the ‘Emerging Church’ movement in the USA, in *The Story We Find Ourselves in* (2003).<sup>12</sup>

---

9. Steve Chalke and Alan Mann, *The Lost Message of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003). See also Steve Chalke, ‘Cross Purposes’, *Christianity* (September 2004), pp. 44–48.

10. Chalke and Mann, *Lost Message of Jesus*, p. 182.

11. *Evangelical Alliance Atonement Symposium Statement*, 8 July 2005, [www.eauk.org/theology/atonement/atonement-statement.cfm](http://www.eauk.org/theology/atonement/atonement-statement.cfm) (accessed 21 April 2006).

12. Alan Mann, *Atonement for a ‘Sinless’ Society: Engaging with an Emerging Culture* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2005); Stuart Murray Williams, ‘Stuart Murray Williams on the Lost Message of Jesus: A Speech at the Debate on Steve Chalke’s Book *The Lost Message of Jesus*’, <http://www.anabaptistnetwork.com/node/233>; Brian D. McLaren, *The Story We Find Ourselves in: Further Adventures of a New Kind of Christian* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003).

In short, after rumbling away for a century and a half behind the closed doors of the liberal scholarly academy, criticisms of penal substitution have recently been voiced by several influential evangelical theologians and church leaders, provoking a storm of controversy within the Christian community.

### Responding to the challenge

Of course, advocates of penal substitution have not been silent during this time. Many have written in defence of the doctrine and the biblical and theological framework that underpins it.

One of the most significant contributions came from the pen of Leon Morris. His article 'The Use of *hilaskesthai* etc. in Biblical Greek' (1951) was a direct challenge to Dodd's attempt to reinterpret the vocabulary of 'propitiation' in the New Testament. Morris concludes that 'the word group under discussion has reference to the wrath of God, and expresses the great truth that the death of Christ is the means of turning that wrath away from sinners conclusively and finally'.<sup>13</sup> A few years later, he published *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross* (1955), which discusses in detail the meaning in context of important New Testament vocabulary such as 'redemption', 'propitiation' and 'reconciliation', and clearly affirms the doctrine of penal substitution. He built on this foundation in *The Cross in the New Testament* (1965), which adopts a broader perspective, surveying all of the New Testament's teaching about the cross, and harvested the fruits of his academic work for a wider audience in *Glory in the Cross* (1966), *The Atonement* (1983) and *The Cross of Jesus* (1988).<sup>14</sup>

Unfortunately, Morris's writings have not had the impact they deserve, because critics of his position paid little attention. Indeed, one of the strangest things about modern challenges to penal substitution is the extent to which they continue to rely on interpretations of Scripture soundly refuted by Morris decades ago, without even attempting to reply to his case.

---

13. Leon Morris, 'The Use of *hilaskesthai* etc. in Biblical Greek', *Expository Times* 62 (1951), pp. 227–233 (p. 233).

14. Leon Morris, *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross* (London: Tyndale, 1955); *The Cross in the New Testament* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1965); *Glory in the Cross: A Study in Atonement* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1966); *The Atonement: Its Meaning and Significance* (Leicester: IVP, 1983); *The Cross of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; Exeter: Paternoster, 1988).

At around the same time that Morris was writing in Australia, scholars in America also mounted a solid defence of the doctrine. Roger Nicole focused his attention on the task of biblical exegesis, and wrote two significant articles refuting Dodd's reading of the disputed New Testament texts. John Murray, meanwhile, gave a resounding endorsement to the Reformed doctrine of salvation in his *Redemption Accomplished and Applied* (1955), as did Louis Berkhof in his *Systematic Theology* (1941).<sup>15</sup>

A few years later, back in the United Kingdom, J. I. Packer defended penal substitution in his 1973 Tyndale Biblical Theology Lecture entitled 'What Did the Cross Achieve? The Logic of Penal Substitution'. This was subsequently published in the *Tyndale Bulletin* before appearing as a short booklet and as a chapter in volume 1 of his *Collected Shorter Writings*. Packer's best-selling book *Knowing God* (1973) also outlines and defends penal substitution in a chapter entitled 'The Heart of the Gospel'.<sup>16</sup>

One of the most important affirmations of the doctrine in recent years is John Stott's *The Cross of Christ* (1986). It is breathtaking in its scope and remarkable in its attention to detail, displaying the author's firm grasp of Scripture and his profound reflection on a whole range of theological and pastoral issues. It has deservedly come to be regarded among evangelicals as one of the standard texts on the cross. Mark Meynell's *Cross Examined* (2001) covers similar ground more simply, and draws on the author's experience of communicating the gospel to university students. This book sets the cross in the broad context of the doctrine of salvation and the Christian life, and it covers

