THE SCRIPTURAL NECESSITY OF
CHRIST’S PENAL SUBSTITUTION

Richard L. Mayhue, Th.D.
Senior Vice-President and Dean
Professor of Pastoral Ministry and Theology

This introductory essay overviews the indispensable theme of Christ’s penal substitution on Golgotha’s cross. The subject unfolds in two parts; the first section provides background and context for this essential theological truth. The second section reasons that three compelling biblical necessities require a true believer in Jesus Christ to understand scripturally and accept the Savior’s penal substitution on behalf of redeemed sinners, especially oneself. The landscape/backdrop for this article provides (1) a definition of “Christ’s penal substitution,” (2) statements by representative defenders and objectors to this doctrine, and (3) an introduction to subsequent and more focused writings in this issue of TMSJ. Then follows the proposition that Scripture must necessarily be understood as consistently (in both OT and NT) teaching Christ’s penal substitution, which rests on three convincing biblical lines of thinking: (1) revelational evidence, (2) lexical evidence, and (3) theological evidence. The writer thus concludes that this teaching is clear, not obscure, thoroughly biblical, not humanly contrived, and essential to personal salvation, not optional.

* * * * *

America’s highest military honor, given for conspicuous gallantry at the risk of one’s life above and beyond the call of duty, has been since 1863 the Congressional Medal of Honor (hereafter CMH). To date 3,467 heroes have earned this medal associated with gallantry that more times than not cost the recipients their lives. Over 60% (522) of the 850 CMH awarded from WWII until now have been received posthumously. Unquestionably, the awardees have rendered the greatest act of human courage and sacrifice, i.e., being willing to die so that others might live. So why is the ultimate sacrifice of Christ’s penal substitution objectionable?

Was this not the precept that Christ taught his disciples, “Greater love has
no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends’” (John 15:13)?

Was this not the Savior’s practice on behalf of those whom He loved? “We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us....” (1 John 3:16).

Was this not Paul’s polemic, regarding God’s means of salvation through Christ’s death in Rom 5:6-8? “For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die—but God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

Why then would anyone question the superlative, greater act of Christ’s penal substitution on behalf of sinners who would inherit eternal life as the result, while applauding the lesser, rare human act honored by the CMH?¹

**CONTEXT FOR CHRIST’S PENAL SUBSTITUTION**

The context for this great truth will be explored by first defining penal substitution as it relates to Christ’s atonement.² Second, a brief survey of recent defenders for this doctrine will be examined. Finally, a representative sample of objectors will be exposed.

**Definition**

Three samples offered here will adequately define the basic issue at hand. These elaborations represent the church’s understanding regarding the meaning of and necessity for “penal substitution” as it relates to Christ’s atonement.

On the cross God treated Jesus as if He had lived our lives with all our sin, so that God could then treat us as if we lived Christ’s life of pure holiness.³

The idea that Christ’s death is a sacrifice offered in payment of the penalty for our sins. It is accepted by the Father as satisfaction in place of the penalty due to us.⁴

¹For an example, see Steve Chalk and Alan Mann, *The Lost Message of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003) 182-83.


The notion of substitutionary sacrifice, widely attested in Scripture, means that Christ died in the place of sinners. The perfect obedience God required from his creatures, Jesus fully gave. In bearing the penalty of human sin as our substitute he made full payment to God for all our failures and misdeeds.\(^5\)

In other words, Christ (perfectly and eternally righteous in death) received from God the Father the eternal punishment due to all the unrighteous who would believe in Him for eternal life. He was the believer’s substitute; He who deserved no condemnation received eternal condemnation on behalf of condemned sinners who repented in His name. Without Christ’s penal substitution on behalf of sinners, an efficacious atonement rendered by Christ to redeem sinners would not be real.

Defenders

In recent years, a new series of articles and books has appeared which elaborate convincingly on the biblical necessity and scriptural truthfulness of Christ’s penal substitution.\(^6\) For the sake of quickly making the point that from the earliest centuries of church history to this present hour “penal substitution” has been embraced by those who take the Bible seriously, four representative statements are offered here.

The Christian world as a whole believes in a substitutionary atonement. This has been its belief ever since it began to think. The doctrine was stated by Athanasius as clearly and fully as by any later writer. All the great historic creeds which set forth the atonement at any length set forth a substitutionary atonement. All the great historic systems of theology enshrine it as the very Ark of the Covenant, the central object of the Holy of Holies.\(^7\)

The idea of vicarious, penal substitution is embedded in the warp and woof of Scripture.\(^8\)

The idea of substitution is unmistakable.\(^9\)

---


…penal substitution is an indispensable part of the scriptural revelation.¹⁰

Objectors

For illustrative purposes, the following quotes which appear in current volumes take issue with penal substitution as an essential element of Christ’s atonement. Brian McLaren puts the following words in the mouth of a fictional character who is in a dialogue concerning penal substitution and challenges the doctrine’s modern relevance.

For starters, if God wants to forgive us, why doesn’t he just do it? How does punishing an innocent person make things better? That just sounds like one more injustice in the cosmic equation. It sounds like divine child abuse. You know?¹¹

Steve Chalk cannot reconcile the righteous wrath of God with His redemptive love. He explains his solution of eliminating God’s justified anger and focusing instead on God’s love.

John’s Gospel famously declares, “God loved the people of this world so much that he gave his only Son” (John 3:16). How then, have we come to believe that at the cross this God of love suddenly decides to vent his anger and wrath on his own Son?

The fact is that the cross isn’t a form of cosmic child abuse—a vengeful Father, punishing his Son for an offence he has not even committed. Understandably, both people inside and outside of the church have found this twisted version of events morally dubious and a huge barrier to faith. Deeper than that, however, is that such a concept stands in total contradiction to the statement “God is love”. 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.

The truth is, the cross is a symbol of love. It is a demonstration of just how far God as Father and Jesus as his Son are prepared to go to prove that love. The cross is a vivid statement of the powerlessness of love. It is a perfect example of Willard Waller’s thesis that in any relationship the one who loves most has the least power.¹²


¹¹Brian McLaren, The Story We Find Ourselves In (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003) 102. For a full discussion of objections, see Erickson, Christian Theology 815-17.

The Scriptural Necessity of Christ’s Penal Substitution

Theories relating to the atonement of Christ come and go. In the end, however, divine revelation must be given the final say over the best of human reason when they differ from one another. Let this writer suggest that one’s understanding of penal substitution is scholastically deficient without yielding to the teaching of Scripture and is not even rational without being informed by God’s revelation. Leon Morris makes the point succinctly.

We should not expect that our theories will ever explain it fully. Even when we put them all together, we will no more than begin to comprehend a little of the vastness of God’s saving deed.

Subsequent Articles

Each of the following essays was first prepared and delivered as part of the 2009 Faculty Lecture Series in January-February. This first article is designed to present a brief overview of the subject contemporarily, bibliically, lexically, and theologically.

The second article, “Penal Substitution in the Old Testament,” explores the OT concept of “sacrifice” and interprets Exodus 12 (Passover), Leviticus 16 (Atonement), and Isaiah 53 (Substitutionary Savior). The third article, “Penal Substitution in the New Testament,” plumbs the depths of 1 Pet 1:2, 1:18-19, 2:24, and 3:18. The fourth article, “Penal Substitution in Church History” establishes the dominance of believing in penal substitution throughout church history. The final article discusses the implications of embracing penal substitution as a necessary element of true worship.

COMPELLING NECESSITIES FOR CHRIST’S PENAL SUBSTITUTION

Revelational Necessity

Why would anyone believe in a blood sacrifice rather than a love sacrifice? Why would anyone believe that an innocent person died efficaciously for a multitude of convicted sinners? Simply put, because that is what both the OT and NT teach...
and what church history confirms.

Old Testament

Christ’s penal substitution appears as an authentic shadow of the real truth in the OT. Three key passages include: 1) Christ as Savior in Exod 12:3-13 (cf. 1 Cor 5:7, “Christ our Passover”); Christ as Scapegoat in Leviticus 16 (cf. 2 Cor 5:21, “He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf...”); and Christ as Substitute in Isaiah 53 (cf. 1 Pet 2:24, “...and He Himself bore our sins in His body...”).

Of particular interest is Isaiah 53, the textus classicus, where on no less than nine occasions the declaration of penal substitution appears.

1. v. 4 – “our griefs He...bore”
2. v. 4 – “our sorrows He carried”
3. v. 5 – “He was pierced...for our transgressions”
4. v. 5 – “He was crushed for our iniquities”
5. v. 5 – “by His scourging we are healed”
6. v. 6 – “caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him”
7. v. 8 – “He was cut off...for the transgression of my people”
8. v. 11 – “He will bear their iniquities”
9. v. 12 – “He Himself bore the sin of many”

New Testament

While the OT revealed the shadow, the Gospels unveil the substance of penal substitution in Christ’s atonement. Three specifically clear texts teach this truth. First, Christ’s words from the cross, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken Me?” (Matt 27:46; cf. Ps 22:1). Second, in the Upper Room Christ taught that the bread symbolically pictured “My body which is given for you” (Luke 22:19). And third, Jesus also taught that the grape juice symbolically represented “My blood of the covenant...shed on behalf of many” (Mark 14:24). None of these three statements by Christ make any sense outside of the context of penal substitution!

Whatever explanations the Gospels lacked, while being unmistakable about the substance, the epistles provide abundant substantiation that the OT shadows and the NT substance consistently teach the inseparable element of penal substitution in Christ’s atonement. At least four different biblical authors contribute to this conclusion.

1. Paul – Rom 3:21–4:5; 4:25 with 5:6, 8; 8:32; 14:15; 1 Cor 15:3; 2 Cor 5:14-15, 21; Gal 1:4; 2:20; 3:13; Eph 5:2, 25; 1 Thess 5:10; 1 Tim 2:6; Titus
The triangulation of the *shadows* of the OT, the *substance* of the Gospels, and the *substantiations* of the epistles perfectly pinpoint the verity of penal substitution. This being the case, one would expect to find penal substitution being taught by the Apostolic Fathers.

**Early Church Confirmation**

Clement of Rome (c. AD 95-105) wrote, “Jesus Christ our Lord hath given His blood for us by the will of God and His flesh for our flesh and His life for our lives.”

Ignatius (c. AD 100-120), writing to the church at Smyrna, taught that Christ was “truly nailed up in the flesh for our sakes.” Again he stated, “He suffered all these things for our sakes.”

Polycarp (c. AD 110-120) explained that it was “Jesus Christ who took our sins in His own body upon the tree, who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth, but for our sakes, He endured all things, that we might live in Him.”

As anticipated, the earliest Christian writers after the apostles repeated what had been written in both the OT and NT. And why did these post-apostolic authors come to believe in penal substitution? Because that is what Christ’s disciples taught them, just as they had been taught by Jesus.

---


17Ibid., ibid., “To the Smyrneans” 1:82.

18Ibid., 2:82.

Lexical Necessity
A study of Greek prepositions used in conjunction with and in the context of Christ's redeeming work point decidedly to penal substitution as being an irreplaceable component of Christ's atonement. With rare exceptions (when a theological bias ignores lexical evidence), ὑπὲρ and ἀντί are believed to be used synonymously concerning Christ and His work when translated “on behalf of” and/or “in the stead of” sinners.20

A most compelling piece of evidence appears in the comparison of Matt 20:28 and Mark 10:45 (“to give His life a ransom for many”) with 1 Tim 2:6 (“who gave Himself a ransom for all”). The gospel passages employ ἀντὶ while the Pauline text employs ὑπὲρ with an intensified form of “ransom” (ἁπτίλαυτρον). Both passages, in context, are addressing Christ’s dying on behalf of instead of sinners; thus, the synonymous use of these two prepositions in a redemptive context.

Most noteworthy, perhaps, is the use of ὑπὲρ in 1 Cor 15:29 where one who lives is baptized in place of in the stead of one who is dead. Or, consider Paul saying that Onesimus was serving him in place of in the stead of Philemon (Phile 13). Therefore, if one follows the ὑπὲρ/ἀντί prepositional trail in the NT, the concluding destination will be that Christ died on behalf of in the stead of sinners, i.e. penal substitution.

Theological Necessity
Consider the following theological facts:

1. God’s inviolable holiness and justice.
3. The human race’s need for ransomed redemption to restore a right relationship with God and obtain God’s pardon for sin which results in eternal life.

How can mankind, then, be rescued to the satisfaction of and non-contradiction of God’s holiness and justice? How can this be accomplished and not violate God’s

The answer must be that God the Father, out of His infinite grace, mercy, and love provides a sacrifice who satisfies God’s righteous wrath, upholds God’s pure holiness, and sustains His perfect justice. Who is able to be that sacrifice? Only God’s Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, is able! He does so by bearing the wrath that believing sinners deserve but which Christ does not so that Christ’s undeserved righteousness can be imputed to sinners. The only other alternative? HELL!

Leon Morris has reasoned and stated this truth more vividly with fewer words than any author encountered.

To put it bluntly and plainly, if Christ is not my Substitute, I still occupy the place of a condemned sinner. If my sins and my guilt are not transferred to Him, if He did not take them upon Himself, then surely they remain with me. If He did not deal with my sins, I must face their consequences. If my penalty was not borne by Him, it still hangs over me. There is no other possibility. To say that substitution is immoral is to say that redemption is impossible. We must beware of taking up such a disastrous position.…

In the process of salvation God is not transferring penalty from one man (guilty) to another man (innocent). He is bearing it Himself. The absolute oneness between the Father and the Son in the work of atonement must not for a moment be lost sight of. When Christ substitutes for sinful man in His death that is God Himself bearing the consequences of our sin, God saving man at cost to Himself, not at cost to someone else. As Leonard Hodgson puts it, “He wills that sin shall be punished, but He does not will that sin shall be punished without also willing that the punishment shall fall on Himself.” In part the atonement is to be understood as a process whereby God absorbs in Himself the consequences of man’s sin.21

Penal substitution in Christ’s atonement makes possible three soteriological outcomes.

1. The Father’s Divine satisfaction that results from…
2. The Son’s Divine substitution as sin-bearer and sacrifice that results in…

These are the Trinitarian implications and validations of Christ’s penal substitution. 22

---

21Morris, The Cross 410
22For further theological discussion, see Gordon R. Lewis and Bruce A. Demarest, Integrative Theology (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990) 2:371-434; Erickson, Christian Theology 781-823.
CONCLUSIONS CONCERNING CHRIST’S PENAL SUBSTITUTION

Who or what prompted Philip Bliss to write the classic lines of stanza 2 for “Hallelujah, What a Savior!”?  

Bearing shame and scoffing rude,  
In my place condemned He stood—  
Sealed my pardon with His blood:  
Hallelujah, what a Savior!\(^2\)

Undoubtedly, the authors of Scripture in both the OT and NT made Christ’s penal substitution in His atonement so unmistakably obvious that Bliss and other writers of doctrinally-driven hymns followed the path of Scripture. Not being trained theologians, they nevertheless easily identified with an obvious major doctrine.

This introductory essay has laid the groundwork for the more detailed articles to follow. After setting the theme’s context, three compelling evidences showed that Scripture teaches penal substitution. These included: (1) abundant mention/discussion of penal substitution throughout the entire Bible; (2) the interchange of ἀντί for ὑπὲρ in NT redemptive passages which require the concept of substitution; and (3) penal substitution being the only theological requirement that reconciles the equal demands of God’s justice and holiness with God’s love.\(^2\)

Charles Hodge, venerable theologian of the 19th century, provides a striking remark to conclude this brief beginning to the following crucial discussions concerning penal substitution in Christ’s atonement.

[The transfer of guilt as responsibility to justice, and of righteousness as that which satisfies justice, is no more impossible than that one man should pay the debt of another. All that the Bible teaches on this subject is that Christ paid as a substitute, our debt to the justice of God. The handwriting…Christ has cancelled, by nailing it to his cross. His complete satisfaction to the law, freed us as completely as the debtor is freed when his bond is legally cancelled.\(^2\)


\(^2\) This essay only introduces the subject and has not dealt with the abundance of theological and personal implications for penal substitution. See Packer and Dever, In My Place 97 (this chapter, “What Did the Cross Achieve? The Logic of Penal Substitution” first appeared in the Tyndale Bulletin 25 [1974]:3-45), and Erickson, Christian Theology 822, for these discussions.

PENAL SUBSTITUTION IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

William D. Barrick
Professor of Old Testament

Theologically and biblically speaking, penal substitution refers to God’s gift of His Son to undergo the penalty of death as a substitute for fallen humanity, recent efforts to deny that teaching notwithstanding. The OT offers many examples of cases in which divine judicial action resulted in the deaths of offenders who violated God’s standards of righteousness. No clear evidence in the OT that each individual sin required its own sacrifice. In addition, the Levitical system of animal sacrifices required the death of an animal for sin. The Hebrew and the LXX supported by NT citations back up this concept of judicial punishment for sin. Twelve principles governed the offering of OT sacrifices that pertained to the corporate worship of Israel. Several OT texts illustrate penal substitutionary sacrifices in the OT. The first is the Passover of Exodus 12 in which God graciously spared guilty Israelites through the deaths of animals substituted for the firstborn in each household. Another OT text to illustrate penal substitution is Leviticus 16, the institution of the Day of Atonement. The scapegoat symbolized the removal of Israel’s sin to allow people to enter the presence of a holy God. The Day of Atonement expiated the nation’s sins, cleansed the sanctuary from sin’s pollution, and removed sins from the community. Isaiah 52:13–53:12 is a third text to illustrate penal substitution. The suffering servant of the Lord in this section clearly anticipates the Messiah’s coming substitutionary death as penalty for His people’s sins. The OT sacrificial system clearly laid the basis for penal substitution in awaiting Israel’s coming Messiah.

* * * *

Crucicentrism characterizes evangelical theology.¹ Christ’s atoning sacrifice

¹Steve Chalke, “The Redemption of the Cross,” in The Atonement Debate: Papers from the London Symposium on the Theology of the Atonement, eds. Derek Tidball, David Hilborn, and Justin Thacker (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008) 36. However, Chalke believes that evangelical thinking about the cross has become distorted.
in His crucifixion forms the center, not only of theology, but of mankind’s history. The following diagram visualizes that truth chiastically.  

The central importance of the sacrificial death of Christ makes any variation from biblical teaching on the topic a vital issue. In fact, denial of the penal substitution involved in Christ’s sacrifice has implications for nearly every major doctrine historically identified with evangelicalism. However, the doctrine of penal substitution is disappearing from the modern church with some scholars arguing “that it is irrelevant, too violent, too individualistic, or insufficient.”

**Definition**

Penal substitution means that Christ gave Himself to suffer and die in place of the sinner in order to bear the full penalty for sin. As Jeffery, Ovey, and Sach define it, “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.”

**The Issue**

Some theologians reject the doctrine of penal substitution. At least a handful of biblical scholars have gone so far as to characterize penal substitution as some sort of cosmic child abuse, accusing adherents of producing a caricature of God

---


4See the list of sources critical of penal substitution in ibid., 22-25. It is not the purpose of this essay to explore or explain opposition to penal substitution—other essays in this series will deal with that matter.
that is demeaning and deplorable.\textsuperscript{4} In addition, feminist theologians call for the liberation of Christian theology from penal substitution because of its “abusive theology that glorifies suffering” and “from the oppression of racism, classism, and sexism, that is, from patriarchy.”\textsuperscript{5} Such emotionally charged words depict penal substitution as a brutish doctrine inconsistent with Christian standards of love, mercy, and grace.\textsuperscript{6}

\textbf{OT Background}

Consideration of the concept of penal substitution must begin with the first word, “penal.” Without demonstrating the necessity of divine imposition of penalty or punishment for sin, penal substitution is impossible. A necessary question is whether or not the OT speaks of divine retribution for sin. In answer, a striking contrast develops early in the Scriptures between the way God blesses what He created (Gen 1:22, 28; 2:3; 5:2) and then how He curses it (3:14, 17; 4:11). Indeed, the biblical text asserts that death results from divine judicial action brought against mankind (2:17; 3:3, 19; 5:5, 8, 11, 14, 17, 20, 27, 31; 6:5-7). Pain, banishment, and death do not come about “mechanically or impersonally; rather, God acts to bring them about.”\textsuperscript{7} In response to those who might suggest a misunderstanding the OT record, one notes that Paul seems to have perceived the same truth, according to Rom 5:12 and 6:23.

Divine wrath or anger produces the divine curse or punishment/penalty for sin. Many examples occur in the OT: The judicial execution of Korah and his fellow rebels results from divine wrath (Num 16:46). In the wilderness the fallen corpses of

\textsuperscript{4} E.g., Steve Chalke and Alan Mann, \textit{The Lost Message of Jesus} (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003) 192; Brian D. McLaren, \textit{The Story We Find Ourselves in Further Adventures of a New Kind of Christian} (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003) 102-4; Colin Greene, “Is the Message of the Cross Good News for the Twentieth Century?” in \textit{Atonement Today}, ed. by John Goldingay (London: SPCK, 1995) 232. Chalke responds to the outcry created by his accusing the penal substitution view of holding to some form of cosmic child abuse by writing, “Though the sheer bluntness of my imagery shocked some, I contend that, in truth, it represents nothing more than a stark unmasking of what I understand to be the violent, pre-Christian thinking behind the popular theory of penal substitutionary atonement. . . . I believe it to be biblically, culturally and pastorally deficient and even dangerous” (Chalke, “The Redemption of the Cross” 34-35).


\textsuperscript{6} But, consider that a “deity strictly and simply just, but destitute of compassion for the guilty, would have inflicted the penalty of the violated law upon the actual transgressor. He would not have allowed of a substituted satisfaction of justice, and still less would he have provided one. It is important to notice this fact, because it shows the senselessness of a common objection to the doctrine of vicarious atonement, namely, that it is incompatible with mercy” (William G. T. Shedd, \textit{Dogmatic Theology: Classic Reprint Edition}, 3 vols. [1888; reprint, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1971] 2:382).

\textsuperscript{7} Jeffery, Ovey, and Sach, \textit{Pierced for Our Transgressions} 118.
rebellious Israelis bear witness to divine wrath (Num 11:33-34; Deut 9:7). Divine judgment falls upon Sodom and Gomorrah due to a holy God’s wrath (Deut 29:23). Mistreatment of orphans and widows induces the wrath of Almighty God, sometimes resulting in the deaths of the miscreants (Exod 22:21-24). According to Lev 17:11 (“For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood by reason of the life that makes atonement”), atonement in the OT requires blood. But, does that atoning blood require the death of the sacrifice? Leon Morris points out that the text is “ambiguous, for the reference to blood could be understood as signifying the presentation of life.” So, does the requirement of blood demand the death of the sacrifice in order to offset a penalty of death for the transgressor?

Morris emphasizes that Num 35:33 (“blood pollutes the land and no expiation can be made for the land for the blood that is shed on it, except by the blood of him who shed it”) requires the death of the murderer to make atonement (“חַטֵּא, yeqāpar, “expiate”). This text involves no ambiguity. In this case, the death of the criminal provides the expiating blood. The fact that the text deals with a capital crime requiring the death penalty, rather than dealing with sacrifice per se, does not nullify its point concerning the nature of atonement (expiation). In matters of atonement by sacrifice as well as by capital punishment, “it is expiation of sin that is in question, in both cases the means is blood, in both cases the action is directed towards God, and in both cases atonement is said to be secured.”

The Septuagint (LXX) evidences a pre-Christian Jewish understanding of atonement (especially in the use of the Hebrew words for atonement, רָפָא [kippēr] and רָפָא [kōper]) as propitiation since it employs εἰκόνισκομαι (exilaskomai) 83 times for translating kippēr. Summing up a detailed analysis, Morris deduces that the basic meanings of kippēr and εἰκόνισκομαι involve “the thought of the offering

---

1Unless otherwise noted, all English citations of Scripture are from the NASU.


4Ibid. “Expiate” means “atone for, redress.”

5Ibid., 142. εἰκόνισκομαι appears 16 times in Leviticus and also occurs in Lev 17:11. Morris’ thorough treatment of the concept of propitiation (ibid., 125-85) includes a detailed analysis of the use of the Greek words employed in the LXX. No examination of this topic should ignore his treatise.
Penal Substitution in the Old Testament

of a ransom which turns away the divine wrath from the sinner.”16 In addition to ransom and divine wrath, kippêr “denotes a substitutionary process . . . so plain as to need no comment in the cases where life is substituted for life.”17 Since the OT reveals the reality of divine wrath, it cannot be ignored or explained away as impersonal wrath, mild displeasure, mere irritation, or capricious passion. In nearly 600 OT texts more than 20 different Hebrew words provide a rich wrath vocabulary.18 Divine righteousness, holiness, and justice require divine retribution. Without divine retribution, divine mercy becomes nothing more than a vestigial appendage without function or purpose.

Galatians 3:10, citing the LXX of Deut 27:26, speaks of the curse falling upon those who trust their salvation to their good works, which they perform according to the Law of Moses. The curse is plainly punitive—a penalty for disobedience. Galatians 3:13 further explains that “Christ purchased us from the curse of the Law, becoming a curse for us.” In other words, Christ is our substitute, bearing the results of the curse for mankind’s disobedience to the Law. That comprises penal substitution, pure and simple.

Paul, in Gal 3:13, cites Deut 21:22-23, “If a man has committed a sin worthy of death and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, his corpse shall not hang all night on the tree, but you shall surely bury him on the same day (for he who is hanged is accursed of God), so that you do not defile your land which the LORD your God gives you as an inheritance.” Here Moses speaks of one possible means of implementing the judicial death penalty: impalement. Therefore, “accursed of God” (כפוף אלוהים, qillat 'ôhim) expresses the punitive nature of impaling. Consequently, Paul picks up that same concept in Gal 3:13. What makes the passage in Deuteronomy so pertinent is that it describes punitive action. Indeed, reference to Christ “becoming a curse for us” (v. 10) depicts penal substitution. Since the Holy Spirit was superintending Paul’s writing of Galatians and since Paul understood that the matter involves penal substitution, how can anyone deny this truth? In the preliminary drafts of his doctoral dissertation, Abner Chou writes,

[T]here are implications from Baal Peor that the punishment may have a representational nature due to the targeting of the leadership in that situation. In any case, the major emphasis of both Baal Peor and Deuteronomy is that this absolutely supreme punishment is the only means by which God’s wrath/curse can be satisfied and turned away. This is simply because it is the most severe of the already deadly punishments. The highest crime

16Ibid., 153. Culver specifies the distinction between expiation and propitiation in this way: “sins (offenses, trespasses, etc.) are expiated. Wrath, or the person who is wrathful is propitiated. One does not expiate God; one expiates sin. Nor does one propitiate sin; one propitiates God or His wrath” (Robert Duncan Culver, Systematic Theology: Biblical and Historical [Geanies House, UK: Christian Focus, 2005] 554).


18Ibid., 131.
must have the highest penalty; this is how God’s justice system works. . . . [T]hese elements give the sense an ultimate gravity to the situation behind the law. Such ideas of the seriousness of the law and God’s wrath exceed the ANE perspective on the practice.19

In conclusion, the OT speaks clearly about judicial penalty for sin.

Sacrifice in the OT

In order to demonstrate that animal sacrifices in the OT teach penal substitution, the student of Scripture must first understand twelve basic principles regarding those sacrifices. First, only believers should offer OT sacrifices—believers who should be indoctrinated and obedient (i.e., exhibiting right teaching and right behavior). Leviticus 1:2-3 and 2:1 speak of Israelite believers, while 17:8 and 22:18, 25 speak of foreign believers (cf. Num 15:14-16; Isa 56:6-8). Second, OT sacrifices should be the outward demonstration of a vital faith. Without faith the sacrifices were worthless (cf. Heb 11:4; 1 Sam 15:22-23; Ps 51:15-19; Isa 1:11-15; Mic 6:6-8). Third, OT sacrifices did not save from sin or forgive sins. Levitical sacrifices include no provision for removing or doing away with any individual’s sinful nature. Animal sacrifices are insufficient to atone fully and finally for the sins of human beings—only a human life can atone fully for a human life (cp. Lev 1:3 with Ps 49:5-9; cf. Gal 3:10-14; Heb 10:1:18; 1 Pet 1:18-19). Fourth, OT sacrifices did not take care of every sin—especially willful, defiant sin. Many sins required capital punishment—no animal sacrifice could avail for such sin20 (Lev 24:10-23; Num 15:30). Premeditated and deliberate sin required the death of the sinner.21 Therefore, due to voluntary, deliberate sin, each individual found himself under sentence of death and, due to the universality of sin, death reigned, as evidenced by the genealogies recording those deaths (cf. Gen 5:5, 8, 11, 14, 17, 20, 27, 31). “Died,” as a repetitious term provided the epitaph for person after person (cf. 11:32; 23:2; 35:19; 50:26 et al.). This raises a fitting pair of questions: Was there really no sacrifice for deliberate sin? And, is there no forgiveness for such deliberate rebellion?

Fifth, OT sacrifices had fellowship with God as their chief object. They outwardly symbolized forgiveness for sins, which resulted in continued communion with the covenant-keeping God of Israel (Exod 29:42-43; 30:36). Listen to Oswalt:

[While temporal punishment for sin is serious and ought not to be dismissed, it is by no

---


20That no sacrifice is available for capital offenses does not mean that God does not or cannot forgive capital offenses. Legal consequences require death. Such consequences should not be confused with one’s ultimate spiritual relationship to God.

Penal Substitution in the Old Testament

means as serious as spiritual punishment: alienation from God. This is what the entire sacrificial system is about: making it possible for sinful humans to have fellowship with a holy God. The sacrifices do not mitigate the temporal effects of sin, so what do they do? They deal with the spiritual effects of sin; they address the truths that the soul that sins shall die (not merely physically, Ezek. 18:4, 20), and that there is no forgiveness for sin apart from the shedding of blood (Lev. 17:11; Heb. 9:22).22

The sixth principle consists of the fact that OT sacrifices declared, emphasized, and magnified sin and its consequences (Rom 3:19-20; 5:20a; 7:5-11; Gal 3:21-22). Seventh, OT sacrifices declared, emphasized, and magnified God’s holiness, righteousness, love, grace, mercy, and sovereignty (Ps 119:62; Neh 9:13; Matt 23:23; Rom 7:12). The combination of the sixth and seventh principles expressed the dual function of sacrifice in the OT. Sin is essentially “theofugal,”23 i.e., it leads mankind away from God. Sacrifice, displaying by its bloodshed the terrible nature and consequences of sin, was theocentric, turning the sinner’s attention to the effects of his sin on God. His sin was enmity against God, alienating him from God, and proving his rebellion against divine authority and character.24 His sacrifice propitiated25 God’s just wrath and reconciled him to God.

Eighth, OT sacrifices demonstrated that there was no totally independent access to God for the OT believer under Mosaic legislation (Heb 9:8-10). Ninth, OT sacrifices demonstrated that God’s desire with regard to His people’s offering (giving) did not exceed their normal ability. The sacrificial objects (cattle, sheep, goats, doves; flour, oil, wine, and frankincense) were all immediately available to the individual Israelite. God did not require that His people bring something exotic or beyond their normal means. He did not require them to extend themselves to the point of either financial discomfort or disaster (cf. 1 Cor 16:2; 2 Corinthians 8–9). Tenth, OT sacrifices emphasized the ministry of the priesthood (Lev 1:9; 2:8; 4:20; 6:6; Hebrews 5–10; 1 Pet 2:5). Eleventh, OT sacrifices involved the recognition of God’s covenant with His people (Lev 2:13; Ps 50:5, 16). Finally, God commanded OT sacrifices for the maintenance of the priesthood. The covenant community provided for those who minister (Lev 7:34–35; Neh 13:5; Mal 3:8-10).

In summary, the above twelve principles provide evidence that sacrifices

---


25“Propitiation has to do with the offended God, not the offender of God” (William D. Barrick, *The Extent of the Perfect Sacrifice of Christ* [Sun Valley, Calif.: GBI Publishing, 2002] 14)
dealt primarily with corporate worship. They were corporate in the sense that OT believers brought offerings publicly to the sanctuary where the priests participated in the accompanying rituals. Benefits from the sacrifices might be personal or individual, but there was no private sacrifice. The Passover lamb might appear to be private since it involved one’s household, but passersby could see the blood on the doorposts at the entrance to the home—and the lamb could be shared with a neighbor (Exod 12:4). OT sacrifices were confessional, because they demonstrated faith in Yahweh and obedience to His statutes and laws. By offering sacrifices the OT believer identified himself outwardly with the covenant God and His covenant people. That outward demonstration should have been the result of true faith. However, when that initiating faith was absent, the sacrifice is worthless—an empty gesture, devoid of any spiritual value (i.e., a false confession). God hated false sacrifice and could not accept it as true worship (cf. 1 Sam 15:22; Isa 1:13-15).

With these principles in mind, a consideration of texts in the OT dealing with penal substitutionary sacrifices is the next step. In order to limit the study for this article, the discussion will bypass the ram provided by the Angel of the LORD as a substitute for Isaac in Genesis 22:1-14. Merrill offers an excellent treatment in his volume on OT theology. He states that Isaac’s own death “was enacted through a substitute, an animal whose literal death provided full satisfaction to God’s demands.”

Exodus 12—The Passover

Just prior to Israel’s exodus from Egypt, God instituted the Passover observance in which the lamb of the Passover served as a substitutionary sacrifice for the Israelites’ firstborn sons. In Exod 12:3 the Lord instructed Moses concerning the sacrifice of the Passover lamb: “[T]hey are each to take a lamb for themselves, according to their fathers’ households, a lamb for each household.” Taking “for

26See John McLeod Campbell, The Nature of the Atonement and Its Relationship to Remission of Sins and Eternal Life, 6th ed. (London: Macmillan and Co., 1886) 155-56, identifies the relationship between the sacrificial system and worship as follows: “Not to deliver from punishment, but to cleanse and purify for worship, was the blood of the victim shed. Not the receiving of any manner of reward for righteousness, but the being holy and accepted worshippers, was the benefit received through being sprinkled with the victim’s blood.” He appeals to Heb 9:14 (“how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?”) (emphasis in the original). Elsewhere in this volume he seems to diminish if not deny penal substitution (ibid., 99-102).

27Youngblood, The Heart of the Old Testament 84, declares that substitution of one life for another is an underlying principle of sacrifice in the OT. Regarding Genesis 22, he writes, “The tension-filled story of Abraham and Isaac in Genesis 22 dramatically illustrates the principles of the gift of life and the substitution of life” (ibid.).

themselves” and “for each household” as datives of advantage or benefit is best.\(^{29}\) Such an interpretation of the Hebrew might imply substitution. In addition, the sacrifice appeared to forestall the penalty of death for those who were within the household—especially firstborn sons. Although the lamb signified substitution, the text does not state that the blood atones or expiates;\(^ {30}\) it only protects and preserves the household from divine wrath. Durham states only that the sacrificial animal (which, according to v. 5, could be sheep or goat) provided protection—he does not identify it as vicarious or as penal substitution.\(^ {31}\)

According to v. 12, the Lord would execute judgment as He passed through the land of Egypt. Israelites who followed the instructions and applied the blood of the slaughtered lamb to the doorposts of their houses would escape that judgment (vv. 13, 23, 27). Indeed, the Israelites escaped death (v. 30). How can this be? What have the Israelites done that would merit death? Why would they be subject to death and judgment like the Egyptians? According to Jeffery, Ovey, and Sach,\(^ {32}\) two texts help explain the matter: Exod 12:12, indicating that the death of the firstborn of Egypt provided judgment against the gods of the Egyptians, and Ezek 20:4-10, revealing that the Israelites participated in idolatry while in Egypt (esp. vv. 7-8). Joshua 24:14 confirms that the Israelites worshiped idols while they were sojourning in Egypt (“Now, therefore, fear the LORD and serve Him in sincerity and truth; and put away the gods which your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD”). Indeed, Israelite idolatry in Egypt caused the Lord to respond in wrath and to pour out judgment upon them (v. 8). Just like the Egyptians, the Israelites came under sentence of death. What a surprise that proves to the Israelites who were comfortable with the preceding sequence of nine plagues as long as the Egyptians are the ones suffering! But, as Ryken states, “The Israelites were as guilty as the Egyptians, and in the final plague God taught them about their sin and his salvation.”\(^ {33}\) Yahweh’s judgments upon the gods of Egypt proved that “the gods, both severally and totally, of any sort and any status, could not save anyone or anything
Psalm 49 teaches the same truth, but focuses on mankind being unable to provide such deliverance—only God can provide the “ransom” payment that He requires (vv. 7-9, 15).

By providing the Passover sacrifice, the Lord kept His name from pollution (Exod 12:9) and He graciously spared guilty Israelites by means of the sacrificial blood of animals in the observance. According to Leon Morris, “the obvious symbolism is that a death has taken place, and this death substitutes for the death of the firstborn.” Waltke agrees, describing the Passover lamb as “both substitutionary and propitiatory. It nullifies God’s wrath against sinful people because it satisfies God’s holiness.” Once again it is evident that divine wrath on sinners relates to the penalty aspect of penal substitution.

The NT confirms the substitutionary nature of the Passover sacrifice. In 1 Cor 5:7 Paul understands the substitutionary nature of the Passover lamb and, at minimum, draws an analogy with it and Christ’s sacrificial death on the cross.

Leviticus 16—The Day of Atonement

Unger presents the following overview of the Torah’s first three books: “Genesis is the book of beginnings, Exodus the book of redemption, and Leviticus the book of atonement and a holy walk. In Genesis we see man ruined; in Exodus, man redeemed; in Leviticus, man cleansed, worshiping and serving.” Leviticus speaks of more than just cleansing for sinners and preparation for worship. It describes how sinful persons might enter the presence of the holy God. Harrison observes that Leviticus is thus a work of towering spirituality, which through the various sacrificial rituals points the reader unerringly to the atoning death of Jesus, our great High Priest. An eminent nineteenth-century writer once described Leviticus quite correctly as the seed-bed of New Testament theology, for in this book is to be found the basis of Christian faith and doctrine.

---


35Cf. Merrill, Everlasting Dominion 588, writes with reference to Ps 49:14-15, “This glimpse into immortality, if not resurrection, marks a high point of Old Testament revelation with respect to the matter of the state of the righteous after death and in the hereafter.”


On the one hand, the holiness theme of Leviticus reveals the bad news that God’s holiness cannot allow for sinful human beings to have access to Him. On the other hand, however, Leviticus presents the good news that God provides a means for sinners to be accepted and to enter His presence through levitical sacrifices.

Of all of the sacrifices and festivals, the Day of Atonement exceeds all others in its significance to Israel’s relationship to the Lord. According to Mays, this festival was “the climax and crown of Israel’s theology of sanctification.” Its historical setting belongs to God’s judgment on Nadab and Abihu (10:1-20)—a stark reminder of the holiness of God and its incompatibility with human sinfulness. Emphasis thus fell on the necessity of atonement even for the priests’ own sins. If the priests were defiled, they could not mediate between the people and God. Without mediators, sinful Israelites could not approach God’s presence and the Presence of God could not continue to reside in their midst.

The “scapegoat” symbolized the removal of sin from the presence of God’s glory in the midst of His people (see Ps 103:12 and Mic 7:19). “Scapegoat” (Tyndale’s translation of ‘Azazel) is not mentioned again in the OT or the NT (see esp. Hebrews 8–10). On the Day of Atonement it as well as the other goat sufficed as a sin offering (Lev 16:5). ‘Azazel is most likely a general reference to the wilderness to which the goat was banished. Good arguments can also be made for taking the Hebrew term as meaning “removal.” Whatever the meaning, it does not materially alter the essential nature of the ritual.

