

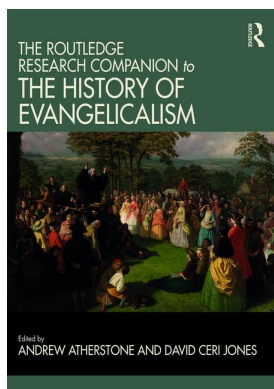
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3

EVANGELICALS AND THE CROSS

David Ceri Jones

From their very beginning, evangelicals wherever they have been found, have been preoccupied with the cross of Jesus Christ, that is, his atoning death and sacrifice on Good Friday, and his resurrection from the dead on Easter Sunday. Evangelicals have taken their cue from the Apostle Paul, who in his letter to the Corinthian church, spoke of his determination ‘to know nothing but Jesus Christ and him crucified’ (I Cor. 2: 2). For George Whitefield, whose preaching in London and Bristol in the mid and late 1730s effectively launched the evangelical revival in England, ‘the doctrine of our regeneration, or new birth in Christ Jesus’ was ‘the most fundamental doctrine of our holy religion’.¹ For his friend John Wesley, there was barely a hair’s breadth difference. The atonement, wrote Wesley, ‘was properly the distinguishing point between Deism and Christianity’, and towards the end of his life he exhorted his band of itinerant preachers that their ‘main and constant business [was] to “preach Jesus Christ and him crucified”’.²

Through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, despite much change elsewhere, evangelicals resolutely maintained their focus on the cross. In a sermon preached in 1878, the Baptist Charles Haddon Spurgeon said that the cross ‘lightens our conscience, gladdens our hearts, inspires our devotion, and elevates our aspirations; we are wedded to it, and daily glory in it’.³ Battling against modernism and theological liberalism at the beginning of the twentieth century, the authors of *The Fundamentals* (1910–1915) confidently asserted that: ‘The atonement is Christianity in epitome. It is the heart of Christianity as a system; it is the distinguishing mark of the Christian religion’.⁴ From a slightly different perspective, the Scottish Congregational theologian P. T. Forsyth commented: ‘Christ is to us just what his cross is. All that Christ was in heaven or on earth was put into what he did there. . . . You do not understand Christ till

1 George Whitefield, *The Nature and Necessity of our New Birth in Christ Jesus, in Order to Salvation* (London: C. Rivington, 1737), p. 1.

2 Quoted in, Kenneth J. Collins, *The Theology of John Wesley: Holy Love and the Shape of Grace* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2007), p. 99.

3 Quoted in, Mark Hopkins, *Nonconformity’s Romantic Generation: Evangelical and Liberal Theologies in Victorian England* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2004), pp. 146–7.

4 Dyson Hague, ‘At-one-ment by Propitiation’, in *The Fundamentals: A Testimony to the Truth*, edited by A. C. Dixon and R. A. Torrey (12 vols, Chicago, IL: Testimony Publishing Company, 1910), XI: 23.

you understand his cross'.⁵ At the beginning of the twenty-first century, after over seventy years preaching to millions in stadiums around the globe, Billy Graham, in one of his final books, continued to proclaim that Christ 'paid for our freedom with his priceless life', and that salvation is still freely available 'to all who will take hold'.⁶

The hymns evangelicals have sung have dwelt on the cross more than any other single theme. In the popular *Olney Hymns* (1779), William Cowper graphically portrayed the cross as a blood-filled fountain:

There is a fountain filled with blood
Drawn from Immanuel's vein;
And sinners plunged beneath that flood,
Lose all their guilty stains

The dying thief rejoiced to see
That fountain in his day;
And there have I, though vile as he,
Washed all my sins away.⁷

The personal appropriation of the atoning work of Christ has been an indispensable part of the evangelical understanding of the cross. The so-called 'love song' of the 1904–1905 Welsh revival, 'Dyma gariad fel y moroedd' ('Here is love, vast as the ocean'), took up the theme of the love of God displayed at Calvary. Its second verse focused exclusively on the cross:

On the Mount of Crucifixion
Fountains opened deep and wide;
Through the floodgates of God's mercy
Flowed a vast and gracious tide.
Grace and love, like mighty rivers,
Poured incessant from above,
And heaven's peace and perfect justice
Kissed a guilty world in love.⁸

Sustained meditation on the atonement could sustain revival fires. The cross was also meant to overshadow and give shape to the whole of the Christian's life. Fanny Crosby's chorus expressed this more clearly than most:

Jesus, keep me near the Cross:
There a precious fountain,
Free to all – a healing stream –
Flows from Calvary's mountain.

*In the Cross, in the Cross, be my glory ever;
Till my raptured soul shall find rest beyond the river.*

5 P. T. Forsyth, *The Cruciality of the Cross* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1909), pp. 44–5.

6 Billy Graham, *The Reason for my Hope: Salvation* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2013), p. xii.

7 *Olney Hymns* (London: W. Oliver, 1797), no. 79; book 1, p. 98.