15. Roger Nicole, 'C. H. Dodd and the Doctrine of Propitiation', *Westminster Theological Journal* 17 (1955), pp. 117–157, repr. in *Standing Forth: Collected Writings of Roger Nicole* (Fearn: Christian Focus, 2002), pp. 343–396; 'Hilaskesthai Revisited', *Evangelical Quarterly* 49 (1977), pp. 173–177; John Murray, *Redemption Accomplished and Applied* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1961; first pub. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955): page references in our work are to the Banner of Truth edn; Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (London: Banner of Truth, 1959; first pub. 1941).
16. J. I. Packer, 'What Did the Cross Achieve? The Logic of Penal Substitution', *Tyndale Bulletin* 25 (1974), pp. 3–45; also pub. as *What Did the Cross Achieve? The Logic of Penal Substitution* (Leicester: Theological Students' Fellowship); and as 'What Did the Cross Achieve? The Logic of Penal Substitution', in *Celebrating the Saving Work of God: Collected Shorter Writings of J. I. Packer* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1998), pp. 85–123; J. I. Packer, *Knowing God* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1973).

a range of biblical, theological and pastoral themes in a highly accessible style.<sup>17</sup>

More scholarly works in support of penal substitution continue to be published. The French theologian Henri Blocher has contributed three important essays to the debate. ‘The Sacrifice of Christ: The Current Theological Situation’ (1999) and ‘Biblical Metaphors and the Doctrine of the Atonement’ (2004) contain insightful replies to some recent criticisms of the doctrine, and ‘*Agnus Victor*: The Atonement as Victory and Vicarious Punishment’ (2002) is an incisive response to the claim that penal substitution is excluded by the biblical teaching that at the cross Christ triumphed over evil.<sup>18</sup>

In a similar vein, *Where Wrath and Mercy Meet* (2001) is a collection of papers edited by David Peterson, presented at a conference on the atonement held at Oak Hill Theological College, London, in 2000.<sup>19</sup> It contains essays on the atonement in the Old and New Testaments, theological studies relating the doctrine to creation, new creation, sin, guilt and punishment, and some reflections on preaching the atonement. It makes a strong case for penal substitution, and responds to several recent challenges. Critics of penal substitution have received it in a similar way to Leon Morris’s work: its arguments have largely been ignored.

*The Glory of the Atonement* (2004) is another substantial scholarly contribution, written in appreciation of the ministry of Roger Nicole.<sup>20</sup> It contains studies of some relevant biblical material, as well as essays from historical and practical perspectives. Nicole himself contributed a ‘Postscript on Penal Substitution’, which by itself does a great deal to clarify the issues involved.

Other recent works include Dan Strange’s ‘The Many-Splendoured Cross’ (2005), Ben Cooper’s *Must God Punish Sin?* (2005) and Garry Williams’s contri-

17. John R. W. Stott, *The Cross of Christ* (Leicester: IVP, 1986); Mark Meynell, *Cross Examined: The Life-Changing Power of the Death of Jesus* (Leicester: IVP, 2001).

18. Henri Blocher, ‘The Sacrifice of Christ: The Current Theological Situation’, *European Journal of Theology* 8.1 (1999), pp. 23–36; ‘Biblical Metaphors and the Doctrine of the Atonement’, *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 47 (2004), pp. 629–645; ‘*Agnus Victor*: The Atonement as Victory and Vicarious Punishment’, in John G. Stackhouse (ed.), *What Does It Mean to Be Saved* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), pp. 67–91.

19. David Peterson (ed.), *Where Wrath and Mercy Meet: Proclaiming the Atonement Today* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2001).

20. Charles E. Hill and Frank A. James III (eds.), *The Glory of the Atonement: Biblical, Historical and Practical Perspectives* (Downers Grove: IVP; Leicester: Apolllos, 2004).

bution to the EA symposium on penal substitution, 'Justice, Law, and Guilt' (2005). D. A. Carson's assessment of the 'Emerging Church' movement, *Becoming Conversant with the Emerging Church* (2005), includes brief responses to the criticisms levelled against penal substitution by Brian McLaren and Steve Chalke. Thomas Schreiner defends penal substitution and responds to some alternative positions in *Four Views of the Atonement* (2006). Frank Thielman has contributed a chapter on the subject for *Central Themes in Biblical Theology: Mapping Unity in Diversity* (2007).<sup>21</sup> Finally, A. T. B. McGowan's 'The Atonement as Penal Substitution' (2006)<sup>22</sup> includes a revealing analysis of how penal substitution has become in recent years 'a major fault line within evangelical theology',<sup>23</sup> as well as an illuminating critique of Steve Chalke and Alan Mann's *The Lost Message of Jesus*.