Milgrom takes the view that the scapegoat was not an offering nor was it a vicarious substitute for Israel. According to him, the text does not mention any slaughter of the goat as a sacrifice, or sprinkling or pouring out of its blood, or any concept of atonement, propitiation, or expiation. Next, the text does not indicate that the goat was punished or put to death in place of the congregation of Israel. The

---


42 Ibid., 216-17.


44 Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, Anchor Bible 3 (New York: Doubleday, 1991) 1021. Milgrom rejects the concept of substitution here, because he believes that substitution “presupposes demonic attack and the appeasement of threatening demons” (ibid., 1079). A Mesopotamian ritual to transfer impurity from an individual afflicted by a fever forms the basis for this presupposition. See also Walton, *Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament* 131-32. Perhaps this association results from what Walton sees as an absence of “intention to appease the anger of deity or demon” (ibid., 122) in the Day of Atonement rituals.
scapegoat’s “expressed purpose . . . is to carry off the sins of the Israelites transferred to it by the high priest’s confession.”

Goldingay concurs, observing that it is “not that the goat is thus made responsible for these wrongdoings and has to suffer for them; it simply carries them away somewhere.”

However, the description of laying hands on the head of the goat (vv. 21-22) outwardly depicted transference of sins from Israel to the living goat. It served as their substitute—condemned to die in the wilderness, isolated from Israel. The scapegoat carried upon it “all the iniquities” of the Israelites (v. 22).

In addition, vv. 24 and 29-34 indicate that “the entire ritual, not simply the scapegoat procedure, atones for the sins of the priests and the people.” Snith, discussing the views of Rabbi Ishmael, mentions that “in all cases of deliberate sin, the Day of Atonement at most combines with repentance to suspend punishment, but is never itself efficacious even for that, still less for atonement.”

There is a certain sense in which Rabbi Ishmael is correct. Paul wrote, that God displayed Jesus Christ “publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed” (Rom 3:25). In some fashion the Day of Atonement appears to have anticipated the Messiah’s propitiatory sacrifice by His own blood. Thus, having planned it just that way (cp. Heb 9:26; 1 Pet 1:18-21; Rev 13:8), God could suspend the penalty in the light of its ultimate, full removal through Christ’s perfect and complete atonement. Suspension of the penalty applied equally to believer and unbeliever alike within Israel, because the “grace period” involved the temporary benefits of remote substitution, as compared to the permanent and full application of intimate substitution.

Did the ritual of the Day of Atonement indicate the penal aspect of...

---

45Ibid., 1023. The two-handed laying on of hands (v. 21) declares, “‘This one is guilty; he/she is worthy of death’” (ibid., 1041).


49Snith, The Distinctive Ideas of the Old Testament 68.

50See Barrick, The Extent of the Perfect Sacrifice of Christ 5-10 for an explanation of the meaning and relationship of the remote and intimate aspects of vicarious sacrifice.
substitution by explication or by implication? According to Milgrom, kippêr represents “the phenomenon of the ‘substitute’ or ‘ransom,’ the substance to which when the evil is transferred and thereupon eliminated.” The situations in which this term carries this meaning include the law of census in which the ransom averts the penalty of plague when the law is violated (Exod 30:12-16), laws regarding homicide in which death is the penalty for the crime (Num 35:31-33; Deut 21:1-9), the matter of the Levites guarding the sanctuary’s sanctity so that there be no wrath or plague or death on the congregation (Num 1:53; 8:19; 18:22-23—cp. the case of Phinehas, Num 3:32 and 25:11), the inability of Babylon to ransom herself from divine judgment (Isa 47:11; cf. Psalm 49), and blood’s sacrificial and atoning significance (Lev 17:11). Thus, the use of the term kippêr explicitly related to both substitution and penalty.

The Day of Atonement was the central observance of the levitical system. It emphasizes, more than any other observance, the holiness of God and the sinfulness of His people. For Israel the Day of Atonement provided cleansing or purification so that they might have access to the presence of Yahweh. It emphasized the lack of direct access to God by anyone at any time under the Mosaic legislation. Therefore, the Day of Atonement is the point of comparison with regard to the sacrificial work of Jesus Christ in Hebrews 8–10. The chief point of the Epistle to the Hebrews (see 8:1) is in direct contrast to the chief point of the Mosaic Law (see 9:8).

As Paul House explains, “The offerings in this chapter [Lev 16] are substitutionary, for each animal is accepted in place of the people’s pervasive, penetrating sins. This principle is especially obvious in 16:21-22, since the sins of the people are placed on the goat that goes to its death (presumably) in the desert.” In summary, the Day of Atonement expiated the nation’s sins, cleansed the sanctuary from the pollution caused by those sins, and removed those sins from the community.

---

52Milgrom, Leviticus 1–16 1082.
53Ibid., 1082-83.
54Rooker, Leviticus 213: “Since Leviticus 16 occupies the central position in the book (and of the Law as a whole), it is the consummation of the previous fifteen chapters and provides the spiritual energy and motivation to carry out the imperatives of Leviticus 17–27.”
56Paul R. House, Old Testament Theology (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1998) 139.
57Hartley, “Atonement, Day of” 55.
Isaiah 52:13–53:12

What a text Isa 52:13–53:13 is and what a mixed reception it has experienced! As Hermisson declares, “this great text will remain controversial until kingdom come.”58 Modern non-evangelical scholars come to this passage with radical presuppositions that put the text in jeopardy. For example, Spieckermann assumes that Leviticus 16 was probably written later than Isaiah 53.59 Adhering to a post-exilic date for the material and the theological concepts it represents results in identifying vicarious suffering as a new idea from a source outside the OT in post-exilic times.60 In fact, according to some scholars who assume a purely human identification, the date for the text’s composition follows the suffering and death of the Servant.61 Some evangelical scholars approach this text stressing its supposed ambiguity. For example, Robert Chisholm claims that its language “certainly allows for the servant’s suffering to be vicarious (note esp. ‘he will justify many’), but it does not demand such an interpretation in and of itself.”62 Thus, he advises “that it not be used as a basis for any dogmatic conclusions about the nature of the servant’s suffering.”63 Instead, he decides that later revelation (viz., the Gospel of Matthew) clarifies its meaning.64 However, even though Jesus’ death and resurrection realize Isaiah 53’s full potential, he insists that “in its ancient context [it] could be understood merely as stereotypical and hyperbolic.”65 Some theologians, like Waltke, are less ambivalent or cautious, simply declaring that Isaiah 52:13–53:12 “celebrates the gospel of Jesus Christ.”66

First, note that Isaiah describes the sufferings of the Servant of Yahweh whose griefs and sorrows are not his own.67 That fact appears to identify the

---

60Ibid., 15.
61Ibid., 15.
64Ibid.
65Ibid., 331, 332-33.
66Ibid., 333.
67Waltke with Yu, An Old Testament Theology 845.
Servant’s sufferings as substitutionary (cp. v. 4, “our suffering”). Motyer observes, “The substitutionary imagery of verse 6c (“the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him”) is drawn straight from Leviticus 16.” Oswalt responds to those who claim that the concept of substitutionary (or, vicarious) sacrifice arose from Christian theology via Hellenism (e.g., Harry Orlinsky) by saying, “But I suspect the opposite is true: if it were not for the vicarious element in the sufferings of Jesus Christ, which has so many analogues in Isa. 53, there would be no barrier to recognizing the obvious substitutionary elements in that chapter.” Contrary to what might appear to be an open and shut case, Chisholm suggests that the “translation ‘for our transgressions/iniquities’ in verse 5 is perhaps too interpretive,” since it might better be rendered “because of.” Second, the language of Isaiah 53 clearly includes the penal aspect (cp. v. 5, “pierced . . . crushed . . . chastising . . . scourging”).

An additional argument against penal substitution comes from scholars who argue that the LXX appears to deny any vicariousness to the Servant’s suffering. For example, Reventlow writes, “whereas the expression ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν (ἡμῶν) is the characteristic expression for indicating the connection between Jesus’ suffering and the sins of the first Christians (see 1 Cor. 15:3; 1 Pet. 3:18), no formulation with ὑπὲρ can be detected in the Septuagint text of Isaiah 53 (only διὰ and περιποίησις).” Morna Hooker uses the διὰ (dia) references in Isa 53:5 and 12 to argue that “the Servant suffered as a result of the sins of others. This is certainly not vicarious in the substitutionary sense; after all, it could be said of the Jews who perished in the Holocaust, that they were wounded because of Hitler’s transgressions, crushed as a


44House, Old Testament Theology 290; John Murray, “The Atonement,” in Collected Writings of John Murray, 4 vols. (Carlisle, Pa.: Banner of Truth Trust, 1977) 2:148, “This is strikingly brought to our attention in the Old Testament passage which perhaps more than any other portrays for us the vicarious work of Christ (Isa. 52:13–53:12).”


48Chisholm, “A Theology of Isaiah” 331.

result of his iniquities.” 74 Such conclusions fail, however, to consider key NT references employing περι (peri, including an apparent echo of Isa 53 in Matt 26:28, “For this is My blood of the covenant which is poured out for many [περι πολλῶν, peri pollôn] for forgiveness of sins”). 75 In addition, περι parallels ὑπὲρ (huper) in 1 Pet 3:18 and Heb 5:3, indicating virtually identical meaning. A simpler explanation of περι ἀμαρτίας (peri hamartias) in Isa 53:10 consists of the fact that the LXX sometimes uses that phrase to translate ἄσάμ (see 2 Kgs 12:17 [Eng., 16]). 76 Hooker admits that vv. 4 and 12, with their references to bearing diseases and sins “of many,” require a different treatment. However, she continues to insist on a non-substitutionary sense:

The suffering which he endured belonged by right to his people. What we have is not “vicarious suffering,” if by that we mean substitutionary suffering—the anomalous “exclusive place-taking” which is without parallel in Old Testament thought; rather we have an example of “inclusive place-taking” or of what we in English normally term “representation.” 77

Goldingay allows a substitutionary meaning only in the sense that the servant’s “offering of himself as an ἄσάμ substituted for anything they might offer, their own selves or any other reparation. It is representative in the sense that he is treated by the authorities in the way they might treat a king, and in the sense that he makes his offering on their behalf like a priest and they then come to identify with it.” 78

Two items, appealing to the LXX’s use of prepositions and observing that the NT seldom refers to statements in Isaiah 53 that support penal substitution, rely on the assumption that the LXX presents an accurate and dependable translation of Isaiah 53. David Sapp masterfully analyzes the Masoretic Text (MT), LXX, and the first scroll of Isaiah from Qumran Cave 1 (1QIsa), identifying ten statements in Isaiah 53 relating Yahweh’s Servant to the sins of others. Then he concludes that the MT can be easily read as proclaiming the Christian gospel. . . . But whether or not the translators of the LXX saw these statements this way is another question that depends on vv. 9-11. . . . [T]hose verses in the LXX have nothing in them to support the death and

---


75See also Rom 8:3; Gal 1:4; Heb 5:3; 10:8, 18, 26; 13:11; 1 Pet 3:18; 1 John 2:2; 4:10.


77Hooker, “Did the Use of Isaiah 53 to Interpret His Mission Begin with Jesus?” 97.

resurrection of the messianic Servant of the Lord. Only the Hebrew text describes the death of the Messiah and alludes to his resurrection.79

In other words, Philip (viz. Acts 8), Peter, and Paul do not quote from or allude to the LXX of vv. 9-11b, because “vv. 9a and 10-11b in the LXX rewrite the outcome of the Servant’s suffering, excising his sacrificial death and therefore his implied resurrection.”80 The LXX fails to preserve the text of Isaiah 53 in a fashion that makes reference to it possible by the NT writers, whose readers rely heavily upon the LXX. Just as for any other translation, the translators made theological decisions that affected the meaning of the text and its viability for citation.

Although Jewish commentators and theologians tend to identify the Servant with “exiled Israel idealized,”81 some seem to recognize the vicarious nature of the Servant’s accomplishments as described in Isaiah 53. Slotki, for example, commenting on v. 5 (“for our welfare”), writes, “That we may procure well-being, he having been punished for our guilt.”82 At vv. 4-6 he states, “It is now frankly acknowledged that he was the victim who bore the dire penalties which the iniquities of others have incurred.”83 Apparently this latter comment presents the Servant as an innocent representative without necessarily being a substitute in Slotki’s opinion.84

Verse 7’s “humbled Himself” (same root word employed for “afflicted” in v. 4) indicates that the Servant of Yahweh exhibits a “clear-headed, self-restraining voluntariness”85 with regard to bearing the penalty for the iniquities of “many.” This was not some sort of abuse or forced action, but a willing sacrifice. Yahweh’s Servant is “not caught in a web of events, but masterfully deciding, accepting and submitting.”86 Verses 10 (“when His soul sets itself as a guilt-offering”) and 12 (“poured out himself to death”) make that same point regarding the Servant’s voluntary sacrifice.87 Meanwhile, even though v. 12 explicitly refers to death, Chisholm is reluctant to give up what he sees as an ambiguous text. He points to

---

80Ibid., 186.
82Ibid., 262.
83Ibid.
84See Slotki’s comments on vv. 8, 9, 10-12, and 10 (ibid., 263-64).
85Motyer, The Prophecy of Isaiah 432.
86Ibid.
87Being a voluntary sacrifice provides an answer to those who would claim that a substitutionary sacrifice is unfair and unjust, according to Millard J. Erickson, Christian Theology (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985) 816-17.
other OT passages utilizing hyperbolic language about physical death when they describe nothing more than life-threatening circumstances. Therefore, he opts to rely on subsequent NT revelation, rather than the exegesis of the OT text itself to determine its ultimate meaning. His colleague at Dallas Theological Seminary, Eugene Merrill, concludes differently, not only espousing the penal substitutionary sacrifice of the Messiah in Isaiah 53, but stating that the prophet himself understood what he was writing:

By reflection on his person and experience, it became clear to the prophet that this servant of the Lord was suffering vicariously for us, that is, for Israel and, by extension, for the whole world (vv. 4–6). . . . Most astounding of all, what he did was in compliance with the will of God who, through the servant’s death and subsequent resurrection (thus implicitly in vv. 10b–11a), will justify sinners on the basis of the servant’s substitutionary role (v. 11b). Then finally, in God’s time, he will reign triumphant, having gained victory over sin and death (v. 12).

Indeed, Yahweh’s Servant meets all requirements for being a substitutionary sacrifice: (1) identification with condemned sinners (v. 8, “for the transgression of my people, to whom the stroke was due”), (2) being blameless and without any stain or spot to mar His sacrifice (v. 9, “no violence . . . no deceit”; v. 11, “the righteous one”), and (3) being acceptable to Yahweh (v. 10, “the Lord was pleased to crush Him”).

It must also be noted that “by oppression and judgment” (or, “justice,” v. 8) refers to the judicial aspect of the penalty that the Servant bore. Goldingay, however, plays down any legal or judicial reference or concept in Isaiah 53. He claims that

---

88Chisholm, “A Theology of Isaiah” 332.
89This approach creates conflict between the NT interpretation and the OT text within its own context. Such conflict allows NT writers to utilize the OT text for a meaning not intended or understood by the human authors.
90Merrill, Everlasting Dominion 514.
91Hartley states that the scapegoat could not be slaughtered as a sacrifice, “because it carries the people’s sins, this goat was unclean, thus disqualifying it as a sacrifice” (Hartley, Leviticus 238). If the servant is a mere human being (the prophet himself or even the nation of Israel), the same problem would arise. This is one of the reasons why people cannot serve as the ransom or atonement price for anyone else (see Psalm 49). Such truths make it necessary that Yahweh’s Servant in Isaiah 53 be someone who cannot be tainted even by carrying or bearing the sins of many—viz., he must be a person of the godhead. Hartley concludes his exegesis of Leviticus 16 by asking, “In what way does Jesus’ death correlate with the ritual of the goat released to Azazel?” (ibid., 245). Jesus bore the people’s sins (2 Cor 5:21; cf. Gal 3:13; Heb 9:28; 1 Pet 2:24); He died outside the camp (cf. Heb 13:12; John 19:17; Matt 21:39; Luke 20:15); and He took all sins to hell (based upon the Apostles’ Creed and Hartley’s identification of Azazel as either a chief demon or Satan himself, ibid., 238).
Penal Substitution in the Old Testament

“Christian interpretation and appropriation of 52.13–53.12 has . . . been complicated by the fact that Christian understanding of God’s relationship with the world has come to be dominated by a legal model.”

Bible translations vary in rendering the clause in verse 10 (כפשׂת נפּשָׁי, "im-tāšām ʾāšām naḇšō) in which the verb can be parsed as a third person feminine singular (taking “his soul” as the subject, since nepeš is a feminine noun) or as a second person masculine singular (with “you” finding its antecedent in “the LORD”/“Yahweh”). But, this would be the only time in the entire passage (52:13–53:12) that Yahweh serves as a second person reference. Yahweh’s servant is a guilt-offering, “a sin-bearing sacrifice which removes sin and imputes righteousness (11-12ab) and as a voluntary self-identification and interposition (12c-f).”

Why does the prophet identify the sacrifice of Yahweh’s Servant as a “guilt-offering” (ʾāšām, v. 10)? Young concludes that the prophet does not use the term technically, “but the word stands generically for expiatory sacrifice.” Baron distinguishes between it and the sin offering (ḥattāʾ) as follows: “while the sin offering looked to the sinful state of the offerer, the trespass offering was appointed to meet actual transgressions, the fruit of the sinful state. The sin offering set forth propitiation, the trespass offering set forth satisfaction.” Culver agrees, pointing out that the Servant thus paid “to God every debt we owed Him.” Interestingly, Goldingay focuses on the “financial imagery of restitution” which “may also reflect a link between the notion of ʾāšām and that of kōper (compensation or ransom).”

---

92Ibid. See also John Goldingay, Old Testament Theology, Volume Two: Israel’s Faith (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006) 412.
93Hermisson suggests a conjectural emendation redividing the first two words of the clause to obtain the reading נפּשָׁי (ʾemet tāš) resulting in “yet he truly made his life the means of wiping out guilt” (italics added to indicate the translation of the new reading) (Hermisson, “The Fourth Servant Song in the Context of Second Isaiah” 28). The sole occurrence of the second person in this passage is in 52:14 where the antecedent is the Servant, not Yahweh. However, it does provide an instance in which the normal third person reference to the Servant surprisingly changes to the second person as though a direct address. A textual variant changes that 2ms pronominal suffix (cp. 1QIsa irtōš, ʾāšām) to a 3ms pronominal suffix (supported by two medieval Hebrew manuscripts, the Syriac Peshitta, the Targums, and Theodotion’s Greek translation), which a number of English versions follow (e.g., NIV, RSV, NRSV, NJPS, NJB, NLT).
94Motyer, The Prophecy of Isaiah 437.
95Young, The Book of Isaiah 3:355.
96Baron, The Servant of Jehovah 121.
97Culver, The Sufferings and the Glory of the Lord’s Righteous Servant 110.
98Goldingay, The Message of Isaiah 40-55 487. This link does not exist between the two nouns, but does exist between ʾāšām and the verb kippēr in Leviticus 5−7 and 14. The noun kōper links with the verb kippēr in Exod 30:11-16 and Num 35:30-34.
A better approach recognizes that the 'āšām sacrifice involves both unintentional sin (Lev 5:15-19) and intentional sin (such as theft or fraud, Lev 6:1-5; 19:20-22). Since most sacrifices deal only with unintentional sin, any ultimately efficacious atoning sacrifice must go beyond those sacrifices to provide expiation for intentional sins. This answers an earlier question regarding the availability of sacrifice for deliberate sin. Yes, the Servant’s perfect sacrifice takes care of deliberate sin and provides forgiveness for deliberate rebellion. In addition, the 'āšām, rather than purifying, sanctifies—it reconsecrates Israel as a holy nation, restoring them to the land and to their God. The Servant’s perfect 'āšām offering meets these needs—needs unmet by the levitical system.

Motyer summarizes verse 11 by pointing out six separate elements of the atoning work of Yahweh’s Servant:

Isaiah 53:11 is one of the fullest statements of atonement theology ever penned. (i) The Servant knows the needs to be met and what must be done. (ii) As ‘that righteous one, my servant’ he is both fully acceptable to the God our sins have offended and has been appointed by him to his task. (iii) As righteous, he is free from every contagion of our sin. (iv) He identified himself personally with our sin and need. (v) The emphatic pronoun ‘he’ underlines his personal commitment to this role. (vi) He accomplishes the task fully. Negatively, in the bearing of iniquity; positively, in the provision of righteousness.

Even von Rad classifies the Servant’s sacrifice as vicarious and substitutionary: “he makes his life a substitute (דְּמוֹן דָּעִי), he makes righteous (דְּמוֹן דָּעִי), he pours out his life (דְּמוֹן דָּעִי), he acts vicariously (דְּמוֹן דָּעִי).”

Having considered all the key elements of Isaiah 53 and the variety of viewpoints, the simplest and most straightforward meaning of the text rests with the concept of penal substitution. When the text speaks for itself, it speaks without any ambiguity. The NT writers appear to have understood the plain intent of the prophet rightly, finding every reason to take the text as directly Messianic. Take Mark 10:43-45 as one example. Note the parallels: the suffering Servant of Yahweh (Isa 52:13) is the “servant of all” (Mark 10:44; cp. Isa 53:6, “all of us”), Who is “great” (Mark 10:43) because He is “high and lifted up, and greatly exalted” (Isa 52:13). As “slave,” He gave Himself (lit., “His soul”) as a guilt offering (Isa 53:10—the direct equivalent
of “to give His life a ransom” (Mark 10:45, τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ [tēn psuchēn autou], lit., “his soul”). The Servant’s ἀναλύματος rendered restitution, went above and beyond the penalty of sacrifice to cover intentional as well as unintentional sin in the place of “many” (Mark 10:45; Isa 52:14, 15 and 53:12).

Conclusion

This study merely scratches the surface of a rich trove of biblical evidence for penal substitution both as an ancient concept and as prophetic, in one way or another, of the Messiah’s sacrificial work.

1. The OT’s sacrificial system was founded upon a principle of penal substitution in order to propitiate the wrath of God in judgment for sin.
2. Passover presented the first clear picture of penal substitution attesting to death as the penalty as well as the death of the sacrifice.
3. The Day of Atonement demonstrated the centrality of the concept of penal substitution for the nation of Israel and their consecration as God’s people in spite of their sins.
4. Isaiah 52:13–53:12 testifies that the Servant of Yahweh will bear the penal substitutionary sacrifice in place of a people in need of justification.

These do not represent the totality of OT revelation concerning penal substitution, but rise to the top as the most significant of the texts. The picture is clear, a position that is firm.

“The Power of the Cross,” a popular and biblical contemporary song, resounds with echoes from the OT texts this study examines—especially Isaiah 53. Within its lines it speaks of penal substitution (depicting Christ becoming sin for us, taking the blame and bearing the wrath) and expiation (“We stand forgiven at the cross”). The song echoes Isa 53:4 and 11, declaring that Christ bore “the awesome weight of sin.” As it describes the torn curtain of the Temple, it reminds the singer of the Day of Atonement in Leviticus 16. It alludes to the Passover (Exodus 12) when it declares that “life is mine to live.” The final chorus sums it all up by announcing melodically that the slain Son of God as our substitute is “the pow’r of the cross.” We will sing that anthem throughout all time.

---

106 Note how Mark parallels διάκονος (10:43) with ἀναλύματος (v. 45) and δοῦλος (v. 44) with δούλευε τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ ἀντὶ πολλῶν (v. 45). The “servant” serves, but the “slave” dies for others.

PENAL SUBSTITUTION IN THE NEW TESTAMENT: A FOCUSED LOOK AT FIRST PETER

Paul W. Felix
Assistant Professor of New Testament

A focused look at 1 Peter regarding the doctrine of penal substitutionary atonement, taking into account 1 Pet 1:2, 18-19; 2:24; 3:18; and 4:1, typifies many NT references to that important teaching. Though 1 Pet 1:2 does not speak of penal atonement, the passage does speak of the death of Christ in language that recalls the language of sacrifice and substitution in the OT. The language of redemption in 1 Pet 1:18-19 includes substitution since the redeeming of one life requires the giving of another life. That passage also includes in its background a penal aspect since the blood of the victim clearly entailed His dying a painful death as a penalty for the sins of others. First Peter 2:24 does provide readers with an example to follow in Christ’s suffering, but it does far more. In line with the influence of Isaiah 53 on the passage, it views Christ as a sin-bearer and substitute for those whose place He took. It also presents Him as the curse-bearer in bearing punishment for the sins of the people He came to save. In mentioning the sufferings of Christ and the death of the just one for the unjust ones, 1 Pet 3:18 confirms what 1 Peter teaches elsewhere, i.e., the penal substitution of the cross of Christ. Without adding further details but summarizing what Peter has already written, 1 Pet 4:1 adds an explicit reference to the death of Christ. The epistle clearly supports the penal substitutionary nature of the atonement.

* * * * *

Introduction

The doctrine of penal substitution as an explanation of the death of Christ

1“Penal substitution indicates that the Messiah died in the sinner’s place and took upon himself the sinner’s just punishment” (Bruce Demarest, The Cross and Salvation: The Doctrine of Salvation, Foundations of Evangelical Theology [Wheaton Ill.: 1997] 171. An expanded definition of penal
is not new. It is rooted in Scripture, has traces in the Apostolic Fathers, fully blossoms in the Protestant Reformers, and has been vigorously defended in recent years. For those who affirm this doctrine, the issue is not where penal substitution is taught in the Bible, but rather determining which passages to focus on. More specifically, in light of the objective of this article, what are the key passages in the NT that teach the substitutionary and penal aspects of the glorious cross of Christ? Where does the reader of the NT turn to discover if the heart and soul of the atonement is penal substitution?

Two basic approaches have defended penal substitution in the NT. The first is the broad approach that focuses on the NT as a whole. Typically, the employers of this method center their attention on more than one book of the NT and sometimes the whole NT. An alternate approach is to look at a particular passage or book (i.e., Mark, John, 1 John, etc.). There is a tendency to focus on the Pauline passages and in particular Rom 3:21-26.

The latter methodology will be utilized in this article. This writer has chosen to look at the doctrine of penal substitution through the lens of the first letter of the apostle Peter to his readers in various parts of Asia Minor. For a relatively

---

2 See Demarest, Cross and Salvation 159-62 for the history of this doctrine.

3 Contemporary defenses of penal substitutionary atonement are: David Peterson, ed., Where Wrath and Mercy Meet: Proclaiming the Atonement Today (Carlisle, United Kingdom: Paternoster, 2001); Charles E. Hill and Frank A. James III, eds., The Glory of the Atonement: Biblical, Historical and Practical Perspectives (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic, an Imprint of InterVarsity, 2004); Schreiner, "Penal Substitution View" 67-98; Jerry Bridges and Bob Bevington, The Great Exchange (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2007); Steve Jeffery, Michael Ovey, and Andrew Sach, Pierced for Our Transgressions: Recovering the Glory of Penal Substitution (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2007); I. Howard Marshall, Aspects of the Atonement, Paternoster Thinking Faith (Colorado Springs: Authentic, 2008). In addition to these books, the entire issue of The Southern Baptist Theological Journal 11/2 (Summer 2007) was devoted to the atoning work of Jesus Christ.


5 Yet, quite often in such discussions, Paul’s epistles receive star treatment and the spotlight while other writings such as Hebrews are relegated to a ‘junior varsity’ or ‘special teams’ status” (Barry C. Joslin, “Christ Bore the Sins of Many: Substitution and the Atonement in Hebrews,” The Southern Baptist Theological Journal 11/2 (Summer 2007):74.

short book, Peter has a significant amount of direct and indirect references to the cross of Christ. The death of Christ is clearly referred to in 1:2, 18-19; 2:24; 3:18; and 4:1. The sufferings of Christ as a concept and the reality that Christ suffered are mentioned in 1:11; 2:21, 23, 24; 3:18; 4:1, 13; and 5:1. The apostle stated he was a witness of Christ’s suffering (5:1). Furthermore, at the time of the writing of 1 Peter, he unashamedly proclaims that the OT prophets spoke of the sufferings of Christ (1:11). This is quite a contrast for the man who once rebuked the Lord and said the Christ would never suffer and die (cf. Matt 16:22).

Leon Morris correctly observes, “For a short writing, 1 Peter has an astonishing amount to say about the atonement.” In light of this, the wondrous cross as presented by the key apostle of Jesus will be surveyed, not only to behold the cross in all of its grandeur and majesty, but to determine what this epistle contributes to the doctrine of penal substitution.

**FIRST PETER 1:2**

It does not take long for the apostle Peter to focus on the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. The first explicit reference to the cross is located in 1:2 where Peter writes, “sprinkled with His blood.” There is no doubt the apostle is referring to the blood Jesus shed when he died on Calvary’s mountain.

The Context of 1 Peter 1:2

The context of Peter’s first reference to the cross is his salutation in 1:1-2. The three parts of the salutation are the author (1:1a), the readers (1b-2a), and the greeting (1:2b). The context in outline form is as follows:

1A. Salutation (1:1-2)
   1B. The author (1:1a)
      1C. His name
      2C. His office
   2B. The readers (1:1b-2a)
      1C. They are select
      2C. They are sojourners
      3C. They are scattered
   3B. The greeting (1:2b)
      1C. The wish of an abounding of grace

---

7The verses listed are not an exhaustive treatment of the suffering of Christ in 1 Peter, but rather are the ones that use either the verb πάθω (12 times; 2:19, 20, 21, 23; 3:14, 17, 18; 4:1, 1, 15, 19; 5:10) or the related noun πάθος (4 times; 1:11; 4:13; 5:1, 3). Sometimes these terms do not refer to Christ.


2C. The wish of an abounding of peace

The Interpretation of 1 Peter 1:2

After Peter identifies himself by name (Πέτρος) and by position (ἀπόστολος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ), he turns his attention to the recipients of the letter. The readers are identified as “elect sojourners of the dispersion.” The Greek text underlying the identification of the readers indicates that they are selected ones (ἐκλεκτοῖς), sojourners (παρεπιθήμονες), and scattered (διασπορὰς). As Jobes points out, “The original recipients of this letter may have been foreigners with respect to their society and scattered throughout the vast area of Asia Minor, but with respect to God, Peter says they are chosen.”10 Surely, such a designation would have been of great comfort to the readers in their current circumstances.

The apostle expands upon the readers’ identity as “elect” by means of three prepositional phrases.11 The election of the readers is “according to [κατὰ] the foreknowledge of God the Father, by [ἐν] the sanctifying work of the Spirit, that [εἰς] you may obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with his blood. The prepositional phrases indicate the standard (κατὰ), sphere (ἐν), and goal (εἰς)12 of the believers’ choice by God.” Each prepositional phrase contains a reference to a different member of the Trinity. The readers are elect according to the foreknowledge of “God the Father.” They were chosen before the foundation of the world for salvation. Also, they are elect in the sphere of the sanctification of the “Holy Spirit.” It is the Spirit of God who has produced this initial sanctification at salvation. Finally, the goal of the election is stated in relation to “Jesus Christ.”

The third prepositional phrase explicitly refers to the atonement. Before the phrase “the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ” is examined, the precise relationship of the noun “obedience” (ὑπακοήν) and the phrase “sprinkling of the blood” (μαυσωλεύων αἵματος) to “Jesus Christ” (Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ) must be determined. One alternative is the phrase “Jesus Christ” modifies both “obedience” and “sprinkling of the blood.” A translation based upon this understanding is “to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood” (NASU) or “for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood” (ESV). A second alternative is the phrase “Jesus Christ” relates only to “sprinkling of the blood” and the noun “obedience” stands alone. The translations “for obedience and for sprinkling with Jesus Christ’s blood” (NET) and “for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus

---


Christ” (NKJV) seek to reflect this viewpoint. A final alternative is the phrase “Jesus Christ” modifies “obedience” and “sprinkling of the blood,” but these two components are to be understood as a hendiadys (expressing a single idea by two words) and not coordinates, to refer to God’s covenant relationship with His people. This position is reflected in the translation: “and consecrated with the sprinkled blood of Jesus Christ” (NEB).13

The phrase “Jesus Christ” should be connected only to “sprinkling of the blood.”14 “It is too confusing to imagine that “Jesus Christ” would be both an objective genitive (“obedience to Jesus Christ”) and subjective genitive (“by his blood”) in the same phrase.”15 The goal of the believer’s election is first unto obedience,16 and second unto the sprinkling of the blood that belongs to Jesus Christ. “The blood of Jesus Christ” (cf. Heb 10:19; 1 John 1:7; 5:6) clearly refers to the crucifixion of Christ. It speaks of His death on the cross. The mentioning of Christ’s blood is a metaphor of His death. “Sprinkling” (ῥαντισμὸν) captures Peter’s immediate emphasis regarding the blood of the Messiah. The same term is used in Heb 12:24, where the “blood of Jesus is called αἷμα ῥαντισμοῦ blood of sprinkling, i.e. blood that is sprinkled for atonement.”17

The exact phrase of the apostle, “sprinkling of blood” (ῥαντισμὸν αἵματος) is not found in the NT. Despite the absence of the phrase in the OT,18 it is best to turn there to attempt to capture the meaning of Peter’s words. Grudem writes,
Sprinkled blood in the Old Testament was a visual reminder to God and to his people that a life had been given, a sacrifice had been paid. But in most Old Testament sacrifices the blood was sprinkled on the altar or on the mercy seat (Lv. 4:17; 5:9; 16:14, 15, 19; Nu. 19:4). In only three cases was blood ceremonially sprinkled on the people themselves: (1) in the covenant initiation ceremony at Mt. Sinai when Moses sprinkled half the blood from the sacrificial oxen on all the people (Ex. 24:5-8; Heb. 9:19; and perhaps Is. 52:15 [Aquila, cf. Theodotian]); (2) in the ceremony of ordination for Aaron and his sons as priests (Ex. 29:21; probably also Heb. 10:22); and (3) in the purification ceremony for a leper who had been healed from leprosy (Lv. 14:6-7).19

In light of this data, the best background in the OT is the sprinkling of the blood when the covenant with Moses was inaugurated (Exod 24:3-8). Peter’s reference signifies the forgiveness and cleansing; the people need to stand in right relation with God.20 The goal of the reader’s election was not only unto obedience, but also unto forgiveness and cleansing, which is pictured by their being sprinkled with the blood of Jesus Christ.

The Contribution of 1 Peter 1:2 to Penal Substitution

The substitutionary aspect of the atonement is implied by the phrase “sprinkled with the blood of Jesus Christ.” Jerry Bridges and Bob Bevington rightly state,

The expression “sprinkling with his blood” is reminiscent of the sacrificial language foreshadowed in the old covenant. It is the language of atonement, the language of transferred guilt, the language of substitution. The blood of Christ, indicative of his atoning sacrificial death, is sprinkled on behalf of those he represents.21

Yet it would be too much to read into Peter’s words in 1:2 the penal idea of the atonement.

FIRST PETER 1:18-19

The first substantial portion of Peter’s letter to focus on the cross is 1:18-19. The richness of these two verses regarding the atonement has not been overlooked by interpreters, expositors, and theologians. Pastor and biblical expositor John MacArthur introduces the theme of these two verses by citing the words of the Puritan Thomas Watson:

Great was the work of creation, but greater the work of redemption; it cost more to redeem us than to make us; in the one there was but the speaking of a Word, in the other

---

19Grudem, 1 Peter 52.
20So Schreiner, 1 Peter 56; Achtemeier, 1 Peter 89; Elliott, 1 Peter 320; Hiebert, 1 Peter 52; Goppelt, 1 Peter 74; Feldmeier, First Letter of Peter 58.
21Bridges and Bevington, The Great Exchange 251.
the shedding of blood. Luke 1:51. The creation was but the work of God’s fingers. Psalm 8:3. Redemption is the work of His arm.\textsuperscript{22}

The Context of 1 Peter 1:18-19

The broad and narrow contexts of 1:18-19 are important. General agreement is that the broad context of Peter’s significant words about redemption is 1:13–2:10.\textsuperscript{23} After eulogizing God for the believer’s great salvation in 1:3-12, Peter places upon the shoulders of his readers the glorious burden of a series of imperatives that reflect the products of salvation. A great salvation is to lead to godly living. Thus, the readers are commanded by means of five aorist imperatives to hope (1:13, ἐλπίοσατε), be holy (1:15, γεννήθητε), live in fear (1:17, ἀναστράφητε), love one another (1:22, ἀγαπήσατε), and desire the word (2:2, ἐπιθυμήσατε). The wider context concludes with indicative statements whereby the apostle reminds the readers of their identity in 2:4-10.

The narrow context of these two verses is 1:17-21. The specific focus here is to live a life of fear or to “conduct yourselves in fear” (ἐν φόβῳ ... ἀναστράφητε). The command is preceded by a condition that is assumed to be true of the readers\textsuperscript{24}: “if you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each man’s work.” The motivation for conducting their lives in fear is contingent upon invoking God as Father. Another motivation for a life of fear is given in the verses that highlight the redemption of the believer.

The Interpretation of 1 Peter 1:18-19: The Redemption of the Believer

The introductory formula that begins 1:18-19 is “knowing that” (εἰδότες δὲ). “Knowing” is a causal participle and is translated in some modern versions as “for you know” (NIV, HCSB). Why should the readers conduct themselves in fear during the time of their stay upon earth? Why should their time of sojourning be focused on living a life of reverence? It is because of what they know. What they know is to spur them on to obey the command in 1:17.

This formula, “knowing that,” indicates that what follows is well known to the readers. They were well established in the truth of the redemption of the believer. The apostolic teaching on which they were grounded regarding their redemption can be outlined as follows:

The Redemption of the Believer
A. The nature of redemption (1:18b)

---


\textsuperscript{23}Elliott, \textit{1 Peter} 82; Achtmeier, \textit{1 Peter} 73. Feldmeier (First Letter of Peter 22), among others, sees the broader context as 1:3-2:10.

\textsuperscript{24}The conjunction εἰ introduces a first-class conditional statement that assumes the protasis portion is true for the sake argument. See Daniel B. Wallace, \textit{Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics} (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996) 690.
B. The means of redemption (1:18a, 19)

1. The denied means of redemption (1:18a)
2. The affirmed means of redemption (1:19)

The nature of the believer’s redemption is captured by the words “you were . . . redeemed” (ἐλυσθητε). The verb “I redeem” (λυσθω) also occurs in Luke 24:21 (“we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel”) and Titus 2:14 (“Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed . . .”). These are the only uses in the NT. The noun form (λυσον) can be translated “ransom.” Jesus used this term when He stated that He did not come to be served, but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many (Matt 20:28; Mark 10:45). The verb and the noun are a part of a family of terms that combine to teach the marvelous doctrine of redemption in the NT.25

The word “redeem” basically denotes the act of deliverance by the payment of a ransom.26 It means to purchase someone’s freedom by paying a ransom.27

There is disagreement regarding the background Peter had in mind when he used this term. The idea of redemption or ransom has its roots in both the Jewish and the Greco-Roman worlds.28 Suggested backgrounds are the manumission of slaves, the use of the word in the OT, or both the image of manumission and the use of the term in the OT.29 There are two good reasons for favoring the background being the OT Scriptures. First, it is the practice of the apostle Peter to use the OT in this letter.30 Second, the verb is often employed in the OT in reference to God ransoming/redeeming Israel.31 Although this is the preferred setting, the words of Achtemeier are illuminating,

Such an origin is at best secondhand, however, since the author’s language (εἰδότες) makes clear he intends to appeal to an already existing Christian tradition. The more direct

---

26 Hiebert, 1 Peter 101.
27 Gradem, 1 Peter 83.
28 Achtemeier, 1 Peter 127. Elliott (1 Peter 370) adds, “However, the fact that the ‘blood of Christ’ is cited here as the means of redemption points to the influence of a specifically Christian tradition in which the thought of Jesus as vicarious ransom for all (Mark 10:45) was developed through the use of Isa 53, which spoke of the vicarious suffering of the servant of God.”
30 Schreiner, 1, 2 Peter 84.
31 Elliott, 1 Peter 369.
origin is probably to be found in similar concepts of the redemptive significance of the
death of Christ in the NT, where it is recalled as originating with Jesus himself.32

The aorist tense testifies to the redemption of the believer being an
accomplished fact.33 The passive voice is a “divine passive,” a “reverential passive,”
or a “theological passive.” Although the terminology might differ, common
agreement sees that the passive indicates God is the actor in the redemption.34 Peter
uses “the passive that implies God as the subject.”35

The apostle expands upon the nature of the believer’s redemption by
indicating what his readers were redeemed “from” (ἐκ) or “out of.” It is “from your
futile way of life inherited from your forefathers” that these elect exiles of the
dispersion have been redeemed from. This black and dark backdrop allows the
diamond of redemption to sparkle in all of its brilliance.