8 Translation from *Christian Hymns* (Bridgend: Evangelical Movement of Wales, 1977), no. 210.

Near the Cross! O Lamb of God,
Bring its scenes before me;
Help me walk from day to day,
With its shadow o'er me.⁹

For evangelicals, the sacrificial death of Christ has been at the heart of their expression of Christian faith; meditation upon it has been the meat and drink of their spirituality.¹⁰

Christians down the ages have understood the atoning work of Christ in many different ways, and have developed a number of theories or models to aid understanding.¹¹ Some have seen one or other of these models as best capturing the nature of Christ's redeeming work, while others have preferred to argue that each captures just one facet of Christ's death, and that only when taken together do we get a full picture. These models have included the ransom theory, championed by some of the early church fathers, in which Christ by his sufferings and death is held to have paid either God or the devil a ransom to free humanity from the debt that sin had incurred. So-called governmental theories, owing much to the seventeenth-century Dutch jurist, Hugo Grotius, have focused on the need to maintain God's justice, and have seen Christ's death as clearing all obstacles out of the way so that God can forgive sinners without punishing them.

The satisfaction view, developed by Anselm in the eleventh century, interprets Christ's death as a substitution, but avoids the language of punishment, by stressing that in his death Christ brought God the honour that he had been deprived because of human rebellion. More recently, the 'Christus Victor' approach, perhaps best associated with Gustav Aulén's work, regards the cross as a site of cosmic conflict between good and evil, in which Christ overcame the power of sin, death and the devil.¹² Other views include those which see Christ as being a scapegoat for human sin, and the recapitulation view, which argues that the atonement witnessed Christ succeeding where Adam had previously failed. More radically, others following the lead of twelfth-century theologian Peter Abelard have argued that Christ's death carried no redemptive value beyond the example it represented of human suffering. Following the teaching and example of Christ, in his life and his death, it is held, brings moral transformation.

Most evangelicals have certainly favoured a substitutionary view of Christ's sacrifice. That is, they have regarded Christ's passion as in some way in the place and stead of sinful humanity, and often they have added the language of punishment to that of substitution. Taking their lead from the sixteenth-century Protestant Reformer John Calvin, some have stressed that in his sufferings and death Christ bore the penalty and curse due for the sins of his people, and that in the process God's wrath against sin was propitiated, or appeased, and his justice fully satisfied.¹³ However,

9 Ira D. Sankey, *Sacred Songs and Solos: Twelve Hundred Hymns* (London: Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1921), no. 134.

10 David W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), pp.14–17.

11 For some recent introductory surveys to these models, see John Stott, *The Cross of Christ* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1986); Mark D. Baker and Joel B. Green, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross: Atonement in New Testament and Contemporary Contexts* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2003); Gregory A. Boyd, Joel B. Green, Bruce R. Reichenbach and Thomas R. Schreiner, *The Nature of the Atonement: Four Views* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006); Stephen R. Holmes, *The Wondrous Cross: Atonement and Penal Substitution in the Bible and History* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2007); *T&T Clark Companion to Atonement*, edited by Adam J. Johnson (London: Continuum, 2016).

12 Gustav Aulén, *Christus Victor: An Historical Study of the Three Main Types of the Idea of the Atonement*, translated by A. G. Herbert (London: SPCK, 1931).

13 For Calvin's views, see John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, translated by F. L. Battles, edited

evidence of all of the other views on the atonement can be found in the preaching and writings of prominent figures from across the spectrum of evangelical opinion: while each approach has had its passionate advocates, none of them on their own have been regarded as fully expressing the richness of evangelical understandings of the cross. The atonement has consequently been a source of constant debate amongst evangelicals. This chapter explores some of these debates, and argues that while the cross has been integral to evangelical identity, it has also been highly contested, leading to conflicts over the nature of true evangelicalism.

Widening the atonement in the eighteenth century

Finding confident statements from first generation evangelicals concerning the centrality of a substitutionary view of the atonement is not difficult. During these decades most would have heartily agreed with the New England theologian Jonathan Edwards that the ‘great Christian doctrine of Christ’s satisfaction . . . is, as it were, the centre and hinge of all doctrines of pure revelation’.¹⁴ In a sermon in January 1739, on a favourite evangelical text, Romans 3: 23–4, Charles Wesley went a step further and spoke of the atonement not only in substitutionary terms, but added penal language as well:

God sent his only son our Saviour Christ into this world to fulfill the law for us, and by the shedding of his most precious blood, to make sacrifice and satisfaction or amends to his Father for our sins, and assuage his wrath and indignation conceived against us for the same.¹⁵

In his epic poem *Bywyd a Marwolaeth Theomemphus* (1764), the leading theologian of the Welsh Methodist revival, William Williams, put in the mouth of Theomemphus, the main protagonist, a similarly confident expression of penal substitution:

He came to heal the wounded, was wounded in their stead;
The heir of heaven was pierced for those through sin were dead;
He sucked the awful poison the serpent gave to me,
And from that deadly venom, he died on Calvary.¹⁶

Beyond early Methodism, the combination of substitutionary and penal language was no less clear. For the dissenting divine, Philip Doddridge, Christ ‘was made a Curse for us, and endured the penalty which our sins had deserved’,¹⁷ while for John Witherspoon, the Scottish-American Presbyterian and President of the College of New Jersey (later Princeton), Christ’s death was only fully understood as ‘being a propitiation’. He wrote:

by John T. McNeill (2 vols, Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), II: 503–11 (II. xvi.1–6).