At a more popular level, Ian J. Shaw and Brian H. Edwards's *The Divine Substitute* (2006) contains a helpful survey of the last two thousand years, highlighting various figures who were committed to penal substitution. Liam Goligher's *The Jesus Gospel: Recovering the Lost Message* (2006) presents the story of the Bible as a drama in three acts, demonstrating how penal substitution is woven into it. Paul Wells's *Cross Words* (2006) reflects on the events at Calvary from a range of perspectives, such as 'Scandal', 'Violence' and 'Penalty'. Robert Reymond's *The Lamb of God* (2006) traces the idea of sacrifice through

21. Dan Strange, 'The Many-Splendoured Cross: Atonement, Controversy, and Victory', *Foundations* (autumn 2005), pp. 5–22; Ben Cooper, *Must God Punish Sin?* (London: Latimer Trust, 2005); Garry J. Williams, 'Justice, Law, and Guilt: A Paper Given at the Evangelical Alliance Symposium on Penal Substitution' (2005), [http://www.eauk.org/theology/atonement/upload/garry\\_williams.pdf](http://www.eauk.org/theology/atonement/upload/garry_williams.pdf) (accessed 27 March 2006), forthcoming in *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*; D. A. Carson, *Becoming Conversant with the Emerging Church: Understanding a Movement and Its Implications* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005); Thomas R. Schreiner, 'The Penal Substitution View', in James Beilby and Paul Eddy (eds.), *Four Views of the Atonement* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2006), pp. 67–98; Frank Thielman, 'The Atonement', in Scott J. Hafemann and Paul R. House (eds.), *Central Themes in Biblical Theology: Mapping Unity in Diversity* (Nottingham: Apollos, 2007). We are grateful to Professors Schreiner and Thielman for making their manuscripts available to us prior to publication.
22. A. T. B. McGowan, 'The Atonement as Penal Substitution', in *Always Reforming: Explorations in Systematic Theology*, ed. A. T. B. McGowan (Leicester: IVP, 2006), pp. 183–210.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 201.

the Bible, offering helpful treatments of Exodus 12, Leviticus 16 and Isaiah 53 in particular.<sup>24</sup>

Finally, Ben Cooper's little book *Just Love* (2005) is designed to be accessible to both Christians and unbelievers.<sup>25</sup> In a short space and an informal style, it explores the specific question of how a loving God can punish sin, and approaches penal substitution from the perspective of God's justice.

In view of all this material in support of penal substitution, one might reasonably ask whether another book is necessary. If the answers are all out there, why add yet another volume to the pile? This one is distinct in several ways. First, it seeks to bring together in one place a detailed examination of the key biblical passages, a consideration of the important theological and doctrinal issues, and a comprehensive survey of the teaching of the Christian church through the ages.

Secondly, while there are now some very helpful introductory books (*The Jesus Gospel*, *Cross Examined* or *Just Love* would be excellent for a young Christian) and some formidable academic essays, there is little in between. We have tried to steer such a course. We go beyond the introductory because our intention is not only to explain what penal substitution is, but also to defend it, and that means we must engage with hostile and sometimes complex counter-arguments. But at the same time we have avoided producing a weighty technical volume, because we want to be understood by ordinary Christians and not only by scholars. Our desire is to help Christians without formal theological training (or perhaps some who have such training but lack the time to chase up all the references in a library) to get to grips with the debate. We hope to make accessible to a wider audience some of the answers that already exist, but are tucked away in academic journals, unpublished dissertations or out-of-print books. In particular, many voices from the distant past have been forgotten, and yet the likes of Athanasius and John Calvin have much to teach us if we would listen to them.

- 
24. Ian J. Shaw and Brian H. Edwards, *The Divine Substitute: The Atonement in the Bible and History* (Leominster: Day One, 2006); Liam Goligher, *The Jesus Gospel: Recovering the Lost Message* (Milton Keynes: Authentic Media, 2006); Paul Wells, *Cross Words: The Biblical Doctrine of the Atonement* (Fearn: Christian Focus, 2006); Robert L. Reymond, *The Lamb of God: The Bible's Unfolding Revelation of Sacrifice* (Fearn: Christian Focus, 2006). We are thankful to Ian Shaw and Brian Edwards for allowing us to see their material before it went to press.
25. Ben Cooper, *Just Love: Why God Must Punish Sin* (London: Good Book, 2005).



