

“A ‘must read’—a tract for the times to call Christians to be Bible-based, Christ-centered, atonement-believing and -understanding, God-adoring people. Here is vintage J. I. Packer accompanied by some younger friends. The magisterial but too-little-known essay, ‘What Did the Cross Achieve?’ is itself worth the price of the whole book. And there is much more besides. Here, then, are gospel riches, and *In My Place Condemned He Stood* marks the spot where the buried treasure lies. Start digging!”

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

“The essays in this volume by J. I. Packer are some of the most important things I have ever read. I’m delighted to see them united in one volume and supplemented by other excellent chapters and studies on this crucial topic. If you want to preach in such a way that results in real conversions and changed lives, you should master the approach to the cross laid out in this book.”

—Tim Keller, Senior Pastor,
Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City

“This book contains some of the finest essays that have ever been written on the death of Christ.”

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

“What a joy and encouragement to have the three classic essays on the cross of Christ by J. I. Packer published in one volume. Furthermore, Mark Dever pierces to the marrow of the matter in his wonderfully clear essay on penal substitution. This book unpacks the significance of the cross so that we understand why we should glory only in the cross. Every student and pastor should own this volume, for the contents are so precious that they deserve more than one reading.”

—Thomas R. Schreiner, James Buchanan Harrison
Professor of New Testament Interpretation,
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

“At a time when many are again questioning biblical fundamentals regarding atonement, secured for us by the death and resurrection of Christ, it is wonderful to see reprinted these four essays—each of which has proven to be enormously edifying to those who first read

them. Putting them together in this way was a brilliant idea. I heartily recommend the widespread distribution of this little book.”

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

“In a time of spiritual decline and doctrinal confusion, it is desperately important for us to be clear about the cross. Writing with the precision of learned theologians and the passion of forgiven sinners, Mark Dever and J. I. Packer explain the meaning of atonement, substitution, and propitiation—not just as words, but as saving benefits we can only receive from a crucified Savior.”

—Philip Graham Ryken, Senior Minister,
Tenth Presbyterian Church, Philadelphia

“It is common knowledge that J. I. Packer’s introduction to John Owen’s *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ* is worth the price of the book itself. But what a boon to have that same masterpiece bound in a single volume with his classic essays ‘What Did the Cross Achieve?’ and ‘The Heart of the Gospel’—forming a theological treasure trove on the doctrine of penal substitutionary atonement. The addition to this magnificent theological triptych of Mark Dever’s winsome and penetrating ‘Nothing but the Blood’ constitutes a mighty call to a Christ-centered, cruciform life. This is a book for our time—a galvanizing bulwark against today’s attack upon the gospel of the cross of Christ.”

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

“This edition is a splendid expression of the biblical doctrine of the atonement. Those who deny a personal penal substitution cannot account for the immense suffering of Christ or for the justification of the redeemed.”

—Roger Nicole, Professor of Theology Emeritus,
Reformed Theological Seminary

“Given the current rebellion in many evangelical quarters against the biblical understanding of atonement, it is a great pleasure to see these classic essays of J. I. Packer once more in print, along with a new article by Mark Dever and a robust commendation by the four men behind *Together for the Gospel*. All those tired of the childish and therapeutic babble that passes for evangelical

thought on the atonement these days will find this book to be an oasis in a dry and barren land.”

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

“J. I. Packer and Mark Dever have done a superb job in pulling together into one volume some of the most critical doctrinal issues facing the church today. No one in the West or in developing countries who wants to preach or teach the heart of the gospel should miss reading, and rereading, these courageous articles on Christ’s atonement for our sins. My prayer is that many copies of this book will come into the hands of those who preach and teach in Africa where doctrinally enlightening material such as this is scarce. It could go far in strengthening the church in Africa as it becomes the epicenter of Christianity.”

—Rosemary Jensen, Founder and President, Rafiki Foundation

“This book joyfully exalts the doctrine of penal substitution in a biblical and orthodox theology. It is a wonderful gift to the church of the Lord Jesus, a church purchased by God with his own blood. Each of the contributors understands the crucial and essential necessity of grasping correctly the atoning work of Christ. He died in our place and paid in full the penalty of our sin. This book gets that right and I pray it will be widely read and carefully considered by all who love the Savior.”