14 Quoted in Michael J. McClymond and Gerald R. McDermott, *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 250.

15 John R. Tyson, ‘“I Preached at the Cross, As Usual”: Charles Wesley and Redemption’, in *Charles Wesley: Life, Literature and Legacy*, edited by Kenneth C. G. Newport and Ted A. Campbell (Peterborough: Epworth Press, 2007), p. 205.

16 Eifion Evans, *Pursued by God: A Selective Translation of the Welsh Religious Classic Theomemphus by William Williams of Pantycelyn* (Bridgend: Evangelical Press of Wales, 1996), p. 91.

17 Robert Strivens, *Philip Doddridge and the Shaping of Evangelical Dissent* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015), p. 41.

Without all question, every part of his humiliation was satisfactory to the divine justice, and contributed to appease the wrath of God . . . The waves of divine wrath went over him; and he waded still deeper and deeper in this troubled ocean, till he was well nigh overwhelmed.¹⁸

The language of substitution, often with penal language as well, came most naturally to evangelicals when they wanted to explain the sacrificial death of Christ.

Yet there could also be significant variation in the way Christ's death was understood; sometimes alongside such clear expressions of penal substitution, other perspectives could harmoniously co-exist. The evangelical nonconformist Isaac Watts was a passionate defender of penal substitution, arguing that without it the 'blessed Gospel is shamefully curtailed, and depriv'd of some of its most important Designs and Honours'.¹⁹ But he was also ready to speak of the atonement as a 'Recompence for the dishonour done to [God's] Government', and as 'a solemn spectacle and Wonder of other Worlds behind this, even the World of Angels, Principalities and Powers'.²⁰ Penal substitutionary, governmental and 'Christus Victor' theories meshed together. However, it was in his magnanimous approach to those who differed from his understanding of the atonement that Watts was perhaps most innovative. 'Far be it from me', he wrote, 'to imagine that every one must believe these things just after the same Order and in the same manner in which I have learnt to conceive of them'. There were others who had understood things differently. What mattered, he argued, was that all agreed that in his death Christ had made a 'proper Satisfaction for sin'.²¹ It was a generous position.

Among those caught up in the evangelical revivals of the 1730s there was similar synthesis. There is some limited evidence that Jonathan Edwards grappled with some of the complexities of strictly penal views of the atonement, and there are hints here and there in Edwards' writings that he was attracted to a more governmental approach to Christ's death, although in the final analysis he never moved beyond the bounds of penal substitution.²² In his analysis of the theology of John Wesley, Randy Maddox has demonstrated that Wesley could speak of the atonement in different ways at different times. Maddox characterized Wesley's position as a blended one, combining a 'Penalty Satisfaction *explanation* of the Atonement which has a Moral Influence *purpose*, and a Ransom *effect*'.²³

As the spirit of the revivals spilled over its Methodist birthplace in the later eighteenth century, many of its characteristic emphases were taken up by leading figures in other denominations. In *The Complete Duty of Man* (1763), the Anglican evangelical Henry Venn, followed Wesley's synthesizing of various views of the atonement: Jesus, he wrote, 'was made sin, that is, a sin-offering, and a curse for us. He interposed his sacred body between the load of wrath from above, and us the heirs of wrath below', and in so doing, 'the debt of penal suffering, the debt of perfect obedience is paid to the law; the powers of hell are vanquished, and God is well

18 Kevin DeYoung, 'John Witherspoon and Late Reformed Orthodoxy', *Christianity and History Bulletin* vol. 8 (Spring 2016), 33.

19 Isaac Watts, *Sermons on Various Subjects: Divine and Moral* (2 vols, Boston, MA: Rogers and Fowle, 1746), II: 527.

20 Watts, *Sermons on Various Subjects*, II: 529–30.

21 Watts, *Sermons on Various Subjects*, II: 537–8.

22 See S. Mark Hamilton, 'Jonathan Edwards on the Atonement', *International Journal of Systematic Theology* vol. 15 (October 2013), 394–415.

23 Randy Maddox, *Responsible Grace: John Wesley's Practical Theology* (Nashville, TN: Kingswood Books, 1994), p. 109.

pleased'.²⁴ A similar approach was taken by Dan Taylor, the founder of the New Connexion of General Baptists in 1770, who fused a governmental, possibly Grotian understanding of the atonement, with the language of punishment and satisfaction.²⁵ His advocacy of a form of what became known as the governmental theory, presaged the more substantial attempts that would be made by later generations to replace penal substitution with this view altogether.