The recipients of Peter’s letter were redeemed from a “way of life” (τῆς...
ἀναστροφῆς). Typically, redemption is pictured in terms of being redeemed
from sin. Yet the apostle uses one of his key words36 to indicate more specifically
that the redemption was from a lifestyle. “The term implies not merely behavior but
also the values, norms, and commitments that constitute an entire ‘way of life’.”37

This lifestyle is described in a threefold way. First, it is a way of life that
was personally owned by the ones who were redeemed. The personal pronoun
(ὑμῶν) in the genitive indicates this lifestyle was possessed by the readers.
Secondly, the way of life is described as “futile” (ματαιᾶς). The term conveys the
ideas of “vain,” “useless,” “empty,” and “worthless.” To put it bluntly, prior to their
Christian experience the readers’ conduct “was unprofitable and void of positive
results.”38 Thirdly, the way of life is described as “inherited from your forefathers”
(πατροσκληρόντο). This adjective does not occur elsewhere in the NT or in the
LXX.39 Normally, “it signifies a vibrant tradition that is conveyed from generation
to generation.”40 Because of its collocation with the adjective ματαιᾶς these
traditions must be painted with a negative color.41

32Achtemeier, 1 Peter 127.
33Hiebert, 1 Peter 101.
34Achtemeier, 1 Peter 126; Prasad, Foundations of the Christian Way of Life 286; Elliott, 1 Peter
370.
35Jobes, 1 Peter 117.
36The noun ἀναστροφή also occurs in 1:15; 2:12; 3:1, 2, 16. The cognate verb ἀναστρέφω
appears in 1:17.
37Elliott, 1 Peter 370.
38Hiebert, 1 Peter 102.
39Elliott, 1 Peter 370.
40Schreiner, 1, 2 Peter 84-85.
The nature of redemption (1:18b) is sandwiched by the denied means of redemption (1:18a) and the affirmed means of redemption (1:19). These two possible instruments of redemption are contrasted by the strong adversative conjunction “but” (ἀλλά) at the beginning of v. 19. The contrasting pair emphasizes the negative and positive means of the believers’ redemption. Before an affirmation of the true means of redemption, comes a categorical denial of its false means.

The denied means of redemption is “perishable things like silver or gold.”\(^{42}\) Literally, Peter writes, “knowing that not by perishable things, by silver or by gold, you were redeemed.” The negative “not” (οὐ) “categorically excludes all corruptible things from procuring redemption.”\(^{43}\) These “perishable things” (φθαρτοῖς) are further defined by “silver” (ἀργυρῷ) and “gold” (χρυσῷ).\(^{44}\) “They name two of the best and most highly treasured means that belong to the category of ‘perishable things’.”\(^{45}\) Yet, they are utterly inadequate as instruments to redeem sinful man.

The affirmed means of redemption is “with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ.” The means of redemption, when boiled down to one word, is “blood” (αἷμα). The redemption of Peter’s readers was not accomplished by the best of perishable things, even silver or gold, but in complete contrast, it was accomplished by blood that is described as precious.

Throughout the apostle’s epistle, he has a penchant of mentioning something and then expanding upon it. He does that here with reference to the blood. By means of three modifiers, Peter elaborates upon the concept of blood. The first modifier, and the one that is emphatic due to its position, informs the reader of whose blood this is. No one questions that it is the blood of Christ. Although several words separate “blood” from the genitive noun “Christ” (Χριστοῦ) which is at the end of the verse, the two belong together. This phrase “is the clear outward evidence that his lifeblood was poured out when he died a sacrificial death as the price of the believer’s redemption.”\(^{46}\) It was not the blood of a cut finger, but rather the blood of a slaughtered sacrifice for sins! With this first description of blood, Peter reminds believers that redemption was accomplished by means of the bloody death of Christ.

The second modifier, the adjective “precious” (τιμών) precedes the noun “blood” and stresses the value of the blood. This adjective is used in the NT in the twofold sense of “costly” (precious in the sense of its high value) and “highly esteemed” (precious in the sense of held in honor).\(^{47}\) Who can argue with Hiebert when he quotes John Phillips’ words: “The cost of Calvary is beyond all human

\(^{42}\)More than likely this is an illusion to Isa 52:3 (Feldmeier, First Letter of Peter 116-17).

\(^{43}\)Hiebert, I Peter 102.

\(^{44}\)All three nouns are best categorized as instrumental of means (Achtemeier, I Peter 128).

\(^{45}\)Hiebert, I Peter 102.

\(^{46}\)Grudem, I Peter 84.

\(^{47}\)Hiebert, I Peter 103.
computation; the value of the shed blood of Jesus is beyond all our comprehension.”

Yet, could it be that Earl Richard is closer to the truth when he pens,

[H]owever, its present context and the author’s use of the related term *entimos* in 2:4, 6 point to divine approval: “precious [in God’s sight].” Christ’s blood as the means or the price of redemption from slavery (see Acts 20:28 and especially Heb 9:11-14) has become precious to God in its character as perfect sacrifice.

The third modifier separates “blood” from “Christ” and is introduced by the adverb “as” (ἂν). The precious blood of Christ is furthered described “as of a lamb unblemished and spotless.” Peter does not compare Christ to a lamb (ESV—“like that of a lamb”), but rather declares Christ is a lamb (NIV—“a lamb”). His words echo the exclamation of John the Baptist, who when he saw Jesus cried out, “Behold, the lamb of God” (cf. John 1:29, 36). Besides the references of Peter and John the Baptist, the only other time “lamb” (ἁμαρτάνσις) is used of Jesus is in Acts 8:32, which is a quotation of Isaiah 53:7.

The suggested background of Peter’s “lamb” is the Passover lamb of Exodus 12,11 the prophetic lamb of Isa 53:7,12 the sacrificial cult practiced by Israel,13 or a combination of the previous views.14 If Peter is referring to the Passover lamb in Exodus 12, it is not through a lexical association. The LXX renders “lamb” by the Greek term πρόβατον rather than ἁμαρτάνσις. Also, although “unblemished” describes the lamb in Exod 12:5 and 1 Pet 1:19, the Greek is ἄμελα in the Exodus 12 verse and not ἄμελαμαθεῖν as in 1 Peter. Theologically, it has been questioned whether it was the blood of the paschal lamb that provided redemption or the power of God.15

A reference to the prophetic lamb of Isa 53:7 is indeed tempting. As previously mentioned, one of the places where the term “lamb” occurs is Acts 8:32, which quotes Isa 53:7. Peter’s exact phrase “as of a lamb” (ἁμαρτάνσις ἀμαρτάνσις) is used in reference to the Suffering Servant in the LXX of Isaiah. Yet, the apostle focuses upon the blood of this lamb being the means of redemption, whereas the Suffering

---

48Ibid.
49Richard, *1 Peter, Jude, and 2 Peter* 65.
50See Achtemeier (*1 Peter* 129) for a brief discussion of the problem and a defense of the figurative nature of the comparison. See also R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of the Epistles of St. Peter, St. John and St. Jude* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1966) 65, and Hiebert (*1 Peter* 103) who disagree with this position.
52Elliott, *1 Peter* 374; Hiebert, *1 Peter* 104.
53Achtemeier, *1 Peter* 129.
54Michaels, *1 Peter* 66; Prasad, *Foundations of the Christian Way of Life* 303-4; Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter* 87.
55Achtemeier, *1 Peter* 128.
Servant is spoken of in terms of the silence of a lamb. Furthermore, besides the aforementioned phrase, there are no linguistic similarities between Isa 53:7 and 1 Pet 1:19.56

The blending of three backgrounds as the backdrop to Peter’s lamb is possible,57 but not plausible. It is best to view the background as the general sacrificial cult practiced by Israel. The advantage of this perspective is it views Christ as an actual lamb, and also it brings to the forefront the character and perfection of Christ.

The two adjectives, “blemished” (ἀμώμου) and “spotless” (ἀσπήλου), bear testimony to the character of Christ the lamb. English translations have not agreed upon how to render these terms: “unblemished and spotless” (NASU, NET); “without blemish or spot” (ESV); “without blemish or defect” (NIV); “without blemish and without spot” (NKJV); “without defect or blemish” (NRSV, HCSB). The first adjective can be located several times in the OT with reference to sacrifices being without blemish.58 The second adjective is absent from the OT. It stresses the spotlessness and flawlessness of Christ. The two adjectives combine to declare the sinlessness of the one whose blood was the means of redemption.59

The Contribution of 1 Peter 1:18-19 to Penal Substitution

First Peter 1:18-19 is not silent on the matter of penal substitutionary atonement. The two verses have something to say regarding both the substitutionary and penal aspects of Christ’s death on the cross.

Without question the apostle Peter teaches here the great cost of redemption. Yet, it needs to be remembered that the concept of redemption also involves a substitution. The family of words related to the word “redeemed” in 1:18 is used in Mark 10:45 (“a ransom [λύτρον] for many”) and Titus 2:14 (“who gave Himself for us so that he might redeem [κατακτησε] us . . .”) and imply substitution. This is borne out by the respective phrases, “for many” and “for us.” Furthermore, the denied and affirmed means of redemption in 1:18a and 1:19 weigh in on the matter of substitution. McCartney states,

“Precious blood” is in the instrumental (dative) case rather than in the genitive that ordinarily is used to indicate price (cf. 1 Cor. 6:20). The focus is not so much on a particular quantitative value or kind of coin used for the redemption but on the fact that

56Ibid., 129.
57See Prasad (Foundations of the Christian Way of Life 303-4) for an attempt to do so.
58“The requirement that sacrifices are to be ‘without blemish’ is often stated in the OT (e.g., LXX Exod 29:1, 38; Lev 1:3, 10; 3:1, 6, 9; 4:3, 14, 23, 28, 32; 5:15, 18; 12:6; Num 15:24; Ezek 43:22)” (Schreiner, 1, 2 Peter 86).
59Stated positively, “In our context the two terms simply reinforce each other and indicate the total perfection of Christ as a sacrifice (Heb. 9:14)” (Davids, First Epistle of Peter 73).
The substitutionary aspect of the atonement is not the total picture of what is presented in these verses. In the background of this redemption painting is the penal aspect of the bloody death of Christ. The one who paid the price is an unblemished sacrifice who was punished for the sins of others. I. H. Marshall astutely observes,

The price is a substitute for the person redeemed, and in that the price is costly, it is, we might say, painful. Hence the concept of substitution is present and the cost may be regarded as a penalty in the broad sense. This is manifestly the case where it is the precious blood of Christ that brings about people’s redemption. Consequently, the principle of penal substitution can be seen to be effective here. A ransom need not imply substitution of one person for another. It may simply be a monetary payment. Peter, however, makes the point that we were ransomed with blood (cf. 1 Pet. 1:18-19). There is the clear implication that the price is of infinite worth so that it avails for all people; the principle that the death of this particular One is able to ransom many sinners is manifest. Since, as we have seen death is the ultimate consequence of sin, and Christ suffered death, it would seem to me to require special pleading to argue that his death was anything other than a bearing of the death that sin inflicts upon sinners so that they might not have to bear it.61

It should be added that the view of God regarding the blood of His Son dismantles the arguments that penal substitution is “cosmic child abuse” or is “grotesque” or “primitive.” The blood of Christ is “precious blood.”

First Peter 2:24

Peter’s focus on the cross sharpens through what he writes in 2:24. The apostolic preaching of the cross in this verse has been popularly summarized by Robert Mounce:

Few statements in the New Testament exceed this in theological import. The entire redemptive purpose of God comes into focus in this one great act of eternal significance. On the lonely altar of a Roman cross the Son of God becomes the ultimate sacrifice. He carries in his own body the just penalty for our sins. He is at the same time both the priest who lays the sacrifice on the altar (in the Septuagint the Greek verb is commonly used of bearing a sacrifice and placing it on the altar) and the victim who is sacrificed. The One who knew no sin becomes a sin-offering for mankind (2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 9:28). The validity of the Christian faith rests entirely on this central claim—that Christ suffered the full penalty for all the sins of man. As the lamb of God he took upon himself the entire

punishment for sin and paid the just penalty by the gift of his sinless life.\textsuperscript{62}

The Context of 1 Peter 2:24

A significant new literary unit marks the epistle of 1 Peter at 2:11. The suggested terminus for this unit has been 3:12, 3:22, or even as far as 4:11. Whatever the ending point of this section, clearly the broad context of 2:24 begins at 2:11 and extends at least to 3:12. The key theme of the surrounding context is subjection. The basis of subjection and its evangelistic benefit are provided in 2:11-12, followed by attention drawn to subjection of citizens (2.13-17), subjection of servants (2.18-25), subjection in the family (3:1-7), and subjection in the church (3:8-12).

The immediate context of 2:24 is the subjection of “servants” (οἱ ὀικήται) in 2:18-25. These individuals are commanded to submit not only to masters “who are good and gentle, but also to those who are unreasonable” (2:18). The reason for this action, which is described as “a man bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly,” is that it is favorable (2:19). Peter explains that it is not commendable to endure suffering for doing wrong, but to endure when one suffers for doing right, “this finds favor with God” (2:20). In fact, believers “have been called for this purpose,” i.e., of suffering unjustly (2:21a).

At this point Peter ushers to the forefront the example of Christ’s suffering unjustly: “Christ also suffered.” The “for you” suffering of Christ has placed footprints in the sand that the readers might “follow in His steps” (2:21b). The details of the exemplary suffering of Christ (2:22-23) reach their apex with the sacrificial suffering of Christ (2:24). The apostle concludes the passage by highlighting the significance of this sacrificial suffering for the believer (2:25).

An important feature of the narrow context and v. 24 is Peter’s reliance on Isaiah 53. Addressing the use of Isaiah in 2:24, Norman Hillyer writes,

The teaching that Jesus himself bore our sins, that the righteous and innocent one suffered the penalty for the misdeeds of the ungodly and guilty, is elaborated in this verse by means of language soaked with terms from the Suffering Servant passage of Isaiah 53 (LXX). Yet Peter sends his readers no signal that he is about to quote from the OT. That Peter weaves Isaiah’s words so naturally into what he writes suggests that the passage must have been the subject of much meditation on Peter’s part as he pondered the meaning of the death of Christ. He has so absorbed the prophet’s message that it has molded his own thinking.\textsuperscript{63}

The Interpretation of 1 Peter 2:24: The Sacrificial Suffering of Christ

An analysis of 2:24 under the heading of the sacrificial suffering of Christ
reveals the nature of the sacrificial suffering of Christ (2:24a), the purpose of the sacrificial suffering of Christ (2:24b), and the result of the sacrificial suffering of Christ (2:24c).

Peter specifies the nature of Christ’s sacrificial suffering by first indicating the identity of the sufferer (“He Himself”). The sufferer is identified not by means of a personal name, but rather by a relative pronoun (ὁδὲ). This is the third of four relative pronouns in 2:21b-24. The antecedent of each one is stated in v. 21, where Peter declares that “Christ also suffered for you.” The antecedent is Christ. Once the antecedent has been identified, the four relative pronouns, three in the nominative case and one in the genitive, elaborate on Christ. The four relative clauses introduced by the four relative pronouns are: (1) Christ, who did not commit sin . . . ; (2) Christ, who did not retaliate . . . ; (3) Christ, who bore our sins . . . ; (4) Christ, by whose wounds you are healed.64

The intensive pronoun, ἀυτός, further identifies the sufferer. With this word, Peter emphasizes the identity of the one who suffered on the cross.65 It is this One, Christ and Christ alone, who is responsible for the action of the verb, only He and no one else.

Peter elaborates upon the nature of the sacrificial suffering of Christ by indicating the essence of the suffering. The verb “bore” (ἀνήνεγκεν) gets right to the heart of the suffering. The basic meaning of the verb can be “offer” or “bear.” This has led to the understanding that Jesus offered up the sins of His people to God as a sacrifice upon the altar or that Jesus bore the sins of His people as a sacrifice when crucified on the cross. Several reasons lead to rejecting the former interpretation. First, “tree” (ξύλον) is not a normal way to designate an altar.66 Second, in the OT the altar was holy and was never contaminated with anything unholy.67 Finally, it is an intolerable concept in any known Jewish or early Christian context to have Jesus offering up sins as a sacrifice that God accepts.68

Taking the meaning of the verb as “bear” is preferable in this context.69 The object of what Christ bore is “our sins” (τὰς ἁμαρτίας ἡμῶν). The position of the direct object gives it emphasis. Literally, what Peter writes can be roughly translated, “who, our sins, He Himself bore.” Hiebert is right to point out, “Unlike the imperfects in v. 23, ‘bore’ is an aorist—a definite event, not a repeated practice.”70

64Jobes, 1 Peter 196.
66Elliott, 1 Peter 532.
68Michaels, 1 Peter 148; Hiebert, 1 Peter 187.
69Schreiner, 1, 2 Peter 145; Achtemeier, 1 Peter 202.
70Hiebert, 1 Peter 187.
The picture of Christ that is painted by His act is as sin-bearer.\textsuperscript{71}

The opening words of this verse bleed Isaiah 53. Clearly the author depends directly or indirectly on Isa 53:4 ("He bears our sins"), 53:11 ("He will bear their sins"), and 53:12 ("He bore the sins of many").\textsuperscript{72} Peter identifies Isaiah’s Suffering Servant as the one who Himself bore the sins of His people.

The nature of the sacrificial suffering of Christ concludes with the apostle providing the amplification of the suffering. The suffering is expanded upon with two prepositional phrases: "in His body" (ἐν τῷ σώματι αὐτοῦ) and "on the cross" (ἐπὶ τῷ ξύλων). Both prepositional phrases modify the verb "bore." With these words, Peter appends his distinctive Christian interpretation of ‘He himself bore our sins’.\textsuperscript{73} They represent his unique perspective since the phrases are not found in Isaiah 53. The combination of these phrases forms an explicit reference to the death of Jesus by crucifixion.\textsuperscript{74}

Christ’s body was the vehicle through which He bore the sins of His people. “In His body” reinforces Peter’s previous statement that it was Christ Himself and no one else who bore the believer’s sins. The Pauline counterpart to the words of Peter is found in 2 Cor 5:21: “He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf.”

The preposition phrase “on the cross,” first depicts a motion toward a destination. The preposition (ἐπὶ) followed by the accusative case suggests Christ carried the believer’s sins up to or upon the destination, depicting the idea of sacrifice.\textsuperscript{75} The prepositional phrase also identifies a destination, which is the “cross.” Peter uses his favorite term ξύλον (cf. Acts 5:30; 10:39) and not the more common NT term σταυρός. It can mean “tree,” “wood,” and “objects of wood.” Paul uses this term with reference to the cross in Gal 3:13. This is significant since he quotes Deut. 21:23 ("cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree"). Peter more than likely uses ξύλον to imply “that Jesus was cursed for the salvation of his people.”\textsuperscript{76}

Peter is explicit in stating the purpose of the sacrificial suffering of Christ. He writes, “that we might die to sin and live to righteousness.” The conjunction ἵππος introduces a purpose clause that consists of the main verb "live" (ζησόμενον)\textsuperscript{77} which is modified by the participial phrase "we might die to sin" (ταῖς ἁμαρτίαις ἀποστειρώμενοι) and a dative articul noun (τῇ δικαιοσύνῃ). A translation that is more reflective of the Greek text is: “that we, having died unto sins, might live unto

\textsuperscript{71}Schreiner (1 Peter 145) states, “Often the word ‘bore’ (anapherō) is used of ‘offering’ sacrifices (Heb 7:27; 9:28-29; 13:15; Jas 2:21; 1 Pet 2:5; cf. Gen 8:20; 22:2; Exod 24:5; 29:18; Lev. 17:5; Isa 57:6.”

\textsuperscript{72}Achtemeier, I Peter 201. See Jobes (1 Peter 194) for a translation that shows the quotations and allusions to Isaiah 53 in 1 Pet 2:21-25.

\textsuperscript{73}Michaels, 1 Peter 147.

\textsuperscript{74}Jobes, 1 Peter 197; Elliott, 1 Peter 533.


\textsuperscript{76}Schreiner, 1, 2 Peter 145.

\textsuperscript{77}The verb ζάω is a favorite of Peter (cf. 1:3, 23; 2:2, 4, 5; 3:7).
righteousness” (ASV). In a nutshell, the purpose of Christ’s sacrificial death is that the believer might live. The Christian is to live with reference to the righteousness that summarized Christ’s submissive obedience to God.78

The child of God by the grace of God can fulfill this purpose for his life. It is possible due to the fact the believer has died to sin. The aorist participle “having died” is a word that occurs only here in the NT and does not appear at all in the Septuagint.79 Interpreters are divided on whether this participle with the dative has the ideal of having been removed from life with reference to sins (“die”) or having been removed from sins (“depart”).80 The first understanding is preferred in light of the contrast with the verb “live” and the avoidance of the awkward rendering of the dative “sins” with the meaning of the participle “having died.”81 Peter’s purpose statement demonstrates the ethical implications of the cross of Christ.82

The analysis of v. 24 began with the nature of the sacrificial suffering of Christ, continued with the purpose of that suffering, and concludes with the result of the sacrificial suffering of Christ. The result is not expressed by the syntactical means of a conjunction. The only connection the result has with the preceding sentence is through the presence of the last of four relative pronouns in 2:22-24. The relative pronoun oû (translated “His”) stands first in the clause that announces an accomplishment of Christ’s death on the cross for the believer: “for by His wounds you were healed” (oû τῷ μαὼπτι ἠθήνε). It is obvious that the words of the prophet Isaiah in 53:5 (“And by His scourging we are healed;” LXX—τῳ μαὼπτι αὐτὸς ἤμεις ἠθήνεις) are in the mind of Peter.83 The servants of 2:18 in particular and the readers of the epistle in general are healed. “The wounds that sin had inflicted on the souls of Peter’s readers ‘have been healed’, not merely ‘will be healed’.”84

---

78 The dative should be seen as a dative of reference or dative of respect (Elliott, 1 Peter 535).
81 Michaels, 1 Peter 148-49; Elliott, 1 Peter 535; Bigg, Epistles of St. Peter 148; Schreiner, 1, 2 Peter 113; Selwyn, First Epistle of St. Peter 181.
82 Michaels (1 Peter 149) acknowledges that one would expect a genitive of separation with the participle for it to mean “depart from,” but unconvincingly believes that Peter used the dative for “rhetorical symmetry” with the dative “righteousness.”
84 With regards to the Greek of Peter and of the Septuagint, Schreiner (1, 2 Peter 146) observes, “The wording is quite close to the Septuagint. The first person plural verb has been changed to a second person plural, and the relative pronoun “whose” (hôw) has been substituted for “his” (autor).”
85 Hiebert, 1 Peter 189. The issue of physical healing in the atonement is addressed by Richard L. Mayhue, “For What Did Christ Atone in Isaiah 53:4-5?” The Master’s Seminary Journal 6/2 (Fall 1995):121-41.
The means or instrument of the healing is “his wounds.” Although the noun is singular, most translations have chosen to render the word as a plural. Possibly the *hapax legomena* is a collective singular referring to the scourings of Jesus (cf. Mark 15:15; Matt. 27:26). Yet ultimately, Peter has reference to “that ultimate mark made by the stroke of death.”

**The Contribution of 1 Peter 2:24 to Penal Substitution**

The words of this verse provide a significant contribution to a proper understanding of the cross of Christ. A person could argue that this verse provides the readers with an example for handling suffering (cf. 2:21a). But to limit the words merely to Christ’s being an example is to rob them of their full force and weight. First Peter 2:24 teaches penal substitution.

The substitutionary aspect and the penal aspect of the atonement are woven together in Peter’s description of the work of Christ on Calvary’s cross. Christ is first viewed as the sin-bearer. The sin-bearing was substitutionary: “In his sacrificial death we see God, in the Son, bearing the consequences of our sin so that we do not have to bear them.”

The bearing of sin is a well-known concept in the OT. “It means bearing the penalty of sin” and when the apostle applies it to Christ, he “means that Jesus in His death endured the penalty for our sins.” Reflecting upon Christ’s bearing sins, Cranfield wrote, “On the cross He bore not merely physical pain and sorrow that men could be so blind and wicked, but, what was much more dreadful, that separation from His Father (‘My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?’) which was the due reward of our sins.”

Peter also presents Christ as the curse-bearer. It has previously been explained that the death of Christ upon “the tree” has its roots in Deut 21:23 and parallels what Paul teaches about the death of Christ in Gal 3:13. Thus the insight of Marshall on Gal 3:13 is applicable to Peter’s words:

Believers are delivered from the curse of the law by Christ dying on the cross as the one accursed. The curse of the law is its condemnation of sinners and statement of judgment.

---


87 Schreiner, *I, II Peter* 203.


89 Morris, *Cross in the New Testament* 324-25. See also Jeffery, Ovey, and Sach, *Pierced for Our Transgressions* 97. The words of John R. W. Stott (The *Cross of Christ* [Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1986] 143) reiterate the same truth: “It is clear from OT usage that to ‘bear sin’ means neither to sympathize with sinners, not to identify with their pain, not to express their penitence, nor to be persecuted on account of human sinfulness (as others have argued), nor even to suffer the consequences of sin in personal or social terms, but specifically to endure its penal consequences, to undergo its penalty.”

over them. The curse cannot simply be laid aside. It is carried out on Christ, and thereby sinners are delivered from it. Again, the one dies for the many, in their place. The principle of one bearing the consequences of sin for the many is present. Here the procedure of the Old Testament criminal law is used to explain Jesus’ death, and the element of penalty is conspicuous. This is one of the clearest examples of Christ taking the place of sinners by occupying the accursed position and dying. The law, we remember, is God’s law and therefore, ultimately it is God who imposes the curse.”

The influence of Isaiah 53 on Peter in this verse and the larger context (2:22-25) is significant. The phrase “by His wounds you have been healed...” highlights the substitutionary nature of his death—he suffered in order that we might not.”

But there is more: “Returning via Isaiah 52-3 to 1 Peter 2:24, we may affirm that, as the Suffering Servant the Lord Jesus Christ bore the punishment for the sins of his people in their place, and that in so doing he wrought atonement for them as the punishment was poured out upon him by the hand of God himself.”

First Peter 3:18

First Peter 3:18 is another magnificent verse that continues the apostle’s survey of the wondrous cross. The 21 words in the Greek text have to be the most compact, prolific treatment of the death of Christ in the whole NT. The words are simple and succinct. Yet, at the same time they are profound and deep. This verse is “one of the richest summaries given in the New Testament for the meaning of the Cross of Jesus.”

The Context of 1 Peter 3:18

The verse begins a paragraph which concludes with v. 22. It is unanimous among interpreters that these five verses have more than their share of interpretive challenges. The difficulties of the text did not go unnoticed by Martin Luther: “A wonderful text this, and a more obscure passage perhaps than any other in the New Testament, so that I do not know for a certainty just what Peter means.” Yet without doubt at least three significant events in the life of Christ are highlighted in

---

92 Jeffery, Ovey, and Sach, Pierced for Our Transgressions 97. McCartney ("Atonement in James, Peter and Jude" 181) adds: “The Servant of the Lord of Isaiah 40–55 is undoubtedly the source, not just of Peter’s but also of the early church’s idea of Jesus’ death as a representational substitution. The Servant Song has its culmination in Isaiah 53, which is both quoted and applied by 1 Peter 2:21-25 as that which explains the suffering and death of Christ on behalf of his people.”
94 The quotation is found in Hiebert, 1 Peter 235.
95 The quotation is found in Schreiner, 1, 2 Peter 184.
this section. First, the death of Christ is at the center of v. 18. Second, the resurrection of Christ is referred to in v. 21. Third and final, the exaltation of Christ with a reference to His ascension concludes the paragraph, which forms the narrow context of 3:18.

The broader context of the verse under examination is 3:13-4:6. The paragraph 3:18-22 is not an intrusion. Nor should anyone relate 3:18 to 3:17 only, and consider 3:19-22 as peripheral. The entire paragraph furnishes support for 3:13-17. As Hiebert writes, “The treatment of Christian suffering for righteousness in vv. 13-17 prompted Peter to refer to Christ’s undeserved suffering (v. 18a), that elicited an involved treatment of the consequences of His suffering (vv. 18b-21), concluding with a declaration of its triumphant culmination (v. 22).” The inferential conjunction “therefore” (οὖν) in 4:1 indicates that this paragraph is the foundation of Peter’s words in 4:1-6.

**The Interpretation of 1 Peter 3:18: The Death of Christ**

The heart of v. 18 is the subject, “Christ” (Χριστός) and the predicate, “died” (“suffered” in some manuscripts, ἐπέθεν). Everything else in the verse serves as a modifier of the subject or the verb. Peter states as a fact that “Christ . . . died.” The NASB translation hides the idea that before Peter proclaims Christ’s death, he first mentions it was “once” and it was “concerning sins” (cf. Χριστός ἀπέξεις περὶ ἁμαρτιῶν ἐπέθεν). Contrary to expectation, the author was able to write these words. On a previous occasion, he had rebuked the Lord because Christ had declared He was going to suffer, be killed, and be raised on the third day (Matt 16:22). Peter had difficulty with the idea of a suffering and crucified Messiah. But now, he can write freely that “Christ . . . died.” Yet he is not content with simply saying “Christ . . . died.” He expands upon that by pointing out seven facts about the death of Christ.

The death of Christ was exemplary. It served as a model and an example to the readers. The causal conjunction (ὅτι) that begins v. 18 gives the reason why Peter could say in v. 17 that it is better, if God should will it so, that the readers suffer for doing good. It also gives the reason why Peter could say, in v. 14, that the readers...
are blessed if they suffer for doing right. Why is it better? Why are they blessed?
It is because Christ suffered (died) for doing good and for doing right. The end result
of His death is that He triumphed and is at the right hand of God.

Although Peter does not present Christ as the model for suffering per se, as
he did in 2:21-25, it is clear that what happened to Christ is to be an encouragement
and a motivation to his readers to do what is good and to do what is right. The
adjunctive conjunction (καὶ) declares that Christ also suffered just as did some of
the readers. Yet the rest of the verse makes it clear that His suffering was unique!

When Christ died on the cross, it was sufficient. The death of Jesus was
definitive, conclusive, and complete. It was “once for all” (ἅ πανταζ). The Greek word
can mean either “once” or “once for all.” Peter could mean that Christ died once in
contrast to “now,” or he could be writing that Christ died “once for all” in contrast
to something that can be repeated again and again.

In light of the “jewishness” of the apostle Peter and the fact that he could
declare in Acts 10:12-14 that he had never eaten anything unholy and unclean, the
term most likely means “once for all.” In contrast to continual OT sacrifices,
Christ died for sins once and only once. Peter is in complete agreement with other
NT Scriptures that proclaim the sufficiency of Christ’s death (cf. John 19:30; Heb
1:3; 9:28—“so Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many,”
10:12).

Christ’s death was sacrificial. It was a death “for sins” (πέρι ἁμαρτιῶν).
The plural form of “sin” implies that Christ died for a mass of sins. The preposition
(περί) with the singular form of “sin” occurs frequently in the LXX and is often
translated “sin-offering.” The combination occurs 19 times in Leviticus and three of
these uses are in the chapter that focuses on the Day of Atonement (16:3, 5, 9).
Clearly Peter has a sacrificial meaning in mind. That understanding is confirmed
by the use of this same prepositional phrase in Heb 5:3 and 10:26. The writer of
Hebrews also uses περί with the singular form of “sin” in 10:6, 8, 18; 13:11.

Peter has come to understand Christ’s suffering to death as a unique sin
offering and as a propitiatory sin-offering at that. Furthermore, since this
formula was well known from the sin offerings of the OT and NT explanations of the
death of Christ (Rom 8:3; 1 Cor 15:3; 1 Thess 5:10; 1 John 2:2; 4:10), it is also the
formula for substitutionary atonement, the death of the victim on behalf of the sins
of another.

The death of Christ was substitutionary. By means of three Greek words
(δίκαιος ἡμῶν ἅμαρτων), the great doctrine of substitutionary atonement is
proclaimed. The phrase could be translated “a just one for unjust ones.” Two

100Michaels, I Peter 202; Achtemeier, I Peter 246.
102Jobes, I Peter 238.
103Elliott, I Peter 641.
104Davids, First Epistle of Peter 135.
anarthrous adjectives that function as substantives are utilized to put emphasis upon
the nature or essence of the individuals indicated by the terms.\textsuperscript{105} The idea is “a
person, just in character, died in behalf of persons, unjust in character.”

It is clear whom Peter identifies as “just” since the term is in apposition to
Christ. The Christ who died is further defined as having the character of being a “just
one” or a “righteous one.” That Christ was “righteous” is stressed elsewhere in the
epistle (especially 2:22-23) and also in other parts of the NT (Matt 27:19; Luke
23:47; Acts 3:14; 7:52; 1 John 2:1, 29; 3:7; cf. Isa 53:11).\textsuperscript{106}

This righteous One died in the place of individuals who were of a quality
that they could be labeled “unrighteous ones.” These are individuals who break the
law and fail to act in harmony with the will of God. It is very likely that Peter uses
“unjust” to remind the readers of their pre-salvation state.\textsuperscript{107}

Christ’s death was conciliatory. To put it another way, it provided
reconciliation. John Murray distinguishes propitiation from reconciliation in the
following manner: “Propitiation places in the focus of attention the wrath of God
and the divine provision for the removal of that wrath. Reconciliation places in the focus
of attention our alienation from God and the divine method of restoring us to his
favour.”\textsuperscript{108}

The conjunction ἵνα, which is translated “in order that,” introduces the
reader to a purpose clause. The readers are informed that the purpose of the death of
Christ is that “He might bring us [or ‘you’ in some versions] to God.” One of the
grand purposes of the atonement can be literally rendered, “that you He might bring
to God”. The “you” is emphatic due to position and stresses the “for-you-ness” of
the gospel (cf. 1:12, 20-21).\textsuperscript{109} The purpose clause reminds the reader once again of
the ethical implications of the death of Christ (cf. 2:24).

The verb “bring” (προσόγγογγος) is used six times in the NT (Matt 18:24;
(Rom 5:2; Eph 2:18; 3:12).\textsuperscript{110} The usages of the term suggest a variety of meanings,
but the bottom-line is that it communicates “to bring to God” or “to have access to
God.” Davids captures the significance of the expression when he writes, “Jesus died
in order that, so to speak, he might reach across the gulf between God and humanity
and taking our hand lead us across the territory of the enemy into the presence of the
Father who called us.”\textsuperscript{111}

The death of Christ was exemplary, sufficient, sacrificial, substitutionary,
and conciliatory. Many interpreters of God’s Word would be convinced of this based upon what Peter has written thus far. Major disagreement among exegetes has arisen in light of the remaining words of v. 18: “having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit.” Structurally, the apostle Peter uses the particles μὲν and δὲ to contrast\(^{112}\) two aorist passive participles (θανατωθεὶς, ζωοποιηθεὶς)\(^{113}\) that are each modified by an anarthrous noun having the dative form (σαρκί; πνεύματι).

The particle μὲν introduces the first half of the contrast. With regards to the Christ who died, it states that He was put to death (θανατωθεὶς). Peter uses a term that means “to cause cessation of life, put to death; literally τίνακill someone, hand someone over to be killed, especially of the death sentence and its execution.”\(^{114}\) It was a violent death that terminated the life of Christ on earth.\(^{115}\) The term “flesh” should be understood as a locative of sphere and means that Christ was put to death in the sphere of His flesh.\(^{116}\) The agent is unexpressed, but this is more than likely a “divine passive” and indicates that God is ultimately the one responsible for His Son’s death.

It should be observed that the action of God upon His Son indicates that His death was penal. Stibbs is correct when he briefly and succinctly states, “[W]e are told that His earthly life was abruptly terminated by penal execution, as though He were a sinner.”\(^{117}\)

The particle δὲ presents the contrast to “having been put to death in the flesh.” The antithesis, “but made alive in the spirit,” presents the final fact in this verse about the death of Christ. With this phrase, the apostle proclaims that Christ’s death was conquered. The crucifixion of Christ is not the end of the story, nor is “made alive in the spirit.” The story concludes with v. 22, where Christ is pictured at the right of God.

How does the phrase “made alive in the spirit” indicate that the death of Christ was conquered? A popular answer is the phrase refers the words to the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. The term “spirit” is taken as the Holy Spirit and the dative form of the noun is viewed as a dative of agency or instrumental of means. Another answer is that the phrase refers to Jesus Christ being made alive in the spiritual realm, in the realm of the Spirit’s activity. The term “spirit” refers to Christ’s risen state and the dative form of the noun functions as a dative or locative of sphere. Peter’s words have in the mind the resurrection of Christ.

David MacLeod provides a third answer. He states,

---

\(^{112}\)“Such combinations occur elsewhere in 1 Peter (1:20; 2:4; 4:6) and are typical of the author’s predilection for explicit antithesis” (Elliott, 1 Peter 645).

\(^{113}\)The participles modify the verb “died” (ἐκτέθης) rather than “bring” (προσάγαγη).

\(^{114}\)BDAG 443.

\(^{115}\)Hiebert, 1 Peter 238.

\(^{116}\)Contra Elliott (1 Peter 645), who suggests Peter uses the term to mean “men” put him to death.

\(^{117}\)First Epistle General of Peter 141.
It is unlikely, however, that Peter was speaking here of the resurrection; nor did he mean spiritual sphere of existence or spiritual mode of existence when he said “in the spirit.” Rather he was describing certain events in the life of Christ, and doing so in chronological order. In v. 18 he describes Christ’s death. He did not get to the resurrection until vv. 21 and 22.

Furthermore, he was here speaking of two constituent parts of Christ’s human nature, vis., his body and his spirit or soul. On the cross Jesus died in his manhood—body, soul and spirit. The Savior was objectively abandoned by God. The Father withdrew his comfort and sustaining power from him and sent the torments of hell against him. He was separated from God in those awful hours of darkness. As he expired on the cross, there was that separation of body and soul that the Bible calls death. Christ commended his spirit to the Father: “Father, into Your hands I commend my spirit” (Luke 23:46). At that moment Jesus came alive again in spirit through renewed fellowship with the Father. He immediately began to enjoy liberation; the distress of his baptism by death was over (cf. Luke 12:50). By his physical death he became not a victim, but a victor.118

The implication of the words of the apostle Peter in 3:18 is the death of Christ is exemplary, sufficient, sacrificial, substitutionary, conciliatory, penal, and conquered.

**The Contribution of 1 Peter 3:18 to Penal Substitution**

The substitutionary nature of the death of Christ is obvious in this verse. It has already been demonstrated that the phrase, “the just for the unjust,” refers to one who has the character of being righteous, Christ, taking the place of ones who have the character of being unrighteous. This took place when Christ died on the cross.