—Daniel L. Akin, President,
Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary

“The first ‘great’ book I ever read was J. I. Packer’s *Knowing God*. For fifty years he has showered the body of Christ with sound doctrine that clarifies and convicts. As believers in Christ, we can differ on many things but not the core message of the gospel itself. Once again J. I. Packer leads the way by producing with other capable scholars a clarification of the biblical gospel, our greatest treasure.”

—James MacDonald, Pastor,
Harvest Bible Chapel, Rolling Meadows, Illinois

IN my pLace
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He stOOD

Celebrating the Glory of the Atonement

J. I. packER & mark DEVER

*Foreword by Ligon Duncan, R. Albert Mohler Jr.,
Mark Dever, and C. J. Mahaney*

*With an Annotated Bibliography
by Ligon Duncan*

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Authors and Contributors



J. I. Packer currently serves as a professor of theology at Regent College in Vancouver, British Columbia. Dr. Packer has written numerous books, including *Knowing God*. He served as general editor for the English Standard Version Bible, published by Crossway.

Mark Dever is senior pastor of Capitol Hill Baptist Church, Washington, DC, and executive director of 9Marks (www.9marks.org), a ministry for pastors and local churches.



Ligon Duncan is the senior minister of the historic First Presbyterian Church of Jackson, Mississippi, president of the Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals, and chairman of the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood.

R. Albert Mohler Jr. serves as president of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. Additionally, Dr. Mohler hosts a daily, live, nationwide radio program on the Salem Radio Network.

C. J. Mahaney leads Sovereign Grace Ministries, having pastored Covenant Life Church in Gaithersburg, Maryland, for twenty-seven years.

Man of Sorrows! what a name
For the Son of God, who came
Ruined sinners to reclaim:
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!

Guilty, vile, and helpless, we;
Spotless Lamb of God was he.
Full atonement! Can it be?
Hallelujah! What a Savior!

Lifted up was he to die,
“It is finished!” was his cry;
Now in heaven, exalted high:
Hallelujah! What a Savior!

When he comes, our glorious King,
All his ransomed home to bring,
Then anew this song we’ll sing:
Hallelujah! What a Savior!

Foreword



The cross of Christ is at the very center of gospel proclamation, and thus a thorough, biblical grasp of this central truth is necessary for every gospel minister. Yet our day has seen (like ages before us) much confusion on this vital point of truth. This little book, *In My Place Condemned He Stood*, is offered as an aid and encouragement to Christians who want more deeply to understand the nature and accomplishments of Jesus' death and thus to be lost in wonder, love, and praise to the gracious Father who gave and delivered up his only begotten Son on our behalf, and to the Son who loved us and gave himself for us, by the Holy Spirit, who alone enables us to say truly, "Jesus is Lord."

The book that you are holding has a history. It exists, at least in part, because of the same friendships that brought us "Together for the Gospel." It contains what have already been reckoned classic, contemporary, evangelical essays on the subject of the atoning work of Christ. Al, Mark, C. J., and I (Ligon) were talking late one night (as is typical for us), and remarking on how singularly useful is J. I. Packer's introduction to John Owen's *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ* for articulating a robust, biblical view of salvation and for setting forth succinctly the Bible's teaching on the intent of the atoning work of Christ.

After a suitable season of reflection on our own first encounter with that piece, and how often it had been used to clarify the minds of growing Christians on the comforting truth of God's sovereignty in the salvation of sinners, we began to muse other choice, short pieces on the subject of the meaning and achievement of Christ's death on the cross. Almost simultaneously we named another famous Packer essay, "The Logic of Penal Substitution," given at Tyndale House many years ago. This essay is a little more academic than the Owen introduction, we all agreed, but it is solid gold, superb argument, sound, and edifying. Then one of us said, "Don't forget 'The Heart of the Gospel' from *Knowing God*"—yet another Packer piece that had pierced our hearts and grown us in grace.

I think it was Mark who then blurted aloud a thought, an idea, a wish: "Wouldn't it be great if all three of these were in one little book that you could give out to people who want to learn more about the atonement?" It was a stroke of genius, for all three of these short works are enormously helpful, devotionally powerful, and biblically faithful. We all hummed and nodded our agreement. "Yes, yes." But how would this happen?

It was agreed that Mark would call his old friend and senior colleague Jim Packer and inquire into his interest and willingness about such a project. Mark did. Dr. Packer graciously and enthusiastically consented, as did the good folks at Crossway. But Dr. Packer also suggested that Mark Dever's brilliant piece from *Christianity Today* be included. Mark protested mightily. "It doesn't remotely compare with the three works of yours, Jim." But Professor Packer was having nothing of it. "I insist," he said.