Despite these fairly tentative explorations of the precise meaning of the atonement, the chief point of controversy concerning the sacrificial death of Christ throughout much of the eighteenth century concerned not so much its substitutionary or penal nature, but who exactly it was intended to benefit. Questions regarding the extent of the atonement, whether Christ died for the world or just for a more limited group of his own people, the elect, absorbed considerable energy. It was the issue above all others that drove apart George Whitefield and John Wesley during the early stages of the evangelical revival, a fissure between Calvinists and Arminians that has remained ever-present within the evangelical movement. Wesley, a late-comer to the leadership of the English revival, found the Calvinism of the Methodists that Whitefield had gathered in Bristol in the mid-1730s deeply offensive. In a provocative sermon against predestination, he argued that election was the 'Horrible Decree',²⁶ because amongst other things it limited the freeness of the grace of God on offer in the gospel, and inevitably hindered evangelism. 'Christ died', Wesley wrote, 'not only for those that are saved, but also for them that perish'.²⁷ The grace and love of God are 'Free in all, and Free for all'.²⁸

In his answer to Wesley's sermon, Whitefield reiterated his belief in election, but challenged Wesley's assertion that predestination made preaching the gospel all but redundant. Whitefield reiterated his belief in a limited or particular atonement – that Christ died for the elect alone:

But blessed be God, our Lord knew for whom he died. There was an eternal Compact between the Father and the Son. A certain number was then given him, as the Purchase and Reward of his Obedience and Death. For these he prayed, John xvi. and not for the world. For these, and these only, he is now interceding, and with their Salvation he will be fully satisfied.²⁹

However, for Whitefield this did not blunt evangelistic endeavour one bit. 'And since we know not who are Elect and who Reprobate', he wrote, 'we are to preach promiscuously to all'.³⁰ In Whitefield's hands Calvinism, at least in the moderate expression he favoured, far from being a hindrance to evangelism, proved to be an enormous motivation.

There were plenty still wedded to stricter forms of Calvinism, with its narrower application of the atonement. The Particular Baptist, John Gill's stress on eternal justification, the idea that the elect were justified before the foundation of the world, so elevated the secret decrees

24 Henry Venn, *The Complete Duty of Man: Or, a System of Doctrinal and Practical Christianity* (London: J. Newbery, 1763), pp. 195–6.

25 See Richard Pollard, "'To Revive Experimental Religion or Primitive Christianity in Faith and Practice": The Pioneering Evangelicalism of Dan Taylor (1738–1816)' (unpublished PhD thesis: University of Wales, 2014), p. 88.

26 John Wesley, *Free Grace: A Sermon Preach'd at Bristol* (Bristol: S. and F. Farley, 1739), p. 25.

27 Wesley, *Free Grace*, p. 5.

28 Wesley, *Free Grace*, p. 20.

29 George Whitefield, *A Letter to the Reverend Mr. John Wesley: In Answer to his Sermon, Entitled, Free-Grace* (London: W. Strahan, 1741), p. 26.

30 Whitefield, *A Letter to the Reverend Mr. John Wesley*, p. 11.

of God that evangelistic zeal inevitably suffered.³¹ Sometimes, High Calvinist views could gain a considerable following, as in the case of the network of churches established in Surrey and Sussex by the eccentric pastor of Providence Chapel in London, William Huntington.³² During the early decades of the nineteenth century some within the Welsh nonconformist community flirted seriously with hyper-Calvinistic views, in part a reaction to the arrival of Wesleyan missionaries in north-east Wales. The Calvinistic Methodist leader John Elias dedicated himself to ‘purge our pulpits for ever from the accusations that we do not have an atonement sufficient for the world’.³³ But by this point High Calvinist views were becoming increasingly rare among those eighteenth-century evangelicals who understood the death of Christ in Reformed terms.

George Whitefield had modelled a moderate evangelical Calvinism, holding election and a commitment to offering the gospel freely to all in something close to harmonic balance.³⁴ It was, of course, a rebalancing of Calvinism finely tuned to the more optimistic spirit of the age,³⁵ and there were many inspired by his example. The Bristol Baptist Academy became something of a proving ground for moderate Calvinists in that denomination.³⁶ Among a growing band of evangelicals in the Church of England, John Newton’s views were not untypical. Holding to a belief in election, Newton preferred to argue that Christ’s sacrifice was for ‘sinners’, a category large enough to be all-inclusive. It was an approach that owed much to the ‘Book of Common Prayer’, where the Lord’s Supper liturgy says that Christ ‘made there by his one oblation of himself once offered, a full perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world’.³⁷ This allowed him to say that the atonement was sufficient for all, and that none other was needed, without implying that all would necessarily be saved. It was an argument, according to Bruce Hindmarsh, ‘that subordinated the whole question of the extent of the atonement to evangelical priorities’.³⁸ Despite often differing understandings of the extent of the atonement, whether it was intended for the world, or for a smaller subsection of it, in practice there was very little difference between the way in which moderate evangelical Calvinists and Arminians actually preached the cross.