The phrase “Christ . . . suffered . . . for sins” suggests the penal nature of the atonement. The Christ “who committed no sin” (2:22a) suffered to the point of death “for sins.” He was punished for the sins of others; He paid the penalty for sins that He did not do. Also, as already pointed out, the words “having been put to death in the flesh” indicate the penal aspect of Christ’s death. Additionally, it is very possible that the goal of Christ’s death, which is reconciliation (“in order that He might bring us to God”), implies Christ was punished and paid the penalty for sins when He died on the cross. The words of Morris on this matter are helpful. He writes,

This connection of His suffering on the one hand with sins, and on the other with bringing us to God, makes it clear that we are moving in the same thought world as when we read of the bearing of sin. The sins that kept us away from God no longer do so, thanks to that death. Christ’s suffering cancelled out our sins.119

---

118David J. MacLeod, “The Sufferings of Christ: Exemplary, Substitutionary, and Triumphant,” *Emmaus Journal* 14 (2005):12-14. This writer is in essential agreement with MacLeod and would encourage a reading of the selected pages with the supporting footnotes for support of this view.

119*Cross in the New Testament* 326. Marshall (*Atonement* 55) goes a step further with regard to the parallel idea of reconciliation in 2 Cor 5:14-21: “The consequences of sin, specifically death, are borne by Christ when he is made one with sinners, and, in that sense, the substitution is penal.”
Finally, if the interpretation of “having been made alive in the spirit” refers to Christ first being forsaken and abandoned by His Father (“My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?”), then Peter provides further proof of the penal aspect of the atonement. At the cross, Christ experienced punitive separation in the place of the believer.  

**First Peter 4:1**

Peter’s survey of the wondrous cross of Jesus Christ concludes at 4:1. A comparison of this verse with 1:18-19, 2:24, and 3:18 shows a lack of specificity about Christ’s death in 4:1. In the previous verses, the author of 1 Peter enhances what he says about the crucifixion of Christ by means of modifiers. This verse has only a one-word modifier referring to the death of Christ in 4:1a. In fact, the cross of Christ is not even the heart of the verse.

**The Context of 1 Peter 4:1**

First Peter 4:1 initiates a paragraph that ends at 4:6. As mentioned in the discussion of the context of 3:18, Peter links these verses to 3:18-22 by means of the inferential conjunction “therefore” (οὖν). The foundation of the author’s words beginning in 4:1 is the triumphant suffering of Christ. The goal of the paragraph is to impress upon readers that “they can obtain a victory over their persecutors parallel to that which, as already described, Christ has won over the malefic powers which control them.”

A basic summary of the passage notes that because of the suffering of Christ, believers are exhorted to upright living in a sinful and hostile world, for judgment will come.

**The Interpretation of 1 Peter 4:1**

The core of 4:1 is the exhortation “arm yourselves also with the same purpose.” The aorist imperative “arm yourselves” (ὁπλίσομαι) utilizes a military metaphor to command the readers to put on their armor and take up their weapons. The direct object of the verb indicates what that armor or weapon is—“the same purpose” (τῇ αὐτῇ ἐννοιαί). “Purpose” can also be translated “mind” (ASV, KJV, NKJV), “way of thinking” (ESV), “attitude” (NIV, NET), “intention” (NRSV), “resolve” (HCSB), or “thought” (RSV). It refers to the mindset and resolve the believer must possess in order to live for the will of God.

The personal pronoun translated “same” indicates this resolve is to be patterned after the resolve of someone else. This “thought” belongs to Christ, who

---

120 Demarest, _Cross and Salvation_ 171.


122 Horrell, _Epistles of Peter_ 74.
is mentioned at the beginning of the verse. Before Peter addressed the will of the
readers with a command, he drew their attention to Christ. The phrase, “since Christ
has suffered in the flesh,” gives the reason the readers are to heed the command.
It is reminiscent of “Christ died” and “having been put to death in the flesh” in 3:18.
The sense is “because Christ has suffered in the flesh, you too must arm yourselves
with the same mindset.”

The verse concludes with the problematic phrase “because he who has
suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin.” It is likely that the introductory
conjunction “because” is causal. Also, “the one who has suffered in the flesh” should be viewed as the believer who has died by virtue of his death and resurrection
with Christ (cf. Rom. 6:1-11).

The Contribution of 1 Peter 4:1 to Penal Substitution

Peter’s final explicit reference to the death of Christ does not offer any
additional insight into the nature of the atonement. The lack of details connected
with the statement “since Christ has suffered in the flesh” indicates that what has
been previously said concerning Christ’s death would apply to these words also.

Conclusion

The focused look at the cross of Christ in First Peter has concluded. The
wondrous cross was surveyed by examining the following passages: 1:2; 1:18-19;
2:24; 3:18; 4:1. In addition, the contribution of each passage to the doctrine of penal
substitution was considered. Several lines of evidence from the various verses were
offered to support both the penal aspect and the substitutionary aspect of the
atonement. The proper understanding of Peter’s presentation of the cross of Christ
is that he proclaims a penal substitutionary atonement.

Is this doctrine the heart of the atonement itself? Should it be at the
forefront of the explanation of the cross? The substitutionary and penal aspects of
the death of Christ are so interwoven in Peter’s message of the cross that such
questions cannot be legitimately answered in the negative. A distorted image of the

---

123 The genitive absolute construction (Χριστού . . . παθόντος) is normally viewed as causal (Achtemeier, 1 Peter 277).
124 This is the adjunctive use of καί.
125 The phrase, δι' ο παθών σαρκά πέπαινε ἀμαρτίας, has two interpretive issues. The minor
issue concerns whether the conjunction δι' is causal (“because”) or epegegetical (“that”). The major
issue is the identity of “he who has suffered in the flesh” (ὁ παθών σαρκά) and its implications for the
meaning of “has ceased from sins” (πέπαινε ἀμαρτίας). It is beyond the scope of this article to
resolve these issues in an exegetical manner.
126 So Elliott, 1 Peter 714; Goppelt, 1 Peter 280; Schreiner, 1, 2 Peter 200. Contra Achtemeier, 1 Peter 278; Davids, First Epistle of Peter 148; Jobes, 1 Peter 263.
127 For a discussion of the problem, see the normal commentaries and especially Achtemeier, 1 Peter 278-80; Elliott, 1 Peter 715-18; Michaels, 1 Peter 225-29.
atonement, if not an unrecognizable one, would result if penal substitution is not at
the center.

Peter’s message of the cross is saturated with the idea that the Messiah died
in the sinner’s place. The words of the apostle about the death of Christ are rightly
understood when they are interpreted to mean that the punishment and penalty which
believers deserved was placed on Christ instead of the believer. The glorious and
magnificent truth of the work of Christ on the cross according to 1 Peter has been
captured in the second stanza of the well-known hymn, “Hallelujah, What a Savior!”

Bearing shame and scoffing rude,
In my place condemned He stood—
Sealed my pardon with His blood:
Hallelujah, what a Savior!\textsuperscript{128}

\textsuperscript{128}Philip P. Bliss, “Hallelujah, What a Savior!”
PENAL SUBSTITUTION IN CHURCH HISTORY

Michael J. Vlach
Assistant Professor of Theology

Recently, at least since the eighteenth-century liberalism gained a place in Protestantism, the penal-substitution view of Christ’s atonement has come under attack. The claim that the doctrine was unknown in the ancient church has emerged along with the idea that such a teaching was invented by the Reformers. The fact that the first thousand years of ancient Christianity frequently espoused the teaching that Jesus suffered death, punishment, and a curse for fallen humanity as the penalty for human sin shows the falsity of such a claim. The fact that early Christians supported other views of the atonement did not exclude the possibility of their supporting penal substitution also. Other views of the atonement include the classic/ransom, the satisfaction, the moral influence, and the governmental theories. Without discussing penal substitution thoroughly, the following church fathers and writings expressed their support for the theory: Ignatius, the Epistle of Barnabas, the Epistle to Diognetus, Justin Martyr, Eusebius of Caesarea, Eusebius of Emesa, Hilary of Poitiers, Athanasius, Basil the Great, Gregory of Nazianzus, Ambrose of Milan, John Chrysostom, Augustine of Hippo, Cyril of Alexandria, Severus of Antioch, and Oecumenius. Martin Luther wrote during the second Christian millennium, but he too endorsed penal substitution. Available writings show clearly that the early church supported a penal-substitution view of Christ’s death.

* * * *

Since the rise of Protestant liberalism in the eighteenth century, it has become common for some to claim that penal substitution, the view that Christ died on behalf of sinners, is not a biblical doctrine. In recent years this position has been accompanied by assertions that the church of the first fifteen hundred years did not hold to penal substitution. So in addition to claiming that penal substitution is not found in the Bible, a growing chorus is arguing that this doctrine was not taught by the church of the Patristic and Medieval eras. Instead, the belief that Jesus died on behalf of sinners, becoming a curse on their behalf, was a creation of the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century. For example, in his work on the atonement,
Paul Fiddes claimed that the doctrine of penal substitution was “developed in the Reformation period.” In addition, some like Gustaf Aulen have argued that objective views of the atonement, of which penal substitution is one example, are a creation of the Latin West church of the early twelfth century. Aulen and others have claimed that the early church held to a classical view of the atonement in which Christ’s death was primarily a victory over the powers of darkness and a ransom paid to Satan, but the early church did not hold to penal substitution.

This assertion is quite serious. If those like Fiddes and Aulen are correct, those who believe in penal substitutionary atonement are accepting a doctrine that is relatively new, and by implication, something foreign to the church of the first thousand years. While Protestant Christians have often emphasized that the Bible, not church history, is their authority, they have usually held that new doctrines should be scrutinized. They also believe that Christians should be skeptical of holding positions not believed or addressed in the early church. Is penal substitution one of those novel views? Is it true that many believe a doctrine of the atonement that began with the Protestant Reformation?

The purpose of this article is to demonstrate that penal substitution was taught in the early church. Consequently, it will also refute the claim that penal substitution was not taught in the church of the Patristic and Medieval eras. Though acknowledging that the early church held to a classical view of the atonement, it will argue that critics of penal substitution are in error when they claim that the pre-Reformation church did not also believe in penal substitution. Ample and even overwhelming evidence proves that Christians of the Patristic Era and beyond held that Christ died on behalf of sinners to pay the penalty for their sins.

Before surveying what the early church believed about penal substitution, some clarifying points are necessary. First, the emphasis will be on the church of the first one thousand years and especially the church of the Patristic Era (A.D. 100-500). This is where the heart of the controversy lies. That after Anselm in the twelfth century an objective view of the atonement was taught is not debated. Also, That Calvin and the Reformation tradition clearly taught penal substitution is established. The controversy is over whether the church of the first thousand years taught penal substitution, so this time period will be the focus.

Second, penal substitution needs to be defined. Penal substitution is the doctrine that Jesus suffered on behalf of sinners the death, punishment, and curse due to fallen humanity as the penalty for sin. As Millard Erickson defines the doctrine, “By offering himself as a sacrifice, by substituting himself for us, actually bearing the punishment that should have been ours, Jesus appeased the Father and effected a

---


reconciliation between God and humanity." Penal substitution, then, emphasizes that the punishment from God provoked by human sin was borne by Jesus Christ with His sacrificial death.

Third, this is not to deny that earlier Christians held views of the atonement other than penal substitution or that the early church did not hold to a classical or ransom view of the atonement. When some early Christians emphasized a certain implication of Christ’s death, they could also teach or believe in penal substitution. To claim that because some theologians advocated a classical view of the atonement, they denied or knew nothing about the penal substitution view is a logical fallacy. Yet such error is occurring today. Some say that because the early church affirmed and emphasized one aspect of the atonement—the classical or Christus Victor view—they knew little or nothing about penal substitution. Even today those who strongly view penal substitution as the primary meaning of the atonement usually affirm other facets of the atonement as well. As Leon Morris has pointed out, “the atonement is vast and deep” “and we need all the theories.” Thus, the fact that Christ died on behalf of sinners is not inconsistent with the ideas that Christ’s death was a victory over the powers of darkness or that Christ’s death is an example for us.

### Historical Views of the Atonement

Before looking in the early church at evidence for belief in penal substitution, a brief summary of the major atonement views in history will serve as a backdrop for discussion.

#### Classic or Ransom Theory

The classic view sees the atonement of Christ as a cosmic victory over Satan and the forces of evil. A subset of this view is the ransom view of the atonement. With this perspective, with His death Jesus paid a ransom to the devil. At the cross, God handed Jesus over to Satan in exchange for the souls of humans held captive to Satan. Satan believed he could hold Jesus in death, but the resurrection proved him wrong as Jesus triumphed over Satan. This view was popular in the early church. Origen and Gregory of Nyssa were the two major early developers of this perspective. Gregory of Nazianzus and Athanasius, on the other hand, rejected the ransom theory. Later, John of Damascus would reject this view as well believing that it was impossible for God to offer Jesus to the devil. This ransom theory of the atonement

---


5 Those who believe in penal substitution usually deny a sense in which Christ’s death was a ransom to Satan. One can hold to a cosmic victory of Christ over the powers of darkness and not hold that the atonement was a payment to Satan.
fell out of favor during the time of Anselm and Abelard around the twelfth century. More recently, Gustaf Aulen (d. 1977) has defended this view of the atonement.⁴

**Satisfaction Theory**

The satisfaction theory views the atonement of Jesus as compensation to the Father. Thus, Jesus’ death satisfied God’s wounded honor. This approach was promoted by Anselm in the early twelfth century. Anselm’s satisfaction theory appears to rely on the idea of a feudal overlord, who, to uphold his honor, insisted that there be an adequate satisfaction for his assaulted honor. Anselm promoted this view in his work, *Cur Deus Homo?* (“Why God Became Man?”). He rejected the classic view that Satan had a right of possession over humanity and that God had to use Jesus to pay a ransom to Satan. Anselm held that sin is the failure to render God His due honor. Since Jesus was divine, He was able to offer adequate satisfaction in this area. Anselm’s view became associated with the Latin view. The primary way to distinguish this view from the penal substitution view of the atonement is that the satisfaction theory views the atonement more in relation to God’s *honor* while the penal substitution position views Christ’s atonement more in relation to God’s law.⁵

**Moral Influence Theory**

The moral influence theory views the atonement primarily as a demonstration of God’s love. Christ’s death was not a payment to the Father to satisfy God’s wounded honor. It was a demonstration of God’s love, and, thus, a motivation for Christians to show love in return. This theory was promoted by Peter Abelard (d. 1142) in reaction to Anselm’s satisfaction view. For Abelard, the major effect of Christ’s death was on humans—not God or Satan. God is viewed as mostly love and His attributes of justice and holiness are not emphasized. God’s love is so strong that it overcomes the resistance of sinners. The power of divine love compels human love toward God. Horace Bushnell (1802-1876), the father of modern liberalism in the United States, popularized the moral influence theory in the United States.⁶

**The Governmental Theory**

With the governmental theory the atonement is a demonstration of divine justice. Hugo Grotius (d. 1645) promoted this view in detail in his work *Defensio fidei catholicae de satisfaction Christi adversus F. Socinum*. According to Demarest,

Grotius maintained that objectively Christ by His death made a token, rather than a full or equivalent, payment to God for human sins. Through the death of his Son, God upheld the moral governance of the universe while setting aside the requirement of the law that


⁵See Morris, “Atonement” 102.

Penal Substitution in Church History

The concept of penal substitution in which Christ’s death is viewed as being on behalf of sinners to satisfy divine justice was a common belief of the church of the first thousand years. Many theologians of the early church held to a penal substitution view.¹² In a survey of these statements, one point should be understood. Many of the statements do not come within extended discussions of salvation. They appear to be noncontroversial at the time uttered. The nature of the atonement was not a major item of controversy or debate in the early church. Thus, the statements are most probably declarations of generally accepted truths, adding more credibility for the

sinners must be punished. The Ruler of the universe could have relaxed his law altogether and not punished Christ, but this would not have achieved the maximum deterrence against future sins.⁹

This governmental theory claims that the punishment of Christ communicates God’s hatred of sin and motivates a person to repentance and godly living.¹⁰ According to Grotius it was possible for God to relax His law so that an exact punishment for each human sin was not necessary. For Grotius, the death of Christ was not a punishment. Instead, it made punishment unnecessary. Thus, there are two elements to the atonement. Objectively, Christ’s death satisfies the demands of justice. There was a real offering made by Christ to God. Subjectively, Christ’s death is viewed as a deterrent to sin by emphasizing the seriousness of sin.

Penal Substitution Theory

As mentioned earlier, according to the penal substitution view, with His death Jesus Christ bore the just penalty for human sins, and in doing so became a curse on man’s behalf. With this perspective sin is primarily a violation of God’s law, thus Christ’s death pays the penalty for sins that God’s holiness requires.¹¹ This position has been held by Christians throughout church history as will now be discussed.

Penal Substitution in Church History

The concept of penal substitution in which Christ’s death is viewed as being on behalf of sinners to satisfy divine justice was a common belief of the church of the first thousand years. Many theologians of the early church held to a penal substitution view.¹² In a survey of these statements, one point should be understood. Many of the statements do not come within extended discussions of salvation. They appear to be noncontroversial at the time uttered. The nature of the atonement was not a major item of controversy or debate in the early church. Thus, the statements are most probably declarations of generally accepted truths, adding more credibility for the

¹⁰Ibid., 155.
¹¹See Erickson, *Christian Theology* 833; Leon Morris, “Theories of the Atonement” 102.
¹²Garry Williams points out that even by a narrow criterion the doctrine of penal substitution was taught by the following: Justin Martyr, Origen, Eusebius of Caesarea, Athanasius, Hilary of Poitiers, Gregory of Nazianzus, Ambrose, John Chrysostom, Augustine, Cyril of Alexandria, and Gregory the Great (Gary J. Williams, “A Critical Exposition of Hugo Grotius’s Doctrine of the Atonement in De Satisfactione Christi” [D.Phil. thesis, Faculty of Social Studies, University of Oxford, 1999] 70). Williams has done significant work unearthing the statements of penal substitution in the early church. He has also addressed the anachronistic demands of those who insist that penal substitution was not taught in the early church because this doctrine was not expressed precisely as it would be later during the Reformation (67).
case that the early theologians held to penal substitution. As Jeffery, Ovey, and Sach observe, “[I]f a writer makes a passing, but nonetheless explicit, reference to the doctrine of penal substitution in a work largely devoted to another subject, this probably indicates that penal substitution was both widely understood and fairly uncontroversial among his contemporaries.” Plus, it would have confused the readers for the author to bring up any other view of the atonement.

**Clement of Rome (d. 96)**

Clement was a bishop in Rome. Eusebius says Clement became bishop in A.D. 92. Like the apostle Paul, Clement wrote a letter to the Corinthians to deal with their schisms. His *Epistle to the Corinthians* (c. 95) is the earliest extant Christian writing after the NT. Clement declared that Jesus gave His life in His atonement: “Because of the love he felt for us, Jesus Christ our Lord gave his blood for us by the will of God, his body for our bodies, and his soul for our souls.”

**Ignatius (d. 107)**

Ignatius was the third bishop of Antioch in Syria. He may have been a personal disciple of the apostle John, and had a special fondness for Paul whom he quoted and of whom he spoke highly. Ignatius is known for refuting Docetism, an early heresy that claimed that Jesus only appeared to be human. Ignatius believed that Jesus died on behalf of sinners when he declared: “Now, He suffered all these things for our sakes, that we might be saved.”

**Epistle of Barnabas**

The *Epistle of Barnabas* is a Greek treatise with features of an epistle. It has been traditionally ascribed to Barnabas who is mentioned in the Book of Acts, though some ascribe it to Barnabas of Alexandria or another unknown early Christian teacher. The epistle was probably written in Alexandria, Egypt, between A.D. 70 and 135. In it are several explicit statements concerning Jesus’ sacrificial death for sins:

> For to this end the Lord endured to deliver up His flesh to corruption, that we might be sanctified through the remission of sins, which is effected by His blood of sprinkling. For it is written concerning Him, partly with reference to Israel, and partly to us; and [the Scripture] saith thus: “He was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our

---


14Ibid.


iniquities: with His stripes we are healed. He was brought as a sheep to the slaughter, and as a lamb which is dumb before its shearer.\textsuperscript{17}

Moreover, when fixed to the cross, He had given Him to drink vinegar and gall. Hearken how the priests of the people gave previous indications of this. His commandment having been written, the Lord enjoined, that whosoever did not keep the fast should be put to death, because He also Himself was to offer in sacrifice for our sins the vessel of the Spirit, in order that the type established in Isaac when he was offered upon the altar might be fully accomplished.\textsuperscript{18}

**Epistle to Diognetus (2nd century)**

The *Epistle of Mathetes to Diognetus* is a second-century work that some believe is one of the earliest examples of Christian apologetics. It also reveals early thinking in regard to Christ’s atonement. This epistle declared that “when our wickedness had reached its height... He Himself took on Him the burden of our iniquities, he gave His own Son as a ransom for us, the holy One for transgressors, the blameless One for the wicked, the righteous One for the unrighteous.”\textsuperscript{19} It then goes on to say, “O sweet exchange! O unsearchable operation, O benefits surpassing all expectation! that the wickedness of many should be hid in a single righteous One, and that the righteousness of One should justify many transgressors.”\textsuperscript{20} This epistle stands as a clear example of early belief that Jesus paid the price for unjust sinners so that they could be forgiven of their sins.

**Justin Martyr (c. 100-165)**

Justin was arguably the greatest apologist of the second century, defending Christianity from both Jewish and pagan critics. He also emphasized that Christ became a curse for the whole human race:

For the whole human race will be found to be under a curse. For it is written in the law of Moses, ‘Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them’ [Deut 27:26]. And no one has accurately done all, nor will you venture to deny this; but some more and some less than others have observed the ordinances enjoined. But if those who are under this law appear to be under a curse for not having observed all the requirements, how much more shall all the nations appear to be under a curse who practise idolatry, who seduce youths, and commit other crimes? If, then, the Father of all wished His Christ for the whole human family to take upon Him the curses of all, knowing that, after He had been crucified and was dead, He would raise Him up, why do you argue about Him, who submitted to suffer these things according to the

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{17}Epistle of Barnabas 5, ANF 1:139.
  \item \textsuperscript{18}Epistle of Barnabas 7, ANF 1:141.
  \item \textsuperscript{19}Mathetes, *The Epistle to Diognetus* 9, ANF 1:28.
  \item \textsuperscript{20}Ibid.
\end{itemize}
Father’s will, as if He were accursed, and do not rather bewail yourselves? For although His Father caused Him to suffer these things in behalf of the human family, yet you did not commit the deed as in obedience to the will of God.\textsuperscript{21}

\textbf{Eusebius of Caesarea (c. 275-339)}

Eusebius was the most important church historian of his time and a religious advisor to the emperor Constantine. He evidenced his belief that Christ became a curse for sinners when he stated,

Thus the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world, became a curse on our behalf.” He then stated, “And the Lamb of God not only did this, but was chastised on our behalf, and suffered a penalty He did not owe, but which we owed because of the multitude of our sins; and so He became the cause of the forgiveness of our sins, because He received death for us, and transferred to Himself the scouring, the insults, and the dishonour, which were due to us, and drew down upon Himself the appointed curse, being made a curse for us.\textsuperscript{22}

He also declared: “But since being in the likeness of sinful flesh He condemned sin in the flesh, the words quoted are rightly used. And in that He made our sins His own from His love and benevolence towards us.”\textsuperscript{23}

\textbf{Eusebius of Emesa (c. 300–360)}

This bishop of Emesa and leader in the Greek church said in regard to 1 Pet 2:24, “But his wounds became our saviors.”\textsuperscript{24}

\textbf{Hilary of Poitiers (c. 300-368)}

Hilary was Bishop of Poitiers and one of the more important Latin writers before Ambrose. In his \textit{Homily on Psalm 53}, Hilary affirms Christ’s sacrificial death and how Jesus became a curse for other human beings:

For next there follows: \textit{I will sacrifice unto Thee freely}. The sacrifices of the Law, which consisted of whole burnt-offerings and oblations of goats and of bulls, did not involve an expression of free will, because the sentence of a curse was pronounced on all who broke the Law. Whoever failed to sacrifice laid himself open to the curse. And it was always necessary to go through the whole sacrificial action because the addition of a curse to the commandment forbade any trifling with the obligation of offering. It was from this curse

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{21}Justin Martyr, \textit{Dialogue with Trypho} 95, \textit{ANF} 1:247.
\item \textsuperscript{23}Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{24}Eusebius of Emesa, “Catena,” in \textit{Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture NT XI} (hereafter \textit{ACCS}), ed. Gerald Bray (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2000) 96.
\end{itemize}
that our Lord Jesus Christ redeemed us, when, as the Apostle says: Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made curse for us, for it is written: cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree [Gal. 3:13]. Thus He offered Himself to the death of the accursed that He might break the curse of the Law, offering Himself voluntarily a victim to God the Father, in order that by means of a voluntary victim the curse which attended the discontinuance of the regular victim might be removed.25

This statement from Hilary includes the major elements of the penal substitution view. Jesus offered Himself on behalf of sinners becoming a curse on their behalf.

**Athanasius (c. 300-373)**

Athanasius is probably the most important Christian theologian before Augustine. This theologian of the Eastern church is recognized as the champion of orthodox Christology as he defended the deity of Christ against Arianism that was so influential in the fourth century. Yet Athanasius was also an explicit promoter of penal substitution. As William C. Weinrich states, “Athanasius frequently says that Christ suffered and died ‘for all’ or ‘in the stead of all.’”26 For instance, Athanasius stated,

Thus, taking a body like our own, because all our bodies were liable to the corruption of death, He surrendered His body to death in place of all, and offered it to the Father. This He did out of sheer love for us, so that in His death all might die, and the law of death thereby be abolished because, having fulfilled in His body that for which it was appointed, it was thereafter voided of its power for men. This He did that He might turn again to incorruption men who had turned back to corruption, and make them alive through death by the appropriation of His body and by the grace of His resurrection. Thus He would make death to disappear from them as utterly as straw from fire.27

Athanasius also said,

The Word perceived that corruption could not be got rid of otherwise than through death; yet He Himself, as the Word, being immortal and the Father’s Son, was such as could not die. For this reason, therefore, He assumed a body capable of death, in order that it, through belonging to the Word Who is above all, might become in dying a sufficient exchange for all, and, itself remaining incorruptible through His indwelling, might thereafter put an end to corruption for all others as well, by the grace of the resurrection. It was by surrendering to death the body which He had taken, as an offering and sacrifice

---


free from every stain, that He forthwith abolished death for His human brethren by the
offering of the equivalent. For naturally, since the Word of God was above all, when He
offered His own temple and bodily instrument as a substitute for the life of all, He
fulfilled in death all that was required.\textsuperscript{28}

In his \textit{Four Discourses Against the Arians} he said: “Formerly, the world, as guilty,
was under judgment from the Law; but now the Word has taken on Himself the
judgment, and having suffering in the body for all, has bestowed salvation to all.”\textsuperscript{29}

And then,

For, as when John says, ‘The Word was made flesh we do not conceive the whole Word
Himself to be flesh, but to have put on flesh and become man, and on hearing, ‘Christ hath
become a curse for us,’ and ‘He hath made Him sin for us who knew no sin,’ we do not
simply conceive this, that whole Christ has become curse and sin, but that He has taken
on Him the curse which lay against us (as the Apostle has said, ‘Has redeemed us from
the curse,’ and ‘has carried,’ as Isaiah has said, ‘our sins,’ and as Peter has written, ‘has
borne them in the body on the wood.’\textsuperscript{30}

Athenasius also said, “He also carried up our sins to the Tree.”\textsuperscript{31} In \textit{Ad Epictetum} he
said, “For what John said, ‘The Word was made flesh’ has this meaning, as we may
see by a similar passage; for it is written in Paul: ‘Christ has become a curse for us.’
And just as He has not Himself become a curse, but is said to have done so because
He took upon Him the curse on our behalf, so also He has become flesh not by being
changed into flesh, but because He assumed on our behalf living flesh, and has
become Man.”\textsuperscript{32} Thus, Athenasius stands as a clear promoter of penal substitution.

\textbf{Basil the Great (330-379)}

Basil was one of the most important defenders of the Trinity in the fourth
century. In regard to Christ’s death he declared, “By the blood of Christ, through
faith, we have been cleansed from all sin.”\textsuperscript{33}

\textbf{Gregory of Nazianzus (c. 330-390)}

Known as the “Trinitarian Theologian,” Gregory also argued that Jesus
became curse for humanity and took human disobedience upon Himself:

\footnotesize{
\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{28}Ibid., 35.
  \item \textsuperscript{29}Athenasius, \textit{Four Discourses Against the Arians}, \textit{NPNF²} 4:341.
  \item \textsuperscript{30}Ibid., 4:374.
  \item \textsuperscript{31}Athenasius, \textit{Letter to Maximus}, \textit{NPNF²} 2:4:578.
  \item \textsuperscript{32}Athenasius, \textit{Ad Epictetum}, \textit{NPNF²} 4:573.
  \item \textsuperscript{33}Basil, “On Baptism,” in \textit{ACCS NT XI}, 96.
\end{itemize}
}
Take, in the next place, the subjection by which you subject the Son to the Father. What, you say, is He not now subject, or must He, if He is God, be subject to God? You are fashioning your argument as if it concerned some robber, or some hostile deity. But look at it in this manner: that as for my sake He was called a curse, Who destroyed my curse; and sin, who taketh away the sin of the world; and became a new Adam to take the place of the old, just so He makes my disobedience His own as Head of the whole body. As long then as I am disobedient and rebellious, both by denial of God and by my passions, so long Christ also is called disobedient on my account. But when all things shall be subdued unto Him on the one hand by acknowledgment of Him, and on the other by a reformation, then He Himself also will have fulfilled His submission, bringing me whom He has saved to God. For this, according to my view, is the subjection of Christ; namely, the fulfilling of the Father’s Will.  

Ambrose of Milan (339-397)
Ambrose, Bishop of Milan, was a mentor for Augustine and one of the most important theologians of the Patristic Era. His views on the substitutionary nature of Christ’s atonement are evident in the following statements:

Who, then, is He by the wound of Whose stripes we are healed but Christ the Lord? of Whom the same Isaiah prophesied His stripes were our healing, of Whom Paul the Apostle wrote in his epistle: “Who knew no sin, but was made sin for us.” This, indeed, was divine in Him, that His Flesh did no sin, nor did the creature of the body take in Him sin. For what wonder would it be if the Godhead alone sinned not, seeing It had no incentives to sin? But if God alone is free from sin, certainly every creature by its own nature can be, as we have said, liable to sin.

A glorious remedy—to have consolation of Christ! For He bore these things with surpassing patience for our sakes—and we forsooth cannot bear them with common patience for the glory of His Name! Who may not learn to forgive, when assailed, seeing that Christ, even on the Cross, prayed,—yea, for them that persecuted Him? See you not that those weaknesses, as you please to call them, of Christ’s are your strength? Why question Him in the matter of remedies for us? His tears wash us, His weeping cleanses us,—and there is strength in this doubt, at least, that if you begin to doubt, you will despair. The greater the insult, the greater is the gratitude due.

Let us bethink ourselves of the profitableness of right belief. It is profitable to me to know that for my sake Christ bore my infirmities, submitted to the affections of my body, that for me, that is to say, for every man, He was made sin, and a curse, that for me and in me was He humbled and made subject, that for me He is the Lamb, the Vine, the Rock, the

---

34Gregory, The Fourth Theological Oration 5, NPNF² 7:311.
35Ambrose, Of the Holy Spirit 9, NPNF² 10:108.
36Ambrose, Of the Christian Faith 9, NPNF² 10:236.
Servant, the Son of an handmaid, knowing not the day of judgment, for my sake ignorant of the day and the hour.\textsuperscript{37}

\textbf{John Chrysostom (c. 350-407)}

John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople, was known for his preaching eloquence. With this quotation he discusses the concept of the transfer of sin from one to another:

If one that was himself a king, beholding a robber and malefactor under punishment, gave his well-beloved son, his only-begotten and true, to be slain; and transferred the death and the guilt as well, from him to his son (who was himself of no such character), that he might both save the condemned man and clear him from his evil reputation; and then if, having subsequently promoted him to great dignity, he had yet, after thus saving him and advancing him to that glory unspeakable, been outraged by the person that had received such treatment: would not that man, if he had any sense, have chosen ten thousand deaths rather than appear guilty of so great ingratitude? This then let us also now consider with ourselves, and groan bitterly for the provocations we have offered our Benefactor; nor let us therefore presume, because though outraged he bears it with long-suffering; but rather for this very reason be full of remorse.\textsuperscript{38}

\textbf{Augustine of Hippo (354-430)}

Augustine is widely recognized as the most important and influential theologian of the Patristic Era. He explicitly states that Jesus bore the curse for man’s sins with His death:

If we read, ‘Cursed of God is every one that hangeth on a tree,’ [Gal. 3:13; cf. Deut 21:23] the addition of the words ‘of God’ creates no difficulty. For had not God hated sin and our death, He would not have sent His Son to bear and to abolish it. And there is nothing strange in God’s cursing what He hates. For His readiness to give us the immortality which will be had at the coming of Christ, is in proportion to the compassion with which He hated our death when it hung on the cross at the death of Christ. And if Moses curses every one that hangeth on a tree, it is certainly not because he did not foresee that righteous men would be crucified, but rather because He foresaw that heretics would deny the death of the Lord to be real, and would try to disprove the application of this curse to Christ, in order that they might disprove the reality of His death. For if Christ’s death was not real, nothing cursed hung on the cross when He was crucified, for the crucifixion cannot have been real. Moses cries from the distant past to these heretics: Your evasion in denying the reality of the death of Christ is useless. Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree; not this one or that, but absolutely every one. What! the Son of God? Yes, assuredly. This is the very thing you object to, and that you are so anxious to evade. You will not allow that He was cursed for us, because you will not allow that He died for us. Exemption from Adam’s curse implies exemption from his death. But as Christ endured

\textsuperscript{37}\textit{Ibid.}

\textsuperscript{38}John of Chrysostom, \textit{Homilies on Second Corinthians} 6, \textit{NPNF}¹ 12:335.
death as man, and for man; so also, Son of God as He was, ever living in His own righteousness, but dying for our offences, He submitted as man, and for man, to bear the curse which accompanies death. And as He died in the flesh which He took in bearing our punishment, so also, while ever blessed in His own righteousness, He was cursed for our offences, in the death which He suffered in bearing our punishment. And these words ‘every one’ are intended to check the ignorant officiousness which would deny the reference of the curse to Christ, and so, because the curse goes along with death, would lead to the denial of the true death of Christ.\footnote{Augustine, Reply to Faustus the Manichaean 6, NPNF\(^1\) 4:209.}

Augustine also said that Christ’s blood was shed for sins: “For then that blood, since it was His who had no sin at all, was poured out for the remission of our sins.”\footnote{Augustine, On the Trinity 15, NPNF\(^1\) 3:177.} In summing up Augustine’s views on the atonement, Stephen Finlan observes, “[T]he crucified Christ provides that satisfaction, dying as a substitute for sinful humans.”\footnote{Stephen Finlan, Options on Atonement in Christian Thought (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2007) 55.}

**Cyril of Alexandria (c. 378-444)**

Cyril, a theologian of Alexandria, wrote that Jesus bore human sin on the cross:

> The Only-begotten was made man, bore a body by nature at enmity with death, and became flesh, so that, enduring the death which was hanging over us as the result of our sin, he might abolish sin; and further, that he might put an end to the accusations of Satan, inasmuch as we have paid in Christ himself the penalties for the charges of sin against us: ‘For he bore our sins, and was wounded because of us’, according to the voice of the prophet. Or are we not healed by his wounds?\footnote{Cyril, De adoratione et cultu in spiritu et veritate iii, 100–102, in J. P. Migne (ed.), Patrologiae Cursus Completus: Series Graeca, vol. 68 (Paris, 1857-) 293, 296.}

**Gregory the Great (c. 540-604)**

A powerful pope of the Western church, Gregory built upon Augustine’s substitutionary views. As Finlan observes, “Gregory the Great taught that sin requires sacrificial payment, so that human sin necessitated a human sacrifice.”\footnote{Finlan, Options on Atonement 55 (emphases in the original).} In *Morals on the Book of Job*, Gregory declared,

> When then the first man was moved by Satan from the Lord, then the Lord was moved against the second Man. And so Satan then moved the Lord to the affliction of this latter, when the sin of disobedience brought down the first man from the height of uprightness. For if he had not drawn the first Adam by willful sin into the death of the soul, the second
Adam, being without sin, would never have come into the voluntary death of the flesh, and therefore it is with justice said to him of our Redeemer too, *Thou movest Me against him to afflict him without cause*. As though it were said in plainer words; ‘Whereas this man dies not on his own account, but on account of that other, thou didst then move Me to the afflicting of this one, when thou didst withdraw that other from Me by thy cunning persuasions.’ And of him is it rightly added, *without cause*. For ‘he was destroyed without cause,’ who was at once weighed to the earth by the avenging of sin, and not defiled by the pollution of sin. He ‘was destroyed without cause,’ Who, being made incarnate, had no sins of His own, and yet being without offence took upon Himself the punishment of the carnal.44

Gregory’s views on Christ’s sacrificial atonement were influential. Finlan states that Gregory’s “atonement logic” became the “standard in Western Christendom, backed up by the authority of this persuasive pope.”45

**Severus of Antioch (d. c. 512)**

Severus was a Greek monk, theologian, and patriarch of Antioch. In regard to 1 Pet 2:24 he declared: “The one who offered himself for our sins had no sin of his own. Instead he bore our transgressions in himself and was made a sacrifice for them. This principle is set out in the law, for what sin did the lamb or the goat have, which were sacrificed for sins and which were even called ‘sin’ for this reason.”46

**Oecumenius (c. 990)**

An author on various books of the New Testament, Oecumenius explicitly stated that Christ died for our sins: “The righteous person suffers for the salvation of others, just as Christ did. This is why Peter mentions our Lord’s example, since Christ did not die for his own sins but for ours. This is the point he makes by adding ‘the righteous for the unrighteous.’”47 He then goes on to say, “So great was his passion that however often human beings may sin, that one act of suffering is sufficient to take away all our transgressions.”48

**Martin Luther**

At this point it has been established that the concept of penal substitution was firmly held by the church of the first thousand years. Yet one more individual in the debate over penal substitution must be mentioned—Martin Luther. Luther is

---

45Finlan, *Options on Atonement* 55-56.
47Oecumenius, “Commentary on 1 Peter,” in *ACCS NT XI*, 107.
48Ibid.
important in the debate over penal substitution since Gustaf Aulen claimed that
Luther broke with Anselm’s satisfaction view in favor of the Christus Victor view.49
But Luther did affirm penal substitution also as the following statements show:

Therefore Christ was not only crucified and died, but by divine love sin was laid upon
him.50

He has and bears all the sins of all men in His body—not in the sense that He has
committed them but in the sense that He took these sins, committed by us, upon His own
body, in order to make satisfaction for them with His own blood.51

For you do not yet have Christ even though you know that He is God and man. You truly
have Him only when you believe that this altogether pure and innocent Person has been
granted to you by the Father as your High Priest and Redeemer, yes, as yours slave. Putting
off His innocence and holiness and putting on your sinful person, He bore your sin, death,
and curse; He became a sacrifice and a curse for you, in order thus to set you free from
the curse of the Law.52

Timothy George comments on Luther’s view of the atonement: “Luther makes clear
that there was no remedy for sin except for God’s only Son to become man and to
take upon himself the load of eternal wrath thus making his own body and blood a
sacrifice for sin.”53 Wolfhart Pannenberg said of Luther that he saw “with full clarity
that Jesus’ death in its genuine sense is to be understood as vicarious penal
suffering.”54 In an orthodox view, Aulen draws too sharp a distinction. Luther was
not inconsistent. He saw both views—classical and penal substitution.55 As Luther’s
Larger Catechism says:

He has snatched us, poor lost creatures, from the jaws of hell, won us, made us free, and
restored us to the Father’s favor in grace. . . . Christ suffered, died, and was buried that

49Aulen, Christus Victor 101–2.
50Martin Luther, Luther’s Works (hereafter LW), eds. Jaroslav Pelikan, Helmut Lehmann, et al. 55
51LW 26:277.
52LW 26:288.
53Timothy George, “The Atonement in Martin Luther’s Theology,” The Glory of the Atonement, eds.
Charles E. Hill and Frank A. James III (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP, 2004, 273). See also Finlan, Options
on Atonement 58.
55See Timothy George, “The Atonement in Martin Luther’s Theology,” in The Glory of the
he might make satisfaction for me and pay for what I owed, not with silver and gold, but with his own precious blood.\textsuperscript{56}

**Conclusion**

Jeffery, Ovey, and Sach rightly point out that the doctrine of penal substitution has “an impeccable pedigree in the history of the Christian church.”\textsuperscript{57} The assertion that the doctrine of penal substitution is a latecomer, a development of the Reformation, is not true. It is refuted by many statements from theologians of the first thousand years that Jesus died on behalf of sinners, becoming a curse on their behalf to satisfy God’s righteous requirements. Recent opponents of penal substitution are correct that many in the early church believed in the classical or *Christus Victor* view of the atonement in which Christ’s death is a victory over the powers of darkness, but often the early theologians also believed in the penal substitution view as well. This is a “both/and” scenario, not an “either/or.” The opponents of penal substitution have erred in thinking that belief in the classical view meant that the early church did not believe in the penal substitution position, but that is not the case. Nor are these opponents correct in claiming that Martin Luther held to the classical view but not the penal substitution view.