Then Mark asked me to do a brief annotated bibliography. "Please don't throw me in the briar patch," I thought to myself. What a joy to offer suggestions for further study on the work whereby our Savior ransomed, redeemed, and reconciled us, propitiating God's wrath by the Father's own loving design and expiating our sin by his blood and righteousness, by his whole, perfect obedience and penal substitutionary sacrifice. Well, it may not pass the test as brief, but I pray that it is useful nevertheless.

So that's how the book and the concept came together. Now it's up to you to read and be edified.

—Ligon Duncan



Ligon tells the story well. The book you now hold in your hands was born out of our shared concern that the eclipse and denial of this doctrine is endangering the health of the church. In these essays you will find a passionate and eloquent defense and exposition of the Bible's teaching that Christ "died for our sins, in accordance with the Scriptures" (1 Cor. 15:3). We believe this doctrine to be central and essential to the gospel. While the atonement accomplished by Christ cannot be reduced to this understanding alone (and no one should claim that it should), to deny or confuse this doctrine is to deny that Christ died on the cross *for our sins* and *as our substitute*. In other words, we honestly believe that those who deny, dismiss, and disparage this doctrine do injury to the gospel. If we truly stand together for the gospel, we stand together for the fact that Christ died on the cross as our substitute, paying the infinite penalty for our sins we could never pay. So read these essays, not only for the health of your soul, but for the health of the church.

—R. Albert Mohler Jr.



I have a couple of things to add. First, I believe this whole idea grew out of Al's certainty that we should address this issue—with which we all agreed. May God use our poor efforts (and Jim Packer's better ones) to aid his church in this. Second, Lig is correct in saying that I was reluctant to add my chapter to this volume. Anything I've said of enduring theological value on this topic is echoing Jim Packer, especially his lecture "What Did the Cross Achieve? The Logic of Penal Substitution." Many critics have suggested that proponents of penal substitution are trashing all other views, or at least ignoring them. I'm not sure I've ever read a book on the atonement that does this. Such a suggestion is, I think, theological caricature. The truth

is that there is a soundly biblical and logically compelling case for considering various biblical images of the atonement, and the image of penal substitution is legitimately considered central. That is a more subtle argument, and Jim Packer makes it superbly. Okay, a third thing: don't miss Lig's bibliography at the end. Bibliographies are valuable—annotated bibliographies ten times more so. Lig has read for all of us, and he makes his reading available to us through his concise comments and summaries. Use and enjoy this little volume and be edified.

—Mark Dever



There is no true pastoral ministry apart from the cross. The cross must be central to all preaching and pastoring. In a day when the message of the cross is so often marginalized and its meaning so often undermined, these classic essays could hardly be more timely and relevant. They will help you love the Savior and serve the church he died for. So that's enough by us. Proceed immediately to the profound content of this little volume.

—C. J. Mahaney

Preface

A Tract for the Times



A century ago, G. K. Chesterton declared that it was beyond the wit of man to invent a new heresy. It seems that he was right, and that this is a truth to take to heart today. Heresies clothe themselves in up-to-date cultural garb and present themselves, face-lifted and iPod-armed, as the latest and wisest thing going, but current heresies, of which there are many, regularly prove, as their predecessors did, to be new forms of old mistakes. This book addresses what we see as a case in point.

We shall not, however, be calling it heresy, for this term today combines maximum fuzziness of meaning with maximum vituperative emotional heat. Such a word is literally too hot to handle in what purports to be sober analysis. We shall speak instead of unorthodoxy, a word that seems to us both more exact and less explosive.

Orthodoxy means right doctrinal belief, viewed as the church's confession of its faith and stated syllabus for teaching. Unorthodoxy means any deviation from that standard. It is, then, a form of unorthodoxy that we are currently seeking to counter.