Eighteenth-century evangelical engagement with the cross was not always preoccupied with the finer points of atonement theory. The cross was also the mainstay of evangelical devotional life. Sometimes meditation on the cross played a decisive role in conversion. Perhaps the classic example of this is the conversion narrative that Whitefield penned for his published journal.

- 31 Clive Jarvis, ‘The Myth of High Calvinism?’, in *Recycling the Past or Researching History? Studies in Baptist Historiography and Myths*, edited by Philip E. Thompson and Anthony R. Cross (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2005), pp. 234–40.
- 32 George M. Ella, *William Huntington: Pastor of Providence* (Darlington: Evangelical Press, 1994).
- 33 Owen Thomas, *The Atonement Controversy in Welsh Theological Literature and Debate, 1707–1841*, translated by John Aaron (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 2002), p. 312. See also David Ceri Jones, ‘“Some of the Grandest and Most Illustrious Beauties of the Reformation”: John Elias and the Battle over Calvinism in Early Nineteenth-Century Welsh Methodism’, *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library: Reinventing the Reformation in the Nineteenth Century: A Cultural History*, vol. 90 (Spring 2014), 113–43.
- 34 David Ceri Jones, *George Whitefield and the Revival of Calvinism in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (London: The Congregational Memorial Hall Trust, 2014).
- 35 Bebbington, *Evangelicalism*, pp. 63–5.
- 36 Roger Hayden, *Continuity and Change: Evangelical Calvinism among Eighteenth-century Baptist Ministers Trained at the Bristol Academy, 1690–1791* (Milton-under-Wychwood: Nigel Lynn Publishing, 2006).
- 37 *The Book of Common Prayer: The Texts of 1549, 1559, and 1662*, edited by Brian Cummings (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 402.
- 38 D. Bruce Hindmarsh, *John Newton and the English Evangelical Tradition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996), p. 165.

During a protracted period of conviction of sin, Whitefield found relief by emulating Christ in the final agonies of his crucifixion:

it was suggested to me, that when *Jesus Christ* cried out, “I thirst,” his sufferings were near at an End. Upon which, I cast myself down on the Bed, crying out, I thirst! I thirst! – Soon after this, I found and felt in myself that I was delivered from the Burden that had so heavily oppressed me!³⁹

However, there were few who matched the Moravians for their mystical devotion to the bodily sufferings of the dying Christ. In his study of early evangelical conversion narratives, Hindmarsh quotes the startling example of the barely literate Susannah Duree, who longed to:

give my self Kuite up to my Deare Saver So that I may get In to Is Deare Sidhol and to a Bide theare for hever To hall he tarnety I can not find Rest any weare hels wich makes me wich to Sink kuite in to that Deare Sidhole thow I am so un faithful.⁴⁰

Such overt focus on the physicality of the cross, including a preoccupation with the physical wounds of Christ, was exceptional.⁴¹

When their preaching focused on the gospel itself, some evangelicals said surprisingly little about the cross. Whitefield is the obvious example of this trend. For him the key issue was the new birth – regeneration – and it was his preaching on this theme that catapulted him to national fame in 1737. While he held that Christ died ‘to be a Propitiation for our sins, to give his life a ransom for many’,⁴² it was not on this that he chose to dwell. In his oft-repeated sermon on the new birth he reasoned that because of the ‘moral Impurity in our nature . . . it is necessary . . . that we should have a grant of God’s Holy Spirit to change our natures, and to prepare us for the Enjoyment of that Happiness our Saviour has purchased by his precious blood’.⁴³ Whitefield tended to be more preoccupied with the inward awakening produced by the Holy Spirit in the soul, rather than by the objective accomplishments of Christ in his sacrificial death. Reference to the actual atonement is surprisingly rare in his published sermons. In marked contrast, the eccentric vicar of Everton in Bedfordshire, John Berridge, attributed the success of his ministry to his explicit focus on the penal substitutionary death of Christ:

I told them very plainly, that they were children of wrath, and under the curse of God . . . and that none but Jesus Christ could deliver them from that curse . . . If we break God’s law we immediately fall under the curse of it: and none can deliver us from this curse but Jesus Christ.⁴⁴

39 *A Short Account of God’s Dealings with the Reverend Mr. George Whitefield* (London: W. Strahan, 1740), pp. 48–9.

40 D. Bruce Hindmarsh, *The Evangelical Conversion Narrative: Spiritual Autobiography in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 179.

41 Explicit references to the cross are, for example, surprisingly absent in the conversion narratives of Whitefield’s Calvinistic Methodists. See David Ceri Jones, ‘Narratives of Conversion in English Calvinistic Methodism’, in *Revival and Resurgence in Christian History*, edited by Kate Cooper and Jeremy Gregory (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2008), pp. 128–41.