The evidence showing that the early church believed and taught penal substitution is impressive and as Jeffery, Ovey, and Sach have put it, “quite overwhelming.”\textsuperscript{58} Those who hold to the doctrine of penal substitution can be encouraged that their belief has been clearly articulated throughout church history. It is not an invention of the Protestant Reformation or the result of common cultural beliefs of the day.

One can only speculate as to why any would claim that penal substitution was not taught in the early church. Perhaps those who have a theological aversion for this doctrine want it to be the case that penal substitution is a more recent invention. Or, opponents have not taken into consideration that statements in favor of a classical view of the atonement are not mutually exclusive with the view that Christ died on behalf of sinners. Either way, they are in error and need to take an honest look at the evidence.

Regardless, Christians should not be confused on this matter. From a historical perspective, penal substitution has been widely held throughout church history. The declaration that “the myth of the ‘late development’ of penal substitution has persisted quite long enough. It is time to lay it to rest for good”\textsuperscript{59} is correct.


\textsuperscript{57}Jeffery, Ovey, and Sach, *Pierced for our Transgressions* 31.

\textsuperscript{58}Ibid., 163.

\textsuperscript{59}Ibid., 163–64.
WORTHY IS THE LAMB THAT WAS SLAIN:

PENAL SUBSTITUTION

AND CHRISTIAN WORSHIP

Andrew V. Snider
Assistant Professor of Theology

By labeling penal substitution as “redemptive violence,” some have rejected the biblical view of the cross of Jesus as substitutionary and penal by claiming that His death was the ultimate example of pacifism. Others want to relegate penal substitution to the category of being only a metaphor of Scripture. Such distortions of the Bible have adverse effects on true Christian worship as a close survey of ritual offerings under the Mosaic Covenant reflect when carried forward into what the NT says about worship. Sacrifice has always been fundamental as a basis for true worship. The OT book of Leviticus devotes itself to explaining how sinful Israelites through sacrifices could make themselves pure in approaching a holy God in their worship. Four of the five offerings described there—the whole burnt offering, the grain offering, the peace offering, and the sin offering—had the purpose of dealing with sin and with guilt. Holiness achieved through sacrifice was paramount in having one’s sacrifice acceptable by God and effective in worship. The effective offering was costly to the worshiper and brought him into covenant fellowship with God. In the NT Christ came to be the ultimate sacrifice in fulfilment of all the OT offerings. Beginning with John 1:29, the NT uses sacrificial imagery in a number of places in anticipation of His work on the cross, particularly in His institution of the Lord’s Supper. The author of Hebrews in particular portrays Jesus as the perfect atoning sacrifice in fulfillment of the OT system of sacrificial worship. Christian worship without the doctrine of penal substitution is impossible.

* * * *

Introduction: The Message of Atonement

The principle of penal substitutionary atonement has come under significant challenge in recent years, even among those who fall into the broad category of
evangelicalism. Widespread discomfort has arisen with viewing the efficacy of Christ’s cross in terms of bloody death that propitiates the wrath of God on behalf of sinners. The sentiment seems to follow that of the old laundry detergent commercial: “There’s gotta be a better way!”

One recent example is Daniel Bell, who argues that the penal substitution interpretation of the atonement is an endorsement of what he calls “redemptive violence.” For Bell and those who adopt his ideology, the concept of penal substitution has been used by the church to sanction, or at least tolerate, all sorts of violence and abuse. But how does he explain the cross in light of the strong tradition in favor of penal substitution? An extensive quotation will paint a clear picture.

Any effort to make the case that God does not demand blood cannot simply skip over the cross but instead must pass right through it. This is the case not just because efforts to circumvent the cross run against the grain of the tradition and jettison significant portions of scripture, but because discarding the cross and talk of atonement through the blood of the Lamb also undercuts the laudable goals of those who reject blood sacrifice. In other words, we need the cross of Christ in order to reject the logic of blood sacrifice.  

What, then, is the meaning of the cross? Bell continues to advance his agenda as follows:

The work of atonement is God in Christ bearing human rejection and extending the offer of grace again, thereby opening a path for humanity to recover blessedness. In this sense, Christ’s faithfulness even to the point of death on the cross marks not a divine demand for retribution, but a divine refusal to hold our rebellion against us. God offers us life and we reject it. God continues to offer it, in the form of love incarnate, and we crucify him. Yet even now, God will not lash out against us but instead raises Jesus up and sends him back with the same offer of life.

The goal for Bell is clearly to deny that Christ’s substitutionary role on the cross was not only not penal, but rather the opposite—the ultimate example of pacifism.

A similar approach is taken by Brian McLaren in A Generous Orthodoxy. To set up his understanding of the cross, he summarizes what it means for Jesus to be Lord:

1Daniel M. Bell, Jr., “God Does not Demand Blood: Beyond Redemptive Violence,” in God Does not, Entertain, Play Matchmaker, Hurry, Demand Blood, Cure Every Illness, Kindle e-book ed., ed. D. Brent Layham (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2009) locations 478-81. Elsewhere Bell strengthens this assertion: “Far from reinforcing blood sacrifice and redemptive violence, Christ’s work on the cross is nothing less than the divine refusal of blood sacrifice, as well as any notion that suffering violence is or can be redemptive” (ibid., 512-13).

2Bell, Jr., “God Does Not” locations 532-38.

3A disturbing implication of Bell’s argument (and one that is not lost on Bell) is that those who continue to advocate the penal substitution view are somehow in favor of violence in general, or at least accepting of it.
We live in danger of oppression and deception, so Jesus comes with saving judgment. When God shines the light of justice and truth through Jesus, the outcome is surprising: the religious and political leaders often turn out to be scoundrels, and the prostitutes and homeless turn out to have more faith and goodness than anyone expected. Through parable, through proverb, through invective (“Woe to you!”), and most powerfully through the drama of his life story culminating in his death and rising, Jesus, wherever he goes, shows things to be what they really are—bringing a saving judgment-with-forgiveness (or justice-with-mercy) to all who will accept it.⁴

From this theological basis, McLaren then summarizes the meaning of the cross in terms of atonement:

This is a window into the meaning of the cross. Absorbing the worst that human beings can offer—crooked religiosity, petty political systems, individual betrayal, physical torture with whip and thorn and nail and hammer and spear—Jesus enters into the center of the thunderstorm of human evil and takes its full shock on the cross. Our evil is brutally, unmistakably exposed, drawn into broad daylight, and judged—named and shown for what it is. Then, having felt its agony and evil firsthand, in person, Jesus pronounces forgiveness and demonstrates that the grace of God is more powerful and expansive than the evil of humanity. Justice and mercy kiss; judgment and forgiveness embrace. From their marriage a new future is conceived.⁵

McLaren espouses a view of the cross that is similar to Bell’s, but without the explicit commitment to an ideology of nonviolence. In both cases, a clear picture of postliberal soteriology in full bloom is evident.

Other challenges to the penal-substitution theme of the atonement are less extreme. Authors like Joel Green and Scot McKnight do not want to deny penal substitution, but rather appreciate it as one of many metaphors in Scripture and church history that have been employed to describe the redemptive efficacy of the cross.⁶ Now, it is important to see the multicolored richness of the biblical doctrine of the atonement—indeed, Scripture does describe atonement via motifs such as ransom, victory, satisfaction, and example—but it is equally important to see that


⁵Ibid.

penal substitution is the central and organizing theme.\textsuperscript{7}

But can the penal substitutionary motif of the atonement be disposed of, reinterpreted, or pushed to the side so easily? What are the consequences of such a denial? This study will draw a connection between the doctrine of penal substitution and the worship life of the people of God. Within the biblical account of redemption, the worship of the faithful reflects the content of the faith—\textit{lex orandi, lex credendi}. So the question is this: What does the doctrine of atonement look like as it is reflected in the worship of God’s people? And in light of this connection, can a denial or deemphasis of penal substitution stand?\textsuperscript{8}

In order to address these questions, we will survey the ritual offerings prescribed under the Mosaic Covenant, noting the themes of atonement and substitution, and show that these acts formed the core of the worship of OT believers. From there, we will observe key thematic passages in the NT which demonstrate that the concept of sacrifice—and particularly the atoning sacrifice of Jesus—is still integral to worship that is acceptable before God. This study will show that the principle of sacrifice has always been fundamental to true worship. Consequently, because the reality of penal substitution arises directly from the theology of sacrifice, any denial or diminishing of the doctrine of penal substitution is devastating to worship as God intends.

**Sacrifice as Worship in the OT**

In his significant contribution to the study of worship theology, \textit{Recalling the Hope of Glory}, Allen Ross demonstrates that the concept and act of sacrifice is woven into the story of God’s interaction with the human race. He concludes that “sacrifice is at the center of worship as the basis and expression of it.”\textsuperscript{9}

While cases of offerings to God occur a number of times prior to the Exodus, this study will focus on the core of the sacrificial system in the Mosaic covenant, because the NT specifically portrays Jesus Christ as the fulfillment and terminus of that system. It is not our purpose to analyze these prescribed offerings in great detail or to engage in various technical debates regarding the procedures involved in them. Rather, the goal will be to understand these offerings as worship experiences (as they were surely intended to be) and to relate them to Christian worship (as the NT apparently does).

\textsuperscript{7}For a balanced and sensitive argument for the centrality and prominence of penal substitution among the variety of other biblical atonement themes, see Thomas R. Schreiner, “Penal Substitution View,” in \textit{The Nature of the Atonement: Four Views} 67-98.

\textsuperscript{8}While an extension of this study into the postbiblical history of Christian worship would certainly strengthen the case being made, the scope will be limited to aspects of worship in biblical times.

\textsuperscript{9}Allen P. Ross, \textit{Recalling the Hope of Glory: Biblical Worship from the Garden to the New Creation} (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2006) 505.
Sacrifice as Requirement

The beginning for this study will be the first seven chapters of Leviticus, but before surveying the sacrifices legislated there, it is necessary to remember the redemptive historical context. The book of Leviticus continues the story of the exodus and the establishing of God’s covenant with the nation of Israel through His mediator, Moses. As Leviticus opens, the people have entered into this covenant and have followed God’s instructions to build the sanctuary and its furnishings, through which God will maintain his covenant presence with the nation and have fellowship with them. Indeed, “the presence of the Lord is not only the primary theological concern of Leviticus but also the motivating force and the occasion of the book.”

The book of Leviticus is largely occupied with specific instructions for the sacrificial activity that will take place within the confines of the newly built tabernacle. Theologically, the book takes as its theme the holiness which is characteristic of God and to which the people must aspire to receive the blessings of God’s covenant presence among them. Because YHWH, the Holy One, has taken up residence among the people, they must be holy in honor of their covenant Lord (19:2).

The problem with all of this, of course, is sin. The people were emphatically not a holy, pure, or clean people. Leviticus presents the pattern that God established in order to facilitate holiness and remove impurity from his treasured people so that they might dwell with him in covenant fellowship. And this is where the nexus between atonement and worship begins to appear. For the people to commune with God, atonement for their sin must be achieved. Atonement was accomplished by means of sacrifices which were—when offered from a heart of faith—acts of worship.

Atonement as Worship

The sacrifices in the Mosaic system “served many purposes, but the primary purpose was to maintain communion between God and the suppliant(s).” Since four of the five main sacrifices in the system were intended to deal with sin and guilt, it is clear that the theological principle in force here is that for God and mankind to have fellowship, man’s sin must be cleansed in order for him to approach God. The following summary will seek to show certain features of the sacrifices that

\[\text{References} \]

12Some OT scholars want to maintain a categorical difference with the English terms “offering” and “sacrifice,” emphasizing that the latter is a subspecies of the former (e.g., Richard E. Averbeck, “Offerings and Sacrifices,” in NIDOTTE, 4:996-97 and W. A. Van Gemeren, “Offerings and Sacrifices in Bible Times,” in EDT, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984) 788). However, major commentaries on Leviticus (e.g., Hartley, Milgrom, Rooker, and Wenham) apparently do not find this categorization important, choosing rather to emphasize distinctions based on the applicable Hebrew terms. This study will follow their lead in using the English words as more or less synonymous.
demonstrate these acts of sacrifice for atonement were also acts of worship.\(^\text{13}\)

The first sacrifice presented in Leviticus (1:1-17) is the whole burnt offering (יַעֲדָה, 'ôlâ), the most common of the sacrifices.\(^\text{14}\) This offering could be from the herd (1:3-9) or the flock (1:10-13), or in the case of the poor, it could be turtledoves or pigeons (1:14-17). The one bringing the sacrifice did so “that he may be accepted before the LORD” (1:3), a purpose which clearly indicates the atoning significance of the ritual.\(^\text{15}\) Having approached the altar, the offerer identified with the offering by laying his hand on the animal’s head before it was slaughtered (1:4), an act which the worshiper himself usually performed (1:5, 11).\(^\text{16}\) The worshiper did the butchering prescribed in the ritual, while the priest applied the blood to the altar and burned the cut-up animal on it.

The 'ôlâ was an offering designed to deal with sin or impurity so that fellowship with God might be established, or more specifically, renewed. When the offerer brought the sacrifice, he did so to be accepted by God in spite of his own sinfulness. The complete destruction of the sacrifice pictures the total submission and self-giving of the one bringing the offering. In short, this offering was “intent on expressing the dedication of the worshipper before God, within which the step of atonement would be necessary.”\(^\text{17}\)

The grain (or cereal) offering—the מִנְהָה (minhâ)—described in the second chapter of Leviticus is somewhat obscure in its purpose,\(^\text{18}\) but one statement in its description is particularly relevant to the present discussion. Whether the minhâ is presented as an uncooked offering of “fine flour” (2:1) or as a cooked offering of “ unleavened cakes” prepared in an oven, griddle, or pan (2:4, 5, 7), it is said to produce “a soothing aroma to the LORD” when it is burned on the altar (2:2, 9, cf. 1:9, 13, 17). This phrase points to the atoning efficacy of the grain offering in that it brings peace between God and the offerer, a sinner who is seeking fellowship and acceptance before YHWH in an act of sacrificial worship.

---

\(^{13}\)For a helpful distillation of the main features of these basic sacrifices in the Mosaic system, see the chart in Averbeck, “Offerings and Sacrifices” 4:1020–21.


\(^{15}\)Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations in English are from the NASU.

\(^{16}\)Hartley provides a thorough entry point into the discussion about the meaning of laying one’s hand on the sacrificial victim (Hartley, Leviticus 19–21). This study assumes rather than seeks to establish that these sacrifices pictured penal substitution. Other treatments of the topic have done this ably (for a guide to the discussion among the more recent contributions, see Emil Nicole, “Atonement in the Pentateuch,” in The Glory of the Atonement, eds. Charles E. Hill and Frank A. James III [Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2004] 35–50).


\(^{18}\)Some see it as an accompaniment to the burnt offering in order to complete it as a “food offering.” This is perhaps suggested by the collocation of the burnt offering and grain offering in passages such as Lev 14:20 (Averbeck, “Offerings and Sacrifices” 1021; Pierce, Enthroned 100).
The same phrase is used to describe the peace offering — הֵמָּה (zebah šōlāmim) — also called a fellowship offering (Leviticus 3). The precise function of this sacrificial ritual is debated, but important general conclusions for the present study can be drawn from the occasions on which the peace offering was made. This offering, perhaps more than the others, portrays the covenant fellowship that the worshiper sought with God. After the sacrifice was presented and slaughtered, a portion of the animal would be offered up by the priest on the altar, then the remainder of the animal would be consumed in a meal by those offering the sacrifice (7:11-16), while portions would be given to the priest for himself and his family (7:31-34). Though the peace offering contains some of the same elements as those that are more obviously oriented toward substitutionary atonement for sin, such as placing the hand on the head of the animal and sprinkling its blood on the altar (3:2), the emphasis seems to be on communion with God and other worshipers—a “horizontal” as well as a “vertical” dimension.

The sin offering הָטָּו (hattāʾ) is described in 4:1–5:13 and applies to cases of inadvertent sins, sins of omission, and the cleansing of ritual impurity. Two recurring themes for the topic at hand bear mentioning: first, even when transgression of the law is inadvertent—even unknown to the perpetrator—that person is still guilty in the eyes of God and must deal with the consequences according to God’s revealed will. Whether the sinner is immediately aware of his guilt or not, the result has been the pollution of God’s people and sanctuary, and this pollution must be cleansed. To accomplish this, certain features of this ritual, as with other atoning sacrifices, point to the concept of substitution—the laying on of hands, slaughtering, and sprinkling of blood.

A second and related theme is that some ceremonial uncleanness is inevitable. The holiness code in later chapters of Leviticus prescribes this offering for purification after giving birth (12:6-8) or recovering from a skin disease (14:19). These and other circumstances serve to emphasize the complete and unspotted purity of God and the ease with which His people can become contaminated.

Finally, the guilt offering הָטָּו (hattāʾ), described in 5:14–6:7 (MT, 5:14-26), deals with sins with economic repercussions in the community. “It was in the guilt (or perhaps better named ‘repayments’) offering that the civil issue of economic

---


2These occasions are developed further in Leviticus 7, but will not be discussed in detail here.

3Because this offering was used to cleanse ceremonial defilement, it is often called a purification offering (Hartley, Leviticus 55-57; Wenham, Leviticus 88-89).

4Wenham, Leviticus 94.
payment for the failures of humans was addressed.” 23 In such cases the guilty one was required to pay back what was sinfully appropriated, plus an additional 20 percent (6:5). Again, in these cases, atonement is made for the sin, unintentional though it may have been, through the slaughtering of a sacrificial animal and offering of its blood.

No survey ever seems adequate; the foregoing is no exception. Much more should be said regarding the OT sacrifices as acts of worship that bring atonement for sin and impurity, especially on the Day of Atonement, the centerpiece of the book of Leviticus. But the description above is enough to make possible some thematic observations for the purpose of this study.

Summary: Sacrifice as Drawing Near

Five observations about the Mosaic sacrificial system will crystallize the relevant OT theological input for the present study and provide a reference point for the continuities and discontinuities to be found in the NT portion of the discussion to follow.

First, purity, or holiness, was of paramount concern to God and therefore to the worshiper. Besides the pervasive emphasis on the opposition of pure/impure and clean/unclean, this principle is evident in the order in which the sacrifices were practiced:

Emphasis was first placed on sin which needed to be forgiven, to heal any breach of relationship with God. This was followed by an expression of personal consecration in the burnt offering, with its accompanying cereal and drink offerings in many instances. Thus, finally, the peace offering could symbolize the restoration of communion or fellowship with God and with others in the community of his people. Purification and purity were clearly the prerequisites for living in God’s presence. 24

A desire to commune with God, receive blessings from God, be delivered from circumstances by God, was never divorced from the consciousness of sin that disrupted the relationship between the believer (or family, or nation) and YHWH. Sins must be purified for the relationship to continue to develop. This overarching principle leads naturally to the next observation.

Second, the supplicant came as a sinner to be accepted by God. In most

---

23Pierce, Enthroned 104.

cases, the impetus for the sacrificial act is sin or uncleanness on the part of the supplicant. The goal of acceptance is stated explicitly at the beginning of the description of the sacrificial code, where YHWH tells Moses that the one who offers his burnt offering “shall offer it at the doorway of the tent of meeting, that he may be accepted before the LORD” (Lev 1:3). However, the supplicant could not come to the altar disinterestedly. The assumption of the sacrificial system is that the offerer knows that he needs forgiveness and is seeking it honestly and from the heart. Ample evidence in the Writings and the Prophets shows that the attitude of the worshiper’s heart mattered more than the physical performance of the sacrificial ritual (e.g., Ps 51:16-17; Prov 15:8; Isa 1:13-17; Amos 5:21-24).

This leads to a third observation: God is the one who grants the effective result of the sacrifices. Speaking of the laws governing offerings, Wenham says, “[M]any of the laws conclude with the remark, ‘the priest shall make atonement for him and he will be forgiven’ (or be clean) (e.g., 4:20, 26, 31; 12:7, 8). The addition ‘he will be forgiven’ (clean) is significant. Mere performance of the rite by the priest is inadequate. God is the one who grants forgiveness and cleansing.” Acceptance with God is not automatic upon the execution of the ritual’s physical procedures. This observation underscores the vital truth that the Levitical sacrificial system was an expression of God’s grace—the means by which God’s people could draw near to Him in covenant fellowship and worship. God was not manipulated by the rituals, but responded to them in free generosity. “One cannot totally divorce the act from the result achieved, but the recognition that God is the one who makes the sacrifice effective lends itself quite explicitly to the idea that sacrifice has always been grounded in grace, not ritual.

Fourth, the offering consisted of things that were costly to the offerer. “In the overfed West we can easily fail to realize what was involved in offering an unblemished animal in sacrifice. Meat was a rare luxury in OT times for all but the very rich (cf. Nathan’s parable, 2 Sam. 12:1-6). Yet even we might blanch if we saw a whole lamb or bull go up in smoke as a burnt offering. How much greater pangs

---

25Wenham, Leviticus 27.

26Pierce, Enthroned 86. It is widely acknowledged in the Christian tradition that Mosaic sacrifices did not “save” the supplicant—i.e., one did not become a believer by animal sacrifice. Rather, the sacrifices were the faithful expression of the believing heart’s desire to draw near to God in refreshed covenant fellowship. Or, as Rooker succinctly puts it, “It could be said that these sacrifices pertained to the believer’s sanctification rather than justification” (Rooker, Leviticus 54). See also Allen P. Ross, “The Biblical Method of Salvation: Discontinuity,” in Continuity and Discontinuity: Perspectives on the Relationship Between the Old and New Testaments, ed. John S. Feinberg (Westchester, Ill.: Crossway, 1988) 174-47, and H. E. Freeman, “The Problem of the Efficacy of Old Testament Sacrifices,” BETS 5/3 (1962):73-79. Pierce goes further to say that faithfully practicing the prescribed sacrifices resulted in personal transformation as well, since purity/cleanliness was the goal of all life under the Mosaic covenant. Atonement therefore “involved a life-changing process by which the people sought to preserve fellowship” (Enthroned 87).
must a poor Israelite have felt.”

Even David, as king of Israel, perceived that an offering to God must be costly. Presented with Araunah’s donation of land and materials for sacrifice, David insisted upon paying for them, for “I will not offer burnt offerings to the L ORD my God which cost me nothing” (2 Sam 24:24). The worshiper approached the altar of YHWH with a significant piece of his earthly wealth—and gave it up completely to God.

Finally, the offerer came to commune with God in covenant fellowship. The sacrificial rituals involved not just a simple request for forgiveness of sins—a simple act of “keeping short accounts with God.” The request for and granting of forgiveness was one (critical) part of the overall process of covenant fellowship. Offerings were also a way for the worshiper to celebrate God’s goodness and share that celebration through feasting and rejoicing with other worshipers (e.g., Pss 107:22; 116:17-19). This sense of fellowship with God is clear in the various biblical psalms where the writer is looking forward to “being with” God in the tabernacle or temple precincts (e.g., Psalms 27, 42/43, 84). The worshiper could hardly wait to enter into the special covenant presence of YHWH in YHWH’s own house. So the offerer was not interested only in atonement for sin, but also in other celebratory worship activities.

To summarize, then, OT sacrificial worship involved a sinner offering to God something of value out of a heart of faith, in response to revelation, in order to draw near to God for forgiveness and fellowship. OT worship was sacrificial worship, the conceptual center of which was the atonement of sin by blood sacrifice in order to draw the believing sinner and God closer together.

Worship as Sacrifice in the NT

It must not be forgotten that the worship environment just surveyed provides the vivid backdrop against which NT worship language is set. Jesus’ disciples, their followers, and the NT authors thought about and experienced worship as the development and fulfillment of the sacrificial system they had practiced until Jesus came. The selective survey that follows seeks to show that the NT presents Jesus as the culmination of OT atoning sacrifices (and of OT worship), and therefore as the sacrificial basis for NT worship.

Christ, the Ultimate Sacrifice

From the earliest direct revelations about Jesus’ life on earth, He is presented as the solution to the problem of unholiness. The angel who announced

---

27 Wenham, Leviticus 51.

28 This does not exclude the private piety of the OT saint—rather, it assumes it. As mentioned above and attested amply in the Psalms, the OT believer lived life in the knowledge of God’s constant personal attention and covenant faithfulness. It was on this basis that such a person sought to engage with YHWH in sacrificial worship.
Jesus’ birth to Joseph said that the baby conceived in Mary would “save His people from their sins” (Matt. 1:21). But how would he do this? The answer of the NT is, consistently and holistically, by fulfilling the OT sacrificial system as the sacrifice to end all such sacrifices.

Sacrificial terminology is applied to Jesus sparingly in the Gospel accounts, but the language is poignant when it appears. At the inception of His earthly ministry, Jesus is introduced by John the Baptist as “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29, 36), likely an allusion to the sacrificial role that Jesus would play in His death. Though the Baptist’s understanding of his own utterance is widely contested, probably John’s words were more pregnant with redemptive significance than even he was aware. He may not have anticipated a suffering Messiah (cf. Matt. 11:2-19), but the inclusion by the apostle John of this introduction of Jesus does seemingly show the allusion to OT sacrifice.29

Jesus also used sacrificial imagery to refer to Himself in Matt. 20:28 and Mark 10:45, where, chiding his disciples for seeking prominence, He asserted that He came “not to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.” Referring to Himself as a ransom for others is clearly a way of speaking of His redemptive ministry in terms of atoning sacrifice and likely carries an allusion to Isa 53:5, 6, and 11, where the Suffering Servant bears the sins of many.30

But the clearest cases of Jesus’ references to Himself as a sacrifice for sins cluster around the Last Supper. The Synoptics record Jesus’ mention of the cup as “the blood of the covenant” (Matt. 26:28; Mark 14:24) and “the new covenant in my blood” (Luke 22:20). All three refer to His blood being “poured out,” and in Matthew’s account Jesus specifies that this pouring out is “for the forgiveness of sins.” The reference to the OT sacrificial system is unmistakable, with the phrase “the blood of the covenant” appearing in Exod 24:8 as the Mosaic Covenant is being enacted by blood being applied upon the people.31 In the context of the upper room with a company of pious Israelites, blood being poured out for the forgiveness of sins must be speaking of an atoning sacrifice—the means of fellowship with God and, above all, an act of worship.

What Jesus instituted on that night He intended to be practiced by His followers after His death. Paul makes this clear in 1 Cor. 11:24-26 as he gave remedial instructions to the Corinthian church regarding this most important ritual. He emphasized that the celebration of the bread and cup memorializes the death of Christ, and that this celebration is to be regular: “For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until He comes.” Moreover, in the


31Ibid., 773.
previous chapter Paul refers to the taking of bread and cup as a κοινωνία (koinônia) in Christ’s blood and body, the sacrificial giving of which are celebrated in the Lord’s Supper (1 Cor 10:16). Paul himself drew a direct connection with the animal sacrifices of the Levitical system: “Look at the nation Israel; are not those who eat the sacrifices sharers in the altar?” (10:18). In this stern warning against syncretism, Paul revealed the deep significance of celebrating the Lord’s Table: it is a commemoration of—even a mutual fellowshipping in—the sacrificial death of Jesus as the culmination of the OT sacrificial system. Here we see in vivid colors the connection between the principle of penal substitution and Christian worship. In fact, in light of the foregoing discussion and given the claims of Bell, McLaren, and others, those who question the penal-substitution nature of the atonement must respond to the following question: Can the Table make much sense at all without the doctrine of penal substitution?

Christ, the Sinner’s Access to God

Any discussion of Christ as the culmination of the OT sacrificial system would be inadequate without some discussion of the Epistle to the Hebrews. “Hebrews presents the most complete and fully integrated theology of worship in the New Testament. All the important categories of Old Testament thinking on this subject—sanctuary, sacrifice, altar, priesthood and covenant—are taken up and related to the person and work of Jesus Christ.” Further, the author of Hebrews relates all this to the worship of the NT church. In what follows we will see the

---

32 Thiselton’s translation of koinônia as “communal participation” is better than “sharing” or “participation,” as rendered by many English translations. “Fellowship fails to convey the ‘vertical’ dimension of Paul’s meaning, as if to imply that the emphasis fell on the ‘horizontal’ bonding of a likeminded group.” Rather, koinônia here “denotes having an active common share in the life, death, resurrection, and presence of Jesus Christ as the Lord who determines the identity and lifestyle of that in which Christians share” (Anthony C. Thistlethwaite, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, NIGTC [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000] 761 [italics in the original]; see his broader discussion and bibliography on 96, 752-67). Robertson and Plummer have a related idea in mind when they show concern for “the difference between having a share and having the whole. In Holy Communion each recipient has a share of the bread and of the wine, but he has the whole of Christ” (Archibald Robertson and Alfred Plummer, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the First Epistle of St Paul to the Corinthians, 2d ed, ICC [Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1914] 212). This point is important because of the common mistake made by evangelicals, who in their well-intentioned effort to avoid the appearance of sacerdotism often tend to fall into the opposite error: a kind of bare memorialism that leaves no space for a genuine koinônia in the body and blood of Jesus.

33 Also, the NT doctrines of propitiation (Rom 3:25; 1 John 2:2; 4:20) and union with Christ (Rom 6:1-10 and throughout the Pauline Epistles) further bolster this connection. Jesus is the sacrifice that averted divine wrath; he is the substitute whose death counts as that of believers and whose resurrection life is granted to them. That is what the Table celebrates; what biblical meaning can it have apart from penal substitution?

34 Peterson, Engaging with God: A Biblical Theology of Worship 228. This discussion is especially indebted to Peterson’s excellent work on the book of Hebrews.
connection between penal substitution and the church’s worship by summarizing the relevant teachings of Hebrews concerning Jesus Christ as the perfect sacrifice and high priest that brings believers to God.

First, the author of Hebrews shows that Jesus is the perfect atoning sacrifice. In chapter 9, the writer begins in verses 1-10 by summarizing the OT worship system in terms of sacrifice and priesthood. Prominent features of this arrangement included the continual offering of sacrifices by priests (v. 6); the necessity of blood sacrifice to gain entrance into the presence of God (v. 7); the symbolic nature of this arrangement until “the present time” in which Christ has fulfilled its imagery (v. 9); and the inadequacy of the old system in that it could not “make the worshiper perfect in conscience” (vv. 9-10).  

Having thus prepared the negative side of the contrast he is developing, the author focuses on Christ as the better sacrifice, the substance that fulfills the shadow. He shows that Christ entered on Christians’ behalf as high priest into the presence of God (the “greater and more perfect tabernacle,” v. 11, cf. 24) by means of His own blood, which is superior to that of sacrificial animals, and so His entrance was “once for all, having obtained eternal redemption” (v. 12). This effective and enduring sacrifice is indeed competent to cleanse the conscience (v. 14).

The writer then emphasizes these same points in a variety of ways. In 9:11-28 the dominant theme is the blood of the covenant, the blood of Jesus being the once-for-all effective blood that cleanses the sinner. The key distinction, of course, is that Jesus offers His own blood, whereas the OT priest offered that of an animal (vv. 12, 25 and 10:1-10).

The above is a quick summary, because though various interpretive difficulties exist in these texts, the main outline as presented is relatively uncontroversial: Christ is the fulfillment of the OT system of sacrificial worship that pictured the principle of penal substitution. The main point at hand is how all this relates to the worship of the redeemed in the NT.

After expounding on how Jesus is the perfect high priest and sacrifice, the τέλος (telos) of the OT sacrificial system, the writer turns to exhort the reader in 10:19-25. The actual command is in vv. 22-23: “Let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith . . . let us hold fast the confession of our hope.” The appeal is based on the fact that Christ is the perfected and enthroned high priest, who

---

35 On being perfected in conscience, see especially David Peterson, Hebrews and Perfection: An Examination of the Concept of Perfection in the Epistle to the Hebrews; SNTS Monograph Series (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005) 135-36.
38 A similar twofold exhortation occurs in 4:14-16.
has entered the heavenly sanctuary by means of his sacrificial death and heavenly exaltation and opened up ‘a new and living way’ into that sanctuary for us. This challenge brings us to the heart of the writer’s concern.” 39 What the animal sacrifices of the Levitical code provided in shadow, Christ brings in substance—access to and fellowship with God.

But the writer is vivid and emphatic in his language. Christ’s provision gives His people boldness (or “complete freedom,” as Ellingworth suggests 40) to approach God. The new and living way Christ has opened is the path of access for His people to “draw near” to God freely and confidently—here, προσέρχομαι (proserchomai) is a worship word, as it is typically in Hebrews (4:16; 7:25; 10:1; 11:6; 12:18, 22) and often in the LXX (among many, see e.g., Lev 9:5, 7; 21:17, 21).

Here we see how the perfect substitutionary sacrifice of Jesus provides the connecting point between OT worship and NT worship. The author of Hebrews states it simply in 13:15: “Through Him, then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name.” New Testament believers can draw near to God in worship only by means of the “new and living way” that Jesus opened up by offering Himself as the perfect, spotless Lamb of God. Of course, NT believers do not sacrifice Jesus like OT believers sacrificed the animal—Jesus has already done that—but they enter into His sacrifice by faith and are thus brought near to God in worship. In other words, “praise is offered to God through or by means of Jesus . . . just as it is through Jesus (7:25), more specifically, through his sacrifice (9:26), that believers have access to God.” 41 So, “no longer in association with animal sacrifices, but through Jesus, the sacrifice of praise [is] acceptable to God.” 42

There is nothing in the foregoing to limit its application to corporate worship. Although praise is often envisioned biblically as a corporate activity (“magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His name together,” Ps 34:3), it is also practiced individually throughout the biblical narrative. But more comprehensively, Paul exhorts Christians to present their very selves as “a sacrifice—alive, holy, and pleasing to God, which is your reasonable service” (Rom 12:1, NET). Using more sacrifice words that are also worship words, Paul shows that the daily activities of the believer are to be sacrificial worship. The writer of Hebrews concurs as he continues in 13:16: “and do not neglect doing good and sharing, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.” In other words, Christians are constituted as “a holy priesthood to offer

40Ellingworth, Hebrews 517.
41Ibid., 720.
42Bruce, Hebrews 383.
up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ” (1 Pet 2:5).  

Worship in the NT, then, is not fundamentally different from worship in the OT, which (to recap) involved a sinner offering something of value to God out of a heart of faith, in response to revelation, in order to draw near to God for forgiveness and fellowship. The problem is sin; the approach is by faith through sacrifice that atones for sin; the worshiper responds sacrificially in love and gratitude to a holy God who reaches out to him in grace. The key difference in NT worship is that the blood of bulls and goats has been once for all fulfilled and superseded by the blood of Christ, who as the substitute and faithful high priest brings sinners near to God.

Synthesis: Sacrifice, Substitution, Service

“Sacrifice is still absolutely essential to worship, for the sacrificial death of the Lamb that the Father has provided is the basis of salvation, the means of sanctification, the focus of fellowship, and the hope of glory.”  

This is the central truth that Christians—a chosen band of living sacrifices—gather around when they assemble as God’s people to worship; the principle that drives them to offer their very selves as devotional sacrifices to God.

True worship in the Bible is consistently the worship of the redeemed. It is not sinners trying to impress God or appease Him on their own. Worship arises from those who know in their heart that they need a substitute to avert the displeasure of their holy Creator. Only one path leads into fellowship with God: a substitute who will stand in the place of sinners. This principle, penal substitution, is pictured in the animal sacrifice and embodied in the divine one. Worship is possible because of what He has done. Therefore, worship is still a sacrifice—of life, praise, thanks, and self-consecration—offered to God through Jesus. Because worshipers come through Jesus, and because His cleansing sacrifice continually qualifies them to draw near to him, they can draw near with confidence.

Sacrifice, then, is the basis and substance of worship. The penal substitution of Jesus for sinners is to be woven into the worship of God’s people. It is to be pictured in the church’s ordinances and celebrated in her gatherings. Christian worship without the doctrine of penal substitution is, quite simply, oxymoronic. A distaste for violence—much less a fashionable ideology of redemptive nonvio-

---

43 See also Eph 5:2ff., where Christ’s self-sacrifice is held up as the model for believers to follow; and Phil 2:17, where Paul describes his service to God as a drink offering that is poured out on the sacrifice of the Philippians’ service, which is also called a sacrifice in 4:18. It seems the NT is replete with descriptions of both individual and corporate Christian activity as sacrifice.

44 Ross, Recalling the Hope of Glory: Biblical Worship from the Garden to the New Creation 217-18.


46 Ibid., 241.
The Master's Seminary Journal

ience—cannot eviscerate the central truth which constitutes access to God. The sinner’s desire for forgiveness without justice cannot overshadow the inexorable truth of the wages of sin. And the central and organizing principle of the atonement cannot be reduced to just another metaphor in the crowd. The recent suppression of the doctrine of penal substitution appears to be an effort to put forward a kinder, gentler gospel. But can there be anything kinder than a God who provides a substitute so that the sinner need not face divine wrath; anything gentler than being brought into the presence of God by the Son who paid the price of access?

This is the Savior the people of God worship today, the once-for-all substitutionary sacrifice to whom an innumerable host will sing with a loud voice, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing” (Rev 5:12).
BIBLIOGRAPHY OF WORKS ON
THE DOCTRINE OF PENAL SUBSTITUTION

Compiled by Dennis M. Swanson
Director of the Seminary Library

The 2009 Faculty Chapel Lecture Series at The Master’s Seminary was on the subject of “The Doctrine of Penal Substitution.” The bibliography below is a compilation of the contributors’ research as well as additional material.

This bibliography is not designed to be exhaustive, but rather to lead the reader to sources that represent the varied viewpoints on this subject, with a strong foundation of materials supporting the biblical and historical position delineated in the articles. The reader is also encouraged to examine the “Bibliography on The New Perspective on Paul” (TMSJ 16/2 [Fall 2005]:317-24) for additional materials related to the error of NPP in the key areas of justification by faith and penal substitution.

The bibliography has five sections: (1) Reference Works; (2) Monographs and Multi-Author Works; (3) Journal and Periodical Literature; (4) Unpublished and Online Resources; and (5) Classical and Patristic Resources.