Can we say that the Christian church, taken as a whole, actually has an orthodoxy? Some would say no, but our answer is yes. It is found in the churches' creeds and confessions, in their hymns and

worship forms, and in the writings of their approved theologians. Does this orthodoxy extend to all the beliefs of all the churches? No. For example: on the nature and authority of the church and its clergy, on the number and working of the sacraments, and on the functioning of holy Scripture as a rule of faith and life, what is held as orthodox by Roman Catholicism and with less precision by Eastern Orthodoxy seems less than orthodox—unorthodox, therefore, or heterodox—to adherents of historic Protestant evangelicalism; and Protestantism itself is split down the middle on some secondary matters, such as whether baptizing believers' infants is part of God's prescribed way or not. The present writers, an elderly Canadian Anglican and a middle-aged Southern Baptist, heartily disagree on that subject, though on everything of prime importance, as we see it, such as the truth of the Trinity and of the incarnation, all humanity's need for salvation from the guilt and power of sin, the present heavenly reign and future visible return of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the way of salvation through faith, and faith alone, in him, we regard each other as a standard and bastion of orthodoxy. What we now seek to meet is a challenge to the truly catholic and truly evangelical belief system that we share.

No recognized name exists for the unorthodoxy that we have in view, so we coin one. On the model of anti-Trinitarianism, a fairly familiar term with a clear meaning, and anti-incarnationalism, a word less common but no less clear, we label the generic error we are up against *anti-redemptionism*. Its essence is sidelining, and in some cases actually denying, the work of Jesus Christ as our redeemer, who did all that had to be done to save us from hell, in favor of the idea of Jesus as teacher, model, and pioneer of godliness. Methodologically, in having Christ's prophetic word thus trump his priestly work, ancient Graeco-Roman Gnosticism and modern Western Protestant liberalism join hands (in a high-five, one might almost say), though, since the preexisting cultural frames into which Jesus' teaching is then made to fit are very different, the results of following the method vary very much also. But the substantive unorthodoxy of this nonbiblical method of proceeding is common to them both.

A recent twist in Western liberal unorthodoxy is to say that all accounts of the redemptive work of Christ on the cross must be judged immoral, since violence as such is always immoral, and since penal substitution explicitly ascribes the violence that Jesus suffered to the Father, penal substitution is the most immoral account of all. In this fashion, fueled by one culturally projected, anti-redemptionist axiom after another, the critique of orthodoxy goes on.

It has been said that the best defense of any doctrine is the creative exposition of it. That is the star by which we steer; that is what we hope we have achieved in this book. Apart from the present preface and the epilogue, which are joint efforts, all the pieces that follow are compositions by one or other of us that have received a measure of approval and which, we think, make together a cumulative expository case. J. I. Packer's "Penal Substitution Revisited" was published in a slightly shorter form in *NB: News*, British UCCF's house magazine, July 2007. "The Heart of the Gospel" is chapter 18 of his *Knowing God* (1973). "What Did the Cross Achieve? The Logic of Penal Substitution" first appeared in *Tyndale Bulletin* 25 (1974; pp. 3–45). "Saved by His Precious Blood" was written to introduce a reprint of John Owen, *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ* (1648) in 1958, and is now chapter 8 of *A Quest for Godliness* (in Britain, *Among God's Giants*, 1990). Mark Dever's "Nothing but the Blood" was published in *Christianity Today*, May 2006.

We offer this book not as a treatise but as a testimony and a composite tract for the times. Our prayer is that God will use it to help his children distinguish things that differ, and to ground them more thoroughly in the truth of Christ.

J. I. Packer
Mark Dever

Introduction

Penal Substitution Revisited

J. I. Packer



Throughout my sixty-three years as an evangelical believer, the penal substitutionary understanding of the cross of Christ has been a flashpoint of controversy and division among Protestants. It was so before my time, in the bitter partings of the ways between conservative and liberal evangelicals in the Church of England, and between the Inter-Varsity Fellowship (now UCCF) and the Student Christian Movement (SCM) in the student world. It remains so, as liberalism keeps reinventing itself and luring evangelicals away from their heritage. Since one's belief about the atonement is bound up with one's belief about the character of God, the terms of the gospel and the Christian's inner life, the intensity of the debate is understandable. If one view is right, others are more or less wrong, and the definition of Christianity itself comes to be at stake.

An evangelical theologian, dying, cabled a colleague: "I am so thankful for the active obedience [righteousness] of Christ. No hope without it." As I grow old I want to tell everyone who will listen: "I am so thankful for the penal substitutionary death of Christ. No hope without it." That is where I come from now as I attempt this

brief vindication of the best part of the best news that the world has ever heard.