42 Whitefield, *The Nature and Necessity of our New Birth in Christ Jesus*, p. 17.

43 Whitefield, *The Nature and Necessity of our New Birth in Christ Jesus*, pp. 17–18.

44 John Berridge, *Justification by Faith: Being the Substance of a Letter from the Rev. Mr. Berridge in Cambridge to a Clergyman in Nottinghamshire, Giving an Account of a Great Work of God Wrought in His Own Heart* (London: E. Englesfield and J. Wakelin, 1762), pp. 20–1.

There was considerable flexibility in the evangelical use of cross in preaching to the unconverted.

The evangelical focus on the cross was not only limited to the beginnings of Christian life. Many evangelicals, both Calvinistic and Arminian, were alarmed at the spectre of Antinomianism, and so stressed the necessity of a life of good works as a sign of the reality of inward change and re-birth.⁴⁵ Some made explicit reference to the atoning work of Christ in this regard. In a letter to the evangelical philanthropist and anti-slavery campaigner, John Thornton, Berridge argued that ‘all divine life, and all the precious fruits of it, pardon, peace and holiness, spring from the cross’. Progress in holiness, he argued, was dependent on ‘clear views of the cross . . . We must feed on Christ’s atonement every day, and derive all our life, the life of peace and holiness, from his death.’⁴⁶ Similarly, William Jay, the evangelical Congregational minister at the Argyle Chapel in Bath for over sixty years, urged that only ‘the love of God shed abroad’ in the heart of the Christian ‘by his cross, will make them long to resemble him’.⁴⁷ For many the whole of the Christian life, not just its start, was a cross-shaped existence.

Redefining the atonement in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries

Among the early evangelicals there had been a broad commitment to substitutionary approaches to Christ’s death; some added penal terminology, but others did not. While some had begun to tentatively explore other approaches, towards the end of the eighteenth-century voices arguing that the substitutionary view did not fully or adequately capture the perplexity of Christ’s death became increasingly prominent. Advocates of what became known as the ‘New Divinity’ made the initial running. Joseph Bellamy, a close associate of Jonathan Edwards, argued that the atonement was, in the words of Oliver Crisp, a ‘penal nonsubstitution’. Drawing on the views of Hugo Grotius, Bellamy favoured a version of the governmental theory of the atonement. The law of God, he stated, could not be abrogated without a major threat to God’s justice; in his death Christ vindicated God’s law by showing what is required of those who were condemned by it – that is punishment. The undeserving Christ was punished, and the merit he accrued as a consequence could be drawn upon to forgive sinners. For Bellamy that merit was sufficient for the whole world, but only actually applicable to the elect.⁴⁸ In his wake, there were others that took things much further. Edwards’ son, Jonathan Edwards Jnr, propounded a full-blown governmental theory; he argued that Christ ‘did not, in the literal sense, pay the debt we owed to God’, but by means of his death vindicated God’s law and justice. With the moral order intact, and God’s justice satisfied, the way was clear for God to save by means of sovereign grace alone.⁴⁹

This alternative language went through many iterations, as subsequent generations of New England theologians, such as those associated with the New Haven school and later Andover

45 David Ceri Jones, ‘George Whitefield and Heart Religion’, *Heart Religion: Evangelical Piety in England and Ireland, 1690–1850*, edited by John Coffey (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 93–112.

46 John Berridge to John Thornton (18 August 1773), in *The Letters of John Berridge of Everton: A Singular Spirituality*, edited by Nigel P. Pibworth (Kitchiner, Ontario: Joshua Press, 2015), p. 198.

47 Quoted in Stephen Blair Waddell, ‘William Jay of Bath (1769–1853)’ (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Stirling, 2012), p. 140.

48 This section follows Oliver D. Crisp, ‘The Moral Government of God: Jonathan Edwards and Joseph Bellamy on the Atonement’, in *After Jonathan Edwards: The Courses of New England Theology*, edited by Oliver D. Crisp and Douglas A. Sweeney (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 85–8.

49 See Douglas A. Sweeney, *Nathaniel Taylor, New Haven Theology and the Legacy of Jonathan Edwards* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 105.

seminary, refined and adapted it further.⁵⁰ As some of their often tortuous theological manoeuvres trickled down to the popular level, they could be reduced to blunt statements that often lacked the nuance that characterized the work of their more careful expositors. In the hands of the revivalist Charles Finney, for example, this new view was stated in perhaps its starkest terms. Christ had died, he wrote, 'simply to remove an insurmountable obstacle out of the way of God's forgiving sinners'. In his death, Christ

... had only satisfied public justice, by honouring the law both in his obedience and death; and therefore rendering it safe for God to pardon sin, and to pardon the sins of any man, and of all men, who would repent and believe in Christ.⁵¹

Among evangelicals in Britain, it was the Baptist Andrew Fuller who mediated such views to a wider constituency.