But the most pressing reason why this book is necessary is that the misconceived criticisms of penal substitution show no sign of abating, and the resulting confusion within the Christian community seems to be increasing rather than decreasing. As Carl Trueman remarked, ‘The classical evangelical position on atonement has fallen out of favour over recent years, often rejected on the basis of a theologically caricatured and historically inadequate understanding of what exactly the position entails.’<sup>26</sup> In Part One of this book we set out the positive case for penal substitution, biblically, theologically, pastorally, historically. In Part Two we outline every objection we have been able to find against penal substitution, where possible giving examples in the writings of contemporary theologians, and respond to each in turn. This prosecution and defence format was once a popular way of doing theology, though less so today; certainly none of the other current books on penal substitution has adopted this approach. We hope it will prove a useful resource for those who believe in penal substitution yet find themselves assailed by some of these objections. We hope also to challenge those who deny the doctrine by engaging some of their claims head on. For too long the opposing sides of the debate have talked past each other. We have structured Part Two to avoid that. These, then, are the distinctive features of our book.

In brief, we argue that penal substitution is clearly taught in Scripture, that it has a central place in Christian theology, that a neglect of the doctrine will have serious pastoral consequences, that it has an impeccable pedigree in the history of the Christian church, and that all of the objections raised against it can be comprehensively answered. It may be helpful if we begin by giving a brief synopsis of each chapter.

Chapter 2 sets out the biblical foundations for the doctrine of penal substitution. This is the basis for all that follows, for if penal substitution is unbiblical, it must be abandoned. We look in some detail at a number of important biblical passages that contribute to a penal substitutionary understanding of the atonement.

The aim of chapter 3 is to explore how penal substitution fits within the ‘big picture’ of Christian theology, showing how it relates to other important biblical themes such as the character of God, the doctrine of creation, the consequences of sin, and other biblical perspectives on the atonement. Penal substitution is shown to have a central place; to exclude it would distort or undermine many other theological themes.

Chapter 4 reflects on some of the most significant pastoral implications of

---

26. Peterson, *Where Wrath and Mercy Meet*, back cover.

the doctrine of penal substitution. There are many other facets to the Bible's teaching on the cross, and each has implications for the Christian life. Here, however, we have focused specifically on those things that depend predominantly on penal substitution, and would be imperilled if the doctrine were denied.

Chapter 5 presents a historical survey of belief in penal substitution. We provide primary documentary evidence to show that leading figures of every era, from the church Fathers until the present day, have held to the doctrine. Of course this does not by itself compel us to believe it: history is no substitute for theology, and Scripture remains our sole and final authority. Yet it has been claimed that penal substitution is a relative newcomer to the theological scene and in particular that it was not taught in the early church. These claims have no historical foundation whatsoever, and we hope to lay them to rest.<sup>27</sup> As we set out to defend penal substitution, it is an encouragement to see a great cloud of witnesses who have gone before us down the same road. Moreover, those who want to deny the doctrine and yet own the label 'evangelical' would do well to recognize just how far they are departing from their heritage. Few if any of their forefathers would stand with them.

We begin Part Two with a more detailed rationale for why we have engaged the critics of penal substitution in the way we have (chapter 6). We have classified the possible objections to the doctrine under six headings, which give us chapters 7–12. Sometimes the objections stem from a misunderstanding of the Bible's teaching, sometimes they arise from misconceptions about penal substitution itself, but in every case they can be answered. Finally, we deal with a different species of objection in chapter 13.

It is our prayer that this book will help many people to grasp more fully the wisdom of God in conceiving so perfect a plan to save a fallen world, the love of God the Father in sending his Son, the love of God the Son in going willingly to his death for our sake, the justice of God, which was vindicated at Calvary as the sin of his people was paid for, and the confidence that we can have to approach such a God, imperfect as we are, on account of the One who was 'pierced for our transgressions' (Isa. 53:5).

---

27. We are particularly indebted to Garry Williams for providing us with a copy of his doctoral thesis, which provided many of the references for the earliest proponents of penal substitution (Garry J. Williams, 'A Critical Exposition of Hugo Grotius's Doctrine of the Atonement in *De Satisfactione Christi?* [unpub. doctoral thesis, University of Oxford, 1999]).