Reference Works (including Lexical Sources and Systematic Theologies)


Monographs and Multi-Author Works


Bibliography


Journal and Periodical Literature


Williams, Gary J. “Penal Substitution: A Response to Recent Criticism,” JETS 50/1 (March 2007):71-86.
Unpublished and Online Resources


Classical and Patristic Resources


REIEWS


The last several years have seen a renewed and vigorous debate on the nature of the Pastoral Epistles and their relation to the overall Pauline corpus of the NT. The now-traditional liberal assumptions of non-Pauline authorship of the Pastors are being challenged within that sphere and for the last decade a study group in the Society of Biblical Literature (hereafter SBL) has been dedicated to a re-examination of these key epistles.

Aageson’s work is part of a larger series, *The Library of Pauline Studies*, edited by Stanley E. Porter, President and Professor of New Testament at McMaster Divinity College in Canada. The series now totals five volumes and this present volume is one of the most significant. The author is Professor of Biblical Studies and Chair of the Division for Arts and Humanities at Concordia College in Moorhead, Minnesota. He has been one of the key contributors to the SBL study group and has authored several articles on this subject.

The author has compiled a detailed and specific bibliography, and useful subject and scripture indexes have been included. The text is thoroughly noted and the writing style is scholarly and clear, and though he expresses his considered opinion on controversial points, he is even-handed in his approach.

For the most part, the author views the Pastoral Epistles as a bridge of sorts between the “Pauline Scripture,” that is the so-called undisputed letters of Paul in the NT and the “Pauline Tradition” or “Pauline Legacy” of the early church. The author examines the Pastors in several different avenues: (1) the theological patterns of the Pastors; (2) an examination of those patterns against the undisputed letters of Paul, (3) an examination of the Pastors in relation to Paul’s apostolic authority; and then (4) two sections of influence of Paul and the Pastors in the early church.

The issue of Pauline authorship, though perhaps not dominating the work, is nonetheless a recurring theme that the author addresses from various angles. In the last century of biblical scholarship, the emerging view (mainly within the sphere of progressive, non-inerrantists) was a denial of Pauline authorship of the Pastors. Various lines of reasoning were promoted and eventually this denial became the
dominant view, to the point that even a respected evangelical such as I. Howard Marshall in his ICC Commentary (Pastoral Epistles, 1999) has joined the majority of those who, “take it almost as an unquestioned assumption that the PE are not the work of Paul” (Marshall, 58). The issue of authorship becomes a central issue in distinguishing what the author calls “Pauline Scriptures” and a “Pauline Canon” (90).

If Paul is not the author, the question is, how did the Pastors find a place in the NT canon? Though Aageson concludes against Pauline authorship, he notes,

The writer(s) of the Pastorals looked to the Pauline past and used a memory of the pastor to enact a version of the Pauline tradition in the present. In this functional way, the Pastoral writer(s) contributed to the development of the early church even as he sought to combat various theological opponents (208).

In other words, is it plausible to assign the Pastorals an authorship by a late-first-century Christian, facing new problems and issues in the church, who was committed to the “Pauline Tradition” and who asked the now cliché-like question, “What Would Paul Do?” Aageson’s answer to the question is yes; this person crafted letters steeped in Pauline tradition and framed in a plausible Pauline scenario. The effect was to enhance the letter’s authority to deal with the questions at hand and also to build or strengthen the Pauline legacy in the early church at a time when it was apparently in danger of being usurped.

This writer (or these writers) in the Pauline tradition were apparently so successful that by the immediate post-apostolic age, “Paul was perceived to be the author of all the NT epistles that bear his name” (122). As the author notes,

These letters and the stories recorded in Acts represented the “real” Paul for much of the postapostolic church, and they contributed to his ongoing and transforming legacy. In the emerging traditions of the church, there was ultimately no thought that the Pastoral Epistles or the so-called Deutero-Pauline Epistles were from anyone other than the “real” Paul, or that the Paul in Acts was somehow different from the Paul of the epistles. …In short, they gave rise to new images of the apostle. Paul, however, was not only a figure of apostolic authority, he was a writer of letters and a theologian who significantly shaped the first century church (ibid).

In short, the author, and others like him, are fighting a battle to retain Pauline authority for the Pastorals while at the same time denying traditional authorship and giving no weight at all to the notion of the inspiration of Scripture. The “Pauline Tradition” is viewed as largely good for the church today and largely authoritative in terms of historical precedent, but it is not absolute, and though it is “canonical,” it is not “Scriptural.”

This is a book that should be read by anyone working through the Pastoral Epistles and Pauline theology in general. The careful research of the author is evident. It represents a significant advance over the simplistic liberalism that rejects
the Pastorals as having no validity or usefulness today. This reviewer disagrees with the underlying assumptions regarding Pauline authorship presented in this work, but finds its trajectories and argumentation both helpful and stimulating.


The canon of the writing of Scripture ought to be vitally important to everyone engaged in careful study of the biblical texts, Old or New Testament. But it is a subject that is often challenging to investigate, difficult to understand, and fraught with controversy, as demonstrated by Craig D. Allert (hereafter CA), Associate Professor and Chair of Religious Studies at Trinity Western University (Langley, British Columbia), in his book, *A High View of Scripture? The Authority of the Bible and the Formation of the New Testament Canon*. Professor Allert attempts to correct what he sees as a defective view of the NT canon held by evangelical Christians in general and inerrantists in particular (“Introduction” 9-12) which he describes as “a ‘dropped out of the sky’ understanding of the Bible” (10). He continues,

What I mean by this is that since the Bible is the primary source for evangelical faith and life, it is taken for granted as being always there and handed on to us as such. We give little thought to the question of why we have this particular collection (10).

CA contends that unless evangelical Christians take into account the “how, when and why” of the biblical canon’s formation, their view of Scripture will be low, even if they believe it to have been inerrantly inspired (10-11). On the other hand, only by appreciating the complexities of the canonization process in context, that is, without “forcing and reading modern presumptions and presuppositions into the ancient evidence,” can one have a high view of Scripture (13).

CA explicitly affirms the authority of scriptural revelation, but exactly what this means is not clear, since he spends most of chapter 6 (“Inspiration and Inerrancy”) criticizing the Evangelical Theological Society’s (ETS) decision which compelled Dr. Robert Gundry to resign from its ranks for having denied the doctrine of the inerrancy of Scripture in his scholarly work (159-72).

Between the Introduction and chapter 6, CA tries to define the basics of evangelical Christianity (chapter 1, “Evangelicals, Traditionalism and the Bible”), and to show how it has historically arrived at its “low” view of Scripture (17-36). In chapter 2 (“Introducing New Testament Canon Formation”) CA describes a typical but inadequate evangelical view of the NT canon (38-40), before discussing why it
is inadequate (40-47), by showing that one can find a clear distinction in the patristic writings between the notions of Scripture and canon (44-47). He then offers his own three-phase outline of how the NT canon developed (48-52). In phase 1 “the central core of the present NT is already beginning to be treated as the main source for Christians,” although “it would be inappropriate to say that the canon was fixed” (50). This stage extends to about the end of the first century (50). Phase 2 covers the second and third centuries in which the less frequently used NT writings, such as Acts, the shorter Catholic Epistles and minor Pauline Epistles, as well as Revelation, are cited more often by the patristic writers. Nevertheless, “still no one thought of Scripture as forming a fixed collection” (50). Phase 3 constitutes the final stage of development when “fourth-century rulings about the canon beca[me] firm” and recognized from that time onwards all, but only, the twenty-seven books now known as the NT (51). The concluding section of chapter 2, titled “The Criteria of Canonicity,” treats four major tests usually given to explain why certain writings were recognized as canonical, i.e., apostolicity, orthodoxy, catholicity or widespread use, and inspiration (52-66). Here CA seeks to demonstrate that the church fathers referred to many doctrinally orthodox writings outside of the NT as inspired (60-65).

Chapter 3 (“Canon and Ecclesiology,” 67-86) emphasizes that, if the distinction CA sees between Scripture and canon holds, when the church fathers of the first four centuries refer to “the Scripture(s),” it is anachronistic to understand them as referring (only) to one or more of sixty-six books of the Protestant Bible (74). In addition, CA continues, if the NT canon was not closed until well into the fifth century, and if it developed in the way that it did, then “the Bible is the church’s book” because it “both grew in and was mediated through the church” (84). This, along with CA’s critique of doctrine of inerrancy as held by the ETS, really seems to form the central thesis of the book.

Chapters 4 (“A Closed Second-Century Canon?” 87-130) and 5 (“Two Important Fourth-Century Lists,” 131-45) attempt to show in detail from the writings of the church fathers that it is anachronistic to speak of a “closed canon” of NT writings until at least the end of the fourth century, well after Eusebius of Caesarea’s listing in his Historia Ecclesiae (ca. A.D. 330-340) and Athanasius’ famous Festal letter (A.D. 367). First, CA argues that even as a result of the controversies with heretics of the second century, i.e., Marcionism, Gnosticism and Montanism, the church still did not finalize the NT canon (88-103), and, secondly, that the evidence of the church fathers, especially Irenaeus, suggests that they valued an oral Rule of Faith far more than any of the apostolic writings (108-26). CA continues in chapter 5 by challenging the widespread (evangelical) perception that the comments of Eusebius and Athanasius indicate an unequivocally settled NT canon by the end of the fourth century (131-45).

Although they cannot be addressed in detail, several points must be made in response to CA’s arguments. First, on the positive side, this reviewer agrees with CA that many, perhaps most, theologically conservative evangelicals, especially at the popular level (10), have at best an inadequate understanding of the formation of
both parts of the biblical canon, but particularly the NT. Those who believe strongly in the complete, divine authority of an inerrant but limited—to the sixty-six books of the OT and NT—Scripture must be conversant with how it has come down to the present day and why only these particular writings possess ultimate authority for the believer’s faith, doctrine, and practice. In challenging shallow thinking on this subject, CA has done a great favor to every thoughtful believer.

Second, however, CA has completely accepted Albert Sundberg’s extreme view that neither the NT writers nor the earlier church fathers (2nd to 4th centuries) referred to a closed OT canon (44-47). This is a key point in CA’s overall argument, but it is not a strong one, since as good or better evidence to the contrary exists. It can be shown, for example, that the only books which NT writers clearly cite as Scripture conform to what is recognized by most Protestants today as the OT canon (cf. D. A. Carson and D. J. Moo, An Introduction to the New Testament, 2nd ed., Zondervan, 2005, 730-32).

Third, CA’s interpretation of some of the key evidence in the church fathers, especially Irenaeus (late 2nd century), is certainly questionable. According to CA, “Irenaeus confirms that the church of the second century really had no need of a written canon because it already had a canon of truth” (125). By “canon of truth” CA means an oral one. It is even clearer, however, that in this context Irenaeus is speaking of conversions to Christ among illiterate barbarians (Against Heresies, book 3, chapter 4, section 2), whereas he spends almost the entire remainder of the book defending orthodox doctrines (against various heretical views), using and basing his arguments throughout on the NT writings (Against Heresies, book 3, chapters 9-23). This suggests that CA has reviewed the patristic evidence so selectively that he himself is offering an inadequate view of the formation of the NT canon.

Fourth, even if it is true that many evangelicals are unaware of the complexities of the early church’s final recognition of the NT canon and perhaps refer (perhaps anachronistically) to “the Bible of the church fathers,” this does not change the fact that by early in the second century almost all of the NT writings were already being regarded by patristic writers in a manner similar to how most first-century Jews treated the OT writings, namely, as uniquely authoritative communications from God (cf., F. F. Bruce, The Canon of Scripture, IVP, 1988, 41), whether or not they say so explicitly. Merely because the church fathers do not use the word “canon,” or actually write about restricting the collection of supremely authoritative works to particular writings, does not mean that a de facto canon did not already exist, as can be shown from how frequently NT writings are cited in early patristic sources (cf. Carson and Moo, 733).

Finally, this reviewer’s considered opinion is that CA’s work constitutes a warning to every believer who holds to the inerrancy of both Old and New Testaments, and therefore their ultimate divine authority (cf. Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy, Article I, in Carl F. H. Henry, God, Revelation and Authority, vol. 4, Word, 1979, 212). If CA is correct in concluding that “the church has
something to say about what the Bible says because the Bible is the church’s book,” and, though useful as “a standard of measurement,” the Bible “could not and did not function in the early church as the only standard for texts” (173-74; author’s emphasis), it follows that “the proper lens of interpretation … [is] the ecclesial canons of the church in which the Bible grew” (175). The question must then be asked, how far away is this position from that of either the (Eastern) Orthodox Church (“the Church alone … can interpret Holy Scripture with authority,” in T. Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, rev. ed., Penguin, 1993, 199), or the Roman Catholic Church (“both Scripture and Tradition must be accepted and honored with equal feelings of devotion and reverence,” in A. Flannery, *Vatican Council II, “Dei Verbum,”* 9, 755)? CA’s book is a vivid reminder that one can deny in practice what one affirms in theory, namely, “the authority and sufficiency of Scripture” (175). To do so in matters such as the authority and inerrancy of Scripture, which are so foundational to one’s understanding of the biblical text, can this not lead to disaster (cf. 2 Tim 2:16-18)?


This book is another in the series entitled *Paul’s Social Network: Brothers & Sisters in the Faith*, edited by Bruce J. Malina. The series focuses on the interconnectedness of early church converts across western Asia, Greece, and Italy and their impact on the ministry of the apostle to the Gentiles.

In this brief treatise, Richard Ascough, Associate Professor of New Testament at Queen’s Theological College in Kingston, Ontario, turns his spotlight solely on Lydia, the businesswoman from Philippi. He begins by rehearsing her prominent role in the establishment of the first church in Europe, noting that “She was a key player in Paul’s social network—one of the pivotal sisters in the faith” (1).

Ascough introduces this remarkable woman by recounting the data, both explicit and implicit, that is given in Luke’s narrative. And, though the information in the Acts 16 account is brief, there are a number of elements of her life that can be gleaned. Among other things, he observes that her name may be an ethnic appellation that speaks of her place of origin, as the city of Thyatira in Asia Minor was located in an area called Lydia; that she now resides and heads a household in Philippi; that she is a business woman, dealing in purple fabrics and/or the purple dye itself; and that she, after responding to the gospel, is baptized and opens her home to Paul and his traveling companions, both before and after their imprisonment. In each of these, the author delves into the background of such activities, providing a treasure-trove of historical information on her identity, the city of
Thyatira, the Philippian assembly of believers, her household, the nature and role of women in first-century business, and much more.

Occasionally, the writer slips into a more “historical novel” mode, seeking to construct “an image of Lydia based on what is known about the political, commercial, social, and religious norms of the first-century world” (back cover). At times, these historical facts carry one beyond what can be corroborated by the biblical text. Nevertheless, when read with discernment, they can open up interesting vistas into the background of Lydia, highlighting the personal, business, religious, and social milieu of Lydia’s day. The author’s Markan priority perspective and higher critical remarks notwithstanding, the historical data provides a rich repository of information about life in that part of the world during the latter half of the first century. Anyone preaching through the journeys of Paul will find it a helpful resource.


The resurgence in reference material related to biblical and theological studies in the last decade has new and updated volumes covering nearly every aspect of those studies. One glaring exception has been a lack in the area of church history. The two main works available have been The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church (3rd edition, edited by E. A. Livingstone and the late Frank L. Cross, Oxford University Press, 2005) and Jerald Brauer’s, Westminster Dictionary of the Christian Church (WJK, 1971). The former works price tag of $150 generally keeps it out of reach to the average pastor, and the later had, by the admission of the editor of this new edition, become significantly dated.

This new edition will be published in two volumes dividing roughly between A.D. 33 to 1700 and then 1700 to the present day. This is an excellent decision on the part of the publisher allowing for more articles in terms of number and depth. In this new edition (unlike its predecessor) the articles are signed and each contains a short bibliography. The articles are all solid overviews of the individual person, place, or event. Very few are longer than two full columns, most between 350-750 words long.

The work is thorough in terms of entries, but it is not exhaustive. For instance, many of the minor or insignificant popes do not receive an entry. One notable exclusion is Benedict IX [Theophylactus of Tusculum] (1012-1061 or 1085), who was notable for being the youngest pope (probably in his late teens when he was first elected) and also held the papacy on three separate occasions in his rather tumultuous lifetime. Some articles are perhaps too brief, for instance, that of Henry
VIII (300) is only slightly longer than that of his son, Edward VI (219) even though Edward reigned only five years compared to Henry’s 44 years. In addition, the fact of Henry’s exceptional importance in the transition of England to a world power is important. Also, the work does not mention Henry’s work against the Reformation, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Defence_of_the_Seven_Sacraments" "Defence of the Seven Sacraments", for which the title “Defender of the Faith” was attached to the English monarchy. However, these are exceptionally minor flaws in an excellent work.

The articles are also well balanced in terms of reflecting both the Eastern and Western traditions concerning personalities and significant works. Further, the editor has been careful to assign a wider scope of articles in the oft-neglected medieval period, and the updated scholarship in the patristic entries is noteworthy.

This is an excellent reference volume that will serve its owner well. The articles are well written, the bibliographies, though brief, are thoroughly suggestive. One can look forward to the companion volume and highly recommend this present work.


The Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture (ACCS) targets the patristic period of church history (approximately A.D. 95-749). ACCS employs computer digital research and storage techniques in an innovative fashion to identify the Greek and Latin texts composed by early Christian writers who referred to specific biblical passages. The search extends beyond the patristic commentaries on biblical books so that as comprehensive a selection of texts as possible results. The general editor for the series is Thomas C. Oden, Henry Anson Buttz Professor of Theology at Drew University.

Three goals characterize ACCS: (1) to renew preaching in the classical tradition of Christian exegesis, (2) to encourage lay study of Scripture with input from the early history of the church, and (3) to increase scholarly investigation of patristic biblical interpretation (7:xi). Oden describes ACCS as “a Christian Talmud” since the writings of the church fathers clarified and interpreted the Scriptures (7:xii). For a more detailed description of the principles and nature of ACCS, see my earlier review of Genesis 1–11, ACCS 1 (TMSJ 13/1 [2002]: 134-36).
These two volumes on Psalms draw on more than 160 different patristic works from more than 65 different authors (7:xvii). In the introduction to ACCS 7 Blaising provides readers with a survey of the primary commentaries and homilies from which selections were taken for Psalms (7:xvii–xxvii). For ACCS 8 Wesselschmidt expounds on the uses of Psalms by the early church (8:xviii–xxiii). From the former introduction readers will become acquainted with some of the major patristic commentators and expositors on Psalms. Readers will find the latter introduction helpful in understanding the general content and the various emphases of the patristic citations regarding various pericopes in Psalms.

Throughout ACCS 7 Blaising and Hardin position a brief citation from Athanasius (ca. 295-373) at the head of each psalm’s commentary section. The following stands at the commencement of Psalm 19: “As you wonder at the order of creation, the grace of providence and the sacred prescription of the Law, sing Psalm 19” (7:145). Before Psalm 45 the quote from Athanasius reads, “Well aware that the Word is the Son of God, the psalmist sings in 45 in the voice of the Father, ‘My heart has uttered a good Word’” (7:341). In order to provide at least some unity between the two Psalms volumes, Wesselschmidt would have been well served to have continued the introductory citations from Athanasius—unfortunately, he did not.

Preachers will benefit from reading the patristic homilies or sermons on Psalms, because they reflect the implications of the biblical text for the early church. For example, Basil the Great (born ca. 330), Bishop of Caesarea, waxes eloquent on the implications of Ps 15:5 for usurious interest: “This interest, which you take, is full of extreme inhumanity. You make profit from misfortune, you collect money from tears, you strangle the naked, you beat the famished; nowhere is there mercy, no thought of relationship with the sufferer; and you call the profits from these things humane!” (7:117). Jerome’s (347–420) citation of Ps 131:1 in his letter to Eustochium, the daughter of Paula, could just as rightly be applied to false humility in the present: “Harbor not the secret thought that having ceased to court attention in garments of gold you may begin to do so in mean attire. . . . Do not deliberately lower your voice as though worn out with fasting; or, leaning on the shoulder of another, mimic the tottering gait of one who is faint” (8:362).

Contrasting hermeneutical methods exhibited by the two schools of thought represented at Antioch and Alexandria show up throughout the ACCS as a whole. In Psalms one of the clearest contrasts involves the treatments of “Selah” at Ps 3:2 by Gregory of Nyssa (ca. 335-394) and Diodore of Tarsus (died ca. 394). Gregory, following the less literal Alexandrian school, viewed “Selah” as an indication that the psalmist pauses as he receives additional teaching from the Spirit, but Diodore (of the more literal Antiochene school) claimed that it represented merely an alteration in rhythm and style (7:20-21).

As with modern commentaries and expositions, the patristic writers often came to different interpretations of a particular text. Psalm 29:10 (“The LORD sat as King at the flood,” NASU; cp. “The LORD sits enthroned over the flood,” NRSV) provides one of the many windows to such disagreements. Augustine (354-430)
indicates two possible interpretations: the Noachic Flood and water used metaphorically to represent many believers (7:219). Arnobius the Younger (5th cent.) and Basil the Great, however, took the flood as a reference to the water that washes away sin (7:219, 220). Theodoret of Cyr (393-466) interprets the flood as a torrent of iniquity with which the world is inundated (7:219). Pseudo-Athanasius (apparently accidentally omitted from the biographical sketches, 7:401-16 and 8:440-53) landed upon the second view mentioned by Augustine (7:220). Due to the limited nature of the ACCS approach, readers must go to the original sources in order to read any available argumentation for or against these viewpoints.

In the matter of Ps 137:9 (“How blessed will be the one who seizes and dashes your little ones against the rock,” NASU), only two patristic sources are cited. Origen (born ca. 185) and Ambrose (ca. 333-397) both interpret the verse allegorically, making the “little ones” refer to sinful thoughts (8:379-80). One cannot help but wonder if there might be a source that took it literally and then offered an explanation for imprecatory psalms. The Scripture index for the volume leads to Jerome’s comment on Ps 141:6 that cites 137:9 and interprets the “little ones” as “trifling thoughts before they grow into ones of serious consequences” (8:398). Jerome also claims that the rock is Christ.

While preparing adult Bible fellowship lessons on the Psalms, this reviewer referred to these two volumes as part of his research. Though ACCS did not provide help in interpreting a psalm, these volumes sometimes provided good illustrations of poor interpretation and often stimulated thinking with regard to the practical implications of the text. Readers receive another benefit from these volumes: the keen awareness that many current theological issues are nothing more than an old heresy or doctrinal issue that the early church had confronted in its own time. For patristic responses to the denial of original sin, the comments of Augustine, Origen, and Jerome on Ps 51:5-9 present aspects of the debate in the early church that apply equally in modern times (8:4-6). On the other hand, evangelicals will find some patristic comments about believers becoming “gods” in Ps 82:1-7 a bit disturbing in the light of erroneous views of both Mormons and Jehovah’s Witnesses (8:145-47).

As lengthy as these volumes are, sometimes large sections of text (e.g., Ps 89:8-30, 35-49) go without any heading or comment (8:163-64). In some cases this may be due to the fragmentary nature of some patristic sources.

Craig Blaising is Executive Vice-President and Provost of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary as well as Professor of Theology. Carmen S. Hardin is Assistant Professor of Classics at the University of Louisville. Quentin F. Wesselschmidt is Professor of Historical Theology at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis.
The genesis of *A Case for Historic Premillennialism* came from a faculty lecture series sponsored by the Biblical Studies division of Denver Seminary. The purpose of the lecture series and this book is to honor longtime Denver Seminary faculty member, Bruce Demarest. Of the eight lectures/chapters, six are written by current faculty members and two by friends of the seminary. The editors are to be congratulated for such an honorable undertaking.

The title promises much and piqued this reviewer’s interest in that it created the expectation that “a case” would be made to offer strong support for belief in historic premillennialism. Unfortunately, the title offered more than the lectures delivered.

This review proceeds in two major sections. First, the contributors are to be commended for supporting a basic premillennial approach to eschatology as opposed to amillennialism or postmillennialism (see 64-67 for brief mentions of these other prophetic schemes). Several contributions were extremely helpful such as in chapter two “The Future Written in the Past: The Old Testament and the Millennium” and chapter five “The Theological Method of Premillennialism.” The remaining chapters were either unconvincing or too uneven in their presentation. For a list of all the contributors, consult pp. 173-74. This reviewer found the Scripture index (175-78), Ancient Writings index (178-79), and Subject index (181-84) to be thorough and quite helpful.

Second, as often happens with lecture series turned into books with multiple lecturers/authors, what made for a great lecture series does not make for such an effective book. This would appear to be true for this volume. One senses an underlying tone of scholastic elitism throughout, particularly when comparing historic premillennialism with futuristic premillennialism (a.k.a. dispensationalism). A futuristic view of Revelation and eschatology in general has more representatives than the two cited most often, Hal Lindsey and the fictional series (*Left Behind*) whose purpose presumed a right theology and never was designed to develop or defend that theology. The reviewer was quite surprised that no mention was made of the Pretribulation Study Group, its members, or articles/volumes that have been written with serious exegetical and theological material.

This volume does not systematically deal exegetically or theologically with historical premillennialism as such, but much more with pretribulationism versus posttribulationism (championed by co-editor Craig L. Blomberg) in chapter four “The Posttribulationism of the New Testament: Leaving ‘Left Behind’ Behind.”

The chapter sequencing makes no evident sense. The volume certainly did not seem to develop a logically flowing inductive case for historic premillennialism. The reader and the book’s intended purpose would have been better served had that approach been followed. Throughout the book historic premillennialism was assumed, but never seriously proven. Ultimately, this book fails to grapple with the
most important differential between historic premillennialism and futuristic premillennialism, i.e., the difference between theological covenants (for which there is no commonly accepted biblical basis) and biblical covenants (on which most theologians agree in historical fact). Though an attempt was made by co-editor Sung Wook Chung in chapter seven (“Toward the Reformed and Covenantal Theology of Premillennialism”), no acknowledged contrast is drawn with the non-covenantal theology approach that is unique to futuristic premillennialism. This is a serious lapse given that the contributors and editors repeatedly stated that they wanted to make a very serious attempt at a scholastic case for an academic presentation of their view in contrast to what they alluded to was the popular “origin,” support, and articulation of futuristic premillennialism.

In the opinion of this reviewer, the works by the late George Eldon Ladd (1911–1982) such as The Blessed Hope (1956), The Gospel of the Kingdom (1959), The Presence of the Future (1974), and A Theology of the New Testament (1974) remain the most bibliically articulate and compelling pieces of literature supporting both historic premillennialism and its associated posttribulationism.

Let this reviewer conclude on a positive note. He agrees with the comment made by the co-editors (xvi), “…no one has emerged to take his [George E. Ladd’s] place.” That remains true to this day.


Professor Craig L. Blomberg, Distinguished Professor of New Testament at Denver Seminary, is highly qualified to contribute a new commentary to the growing literature on the Epistle of James. He has studied James more intensely than any other book of the Bible in preparation for teaching its entirety over twenty times to exegesis students at Denver Seminary. Mariam J. Kamell, who is pursuing her Ph.D. in NT at the University of St. Andrews, joins him as co-author of James. The authors feel that the product is genuinely “team-taught” rather than merely “tandem-taught” (p. 14).

The format of the Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the NT series, of which James is the first volume, did not allow the authors to provide a detailed introduction to James. Yet, a span of 15 pages (21-35) has a more than adequate treatment of the preliminary matters of outline, circumstances, authorship, and date.

overarching structure; (2) A broad topical or thematic structure; (3) A structure that prioritizes key themes; (4) A structure informed by Greco-Roman rhetoric or modern discourse analysis. Blomberg and Kamell reject the first approach, while glean¬ing insights from the other approaches. They conclude that three key themes (trials; wisdom; riches and poverty) along with “the central theme of a right approach to wealth and poverty” (26) lead to the following working outline: Greetings (1:1); Statement of the Three Key Themes (1:2-11); Restatement of the Three Themes (1:12-27); The Three Themes Expanded (2:1-5:18); Closing (5:19-20).

James, the half-brother of Jesus, is ably defended as the author of what is probably the first NT document written. Sometime in the mid-to-late 40s (before the writing of Galatians), the chief elder in Jerusalem wrote from there to a group of primarily Jewish-Christian congregations who resided somewhere in or around Syria. Central to his letter is “faith in action, especially in social action” (35).

A five-page, double-column, select bibliography is the next portion of the commentary. It consists of 132 entries with the majority of the entries representing works completed in the 1990s (51 entries) and the 2000s (49 entries). At least 10 of the works are in German. The bibliographic data in the footnotes generously supplement these entries. The breadth of the entries is reflected when the authors reference articles in Spanish and Italian in different footnotes on the same page (84)!

The “Commentary on James” (43-253) portion of this work consists of 11 chapters and is the heart of the book. Each chapter divides into the following sections: Literary Context; Main Idea; Translation and Graphical Layout; Structure; Exegetical Outline; Explanation of the Text; Theology in Application. A periodic feature of a chapter is the “In Depth” discussion (“Are the Rich in 1:10-11 Christians?” [57-58]; “Is This a Worship Service or Christian Court?” [110-11]; “Were the Teachers Only Men?” [154-55]; “Does Wisdom Equal the Spirit in James?” [178-79]). Unfortunately, these discussions can be located only by reading through the commentary.

The bulk of the “Commentary on James” is the explanation of the text. The format of these pages is double columns. The norm is to focus on a verse by providing the authors’ own translation followed by the Greek text in parenthesis. Before looking at the details of the text, the relation of the verse to its context is stated. At times conjunctions are not clearly developed (“for” in 2:10 [118] and 2:13 [119-20]). Attention is given to the meaning of non-routine terms, an analysis of syntax, and a discussion of many interpretive issues. The authors do not shy away from terminology found in standard intermediate grammar books. A random page (75) dealing with 1:18 has references to asyndeton, causal participle, instrumental dative of means, descriptive genitive, and partitive genitive. This is good news for readers who are seeking to enhance their understanding of the Greek language. An
important lesson on syntax can be learned if a person consults the footnotes (i.e., 87 n. 25, temporal participles modifying a main verb in the imperative mood).

Significant textual issues are treated in the footnotes. The treatments can be brief, but on the whole the discussions are illuminating. Blomberg and Kamell chose to spotlight primarily text matters that the United Bible Societies' Greek New Testament deems worthy of note.

Sprinkled among the explanations of the text are helpful applications. The reader of the commentary is reminded that the message of James is not just for the head and heart, but also for the hands. The author has a word for nominal Christians (54), for those in pastoral ministry (71), for “bloggers” (99), for those who glibly say “if the Lord wills” (209), etc. These sporadic applications are enhanced by the “Theology in Application” section of each chapter. A person should not get the impression that these parts of the commentary are contrived pragmatics. Rather, such pages are truths that challenge Christians with the message of James (i.e., Christians suffer from “affluenza,” 211-12). On one occasion, the authors go too far in the area of relevancy by using the “N-word” (121).

Some suggest the Epistle of James is weak in the area of theology. The authors counter this viewpoint by devoting 10 pages (254-63) to a discussion of “The Theology of James.” The major theological contributions of James are considered under the headings that emerge from the text rather than those found in standard books dealing with systematic theology. Blomberg and Kamell discuss the areas which they see as most central to the most peripheral: Wealth and Poverty; Trials and Temptations; Wisdom and Speech; Prayer; Faith and Works; Law and Word; God; Christology; Eschatology; Other Themes. In light of the theology of James, they conclude the bottom-line unifying motif or subtheme of this epistle is believers should become people of integrity (261).

James concludes with a “Scripture Index” (264-71), “Subject Index” (272-76), and an “Author Index” (277-80). This reviewer wonders why the subject index contains entries for “arists” (56, 69, 88), “apostrophe” (220), Semitism (112), and Septuagintalism (115, 138), but none for “asyndots,” “genitives,” “imperatives,” etc. Since the commentary pays significant attention to syntactical matters, it would have been very beneficial to have various grammatical categories to be in the subject index. The author index is very helpful, but the reader should be aware of the misspelling of names (Adeymo should be Adeymo; “Jenkins, D. Ryan” should be “Jenkins, C. Ryan”), invalid page numbers (page 36 does not exist for Adeymo, Tokunboh; “Dyer, Charles H.” can’t be found on page 246, but can be found on page 237 [likewise for “Zuck, Roy B”]; “Porter, Virgil V., Jr.” can’t be found on page 35), and confusion of names (“Taylor, Mark E.” needs to be distinguished from “Taylor, Mark H.” [22, 25, 41]; “Barton, Bruce B.” needs to be distinguished from “Barton, Stephen C.” [191]).

Blomberg and Kamell are strong advocates for inclusive language translations (48, 53, 69, 90, 130, 154-5, 224, 255), even to the point of admitting a less than elegant translation (i.e., 5:20 – “the error of his/her ways;” “saves his/her
Quotations from Scripture that are not the authors’ own translations directly from the Greek are usually taken from the TNIV (25). A related gender issue is awkwardly tackled in an “In Depth” article: “Were the Teachers Only Men?” Yet, Jas 3:1-2 is not the best place to argue for the authors’ understanding of 1 Tim 2:12.

At times, James can be a bit frustrating when treating interpretive issues. The authors solve problems in three ways. Sometimes it is an in-depth approach where various alternatives are given with accompanied arguments and a conclusion is reached. On other occasions, there is simply a discussion of the views and a conclusion. A more problematic method for an exegetical commentary is a brief discussion of a problem with no conclusion (119—the examples of do not murder and do not commit adultery; 131—middle or passive verbs; 248—true passive or implied middle; etc.). Thankfully, the approach typically taken in this commentary is the first one.

This first volume of the Exegetical Commentary on the NT series published by Zondervan has many commendable features. First, as has already been mentioned, the explanation of the text is a highlight of James. This does not mean that the reader will agree with every conclusion reached, but he will have his exegetical faculties stimulated. Second, the “Literary Context” and “Structure” sections found in each chapter are extremely helpful for a book like James, where it has been suggested that the letter is simply a “string of pearls” with no relationship between the sections. Blomberg and Kamell in these sections dispel that myth. Third and final, the translation and graphical layout which provides the flow of thought within a text can be of help for the intended audience of the busy preacher or teacher. A similar layout of the Greek text would have been beneficial.

Students of the Epistle of James should wholeheartedly welcome this work by Blomberg and Kamell. The authors are to be commended for producing an excellent commentary on the very practical book of James. The discussions in the body of the commentary will not always satisfy the needs of scholars, but the footnotes demonstrate the authors are more than aware of the issues.


Of the writing of many books on NT survey there is no end. This reviewer thought up that paraphrase of Kohelet’s lament when he heard of yet another NT survey textbook to hit the already overcrowded market of academic publishing. Why would Zondervan issue yet another book of this type when it already publishes the fourth edition of Gundry’s survey and the second edition of Carson and Moo’s introduction? Such a book must justify its existence by its unique contribution to the
many similar books in the market. The reviewer’s concerns were answered when he began to peruse this truly unique and quite helpful volume. The co-authors teach undergraduates at Wheaton College and I would not be surprised if this text came out of a collaborative course surveying the NT writings.

This volume is worthy of serious consideration by teachers and students because of two great strengths. First, the work fulfills the goal expressed in its title and sub-title. The authors work hard at placing the NT writings firmly within their historical and cultural contexts. They devote over one hundred pages to the historical setting of the NT, the world of Jesus in His homeland, and the Mediterranean world of the apostle Paul before anything is mentioned about the written and oral sources for the Gospels. In their discussions of the individual biblical books, they still attempt to provide the historical context of each writing. The volume concludes with a helpful chapter on textual criticism, canon issues, and some balanced ideas on translation theory. Though the authors utilize the TNIV, their comments about translation theory avoid any attack on the formal equivalence approach favored by advocates of versions like the NASB and ESV.

The second great strength of this volume is the absolutely stunning visual layout. This book has more high resolution photographs than any other similarly sized book that this reviewer has ever surveyed. The “photo credits” extend to three finely printed pages (477-79). Many of the photos are the work of TMC/TMS grad Todd Bolen on his BiblePlaces.com web site. I had not previously seen many of these photographs. Some superbly done and accurate maps also illustrate the written explanations. The visuals do not just serve as decoration, but enhance one’s mental image of the items, places, and people mentioned in the NT writings. This marvelous feature causes this volume to stand above other NT surveys. The downside of this visual feast is its inevitably more expensive price tag.

The authors maintain a high view of Scripture and generally espouse conservative positions on most all the issues that concern evangelicals. While explaining the various theories proposing Mark as the first Gospel, Burge cautions the reader that all of the views are hypotheses. “Q particularly is hypothetical, for no such document has ever been found” (117). Some will be dissatisfied that the authors do not espouse the ancient chronological order of the Gospels. They do recognize, however, the theoretical nature of all such synoptic theories. They affirm Pauline authorship of the Pastorals (370-72) as well as the Petrine authorship of 2 Peter (405-7). Such issues have become something of a litmus test for “conservative” introductions to the NT. For the differences in style and vocabulary in those books, they suggest that amanuenses may have played a role in their final composition.

Though one may disagree with an item here and there, this reviewer was pleased with the degree to which the authors affirm traditional positions on controversial issues. For example, in her controversial discussion about the role of women, Lynn Cohick carefully maneuvers her discussion of complementarian and egalitarian positions in her explanation of 1 Timothy 2 (367-69). Discerning eyes can see that she favors the latter approach, but she does not unduly prejudice her
presentation. Gene Green explains the controversial issues surrounding the “New Pauline Perspective” in a fairly even-handed manner (264). One may guess that an editorial hand may have taken a sharp edge off some of these discussions. Some critics will feel that leaving many conclusions on controversial issues for the reader to decide is not wise. Here, however, the important role emerges for the professor who must guide his students through the issues raised by this and any other textbook.

Even though the field is crowded, this book should be near the top of the reading list in any NT survey syllabus. There will be a need for more detailed discussion of certain “introduction” issues. Some professors may want to sharpen areas that the authors leave a bit “fuzzy.” For most students, however, the material included is more than adequate for them to come away with a good presentation of each individual book and its historical/cultural context. If used in a graduate school setting, perhaps the material could be supplemented by information in a more academic introduction like Carson and Moo.

But it is the visual beauty and helpfulness of the volume’s graphics that are unequalled in other books surveying the NT.


John J. Collins is Holmes Professor of Old Testament Criticism and Interpretation at Yale Divinity School. He has authored or co-authored over thirty volumes including *Daniel* in the Hermeneia series (Augsburg Fortress, 1994), *The Apocalyptic Imagination* (Eerdmans, 1998), *Between Athens and Jerusalem*, 2nd ed. (Eerdmans, 1999), and *Introduction to the Hebrew Bible* (Augsburg Fortress, 2004). Collins is also one of the editors for *The Catholic Study Bible—NAB* (Fireside Catholic Publishing, 2009).


In the first of these essays, Collins depicts historical criticism as “a process rather than a technical method” (3). Behind its name (historical criticism) resides the fact that this form of scholarship regards the historical context of Scripture as basic (4). It is not surprising then that historical criticism developed hand in hand with historiography. The following Troeltschian principles guide historical criticism: the autonomy of the historian, analogy, and criticism (5-6). For biblical studies, these three principles mean that the study of the Bible must proceed free of all ecclesiastical authorities and dogmas, must include a commitment to the present being a key
to the past (since human nature remains the same), and must view results as provisional and never final. Collins succinctly states the bottom line in this approach: “it implies that anything we believe may be subject to revision in light of new evidence and undercuts any idea of unchangeable revealed truth” (6). Rounding out this first essay, Collins discusses the relationship of historical criticism to postmodernism (11-17), deconstructionism (17-23), ideological criticism (24-25).