Advocating a governmental theory of the atonement, an innovation which led some to question his Calvinism altogether, it was Fuller's emphasis on 'duty faith' that both aroused most controversy and that was most widely followed. In the same way as the atonement was sufficient for the whole world, but only efficient to the elect, so when it came to the role of human responsibility in accepting the gospel, Fuller trod a similar tightrope. Following Edwards, he argued that all men and women had the natural ability to believe the gospel, but it was their moral inability that prevented them from accepting Christ, something that could only be overcome by the enlightening power of the Holy Spirit. For Fuller, a more capacious atonement led him to argue that all were commanded to believe the gospel – without exception. That in turn opened the way to more ambitious evangelistic labour.⁵² These innovations were very much within the bounds of legitimate Reformed theological opinion, and they were taken on board enthusiastically in some quarters. Edward Williams, for example, the Welsh Congregationalist tutor at the Rotherham academy, had published *An Essay on the Equity of Divine Government and the Sovereignty of Divine Grace* in 1809, and was one of the founder members of the London Missionary Society.⁵³ He, like many others, thought that these ideas represented a more consistent Calvinism altogether.

In the middle and later nineteenth century, under the twin influences of first Romanticism and then Modernism, particularly in the form of German biblical criticism, much more radical reformulations of the doctrine of atonement took place. For the Romantics the idea of God as judge seemed outmoded, and the legal language that had been relied upon to define the purpose of the death of Christ jarred with the new more optimistic cultural mood. God, many argued, should be thought of as immanent rather than transcendent, more as a benevolent Father than a cosmic and distant ruler dispensing arbitrary justice. Gradually the incarnation of Christ, rather than his death, took centre stage.⁵⁴ The running was made by the Scot, John McLeod Campbell, who in his 1856 book *The Nature of the Atonement*, argued that it was Christ's identification with

50 For some of these developments, see *After Jonathan Edwards*, edited by Crisp and Sweeney, parts II & III.

51 Quoted in Charles E. Hambrick-Stowe, *Charles G. Finney and the Spirit of American Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996), p. 34.

52 See Peter J. Morden, *Offering Christ to the World: Andrew Fuller (1754–1814) and the Revival of Particular Baptist Life* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2003).

53 For Williams, see W. T. Owen, *Edward Williams D.D.: His Life, Thought and Influence* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1963).

54 For this change and some of its wider implications, see Boyd Hilton, *The Age of Atonement: The Influence of Evangelicalism on Social and Economic Thought, 1785–1865* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986).

humanity that was the key to understanding both his life and death. Christ lived vicariously in humanity's place, he wrote; in his death he made confession of sin on behalf of fallen human beings thereby recognizing the rightness of God the Father's estimation of sin and safeguarding his justice. While Christ's death was therefore still substitutionary, it was no longer penal.⁵⁵

In a similar vein, the Birmingham Congregationalist R. W. Dale argued that Christ's death was a voluntary sacrifice which vindicated God's righteousness; as was becoming typical he laid equal stress on Christ's incarnation as his death, and maintained that by identifying so closely with human beings in his life, Christ was able to restore the broken relationship between God and humanity in his death.⁵⁶ In his *The Old Evangelicalism and the New* (1889), he contrasted the theology of the eighteenth-century evangelicals, with its exclusive stress on the atonement and regeneration, with the position of contemporary evangelicals who had, rightly in his opinion, restored the doctrine of the incarnation to centre stage.⁵⁷ Some of these reformulations of the doctrine of the atonement were still taking place within the broad parameters of the evangelical movement; initially they indicated the emergence of a liberal evangelical wing to that movement, but the theological trajectory of some of their advocates was to take them beyond evangelical belief.

By the end of the nineteenth century, other theological currents of a much more radical nature had overhauled the concept of atonement altogether, relegating it to an earlier more primitive stage in the development of the Christian faith. In its place, inspired by the German theologians Friedrich Schleiermacher and Albrecht Ritschl, were enthroned the universal fatherhood of God, and a theology that saw Christ's death as little more than an example of supreme self-sacrifice, certainly to be emulated, but carrying little intrinsic salvific or redemptive power. For some of the more radical voices, especially within nonconformity, the whole concept of atonement itself was regarded as outdated, ill-suited to the modern age.

The degree to which the atonement had become a thorny issue among evangelicals by the second half of the nineteenth century can be seen in the way in which the Evangelical Alliance tackled the doctrine in its basis of faith. Published in 1845, the clause on the atonement was concise and non-specific, speaking only of Christ's 'work of atonement for sinners of mankind'.⁵⁸ For many evangelicals, such imprecision was deeply troubling, and systemic of much greater theological drift. A little later J. C. Ryle, who would go on to serve as bishop of Liverpool, solemnly warned:

As long as you live, beware of a religion in which there is not much of the cross. You live in times when the warning is sadly needful. . . . There are hundreds of places of worship, in this day, in which there is everything almost except the cross . . . Jesus Christ is not proclaimed in the pulpit. The Lamb of God is not lifted up, and salvation

55 T. F. Torrance, *Scottish Theology: From John Knox to John McLeod Campbell* (London: T. & T. Clark, 1996), pp. 297–317; Peter K. Stevenson, *God in Our Nature: The Incarnational Theology of John McLeod Campbell* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2004).