The Atonement in Focus

It is impossible to focus the atonement properly until the biblical mode of Trinitarian and incarnational thought about Jesus Christ is embraced. The Trinitarian principle is that the three distinct persons within the divine unity—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—always work inseparably together, as in creation, so in providence and in every aspect of the work of redemption. The incarnational principle is that when the Son took to himself all the powers and capacities for experience that belong to human nature and began to live through his human body, mind, and identity, his sense of being the Father’s Son was unaffected, and he knew and did his Father’s will, aided by the Spirit, at all times. It was with his own will and his own love mirroring the Father’s, therefore, that he took the place of human sinners exposed to divine judgment and laid down his life as a sacrifice for them, entering fully into the state and experience of death that was due to them. Then he rose from death to reign by the Father’s appointment in the kingdom of God and from his throne to send the Spirit to induce faith in himself and in the saving work he had done, to communicate forgiveness and pardon, justification and adoption to the penitent, and to unite all believers to himself to share his risen life in foretaste of the full life of heaven that is to come. Since all this was planned by the holy Three in their eternal solidarity of mutual love, and since the Father’s central purpose in it all was and is to glorify and exalt the Son as Savior and Head of a new humanity, smarty-pants notions like “divine child abuse” as a comment on the cross are supremely silly and as irreverent and wrong as they could possibly be.

As in all the Creator’s interacting with the created order, there is here an element of transcendent mystery, comparable to fog in the distance hanging around a landscape that the rising sun has effectively cleared for our view. What is stated above is clearly revealed

in God's own witness to himself in the Bible, and so must be given the status of nonnegotiable fact.

Again, the atonement cannot be focused properly where the biblical view of God's justice as one facet of his holiness and of human willfulness as the root of our racial, communal, and personal sinfulness and guilt, is not grasped. Justice as such, as Aristotle said long ago, is essentially giving everyone their due, and whatever more God's justice (righteousness) means in the Bible it certainly starts here, with retribution for wrongdoing. We see this as early as Genesis 3 and as late as Revelation 22:18–19 and consistently in between. God's mercy to guilty sinners is framed by his holy hostility (wrath) against their sins.

For human nature is radically twisted into an instinctive yet deliberate and ineradicable habit of God-defying or God-denying self-service, so that God's requirement of perfect love to himself and others is permanently beyond our reach, and falling short of God's standard marks our lives every day. What is due to us, then, from God is condemnation and rejection.

Penal Substitution in Focus

The built-in function of the human mind that we call conscience tells everyone, uncomfortably, that when we have misbehaved we ought to suffer for it, and to that extent conscience is truly the voice of God.

Both Testaments, then, confirm that judicial retribution from God awaits all whose sins are not covered by a substitutionary sacrifice: in the Old Testament, the sacrifice of an animal; in the New Testament, the sacrifice of Christ. He, the holy Son of God in sinless human flesh, has endured what Calvin called “the pains of a condemned and lost person” so that we, trusting him as our Savior and Lord, might receive pardon for the past and a new life in him and with him for the present and the future. Tellingly Paul, having announced “the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation [i.e., wrath-quencher] by his blood, to be received by faith,” goes on to say: “It was to show his righteousness at the

present time, so that he might be *just and* the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus” (Rom. 3:24–26 ESV). *Just* justification—*justified* justification—through the doing of justice in penal substitution is integral to the message of the gospel.

Penal substitution, therefore, will not be focused properly till it is recognized that God’s redemptive love must not be conceived—misconceived, rather—as somehow trumping and displacing God’s retributive justice, as if the Creator-Judge simply decided to let bygones be bygones. The measure of God’s holy love for us is that “while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” and that “he . . . did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all” (Rom. 5:8; 8:32 ESV). Evidently there was no alternative to paying that price if we were to be saved, so the Son at the Father’s behest, “through the eternal Spirit” (Heb. 9:14), paid it. Thus God “set aside” “the record of debt that stood against us . . . nailing it to the cross” (Col. 2:14 ESV). Had we been among the watchers at Calvary, we should have seen nailed to the cross Pilate’s notice of Jesus’ alleged crime. But if by faith we look back to Calvary from where we now are, what we see is the list of our own unpaid debts of obedience to God, for which Christ paid the penalty in our place. Paul, having himself learned to do this, testified: “The life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me” (Gal. 2:20 ESV).