“The Crisis in Historiography” (27-51) stands as one of the more interesting chapters of The Bible after Babel. Throughout the essay Collins takes a centrist position, aligning himself generally with Israel Finkelstein and William Dever rather than with minimalists like Thomas Thompson, Philip Davies, and Niels Lemche or with maximalists like Kenneth Kitchen. Prior reviews in TMSJ that help identify the positions of these men include Dever’s What Did the Biblical Writers Know and When Did They Know It?: What Archaeology Can Tell Us about the Reality of Ancient Israel (13/2 [2002]:275-79), Davies’ Scribes and Schools: The Canonization of the Hebrew Scriptures (10/2 [1999]:290-91), and Kitchen’s On the Reliability of the Old Testament (15/1 [2004]:121-22). Collins reveals his biases readily. He denigrates the authority of Scripture by declaring that the argument that the testimony of Scripture “should be given the benefit of the doubt is credible only to committed believers” (38). His denial of historical status to Genesis 1–11 (“best understood as myths,” 46) rests upon his opinion that the “authors and compilers of Genesis”(!) give no indication that their intentions included “providing an accurate record of the past” (38). This statement totally ignores the force of “and it was so” (וַיְהִי־כָּנָן), wayḥī-kān in Gen 1:7, 9, 11, 15, 24, and 30, by which Moses indicates that these things “happened just so” (cf. Bryan Murphy, “Genesis 1:1–2:3: A Textual and Exegetical Examination as an Objective Foundation for Apologetical and Theological Studies” [unpublished Th.D. dissertation, The Master’s Seminary, 2008], 51 n. 62, 70-71, 129).

In his treatment of the exodus and liberation theology (53-74), Collins reveals his unease with the biblical account of the conquest of Canaan and the wholesale annihilation of the inhabitants. He declares that the Puritans, the Boers, Zionists, and conservative Christian supporters of modern Israel all appeal to the conquest as the legitimatizing paradigm for oppression and ethnic cleansing (62-63). He concludes that any appeal “to biblical authority in ethical matters is a dangerous undertaking” (69). The mantra to which Collins returns at the end of this essay “is a cautionary one against according intrinsic authority to any story or any text” (74).

Feminist and gender studies occupy Collins’ attention in the fourth chapter (75-98). Actually, his outline of the development of feminist and gender studies marks a section well worth reading (77-85). His anti-biblical rhetoric soon escalates, however, as he writes, “Perhaps the most egregious example [of unfounded assumptions] is the traditional Christian doctrine of original sin” (86). Before the conclusion of the chapter, Collins manages to accuse Gen 1:27 of being oppressive since its limitation to male and female “has the effect of relegating whole categories of people (homosexual, transgender) to a status of abnormality” (97). Then, at the
end of the essay he returns to the attack: “[T]he Bible is not an infallible guide” (98) in dealing with gender issues.

“Israelite Religion: The Return of the Goddess” (99-129) focuses on the contribution “asherah” inscriptions at Khirbet el-Qôm and Kuntillet Ajrud that might indicate an Israelite belief in a female consort for Yahweh. As Collins observes, “Much of this discussion is obviously speculative” (113). Archaeological evidence for Israelite polytheism supports the accuracy and integrity of the biblical narrative (cf. 2 Kgs 16:4; 17:10; Jer 2:20). Revisionist and deconstructive methodologies fail to see that the text itself provides the *prima facie* evidence.

In his final chapter (“Is a Postmodern Biblical Theology Possible?” 131-61) Collins rejects *sola Scriptura* and opts for the imposition of historical criticism founded on extrabiblical evidence. As he explains, “My context, however, is an academic one, and my concern is for developing an approach to the Bible that takes account of current scholarship as fully as possible. This concern, in my view, is also highly relevant to the churches, if they at all respect the intelligence and integrity of their members” (134).

Though Collins presents an interesting and insightful description and evaluation of the current state of historical criticism, he nevertheless staunchly advocates an anti-evangelical stance in hermeneutics, critical methodology, theology, and ethics. Denying the authority of Scripture, he substitutes human intelligence for divine revelation. He concludes, “Biblical theology and biblical ethics, in short, can never be determined *sola scriptura*, by appeal to ‘the text itself,’ but always have the nature of a dialogue between the Bible as we understand it and whatever knowledge we may have from other sources” (161).

This book concludes with a fairly extensive bibliography (162-92) and indexes of names (193-99) and ancient literature (200-201). Conservative and evangelical sources are noticeably lacking. Collins includes only Kenneth A. Kitchen’s *On the Reliability of the Old Testament* (Eerdmans, 2003), which he calls “too blatantly apologetic to warrant serious consideration as historiography” (35).

---


In recent years literature about world missions has seen an almost exponential growth after several decades of relative stagnation. This recent addition to reference literature represents an attempt to examine theological terms and concepts in light of their application to missionary and missional constructs.

The volume has a normal reference format with articles varying in length from a few paragraphs to several pages. Each article has a useful bibliography and, in keeping with the publisher’s normal excellence and attention to detail, an effective
use of “see” and “see also” references throughout. The main editor is Professor of Mission Studies at Trinity College in Bristol (UK) and the contributor list reflects a largely European flavor supplemented with a large number of contributions from African, Asian, and Latin American scholars and mission practitioners, as well as a number from the Indian sub-continent as well.

In his introduction Corrie states his general observations about missions and his intended purpose for the work:

World Christianity and its associated mission are going through unprecedented change and development as the centre of gravity of the faith shifts ever further ‘south’. Mission ‘from everywhere to everywhere’ challenges many traditional models of mission, and new contexts raise new questions for theologies that have hitherto seemed universal truths. Evangelicals need a mission theology with a sufficiently broad agenda, which both engages with these contexts and their perspectives while also holding on to foundational truths and scriptural boundaries (xv).

The types and scope of the articles is a rather jumbled mix of theological, anthropological, sociological, historical, and conceptual terms. Corrie states, “[T]here is plenty here that will be recognizably ‘evangelical’: a respect for the priority of the biblical text as the authoritative source of theological and missiological thinking; a thoroughgoing trinitarian view of mission; an affirmation of Jesus Christ at the heart of God’s mission purposes; a confirmation of the importance of evangelism and the making of disciples of Jesus as the focus of our mission mandate; and the gospel call to all peoples and nations to come in repentance and faith to worship the one true and living God revealed in Scripture” (xvi-xvii). But he also insists that evangelicals need to understand that “liberation as a category of salvation, the inclusion in the church’s mission of reconciliation, social justice and political engagement” are apparently equally important.

No review can detail all or even a significant number of the articles. Some important notes are important to make, though. Though an acknowledged centerpiece of evangelical theology is the inspiration (and normally inerrancy) of Scripture, the reader finds no specific article on the Bible or Scripture in this work. The longest discussion of “the authority of the Bible” consists of a few nondescript paragraphs buried in the larger article on “Worship” (441-43). Though there is some discussion of Bible translation, it is found in the larger article on “Language, Linguistics and Translation” (199-202).

Some of the normal theological categories often has a specific article, but clearly such articles were not written by contributors with specific expertise in those fields. A long, but entirely misleading, article on eschatology (106-10) misrepresents all the major millennial positions in one way or another, and the one on premillennialism calls it a view that became “prominent in the nineteenth century.” That ignores that it was the dominant position of the time prior to Augustine during the greatest missionary expansion of the church to date. After being generally unfavorable to premillennialism in terms of missions, the article then cites George
Eldon Ladd as an example of “Biblical Eschatology” though failing to acknowledge that he was a premillennialist.

A key problem with the volume is that it often wanders out of its titular construct of a reference work into the genre of advocacy for a particular cause. The article on “Ecology/Environment” (104-6) is a prime example of this. The article begins, “Is it time for humanity to be de-centered as the focus of mission?” (104). The article continues, “[P]erhaps at the heart of the matter lies the doctrine of salvation. We urgently need to avoid a reductionist view of salvation, by supplementing the dimension of human individual relationship with God with a comprehensive biblical vision of renewed harmony and justice between people and the rest of the created order (Eph. 1:9-10; Col. 1:15-20)” (105). Of course, even a cursory examination of the passages cited by this article reveals that they have nothing to do with the concept which the author calls, “missionary earth-keeping.”

The discussion of salvation centers in an article of that title (352-57), which, in this reviewer’s opinion, summarizes the overall problem with the work. Largely, it is a general overview that never actually says anything definitive. The article says nothing biblically about justification by faith or how one is saved. It does not answer the question of whether or not the gospel is the exclusive means of salvation (in fact the articles on different world religions never claim that non-Christian religions lead to damnation).

The book cannot be recommended at any level. The articles represent a sociological view of “religion,” not biblical Christianity. The sub-title “Evangelical Foundations” is entirely inappropriate as there is virtually nothing within the pages that is even remotely aligned with historic evangelicalism. It is an aimless, theologically nebulous, and biblically vacuous collection of agenda-driven articles under the guise of a dictionary.


This short book is a part of the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship Liturgical Studies Series, edited by John Witvliet and is therefore targeted at a pastoral and lay leader audience. Dyrness, Professor of Theology and Culture at Fuller Theological Seminary, seeks in this volume to give a theological and historical overview of Christian worship, yet with an eye toward the future of today’s evangelical churches.

Dyrness seeks to develop a God-centered understanding of worship by thinking of worship as God’s call and the human’s God-enabled response. Worship is Trinitarian in its God-centeredness: “[W]e are invited by God, in Christ, to respond to divine initiative in a way that is enabled by the Holy Spirit” (2). Yet this
book is not technical in its theological discussions; it is a resource to help churches think carefully about their worship practices. After all, it is what a body of believers actually do in their worship that reflects what they really believe.

After introducing in chapter one his understanding of the nature of worship and giving an overview of his approach, in chapter two Dyrness turns to a summary discussion of the history of Christian worship. These two chapters of the book provide an excellent overview of the topic, particularly if the reader already has some background in the topic. Unfortunately, without that background some of the material may be a little confusing, particularly in chapter two where Dyrness is attempting to cover so much history in such a short space.

Dyrness then presents a Trinitarian understanding of worship, centered on the glory of God and the human participation in it as people respond to God’s invitation in Christ and are formed by the Holy Spirit in their acts of worship. In the scope of the book, this leads naturally into a description of worship as a retelling of the narrative of God’s love. Here is where many evangelicals, particularly in the free church traditions, will meet some significant challenge. Dyrness thinks through worship narratively from the perspective of the traditional four-step liturgy (gathering, Word, Table, sending), a pattern that many in the free-church and revivalsist traditions are not familiar with.

Chapter six alone is probably worth the price of the book. Given all the foregoing discussion, Dyrness puts forward five lessons that his vision of Trinitarian, narrative worship teaches. Some of these points will be controversial among conservative evangelicals (e.g., “in the liturgy we honor God’s material creation”), but these are important points that deserve careful consideration (especially “the liturgy allows us to lament”).

Dyrness ends with a chapter of suggestions on how evangelical Christian worship might grow and be renewed based on his discussion. Here again, some will find certain ideas difficult because of Dyrness’ self-conscious embracing of the traditional liturgy’s four-step outline. Also, it seems at times that the author does not adequately appreciate the reasons why evangelical worship is different from Roman Catholic worship. Yet with all this taken into account, this reviewer can recommend the book for any pastor or church leadership team that is thinking carefully about worship.


The legacy of Francis Schaeffer (1912-1984) has left an indelible mark on evangelicalism. From the founding of L’Abri in Switzerland, to his writings on thought, spirituality, and culture, Schaeffer’s ideas have shaped an entire generation
of Christian leaders. Few evangelical leaders have had the intellectual impact that Schaeffer had in the twentieth century. Sadly, this legacy is slowly becoming lost to the current generation. Variously described as a prophet of the culture and philosopher of the modern times, Schaeffer embodied the voice of thinking evangelicals when evangelicals were often silent and should have spoken to culture and society. Schaeffer’s contribution to the stream of evangelical thought flowing into the twenty-first century should be carefully preserved for future generations.

In this context, Schaeffer’s life and teachings have gained in anticipation of the twenty-fifth anniversary of his death. Such biographies have a way of introducing a new readership to the work of this important man. Hearing from Francis Schaeffer’s son-in-law, Udo Middelmann, that a new biography by Colin Duriez was in final editing, this reviewer immediately pre-ordered a copy.

Duriez is the former general book editor for Inter-Varsity Press and currently offers consulting services through his business, InWriting. As an author, his research and writings focus on the Inklings, which won him the Clyde S. Kilby Award in 1994 and considerable notoriety concerning C. S. Lewis and J. R. R. Tolkien, including commentary on the recent films based upon their writings. His biography flows out of his own studies at L’Abri with Schaeffer. Readers interested in Duriez publications and activities should visit his website (web.mac.com/colinduriez).

Duriez’s treatment of Schaeffer is balanced and even-handed, avoiding the frequent critiques of Schaeffer’s apologetic method. The author also avoids defending Schaeffer as a philosopher (a concept Schaeffer himself was careful to avoid), but rather presents him as he was—with all his humanity and compassion. The work is a quality biographical introduction, particularly for those unfamiliar with Schaeffer’s life and ministry. The book is structured chronologically, well-written, and offers a balanced presentation of each stage of Schaeffer’s life and development. The work avoids slipping into hagiography and is honest in its assessment of Schaeffer’s strengths and weaknesses.

Several points should be noted. First, the biography relies heavily on secondary sources in its compilation. The numerous citations of Edith Schaeffer’s The Tapestry, particularly in the early chapters, left this reviewer with the sense he was reading an abridged and updated version of this early work. It had been hoped that any new biography would draw from the archival materials collected in numerous repositories since Schaeffer’s death. This in view, Duriez work is a popular treatment of Schaeffer’s life and ministry. Readers conversant with The Tapestry of L’Abri will likely be disappointed if they are hoping to gain new insights on Schaeffer’s life and ministry, particularly up to the concluding point of The Tapestry. Having said this, the author’s personal interview with Schaeffer in the appendix, and interviews with various L’Abri workers, was a welcomed inclusion.

Second, readers unfamiliar with the intellectual, social and cultural milieu of Schaeffer’s time may not appreciate the struggles that fomented much of his thinking. Important to Schaeffer’s contribution is the context in which it occurred.
For the generation unfamiliar with Schaeffer, such a context is requisite to appreciating his contribution.

Third, the biography avoids follow-up discussion of some of the issues surrounding changes at L’Abri since the death of Schaeffer. These issues were recently raised in a Christianity Today March 2008 article entitled, “Not Your Father’s L’Abri.” Though many young people are unfamiliar with Schaeffer’s ministry, many older individuals assume the L’Abri of today is the same as it was during Schaeffer’s life.

Finally, a review of literature pertaining to Schaeffer’s literary and speaking corpus would have been a helpful inclusion for the new readership. The breadth of Schaeffer’s writings, to say nothing of the L’Abri tape ministry (available through Sound Word at www.soundword.com), deserves a navigational map for the novice. Francis Schaeffer: An Authentic Life is a solid, popular biography that will introduce a new generation to the writings and thought of this pivotal twentieth-century evangelical thinker. It provides an excellent framework and introduction for the uninitiated prior to making a foray into his formidable body of literature and speaking materials, as well as an introduction to the ministry of L’Abri generally. Readers looking for an alternative biography might consider Barry Hankins. Francis Schaeffer and the Shaping of Evangelical America (Eerdmans, 2008). Also, those interested in Schaeffer’s life and ministry should consider Jerram Barrs extensive online courses, Francis Schaeffer: The Early and Later Years (www.worldwide-classroom.com). Barrs has graciously made his notes and lectures available to the public. Schaeffer’s legacy to thinking evangelicals will not be soon forgotten. This contribution from Duriez does much to keep that memory alive to a new generation.


The scholarly duo who co-authored this three-chapter book, first delivered its content as the first two lectures for the “Symposium on Church and Academy,” at Crichton College, Memphis, Tennessee, in 2003 and 2004. Evans contributes the first two chapters and Wright the third. Three essentials based on the Apostles’ Creed, namely the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, were chosen as the content aimed not at the theological scholar but clergy and interested lay-persons (ix). It was heartening to hear NT scholars speaking about the historical reality of Christ and the Easter events. Both men hold firmly to the actual events and do not just take them as theological ideas. Evans avers too, that no serious religious historian doubts that Jesus of Nazareth was a real figure. In chapter one, “The Shout of Death,” he also says that Jesus’ death is well attested in every writing of the NT and by early Jewish and Roman writings.
Since Evans presumes that most people do not know the reasons for the death of Christ, he presents four: (1) His Davidic-like entry into Jerusalem, (2) His zealous actions in the Temple, (3) His recounting of the Vineyard parable from Isaiah, and (4) His anointing by the unnamed woman. Each of these reasons reflect negatively upon Israel’s leadership who in the end sought to kill the figure who had become a political threat (5-9). In the main, evidence of Jesus’ anticipating His death is presented from outside the formal passion predictions (11). Evidence for anticipating His resurrection arises from Jesus’ confidence that God would raise Him again (13). The interaction between Christ and the High Priest and with Pilate receive attention, and the different focus of the interrogations is also brought out. The trial, the offer of a Passover pardon, the mockery of Jesus, the crucifixion and death of Jesus, all receive concise attention, yet the reader senses that he has been given quite a bit of background and historical information in all these areas. “Theological Implications,” closes out the chapter, remembering that what appeared to be a loss—the Master is dead—was but the beginning of victory.

Chapter Two, “The Silence of Burial,” reviews Jewish burial practices of Christ’s time and summarizes what would have been done to criminals, the archaeological evidence of burial in the Roman era, and a survey of theories on the burial of Jesus. All the evidence has only one conclusion: Jesus was placed in a tomb according to Jewish custom (67). Again, one realizes that this chapter has much information, concisely and masterfully delivered.

In the final chapter, “The Surprise of the Resurrection,” Wright reacts to an understanding of the resurrection which lowers expectation of being ultimately in the new heavens and new earth to just going to heaven and being in God’s immediate presence (75). Resurrection never meant “disembodied bliss”; rather, the preferred definition is “the life after life after death” (76). No mention is made of the intermediate state other than to remark that “life after death” is a period of being asleep, resting or waiting (77). Wright points out that with the early Christians coming from every corner of Judaism and paganism, one might expect to find a host of ideas about life after death. What the researcher will discover is that from the apostle Paul and right through to the church fathers of the second century “we find a remarkably consistent set of beliefs about what will happen to God’s people ultimately after death” (82). Wright puts forward seven mutations or modifications from Judaism’s view of the resurrection on the part of early Christianity. These include there being almost no spectrum of belief about resurrection, and that it is not as important a doctrine during Second Temple Judaism. Associating resurrection with the Jesus of Nazareth who had been executed, meant that something extraordinary had happened to make such cross-identification more than acceptable. The seventh modification is proposed as being the “collaborative eschatology” view of Dominic Crossan, in which the believer, now that Christ is risen, has become a helper in the new creation (95).

Then Wright introduces the reader to “four strange features” of the resurrection stories in the Gospels: absence of Scripture used in the Easter accounts,
the presence of women witnesses, the portrait of Jesus, and the absence of any mention of the future Christian hope. Unfortunately, the assumption is that these stories in written form must go back to a very early oral tradition. Stories told over and over again quickly assume fixed form, and although lightly edited by the evangelists, these stories reflect the four ways in which the stories were told from the start (96-97). To hold so strongly to an oral tradition base and to expend much effort in ferreting it out is an unfortunate little twist to the doctrine of inspiration.

That the tomb was really empty, and that the disciples really did encounter Jesus afterwards as bodily alive and not as a ghost, are solidly established historical facts. It is the only explanation to render. Quite unlike Schillebeeckx who thought it did not matter whether there was a resurrected body or not, Wright assesses this writer to have stopped being a twentieth-century historian. Instead, he has become a twentieth-century fantasist. Right on!

This book could be used possibly as an introductory text on background material and other information on the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. Add to this Wright’s contemporary definition and explanation and the reader might be pushed to seek out more in-depth material, historical and theological, on these important events at the end of Christ’s life on earth.


The great discoveries in biblical archaeology are generally agreed to have begun with the discovery and excavation of Ninevah (ca. 1847), and though continuing to this day, really ended its “golden era” before World War II. Individual discoveries since then have been of significant importance (e.g., The Dead Sea Scrolls in 1947; the Nag Hammadi library in 1945; the correct location of the Pool of Siloam in 2004; and even the Tomb of Herod the Great in recent months), but that era remains unparalleled in terms of volume and scope of the discoveries.

One of the significant defects in the methodologies of this early period was the wholesale removal of artifacts from the Near East to the great museums of Europe and elsewhere. The British Museum, the Louve in Paris, the Oriental Institute at the University of Chicago, the Museum of the Ancient Orient, and the Archaeological Museum in Istanbul (among others) in many cases house more artifacts than the museums of the countries from which the artifacts were removed. They certainly house the most significant ones. Even manuscripts have occasionally been subdivided; for instance Codex Sinaiticus is in four uneven pieces. The majority of the Codex is in the British Library, but other pieces are in Saint
Petersburg, the University of Leipzig Library, while some of the leaves still reside in Saint Catherine’s Monastery in the Sinai.

The authors view this volume as providing a “map to the lost treasures of the Bible. Not buried beneath desert sands or hidden in remote mountain caves, these treasures are lost in the endless halls and countless glass cases of the scattered museum collections of the world. They can be seen, but only if one knows where to go and what to look for—and, especially, if one knows why there are true treasures of the Bible” (xvi).

The authors have pulled together an enormous amount of detailed information, following the lines of the biblical chronology, significant artifactual evidences and remains related to specific biblical passages, events, and history. Each artifact is named, detailed as to its discovery and current location, its place in history, and the biblical significance of the item. The articles are thorough, crisply written, and informative. The volume is well illustrated throughout and contains eight center pages of high quality color photographs of some of the more significant items.

After the main section which presents the artifacts chronologically come some additional chapters. One deals with Ancient Biblical Texts (401ff.) and then a chapter entitled, “Sensational Finds: Genuine or Forgery?” (429ff.). The section on texts is well done and substantial enough to stand on its own. However, the section on forgeries is only four pages and appears to be an afterthought to the project. A lot more could have been done with that chapter to make it more useful. On this topic the otherwise excellent bibliography does not list Oscar White Muscarella, The Lie Became Great: The Forgery of Ancient Near East Cultures (Styx, 2000), which details the entire issue of forged artifacts and details some forgeries on display in museums.

In addition to the normal subject and Scripture indexes, the authors have included an index of “Objects by Museum” and an “Index of Objects by Museum Number” (the individual cataloguing numbers that the individual museums use).

This is a well-written and largely well-executed work that fills a need in the literature. It will serve the scholar as well as the pastor who cannot acquire all of the specialized books and articles on these artifacts, but needs a good overview for his study. This work is highly recommended.


One of the occasional lacks in some of the more conservative branches of evangelicalism is to ignore the contributions of scholars from other traditions, particularly those of the Roman Catholic tradition. This antipathy or perhaps more charitably apathy, of course, has a long history from the Reformation and the
obvious theological differences as detailed in the Council of Trent (1545-63), largely restated in Vatican I (1869-1870) and Vatican II (1962-1965). One small but nonetheless significant movement in Vatican II was the pronouncement that all people within the church were to have full and easy access to the Scriptures.

An exceedingly useful byproduct of that decree has been a resurgence of biblical commentaries from a new generation of Catholic scholars. One commentary series, Sacra Pagina (The Sacred Page), edited by Daniel J. Harrington, has been an excellent addition to the commentaries. Harrington states that the purpose of the series is to perform a “close exposition” and “maintain a focus on the issues raised by the New Testament compositions themselves” (xi). In commenting on the series D. A. Carson states, “[T]he commentaries include fresh translation, critical analysis, and theologically sensitive exposition within the Roman Catholic tradition” (Carson, NT Commentaries 28).

The author, President of Campton College at the University of Regina in Canada, has produced an exceedingly useful and detailed work on the Pastoral Epistles. He presents the commentary in the canonical rather than chronological order and presents thorough background and introductory material. The sections are short, and in the commentary portion the author provides his own translation, which, he attempts to “stay as close to the Greek text as possible” (3). The translation is followed by a section of notes where he deals with lexical, grammatical, and historical issues and points of background. He then follows with an interpretative summary. The author has then placed a bibliography at the end of each chapter. The bibliography is detailed with periodical and other literature for each section, which this reviewer finds useful. The author includes helpful Scripture and Ancient Literature, Person, and Subject indexes.

In the notes the author brings a wide range of classical (which was his primary training) and patristic literature to bear. This work is detailed and technical, but does not demand a detailed knowledge of the Greek text to be used with profit (all of the Greek words and phrases are transliterated).

That evangelicals in general and the typical audience of this Journal in particular will differ significantly with the Catholic viewpoints and interpretations is obvious. However, this is a volume and a larger series that serious students of the Bible need to consult in their sermon and lesson preparations. Anyone should profit from insights into the text and the fruits of significant research and study.

Norman Geisler and Joshua Betancourt have written an excellently researched and logical examination of the claims of the Roman Catholic Church (RCC) that it is the true church of the Lord Jesus Christ. They document their writings with quotations from the Bible, the early church fathers, the various Catholic councils, including Vatican I and Vatican II. Though they include footnotes for those with a more scholarly intent and five appendices for those who want to do further study on related topics, the book is very readable for a lay audience and clearly delineates the differences between the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church and what is considered biblical orthodoxy. Often throughout the book the authors present a base statement (such as in Chapter Five: “The Roman Argument for the Infallibility of Peter Evaluated” and why Matthew 16:18 does not support the apostle Peter being the superior apostle, with a list of twelve reasons why the verse does not show Peter to be the first pope). Most paragraphs begin with “First,” “Second,” “Third,” etc.—all the way through to the twelfth (199-22). Thus the reader can go through the book and follow the logical presentation of the material; there should be no confusion on how the authors divide the material and present and support their case. The summary at the end of each chapter is a very worthwhile review and restatement of their findings.

The claims by the Roman Catholic Church that they are the true church should be evaluated and are of great eternal significance:

According to the Roman Catholic Church, it is a mortal sin to reject one of its infallible teachings. Unrepented moral sins lead to eternal condemnation (hell). The Council of Trent often indicated this by attaching anathema to its decrees, saying something like, “If anyone, however, should not accept the stated dogma knowingly and deliberately, let him be anathema.” But the claims that the Roman Church is the only true church of Christ on earth and that its pope is the infallible interpreter of Christian truth are Roman dogma, since they were proclaimed at the ecumenical councils such as the Fourth Lateran Council and Vatican I.

This means that, according to Rome, anyone who knows and rejects this, as most knowledgeable Protestants do (including the authors of this book), will go to hell (21).

Obviously, such a claim by RCC is either true or false; as the authors repeatedly point out on multiple occasions, they cannot be both at the same time.

The authors realize the seriousness of their study because

if the claims [of the Roman Catholic Church] turn out to be false, unsupported by scriptural, historical, and rational argument, then the very structure of the Roman Church, being built as it is on its own magisterium, collapses. Not only is Rome not the true church, but it is also false in at least two, if not more, of its central claims. Its claim to infallibility would be false, since its fallibility is proven in its claim to infallibility.

Accordingly, since its claim to infallibility underlies other distinctive doctrines of the Roman Church, these too are left, by their own confession, without a solid basis for belief. By its own claim, it is the infallibility of its magisterium that grounds its essential teachings for the faithful. An infallible Scripture, they claim, is not enough. What is also
needed, they say, is to define Scripture and its meaning. Without this, they claim, there is no real basis for our faith. If so, if infallibility can be undermined, then the Roman Church as a whole crumbles. The rest of the book sets out to prove that this is indeed the case (12).

Geisler and Batancourt divide their book into eight chapters. Throughout the book the Roman Catholic position is presented (chapter one “The Roman Claim to be the True Church” and chapter two “The Historical Development of the Roman Primacy Structure,” each with substantial quotations from the original sources where possible). These are often done in block quotes so that no accusation about taking a sentence out of context can be made; the authors repeatedly stress their effort to convey accurately the teachings of the church. These chapters are followed by the authors’ assessments of the claims (such as chapter three “The Roman Argument for the Primacy of Peter: Stated and Evaluated”). Substantial biblical and logical refutations appear in each chapter, e.g., chapter four (“The Roman Argument for the Infallibility of Peter: Stated”) followed by chapter five (“The Roman Argument for the Infallibility of Peter: Evaluated”). Chapter six is entitled, “The Roman Argument for Apostolic Succession,” and chapter seven, “Is Rome the True Church?”

In the final chapter (“Why Some Protestants Convert to Rome”), the authors note how some people long to appeal to antiquity and thus want to realign themselves with Rome. To this they respond: “Just because the current Roman Catholic Church, which in turn has a connection with the early NT church, does not mean it is faithful to its apostolic founders. There is a direct continuity between the pluralistic, liberal Harvard University today and the original evangelical institution started by the Puritans, but who would argue that they have been faithful to their founders’ beliefs” (189)? Geisler further adds a more personal note in the same chapter. Having explained that he grew up in an RCC household and attended two Catholic universities where he studied under the top Jesuit philosophers and theologians, he still remains resolute:

And when I examine the real grounds upon which others convert to Catholicism, I am not impressed. By the same logic of one looking for an older, deeper, richer, more intellectual, more beautiful tradition or rejoining the family tradition, one could easily justify becoming a Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim, pagan, or better, an Eastern Orthodox (198).

All in all, this reviewer thought this was a fair, extremely well-reasoned presentation of the substantial differences. The authors conclude that while the RCC is not “a cult, it is in many respects, nonetheless, cultic in its practices” (184). Also, “[T]his is not to say that the Roman Church has no true believers in it,’ nor that it has no essentially true beliefs. It has both. It is only to say that not only is its central claim to infallibility false, but so is its plan of salvation” (ibid.). For those who did not grow up in a Roman Catholic environment (such as myself), this book was quite informative about not only the differences, but also in several crucial elements how
the differences evolved over many centuries and thus substantially differ from the Bible and the earliest church history. For those who have RCC family members and friends and desire to discuss with them logical, biblically based theology, this is an excellent resource.


This is the third and final volume of Goldingay’s commentary on the Psalter. Reviews of both the first and second volumes have already appeared in this *Journal* (see *TMSJ* 18/2 [Fall 2007]: 251-54 and 20/1 [2009]: 106-8). Those reviews cover all of the general information regarding the series and the nature of Goldingay’s approach to the Psalms, making it unnecessary to repeat those comments here.

At Psalm 90 Goldingay continues his rejection of the psalm headings’ indication of authorship. Instead of accepting Mosaic authorship, he insists on dating it in the post-exilic period (22, 24). Accordingly, he interprets the “seventy years” in v. 10 as a reference to the period of exile, rather than to the span of a person’s life (30). This demonstrates how a wrong assessment of date and/or setting can radically affect one’s interpretation of the text.

Throughout the commentary, the author elucidates the meaning of the Hebrew text, appealing to vocabulary, syntax, and poetic devices and structure. Examples of all three will help the reader of this review understand the wealth of information with which Goldingay packs this volume. First, in his explanation of 95:6 he points out that, in contrast to English versions that normally translate the first as “worship,” “all three Hebrew words denote downward bodily movement” (93). The words imply that the worshiper gets down on hands and knees. Goldingay continues, “The effect of the words comes from their accumulation. All imply self-humbling. . . . [W]e are bodies and not merely spirits, and what we do with our bodies expresses our real selves” (ibid.). This is the commentator at his best and this volume is filled with similar observations.

Second, an example of Goldingay’s treatment of Hebrew syntax occurs in his comments on “I loathed” in 95:10. He explains that the use of the imperfect (yiqtol) form of the Hebrew verb “rather than the participle suggests that Yhwh was continually being provoked to loathing by the people’s continual acts of rebellion, rather than that Yhwh was continuously loathing” (96). Accuracy at 95:10, however, does not guarantee that the commentator always identifies the best understanding of the usage of the Hebrew verbs. Readers should use discernment in accepting Goldingay’s explanations regarding Hebrew verbs. They should rely more on the explanation of distinctions between perfects and imperfects in Bruce K. Waltke and M. O’Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Eisenbrauns, 1990).
Third, referring to poetic devices and structure, Goldingay notes not only the identity of particular features, but their interpretive significance. In 102:11-2 he notes that the “wē’attā opening v. 12a stands over against the waʾānī opening v. 11b. It makes for a dramatic shift in the psalm” (154). Noting the chiastic structure of 140:4, he identifies the significance of the chiasm by saying that the center elements (“wicked” and “violent”) are “thus next to each other and reinforcing each other” (645).

In “Theological Implications” for Psalm 101 Goldingay displays regrettable naïveté with regard to the Muslim world and uses “Christian” loosely when he writes, “The Christian nations, in the West and in Africa, are especially cursed by corruption in the highest levels of government and in the world of business (this seems less of a problem in the Muslim world)” (145). One of the best “Theological Implications” section in all three volumes appears in Goldingay’s discussion of the imprecatory nature of Psalm 137 (610-14).

Goldingay’s sources upon which he most often depends are not evangelical. However, in this volume he refers once to an article in Bibliotheca Sacra by Charles Lee Feinberg (134), once to John N. Day’s Crying for Justice (Kregel, 2005; 289 n. 54), twice to Edward J. Young’s exposition of Psalm 139 (640 nn. 51, 52), twice to articles by David G. Barker in Grace Theological Journal (185 n. 32) and Bibliotheca Sacra (459 n. 22), and six times to David M. Howard’s Structure of Psalms 93–100 (Eisenbrauns, 1997). More frequently he refers to John Calvin’s works (41x), Spurgeon’s Treasury of David (15x), and Derek Kidner’s Tyndale OT Commentary on Psalms (12x).

Just like many of the higher critical sources he cites, Goldingay has no compunction in suggesting that the composer of Genesis 1–3 may have utilized Psalm 104, showing a non-adherence to Mosaic authorship of Genesis 1–3 (182). In his treatment of a Messianic psalm like Psalm 110, he declares that “One would never guess this interpretation from the psalm; it can only be read into it” (299). The non-Messianic view of Psalm 110 has to begin by denying the integrity of the psalm heading attributing its authorship to David (“It is difficult to see pattern or logic about links with David in the latter part of the Psalter,” 293). If David is speaking in v. 1 (as the heading indicates), “my Lord” cannot refer to a human king. Who is David’s lord?—only the “Lord” of heaven and earth can fulfill that role. This juxtaposition and the fact that Yahweh speaks to “my Lord” guarantee that a literal, grammatical hermeneutic results in seeing this as a Messianic psalm. It is not a matter of NT reinterpretation.

Although examples of dubious exegesis and exposition mar the commentary here and there, seminarians and pastors alike will benefit substantially from Goldingay’s 3-volume commentary on Psalms. No commentary is perfect and the benefits clearly outweigh the detriments in these volumes. No single commentator will be able to exhaust a mine as deep and rich as the Hebrew Psalter.

One of the oft-neglected aspects of biblical interpretation is the environment and ecology. Both of these factors, combined with the geography, will largely dictate the direction a culture may move in any region. In this book the author works through the natural history of the OT, demonstrating how the various environmental factors influenced the Jewish nation and affected relations with their neighbors in the Ancient Near East.

The author is Professor Emeritus of Environmental Sciences at the University of Massachusetts and Senior Research Scientist at the Center for Climate Systems Research at Columbia University. He is the author of more than 20 books and technical articles and has made a specialty of the environment in the Middle East, having grown up in Israel and worked there. As a young man he joined the Sdeh Boqer kibbutz in the Negev. The author tells of meeting David Ben Gurion, who in 1953 resigned as Prime Minister and moved to Sdeh Boqer where he lived until his death in 1973.

The strength of this work is in the author’s extensive knowledge of the land of Israel and its environment. His explanations of the ecology and how it affected and often dictated the life of the Jewish nation in the OT era is clear and well written. He weaves this knowledge into his rather popular narrative of OT history. In this area, he admits that he is largely self-taught, but his work is respectable and generally takes a conservative line in relation to historicity and dates, though acknowledging disputes in both areas among biblical scholars.

This is a book to supplement and fill in details of natural history that are generally absent or neglected in standard historical studies. It is well illustrated and the bibliography is extensive. Another strong aspect of the work is the author’s understanding of cultural geography as he deals with the various people groups of the Ancient Near East, particularly migration patterns and the overall importance of the land as a bridge between the continents.

Few will pay the rather steep price of $75.00 for the cloth hardback edition, but a paperback edition is available at a more reasonable price of $24.00. It is a profitable work if one is willing to do the work to extract the grain from the straw.

Theologians dealing with Christology cannot afford to ignore the NT exegete in his studies of the Gospels. “Will this book contribute to my understanding of Christ?” is the question being asked. The ‘blurbs’ on the back of the dust-jacket, alert the reader that this book comes from the standpoint of oral tradition and historical criticism. The yellow light of caution immediately switches on and the reader proceeds with care. Horsley, one colleague advises, has overturned historical criticism’s assumption of the centrality of the Gospels as written texts. The Jesus traditions are proposed as coming from popular traditions and transmitted through oral performance and not through the textual work of a scribal elite. The major areas which he addresses are “People’s History,” “Oral Performance,” “Social Memory,” and “Hidden Transcripts, the Arts of Resistance, and Moral Economy.” The data provided from these studies will not leave Jesus detached from His culture, vis-a-vis the Jesus Seminar, but will show Jesus and the early Jesus movement as firmly rooted in Israelite social memory (127).

“During the last three or four decades a combination of new questions, fresh perspectives, borrowed methods, and expanding research has dramatically changed the way we approach and interpret biblical texts” (127). Horsley, much earlier in the introduction under the heading “New Directions,” issued an invitation to join him in exploring new approaches to those questions and challenges which were not anticipated by “better-established” approaches. In the long term he sees this as culminating in a richer appreciation of the Gospels (10). Hmmm!

Any exegete/theologian readily welcomes more “facts and figures,” expanding the knowledge of the historical, cultural, religious, political, and philosophical background of any particular time in Bible history. The motivation should always be to understand the text better in a perfectly normal and straightforward fashion. It is not information by which to formulate a methodology for establishing some fresh interpretive principles which appear to be a challenge to the integrity of the text. It was slow at first to follow along as various bits of information came together in those major areas mentioned above. As Horsley puts it, “Our approach will be eclectically multidisciplinary and self-consciously critical when adapting a given model for a particular purpose” (34). He gives attention to the impact of Imperial Rome on the regions like Judea and Galilee. The Romans did carry out periodic repression on Jesus movements after Christ’s crucifixion and undoubtedly such repression may very well have influenced the way of life by the peoples of that period. No single individual lives in a vacuum untouched by anything in this world. A problem addressed by Horsley is that of limited literacy in an environment of oral communication (57-63). Questions arise, however, when the sociopolitical analysis is done and is then is used to determine how to interpret the biblical text, as well as why the different writers or editors changed what was written down beforehand. In fact, now it is recognized that there were no stable texts of Mark, Matthew and Luke or John in late antiquity (224). “Unstable” means that the documents kept changing and developing because oral communication predominated, even in literate circles. Is it not better to recognize that oral tradition
is notoriously unstable? Proposing that the written NT documents have no stability seems to this reviewer to be a less than favorable look upon inspiration, infallibility, and authority of the Gospels, written down by the men whose names they bear.

The consistency with which Q is cross-referenced and mentioned is unbelievable. Soon it became rather irritating that so much energy was being directed to a document as yet unseen. Chapter three takes thirty-two pages to cover the subject of “Oral Performance and Tradition in Q” (52-88). It would not be wrong to assert that the author and the writers and scholars he cites and to whom he refers, appear to have had a greater respect for this elusive Q document than they did for the biblical text. Anyone standing, as it were, on the outside looking in, would find the practice of honoring Q an instance of the emperor’s new clothes.

As for the answer to the theologian’s opening question, “Little, if any new data on the person of Christ came to light, but as an immediate follow-up a more serious study of Bibliology is definitely in order.” Recommend or not? Obviously, if one is interested in Q, then he will look on this book with favor, but if not, he will look upon it with disfavor.


One might wonder at either the wisdom or necessity of an “All” of anything in or about the Bible given the classic set of volumes created by Herbert Lockyer. However, this new volume by Losch contains several helpful additions, updated research, and an upbeat writing style which makes this volume a welcome addition to any library of biblical studies.