It is often pointed out that Paul uses a wide variety of analogical images to express what Christ achieved for humanity on the cross. Yes, but these are not coordinates in a loosely textured matrix of endlessly exploratory thinking, as tends to be assumed; rather, in Paul’s very clear and orderly mind, they form a logical and theological hierarchy, thus:

How did Christ’s sacrificial death actually save us—that is, rescue us from jeopardy and ruin? By *redeeming* us, which means effecting our transfer from a state of bondage without hope to a state of freedom with a future, by paying the price that the transfer required. Thus slaves were bought out of servitude in Paul’s day. The more remote background is God’s redeeming Israel from

Egyptian captivity “by a mighty hand.” (See Rom. 3:24; Gal. 3:13, 4:5; Eph. 1:7.)

The Essence of the Atonement

How then did the cross actually redeem us, through Jesus’ death? By *reconciling* us to God, ending the alienation and estrangement that were previously there, linking God and us together in new harmony, replacing enmity between us with friendship and peace, by means of the putting away of our sins. (See Rom. 5:11; Col. 1:19–22.)

So how did the cross actually reconcile us to God, and God to us? By being a *propitiation*, ending God’s judicial wrath against us. (See Rom. 3:24.)

And how did the cross actually propitiate God? By being an event of *substitution*, whereby at the Father’s will the sinless Son bore the retribution due to us guilty ones. (See 2 Cor. 5:21; Gal. 3:13; Col. 2:14.)

For Paul, this substitution, Christ bearing our penalty in our place, is the essence of the atonement. Certainly, he celebrates the cross as a victory over the forces of evil on our behalf (Col. 2:15) and as a motivating revelation of the love of God toward us (2 Cor. 5:14–15), but if it had not been an event of penal substitution, it would not for him have been either of these. As Galatians 2:20 declares, his life of responsive faith was wholly formed and driven by the knowledge that his Savior had revealed divine love to him by giving himself to die on the cross in order to save him.

Accordingly, this text starts to show us how faith in Christ, our penal substitute, should be shaping our own lives today, which will be my final point for reflection. Thirty years ago I wrote an analysis of insights basic to personal religion that faith in Christ as one’s penal substitute yields. Since I cannot today improve on it, I cite it as it stands.

- 1) God, in Denney’s phrase, “condones nothing,” but judges all sin as it deserves: which Scripture affirms, and my conscience confirms, to be right.

- 2) My sins merit ultimate penal suffering and rejection from God's presence (conscience also confirms this), and nothing I do can blot them out.
- 3) The penalty due to me for my sins, whatever it was, was paid for me by Jesus Christ, the Son of God, in his death on the cross.
- 4) Because this is so, I through faith in him am made "the righteousness of God in him," i.e., I am justified; pardon, acceptance, and sonship [to God] become mine.
- 5) Christ's death for me is my sole ground of hope before God. "If he fulfilled not justice, I must; if he underwent not wrath, I must to eternity" (John Owen).
- 6) My faith in Christ is God's own gift to me, given in virtue of Christ's death for me: i.e., the cross procured it.
- 7) Christ's death for me guarantees my preservation to glory.
- 8) Christ's death for me is the measure and pledge of the love of the Father and the Son to me.
- 9) Christ's death for me calls and constrains me to trust, to worship, to love, and to serve.¹

Only where these nine truths have taken root and grow in the heart will anyone be fully alive to God.

A lawyer, having completed his argument, may declare that here he rests his case. I, having surveyed the penal substitutionary sacrifice of Christ afresh, now reaffirm that here I rest my hope. So, I believe, will all truly faithful believers.

In recent years, great strides in biblical theology and contemporary canonical exegesis have brought new precision to our grasp of the Bible's overall story of how God's plan to bless Israel, and through Israel the world, came to its climax in and through Christ. But I do not see how it can be denied that each New Testament book, whatever other job it may be doing, has in view, one way or another, Luther's primary question: how may a weak, perverse, and guilty sinner find a gracious God? Nor can it be denied that real

1. Cited from *Tyndale Bulletin* 25, 1974, 42-43.

Christianity only really starts when that discovery is made. And to the extent that modern developments, by filling our horizon with the great metanarrative, distract us from pursuing Luther's question in personal terms, they hinder as well as help in our appreciation of the gospel.

The church is and will always be at its healthiest when every Christian can line up with every other Christian to sing (or, in these musically dizzy days, to learn to sing) P. P. Bliss's simple words, which really say it all:

Bearing shame and scoffing rude
In my place condemned he stood,
Sealed my pardon with his blood—
Hallelujah! What a Saviour!