The volume is divided into three main sections: (1) the A-Z Dictionary with the larger articles on all the biblical characters about whom some information is available; (2) All the People of the Bible and Apocrypha, a listing of everyone, even if the name occurs only in a genealogy, with a pronunciation guide and main references where the name occurs; and (3) a series of charts of the Kings of the Jewish Monarchies, the Seleucid Emperors, the Maccabean Leaders and Hasmonean Kings, the Family of the Herods, and the Herodian Dynasty.

In the main section of the work the author has included entries for personalities of the Apocrypha as well as individuals who are not mentioned by name (e.g., Nero, 316ff.) but loom large in the history and narrative. It also has entries for local deities (e.g., Molech, 298) and dynasties (e.g., The Herod Family, 151ff.).

The longer entries on individuals are popularly written and flow exceptionally well. The entries are not technical as in the *Anchor Bible Dictionary* or an equivalent frontline reference work, but they are thorough and often insightful.
Losch includes occasional footnotes, but does not cite any sources and has no bibliography. He can be faulted in places; for instance, his views of the text (e.g., denial of Pauline authorship of the Pastorals, 425) and historicity of certain characters (e.g., his equivocation on the historicity of Daniel, 83ff.). However, those views do not interfere with his presentation of characters as the biblical text presents them. Generally the author avoids critical views related to the narrative and presents an overview in a straightforward manner.

Even with such issues, this is a work recommended for the pastor and Bible-study leader. It is a handy, well-written reference work and will give anyone doing a study of biblical and extra-biblical characters a good starting point.


In this technological age one of the enjoyable features of some in-car GPS devices is not only seeing a map, but being able to click a button and find out some basic information about the towns one is passing through. This is exceptionally helpful for anyone in an unfamiliar area. Bibles often have a set of maps, but with no other information, most readers are no better off than they would be without maps.

In this work the author has created brief narratives on nearly 100 of the more significant cities that occur in the Bible. He provides a significant amount of information (although not documented) on the locations and gives an overview of their place and significant extra-biblical information about the cities and some of the biblical significance of the sites.

Only a few basic maps (in black line format) are located at the back of the volume. The work has no detailed maps of individual cities, no maps of roadway systems to show how cities are interconnected, and only a few site photographs, most of which are of marginal value.

The caption on the photograph on p. 121 identifies it as “The Western Wall of the Temple” in Jerusalem, but the picture is actually the eastern wall and the sealed eastern gates. The entire caption reads, “The Western Wall of the temple in Jerusalem is all that remains of Solomon’s magnificent structure. Destroyed by the Babylonians in 587 BCE and rebuilt by Herod in the first century CE, it was leveled by the Romans in 70 CE” (121). The Western Wall or Wailing Wall, of course, was not part of the temple structure, but the retaining wall that Herod built to enlarge the temple mount area. Herod did not rebuild Solomon’s temple, but enlarged and beautified the temple that had been rebuilt under Ezra (Ezra 6).

Though the author has occasional footnotes, they are used only to expand on some point, not to provide reference information. In fact, he provides no
bibliography or supporting documentation at all, and only occasionally makes a reference such as “many scholars believe...,” a vague citation. He makes several dubious statements about both the historicity of events (such as the account of the Battle of Ai in Joshua, 14) and the idea of non-Pauline authorship of Ephesians (91). He also displays the fascination that modern scholars have with the city of Sepphoris. Though Sepphoris was clearly an important regional capital for the Romans in the Lower Galilee (about 5 miles NW of Nazareth), it is never mentioned in the biblical text. Despite this, the author dedicates the second longest article to this city. Only the entry on Rome is longer.

The brisk, popular narrative style is severely weakened by a lack of good graphics and an absence of cartographic support for the entries. Far too many assertions lack support, and the work raises several questions on issues of fact. Many far superior works of this type are available that make it impossible to recommend this book at any level.


For over 40 years Jerome Murphy-O’Connor has been Professor of New Testament at the École Biblique in Jerusalem and one of the best-known authorities on the historical backgrounds of Bible, particularly the main cities. His archaeological survey, *The Holy Land* (Oxford, 1998), is perhaps the best work of its kind currently in print.

The current work follows the line of his *St. Paul’s Corinth* (Liturgical, 2002). He examines the writings of 26 ancient writers (which he divides into Historians and Poets/Novelists) and in the second section of the book into a “Quick Visit to Ephesus” and “A Walk with Paul through Ephesus” (183-97). The last part of the book is an examination of Paul’s ministry in Ephesus.

The importance of the Ephesus in the NT era can hardly be overstated. After Rome and Alexandria it was called “the third city of the empire”; Caesar Augustus called the city the “First and Greatest Metropolis of Asia.” All the mile markers of the Roman roads in the area all were measured in relation to Ephesus. The significance of Ephesus in NT studies is evident. The city served as Paul’s base of operations for over two years; one of his letters is addressed to the Ephesian church, the first of the seven churches addressed in Revelation 2–3; and into the Patristic era it was the site of the Third Ecumenical Council in A.D. 431. Besides Paul, the apostle John and Timothy had connections with the city.

Murphy-O’Connor presents the works of ancient writers who comment on all aspects of life in Ephesus, from Strabo and his geographic insights to Vitruvius’ description of the architecture (especially of the Temple to Artemis) to Philostratus’
descriptions of daily life in the city. His interweaving of comments with quotations from these Classical writers is excellent, and the text is exceptionally readable and detailed in its presentation of factual information. The book is not rich in illustrations, but its maps and diagrams are excellent and helpful.

It culminates in the author’s reconstruction of the life of Paul in relation to Ephesus. He details his visits and extended ministry there as recorded in Acts 19. He is perhaps overly speculative at times (e.g., his idea of Timothy’s reaction to Paul’s rebuke of his opponents in Corinth, 238-39), but the section brings to life Paul’s activities in Ephesus.

The author’s intention was obviously to center on the relation of Ephesus to Paul, but it is odd that he does not mention Rev 2:1-6 or attempt to bring some of his enormous background material to bear on the passage. However, this is a small fault in an otherwise thorough work.

This is a the real must-have work for the student of the NT. The amount of material collected and made available (particularly the Classical literature) is invaluable. For anyone preaching through the Book of Ephesians, the Book of Acts, or the life of Paul, this volume will be a resource of exceptional value.


Although he is mentioned by name only in the initial chapters of Matthew and Luke, the shadow of Herod the Great looms large over the entire NT. Cities like Jerusalem, Samaria, Jericho, and Caesarea were all adorned with his massive building projects. Three of his sons (Archelaus, Antipas, and Philip), one of his grandsons (Agrippa I), and one of his great-grandsons (Agrippa II) play key roles in the narratives of the Gospels and Acts. Josephus dedicates large portions of his Antiquities and Jewish War to the life and times of this man. The title “the Great” is appended to the names of very few people in ancient and modern history (Alexander, Peter, Catherine), yet one always refers to “Herod the Great” in discussions. Many moderns who read of his cruelty and maniacal paranoia wonder why anyone like him should be called “great.” Josephus actually calls him by this title in only two obscure references and then it is to distinguish him from his son who would be “Herod the Less.” Nevertheless, those who have studied his great building projects recognize how fitting that title is, although not in terms of morality. And it is in that role of builder that Netzer describes Herod in this excellent book.

Ehud Netzer could aptly be called “Dr. Herod” due to his extensive excavations of many of the sites credited to this ancient “King of the Jews.” In the last decades he has dedicated his remaining career to the excavation and interpretation of the “Herodium”—one of Herod’s desert fortresses where Josephus says he
was buried. Netzer dedicated himself to finding the specific site at Herodium where Herod’s tomb was located. This search was finally rewarded in early 2007 when he found the ruins of a mausoleum on the slope which contained architectural fragments of the royal sarcophagus that originally contained Herod’s disease-ridden remains. Since the book is a second edition of another published by Mohr-Siebeck in 2006, Netzer adds a new preface that describes these finds. Netzer’s opening chapter also consists of a helpful overview of Herod’s life and career as a clear-headed, although sometimes ruthless, client king of his masters in Rome.

By his book title, Netzer makes it clear that the title “Great” was well deserved by Herod in at least one area of his career—he was truly a great builder. Most of his book is dedicated to describing in detail the great building projects attributed to Herod. These include not only Herodium (179-201), but also fortresses at Masada (7-41), Machaerus and others in the Judean wilderness (203-18); palaces at Jericho (42-60) and Jerusalem (119-36); the massive port city of Caesarea (94-118); and the adornment of Samaria-Sebaste (81-93). For believers, of course, Herod’s crowning achievement was his (re)building of the Temple in Jerusalem. Netzer weaves together the written sources (Josephus, Mishna, N.T.) with the results of excavations around the Temple Mount over the last forty years to offer a truly helpful and accurate picture of that largest worship center of the ancient Roman world (137-78). He even describes the remains of his lesser-known projects outside the king’s realm (218-42). With the help of some younger assistants, Netzer’s general discussion of Herod’s architectural philosophy and program (243-83) rounds out knowledge of these crucial subjects of interest to the secular as well as the sacred historian.

This reviewer has devoured the book in preparation for a study tour of Israel, where he will again see firsthand the discoveries of this great archaeologist, whose contributions to Herod research have been unequaled in the field. This is essential reading for the serious traveler to Israel and for anyone who teaches the NT. The reviewer considers it the last word on an ancient figure who, more than any other person, has left his physical mark on the land of the Bible.


Once again, evangelicals have cause for renewed attention to a doctrine of Scripture. Amidst what has been called the “third-wave” of the inerrancy debate, this short volume seeks to tell the story of three words that received greatest attention in discussions about Scripture’s authority during the nineteenth, twentieth, and now
twenty-first centuries. These are “inspiration,” “inerrancy,” and “interpretation” (14, 18).

In a consistent format, Nichols and Brandt, professor and student at Lancaster Bible College, devote an individual chapter to developments surrounding each of these words. Each of these is followed by one that includes select quotations from key sources in the debates surrounding the terms. They also provide introductory comments to original source texts which give historical background, other aspects of the debates’ contexts, and sometimes reasons why the selections were made. This work is laden with historical facts and useful bibliographic material. Among what is throughout the text, these features include time-lines (30, 74, 118), succinct lists of sources cited (41-42, 87-88, 131-32), and three appendices. Appendix one includes nineteen evangelical doctrinal statements on Scripture (159-71); appendix two, key Bible texts on a doctrine of Scripture (173); appendix three, books for further reading (175-76), all of which were cited throughout the work.

New features in the present state of the debate are also highlighted. Among these are the current modern/postmodern struggle (39-40), Barth’s role in the American evangelical conversation (36-37, 118), the role of community (124), and theological interpretation (38, 124-25). The authors hold inerrancy by precommitment, deeming it a helpful theological construction (71, 84-85, 129) and also affirming that the Bible stands over readers (118, 127, 130).

Some technicalities should be observed. The citation of Grenz (29) misrepresents his pneumatological emphasis, effectively putting words into his mouth concerning the Princetonian view of inspiration. Page 30 n. 7 cites Grenz at page 116, but it should be 118. Hodge and Warfield are mistakenly identified as not allowing the dictation theory of inspiration (31) whereas they actually did allow that “in some of the prophecies, they wrote by divine dictation” (“Tractate on Inspiration” [1881], in Westminster Doctrine Ancient Holy Scripture: Tractates by Profs A. A. Hodge and Warfield with Notes on Recent Discussions by Rev. Robert Howie [Edinburgh: Hunter, 1891] 31). Without directly stating it, Nichols and Brandt contradict article XVI of the 1978 Chicago Statement when asserting that “the challenge” to the Bible was met recently with deeper reflection and clearer expression of the doctrines of Scripture (14). And though asserting Feinberg’s closeness to the Chicago Statement (91 n. 66), Nichols and Brandt do not mention the interesting feature that the word “fact” is introduced by Feinberg while missing in the statement.

Further shortcomings might be in the selection of texts, not all of which are the most important or most reasonable voices in the debates. The blurring of the thematic and chronological approaches might also be somewhat confusing. A citation index would be helpful, as might a joint-authored book by scholars from different sides of this debate, which could have attracted a wider readership and given stronger cases from select texts. Nevertheless, while preferring inerrancy, allowing variegated source materials to articulate positions makes it a useful tool for readers in a broad range of positions.
Including hermeneutics as part of a doctrine of Scripture is a matter of question for this reviewer. The topics are certainly related, but seem to be separate unless traditional theological categories are to be shifted. Theology, which is able to account for all reality, carries the burden of providing a doctrine of Scripture. It gives descriptions of phenomena before, during, and after biblical exegesis, but should not be equated with the hermeneutical discipline or exegetical task. Though theological interpretation receives attention in this work, occasionally theological interpreters are more interested in what Scripture does rather than what it is. Regardless of whether or not hermeneutics should be a part of a doctrine of Scripture, it seems to have slipped in the back door of the evangelical debates about Scripture (and was virtually missing in discussions over the nature of Scripture among evangelicals before the mid-20th century), and may be here to stay.

The few criticisms mentioned should in no wise diminish from this book’s importance. It is a clear, delightful read, written with brilliant prose (e.g., 26, 39) at an important time in the history of evangelicalism. Surprisingly, it is a portion of what the present reviewer mentioned as needed to move the inerrancy debate forward: “a serious attempt at a comprehensive understanding of the history of this debate... replete with all the arguments set forth, needs to be made and is due to the evangelical community” (“How Far Beyond Chicago? Assessing Recent Attempts to Reframe the Inerrancy Debate,” Themelios 34/1 [April 2009]:31). It is unlike any other book this reviewer is aware of, especially in recent times. It will be a useful tool for laypeople or pastors interested in the topic, and would serve well in an undergraduate or M.Div. course dealing with bibliography or contemporary evangelicalism. Even then, it should probably be supplemented with other helpful books about the nature of Scripture, including possibly Mark D. Thompson, *A Clear and Present Word* [Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2006] and perhaps Michael F. Bird and Michael Pahl, eds., *The Sacred Text: Artefact, Interpretation, and Doctrinal Formulation* [Piscataway, N.J.: Gorgias Press, forthcoming]. Nichols and Brandt have produced a remarkable resource in helping evangelicals understand the mammoth nature of the recent debate over the Bible’s authority. Though one may still eagerly await an exhaustive treatment of the debate’s vast terrain, *Ancient Word, Changing Worlds* is a needed move in that direction.


*Perspectives on Christian Worship* presents five views on worship as seen through five distinct branches of the evangelical community. The book begins with a brief survey of Christian worship by J. Matthew Pinson, who is the president of Free Will Baptist Bible College in Nashville, Tennessee. The book is then arranged
with each contributor explaining a certain perspective followed by the other contributors giving a critique of each perspective. The explanation of each perspective was clear and the responses were in a friendly and fair manner.

The five perspectives are:

Liturgical Worship given by C. J. Quill, Dean of International Studies at Concordia Theological Seminary.

Traditional Evangelical Worship by J. Ligon Duncon, Adjunct Professor of Theology at Reformed Theological Seminary and Senior Minister of First Presbyterian Church in Jackson, Mississippi.

Contemporary Worship by Dan Wilt, the Director of the Institute of Contemporary and Emerging Worship Studies in partnership with St. Stephen’s University in New Brunswick, Canada.

Blended Worship by Michael Lawrence and Mark Dever, who serve as Associate Pastor and Senior Pastor respectively of Capitol Hill Baptist Church in Washington, D.C.

Emerging Worship by Dan Kimball who oversees the Sunday worship gatherings and teaching at Vintage Faith Church in Santa Cruz, California.

No real surprises appear in the discussions provided by the contributors to the perspectives on worship. What one does find is a well articulated explanation of the perspectives on worship with an expression by each contributor as to why he holds to his particular perspective. One walks away with a deeper appreciation for the respective views and a fuller comprehension of other perspectives. This book helps to get “inside the heads” of those who practice a different perspective than the readers hold. One can only gain by reading it.


The catalyst which brought about the July 2005 symposium on the theology of atonement hosted by the Evangelical Alliance (EA) and the London School of Theology (LST) was the “stark critique of penal substitution presented by Steve Chalke and Alan Mann in their book *The Lost Message of Jesus*” (17). Papers from this symposium became the nineteen chapters of the book. It unveils the diversity of teaching on and the feelings about penal substitutionary atonement (hereafter PSA). The chapters are divided into 5 categories, namely, introduction, biblical foundations, theological contributions, historical perspectives, and contemporary perspectives.
Derek Tidball, respected pastor, educator and evangelical leader in the UK, wrote both the preface, and also the final chapter which he entitled “Penal Substitution: A Pastoral Apologetic.” It stands as a critique of the less than truly evangelical viewpoints encountered in some of the preceding chapters.

Chalke, already well known for his comment of God being guilty of cosmic child-abuse, obviously does not favor PSA (19, 34). Thus, his chapter, the second one, will probably receive the bulk of attention from readers, but he is not alone in his understanding; others at the symposium agreed with his ideas. He still makes startling observations: “[T]he greatest theological problem with [PSA] is that it introduces us to a God who is first and foremost concerned with retribution for sin that flows from his wrath against sinners” (39). The violence shown against the Son by the Father means that God does not practice what He preaches. Hear Chalke’s words: “If the cross is a personal act of violence perpetuated 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” (40).

Was any understanding of God having planned the cross, the death, and resurrection of Christ before the foundation of the world given even minimum consideration? One wonders if redemption, reconciliation, and propitiation were given any prominence in discussing the atonement. Apparently not. The church’s inability to shake off this great distortion of a vengeful God presented in the substitutionary theory has cost the church dearly, so Chalke opines. Society’s concept of retribution and of bearing guilt will determine its response to this doctrine. Indeed, PSA is culturally sluggish, unable to relate to the thinking of the present day. That a flawed hermeneutic is the problem here is reflected in the observation that theology must be informed by the Bible while at the same time theology must be creatively alert and related to the modern-day cultural context (41). The 8th-century B.C. prophets, he accepts, were already moving beyond the concept of a propitiatory blood sacrifice (39, no examples cited). To defend PSA from isolated texts ignores the “resonance of Scriptural witness, overall flow of the narrative, and the unraveling story of salvation” (39). No examples are given, nor is a description of this “resonance and flow.” What does it all mean then? Are these texts valueless?

I. Howard Marshall’s chapter fortuitously follows Chalke and basically sets him straight although without mentioning him by name (34-45). Marshall argues that PSA is well-founded in Scripture, and then lays out the terminology for judgment and condemnation, of destruction and death (51-52). He also gives attention to the holiness and righteousness of God, and rightly so (57-59). By the end of Marshall’s argument, one begins to wonder if Chalke has not placed himself outside the pale of evangelicalism.

Joel Green remarks that the focus of PSA on deflecting divine wrath from sinful humanity onto Jesus is “logically deficient and exegetically problematic” (164). PSA finds itself indicted for portraying a misshapen view of God! (159). PSA has no basis for a thoroughgoing soteriology. What a surprising and unwar-
ranted evaluation! The final plea is to keep the atonement debate intramural. Do not use it to distinguish believer from non-believer or evangelical from non-evangelical. Can it really remain as an at-home discussion? Expository preaching and systematic Bible study will bring it to the fore.

Fortuitously, Garry Williams chapter immediately follows Green’s, and, in effect, sets it straight (172-90). Proponents of PSA, Williams advises, are charged with advancing “a biblically unfounded, systematically misleading and pastorally lethal doctrine” (188). Strong words! The chapter treating Rom 3:25-26 represented acceptably the more conservative and evangelical position, and forthrightly observed: the cumulative emphasis in Paul’s epistles almost irresistibly gives evidence of a God of amazing love who gave Christ as a penal substitute. Williams well adds, “A rejection of penal substitution is a rejection of the heart of the Pauline gospel” (129). Certainly, that constitutes being outside the pale of evangelicalism!

The three chapters making up the section “Historical Perspectives” are informative with a remarkable amount of data squeezed into the summaries of the atonement as understood at various times since the death of Christ. However, exactly what the politics of colonial England of the past has to do with the understanding of the atonement escapes this reviewer. Why must the cultural situation influence a change in the way the atonement is viewed? Is this not contextualization “gone wild?”

“Contemporary Perspectives,” the final category in the book, is quite instructive in making the reader aware of the extent to which writers will go in re-interpretating a doctrine to bolster their very different viewpoints. The logic of PSA allegedly has many problems with which to deal, such as: [1] critical questioning of divine love, forgiveness and mercy in relation to divine wrath (40, 54-59, 61, 121, 299), [2] the transferability of sin, guilt, and righteousness (222-23), [3] the inexorability of divine justice (209-10, 219, 221), [4] the resulting anemic nature of soteriology (159-60), [5] the portrayal of a malevolent God stemming from a lack of sensitivity in communication (36, 41-44, 210-11), and [6] the apparent failure of God, who being a vengeful Father rather than a forgiving one such as portrayed by Jesus in the story of the prodigal son, does not practice what He preaches (39-40).

The final chapter by Tidball is refreshing to read after working one’s way through this book, doggedly at times. The closing paragraph of the preface emphasized that all participants agreed on the central significance of the death of Christ to the Christian faith, the varied richness of the NT’s interpreting of that death, and the urgent need to communicate the message of the cross. Such a message must be true to the Scriptures yet simultaneously meaningful in the contemporary world (14). Given the diversity of opinion on how to define and explain PSA, obtaining such an agreement on the surface is quite impressive.

Some chapters have not been commented upon, but suffice it to say that in a full-scale review article they would doubtlessly receive attention and critical response. This reviewer does see some value in the book, since (1) it is an eye-opener to the different hermeneutical rules obviously governing the approach to the
text by those rejecting or redefining and amending PSA, and (2) it might be worth studying in an advanced hermeneutics seminar in which the centerpiece for critique would be “contextualization.”


Two encyclopedic books by the same author on the controversial topic of intelligent design (ID) are both chock full of information, names of scientists, scholars, and researchers—not to forget important places and dates, actions taken, failures and successes noted, literature published, lectures delivered, and a multiplicity of informative and instructive footnotes. Woodward’s doctoral dissertation at the University of South Florida in September 2001 was a *rhetorical history* of the controversial new movement in science called *Intelligent Design Movement* (IDM). His dissertation gave birth to his first book, *Doubts About Darwin*.

He asks just how a small band of academicians could have caused such a “remarkably virulent new strain of dissent,” with its vision of “scientific crisis,” and the triumphant “paradigm” shift predicted to follow (29). The Darwinism-Design debate, which is reaching fever pitch in American society, means that it is not a side issue, but what Woodward calls a “culturally central” one (31). Any questions posed about origins “touch the deepest level of our personal and societal notions of what it means to be human” (31). He proposes that the group, be it religious or scientific, which wins the debate over the fundamental cultural story of humankind will gain the authority to call all other stories mythological. This winning group will be the high priesthood of our time (31). Immediately, he identifies Darwinian science as the current priesthood, and as such, it bears an aura of scientific objectivity and infallibility.

The four principal spokesmen for IDM who dominate the pages of *Doubts About Darwin* were first, Michael Denton, whose writing inspired Phillip E. Johnson and Michael Behe, and then later William Dembski joined the team. The tale of the rise of IDM involves these four men and their writings and research. Two of them have double doctorates, Denton, having both both an M.D. and a Ph.D. in biochemistry, Dembski, in mathematics and the philosophy of science, Johnson an experienced law professor, and Behe, a tenured university professor in biology. Separate chapters detail the impact of the research and conclusions by these four leading figures. The information on the reactions in the science community toward these men makes for fascinating reading. The reader becomes aware that these four
were not working and writing in a vacuum. In the providence of God, the time was ripe for what these four could contribute, which might prove to be helpful to the question of origins and the creation/evolution conflict. Chapter headings with subheadings are interesting, e.g., “2. Murmurs of Dissent: The Prelude to Michael Denton,” or “The Dam Breaks: Michael Behe and the Explosion of Design.” Phillip Johnson manages to secure four chapters for himself. Focusing on the four men and their important role in IDM, makes for simply fascinating reading.

Four appendices provide the extra detail for those aficionados of the history of science who want more exacting detail. Appendix 1 is Phillip Johnson’s “Notes on the Berkeley Faculty Colloquium of 23 September 1988.” Appendix 2 furnishes the text of Johnson’s “Position Paper on Darwinism,” and Appendix 3 is “Letter from the Ad Hoc Origins Committee.” Johnson received quite a bit of criticism for being an outsider to biology, but fortunately this did not prevent his criticism from being heard and given attention within the science community. That has resulted in several universities adopting his book, Darwin on Trial, as a text for their biology or origins courses (224). In Appendix 4 the author describes and explains the “rhetoric of science,” the relatively new subfield of communication theory. It may not be of interest to all readers, but to obtain a good grasp of all that is involved in ID is to read this appendix slowly. The “Afterword” ends with the astute observation that the only grounds for excluding either Darwinism or ID from science is philosophical choice (213).

The second book, as the subtitle shows, deals with the defense of the science of intelligent design. It is as detailed as the first book. He/she who skips the six and a half page preface will lose out on the information which helps set the stage for the second book. The reader will be introduced to The Discovery Institute. He/she will be advised that the debate arena is no longer William Jennings Bryan in debate with Clarence Darrow. It is ID biochemist Michael Behe versus Darwinian biologist Kenneth Miller, and it is intelligent design theorist, Scott Minnich, engaged in intense discussion with a Darwinian philosophy professor, Robert Pennock. “Whether anyone likes it or not, it is no longer science versus religion; it is now science versus science” (12, author’s italics). Intelligent design is no longer an American thing; it is now a global phenomenon. The author traces the struggle between neo-Darwinism and the ID theory. The author also introduces his readers to his journey from hard-core agnosticism to that of Christian theism. What persuaded him was not religious argument but scientific data. This, he avers, would be true in the experience of just about every leading light in the IDM (15). He also observes that design itself is direct scientific inference and does not depend on any religious premise for its conclusions, so what matters is evidence and logic, not some preferred philosophy (15). In the first chapter he reminds his readers that ID was certainly not driven by a religious agenda (21). Thus, the reader realizes that the book will be concentrating not on the identity of the Intelligent Designer but on the elements making up ID and the challenge that it brings to neo-Darwinism.
Twelve chapters, each packed with information follow (page numbers have been excluded here because these concepts occurred more than in just one place). These pages capture the polemical intensity of the debate and the near frantic response to put down ID as “bad science,” “rejecting science,” or as having “given up on science” (31-32). False accusations! Like any other new idea or theory proposed, it received a lot of criticism. None of this was without response by ID proponents. The controversy spawned quite a number of books—there is a lot to read if one wants to become very well acquainted with ID and IDM. As the history of ID unfolded the subjects receiving attention and mention were those such as “Irreducible complexity” or “complex specified information,” Demski’s Explanatory Filter, macroevolution driven by mutation and selection, the new ID paradigm, Jonathan Wells and Icons of Evolution, the fossil record, DNA, RNA and informational chains, “prebiotic soup,” the mystery of life’s origin, the Human Genome Project, and the fine-tuned universe. Attention is also given to the Discovery Institute and its videos, in particular The Privileged Planet and the earth’s perfect setting in the universe.

The last chapter answers the question which is the title of the chapter: “Are we at the tipping point?” Woodward declares that the Kuhnian paradigm crisis has arrived, and Neo-Darwinism will soon be replaced by two or more competitors (176-81). He is convinced that Darwinism will inevitably decline. In fact, it cannot survive. Under “Cross-Examinations” the author poses four questions, probably F.A.Q.s, of which the last one is: “Is not ID a betrayal of all we have gained in the Darwinian revolution, freeing science from the shackles of sectarian ideology?”

A single appendix furnishes an edited version of a lengthy, eight thousand-word critical review of Niall Shanks’ God, the Devil and Darwin by Del Ratzsch. It was reduced to three pages. Quite a feat!

Intelligent Design exponents and opponents would show little intelligence if these two books are overlooked and omitted from their bibliographies on ID and IDM. Any one wanting a full knowledge cannot but read these two books and the publications from the pens of the “ID-team” members.

Unfortunately, one sad note which lingers when reading about these men and their work, arguments, and proposals, is that no attempt is made to identify the Designer—that’s a personal, private matter, one of religion, faith, or philosophy.


The issue of what is now popularly called “New Perspective on Paul” (NPP) has been a leading (if not the leading) theological issue for the last decade within evangelicalism. The Master’s Seminary addressed the issue in its Faculty
Lecture Series in 2005. Those five lectures were were published in the Seminary Journal (TMSJ 16/2 [Fall 2005]).

The literature on the New Perspective is enormous, largely because it is a somewhat amorphous movement. The three main proponents of NPP, E. P. Sanders (largely credited with creating the issue), James D. G. Dunn, and N. T. Wright, often do not agree with one another. In the introduction of Justification and Variegated Nomism (Baker, 2001), D. A. Carson noted,

The “new perspective” on Paul is in some respects not new, and in any case cannot be reduced to a single perspective. Rather, it is a bundle of interpretative approaches to Paul, some of which are merely differences in emphasis, and other of which compete rather antagonistically. Taken together, however, they belong to the “new perspective” in that they share certain things in common, not least a more-or-less common reading of the documents of Second Temple Judaism, and a conviction that earlier readings of Paul, not least from the Protestant camp, and especially from the German Lutheran camp, with lines going back to the Reformation, are at least partially mistaken and perhaps profoundly mistaken (ibid, 1).

As new literature on this subject was beginning to wane, John Piper, the well-known pastor and conference speaker, added to the bibliography with The Future of Justification: A Response to N. T. Wright (Crossway, 2007). In this work, while affirming that in his view NPP, at least as Wright delineates it, is not “another gospel” (ibid, 15); he nonetheless states that Wright’s “portrayal of the gospel—and of the doctrine of justification in particular—is so disfigured that it becomes difficult to recognize as biblically faithful” (ibid).

Piper’s work was thorough and detailed as an interaction with not only Wright’s concepts, but his actual written material, and as the above quote demonstrates, it was pointed and critical. The book under review here is Wright’s response to Piper and to his (Wright’s) larger number of critics.

Wright, who serves as Bishop of Durham in the Anglican Church, is obviously a man of significant ability and responsibilities. He notes in the preface that this book was rushed, and due “to the pressure of other duties, and the urgency of the publisher’s deadlines” (13), he did not get any editorial assistance or input or even share the draft with Piper (although he acknowledges that Piper had shared his draft with him before publication). Wright notes that he is hopeful of completing a larger work on Paul in the near future that he hopes “will help clarify things further” (ibid).

Wright divides the work into two parts. In Part One he deals with introductory issues, methodology, and historical and theological overviews. In Part Two, “turning now to exegesis” (111), he presents his position on Galatians and Romans.

In Part One the reader is quickly aware of the tone of the book, which this reviewer characterizes as snippy and angry. Wright wanders from illustration to illustration, and often displays little coherence or indication of where he is going.
He does have an occasional excellent turn of phrase, for which he is noted, such as, “History is where we have to go if, as we say, we want to listen to Scripture itself rather than either the venerable traditions of later church leaders or the less venerable footnotes of more recent scholars. For too long we have read Scripture with nineteenth-century eyes and sixteenth-century questions. It’s time to get back to reading with first-century eyes and twenty-first century questions” (37). But he also takes a significant and oddly placed swipe at the New International Version of the Bible (NIV), stating, “I do not know what version of Scriptures they use at Dr. Piper’s church. But I do know that if a church only, or mainly, relies on the NIV it will, quite simply, never understand what Paul was talking about” (54).

In the section on “exegesis” there is actually nothing in the chapters that a student of the Bible might call exegesis. No real in-depth or detailed examination of the text takes place. The chapters in this part are just thematic summaries. After criticizing scholars who “try to demonstrate their knowledge of the field with the massive annotation” (111), he states, “Because I have proved elsewhere that I can play that game to a reasonable standard, my regret at not being able to write this book in the same style is not at all that it may look naked and unadorned (that is a risk I have run before and will no doubt run again), but that some works which really helped my case will be ignored, and others which make good points diametrically opposed to my own could and should have been answered and will not be” (ibid).

This quote and another in the introduction in which he states, “I do not suppose I am actually saying very much that I have not already said elsewhere” (13), sum up this work. It reads like something “written off the top of one’s head.” The expectation of a work by Wright, who is normally a clear and powerful writer, is high, and this book is sorely disappointing.

Wright does occasionally interact with Piper’s points, but he rarely quotes him at length and displays little effort to systematically deal with his points in detail. This contrasts with Piper’s work in which Wright is quoted, often at length, nearly 150 times.

Wright often abandons interaction with Piper entirely, arguing against the unnamed “scholars” who oppose his views. In his section on First Century Judaism (55-77), he notes the existence of the two volumes edited by Carson (Justification and Variegated Nomism, which in this reviewer’s opinion has remained unanswered by NPP proponents and has intellectually defeated NPP on all the fronts of historical, theological, and exegetical inquiry), and dismisses the work, calling Carson’s conclusion “tendentious” (74). He does not cite any part of Carson’s work, but cites Carson’s brief promotional blurb on the back cover of Piper’s book.

This is a book that those who are interested in the ongoing discussion of this topic need to read; however, it is really a book that is analogous to the letter you write to someone with whom you are angry. It is fine to write the letter and get the angst out of your system, but you should throw that letter away as soon as you finish it and never let it see the light of day. That’s what Wright should have done with this
book when he finished it. And then he should have concentrated on his promised and yet-future reflective presentation of his views.


In the present work, Yarbrough presents a diachronic historical study of approaches to the discipline of NT theology from the early 1800s to the late 1900s. He divides NT theologians into two camps, the historical critical perspective and the salvation historical. He primarily compares and contrasts three scholars from each stream of thought. From the former he explores the epistemology, theory of history, and NT theology methodology of F. C. Baur, William Wrede, and Rudolf Bultmann. Primary adherents examined from the latter perspective are J. C. K. von Hofmann, Adolf Schlatter, and O. Cullmann.

Yarbrough concedes that the Bultmannian perspective has won the day in the majority of NT studies. Most NT theology authors view the NT from a post-Enlightenment skepticism and would see any approach to the NT that takes seriously the history of God’s saving work as recorded by the NT writers as a methodological fallacy. Yarbrough’s thesis is that while this salvation historical perspective may have been ignored and discounted, it did have its notable scholarly proponents who ably defended it and adequately critiqued the critical perspective. He seeks to represent these champions and call attention to their methods as models for future studies.

The book contains an introduction and six lengthy chapters followed by an epilogue. Chapter one sets the stage by comparing Baur’s conceptions of NT theology, epistemology, and history to those of Hofmann. Baur’s starting point for NT theology is the present contemporary perspective of German philosophy, and the NT writings are merely thoughts about things that never really happened. Yet, they provide a religious consciousness that can be explicated by the modern theologian. For Hofmann, the starting point is in the context of the early church, and he seeks to present the content of the NT.
Baur’s theory of knowledge is that man has innate ideas that reside in his religious self-consciousness. These \textit{a priori} elements are what the modern interpreter will find in the NT, since it is presupposed that these same dynamics gave rise to the biblical expressions. Conversely, Hofmann has no pre-commitment to an epistemology in approaching the NT. He wants to let the texts speak for themselves.

As for the history of the NT, Baur believes that critical thinking stemming from this epistemology can produce an explanation for why the NT writers expressed themselves the way they did. Miracles and divine revelation can be rejected as the cause and substituted by the latent ultimate realities that were unfolding in the minds of the writers. Hofmann counters with a salvation history that views the NT as the record of a sovereign God participating in the everyday lives of His people to fulfill prophecy and act decisively in Jesus toward a culmination of all things.

Chapter two continues the contrast of approaches by juxtaposing William Wrede with Adolf Schlatter. Again the comparisons are made along lines of the concept of NT theology, epistemology, and view of history. Wrede’s concept of NT theology, like Baur, focuses on what supposedly accounts for the authors’ production of the NT rather than the texts themselves. Yet Wrede strives for the history of religion behind the text rather than Baur’s ideals. Schlatter on the other hand presents NT theology as simply “seeing what is there.”

Wrede’s epistemology presupposes that certain elements and values are normative from a history of religion, which must serve as the grid for the NT to be evaluated. What texts can signify is predetermined. Schlatter objects to this constraint and wants instead to be open to having his conceptions of the NT determined by the testimony of the NT itself.

As for NT history, Wrede views the NT as only concerned with theology, not history. He rejects the OT as primary background for NT interpretation and makes it dependent upon the modern critical perspective. Revelation in the past is rejected. Schlatter’s view of history is that God actively works and has worked in history and that the data of biblical history cannot be explained without the perspective testified to by the NT writers.

In chapter three, Yarbrough traces the way various OT and NT theologians “adapted, modified, and rearticulated” (163) salvation historical views to continue the heritage. Men like Schrenk, Weth, Piper, Dodd, Wendland, Stauffer, Goppelt, and Hunter in various ways contributed to the promulgation of the salvation historical perspective. Biblical theology between the wars was divided between the history of religions school and those who saw Scripture testifying to a God who reveals Himself through “historically discerned acts and words” (164).

After World War II a biblical theology movement emerged. Yarbrough discusses the relationship of the salvation historical perspective to this movement in chapter four. Here he interacts with Childs, Pfeiffer, and Filson to show how phrases such as “revelation of God in history” and “unity of the Bible” were used by those whose presuppositions destroyed the very concepts; yet properly defined, these concepts emerged unscathed. He deals with other theologians like Eichrodt and von
Rad and concludes that while the biblical theology movement did emphasize revelation in history, it failed to affirm that the acts of God as recorded in Scripture were actual concrete events.

Chapter five takes up the study of Oscar Cullmann and his approach to NT theology. He starts with objective exegesis of the text and focuses on eschatology and the centrality of Jesus Christ in the overall plan of God. Yarbrough shows how Bultmann’s critique of Cullmann deterred him from gaining much of a following, yet popularity does not negate the fact that, in Yarbrough’s view, his perspective of salvation history is indispensable for NT theology.

In the final chapter, Yarbrough shows how Bultmann’s assault of Cullmann coincided with the pessimism wrought by World War II to nearly bury the salvation historical perspective. Yarbrough uses Albertz and Goppelt to interact with Bultmann and again takes up discussion of views of epistemology, history, and NT theology. Though these theologians did not unseat Bultmannian thinking in the universities of Germany, they did provide salvation historical alternatives for future students of NT theology to take up.

Yarbrough concludes the study with six reasons to suspect that the salvation historical alternative will continue to find support, summarized as follows: internal conflicts between critical schools of thought, the shift to postmodernism, the power of the gospel witness itself, the positive connection between the testaments and the positive role for NT theology in other disciplines, its use for the church, and divine grace.

This book is an important read for anyone who is going to practice biblical theological methodology. It also will serve well in any advanced theological education. It gives a good introduction to the history of NT theology studies of the period it covers. However, readers need to have a good background in higher criticism and philosophies like German Idealism, Hegelianism, Kantianism, Cartesian thought, as well as biblical theological methods. Yarbrough displays amazing knowledge of his field and although his writing is tedious and dry at times, the summary sections and logical progressions of thought keep the dedicated reader tuned in.

As the disparate approaches are contrasted, most readers interested in how this impacts biblical theology will yearn for scriptural examples, yet there are very few. This reviewer feels that the work could use greater editing to remove many redundancies, correct typos, and cull the overuse of words like “repristinate.”

Yarbrough is to be commended for compiling and distilling so much information germane to the history of NT theology. It is a fine survey of biblical theology from Gabler to the present and an equally impressive rescue of overlooked biblical theologians and a perspective that must not be forgotten. The committed reader will be sure to grow through interaction with German philosophy, higher criticism, and evaluations of methods and theologians as they consider the enduring value of the salvation historical approach to Scripture guided by the able hand of Robert Yarbrough. In adopting this approach they will be guided in a greater way
by the God who acts and speaks in history as they meditate upon His Word focused upon His Son Jesus Christ.