56 R. W. Dale, *The Atonement* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1875). See also, Hopkins, *Nonconformity's Romantic Generation*, pp. 68–74; Alan P. F. Sell, *Christ and Controversy: The Person of Christ in Nonconformist Thought and Ecclesial Experience, 1600–2000* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2011), pp. 125–6.

57 See, for example, R. W. Dale, *The Old Evangelicalism and the New* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1889), p. 47.

58 Ian Randall and David Hilborn, *One Body in Christ: The History and Significance of the Evangelical Alliance* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2001), p. 357.

by faith in Him is not freely proclaimed. And hence all is wrong. Beware of such places of worship.⁵⁹

In comments on Psalm 85:10 in *The Treasury of David* (1870), C. H. Spurgeon, with his characteristic pungent wit, castigated ‘modern thinkers who make sport of our Lord’s substitutionary atonement’. He went on:

The doctrine of atonement has been well described . . . as the admission that ‘the Lord Jesus Christ did something or other, which somehow or other, was in some way or other connected with man’s salvation’. This is their substitute for substitution.⁶⁰

In the century that followed, the substitutionary view of the atonement that had been largely assumed by most evangelicals for over a century and a half, and that had hitherto been only lightly reshaped by others, came to greater prominence. When the principal of Princeton Theological Seminary, A. A. Hodge, published his exhaustive study of the atonement in 1867, identifying it along with biblical inspiration as one of the ‘two doctrines just at present most generally brought into question’,⁶¹ the language of penal substitution stood in sharp relief. He wrote:

It is not a pecuniary solution of debt, which ipso facto liberates upon the mere payment of the money. It is a vicarious penal satisfaction, which can be admitted in any case only at the arbitrary discretion of the sovereign; and which may have a redemptive bearing upon the case of none, of few, of many, or of all; and upon the elect case at whatsoever time and upon whatever conditions are predetermined by the mutual understanding of the Sovereign and of the voluntary substitute.⁶²

As many within the churches at large were questioning the validity of an atonement altogether, many evangelicals began to argue that the penal substitutionary view, far from being just one approach among many to explain Christ’s sacrificial death, should actually be seen as one of the defining characteristics of the evangelical movement as a whole.

Contesting the atonement in the twentieth century

As the twentieth century dawned, the 1904–1905 religious revival in Wales seemed to presage a bright future for evangelical Christianity, especially when the ripples from that revival stirred up revival movements elsewhere bringing into being a raft of new evangelical denominations, albeit with a Pentecostal flavour. Yet the excitement stirred by the revival was far from unique. In much the same way as they had done with the revivalist Evan Roberts a little earlier, in 1907 the national press latched on to the radical minister of London’s City Temple, R. J. Campbell, turning him into a national celebrity almost overnight. Campbell, a highly charismatic figure, championed what quickly became known as the ‘New Theology’. In reality, there was little that

59 J. C. Ryle, *Old Paths: Being Plain Statements on Some of the Weightier Matters of Christianity* (London: National Protestant Church Union, 1897), p. 249.

60 C. H. Spurgeon, *The Treasury of David: Containing an Original Exposition of the Book of Psalms* (7 vols, London: Marshall Brothers, 1869–85), III: 453.

61 Archibald Alexander Hodge, *The Atonement* (Philadelphia, PA: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1867), p. 16.

62 Hodge, *The Atonement*, p. 341.

was actually new in what Campbell wrote, his skill rather lay in articulating the often abstruse theological ideas of others, albeit in more popular form.

Campbell's discussion of the atonement took up three chapters of his book, *The New Theology* (1907) – it was the subject dealt with at more length than any other. The traditional view of the atonement, he wrote, 'does not possess a living interest for the mind of to-day',⁶³ and 'has wrought a good deal of mischief in the past and bewilderment in the present'.⁶⁴ The atonement for Campbell had nothing whatsoever to do with punishment, rather it was an expression of the 'fundamental oneness of God and man'.⁶⁵ Jesus, he said, had lived a life of perfect self-sacrifice thereby revealing the divine life within him. Any human being could do likewise. 'If you want to see the atonement at work', he wrote, 'go wherever love is ministering to human necessity and you see the very same spirit which was in Jesus . . . Shew me a Christlike life and I will show you a part of the atonement of Christ'.⁶⁶ The task of the Church was not to preach a supernatural redemption, but to en flesh the life of Christ, to realize his kingdom on earth, by improving the social conditions of the poor and dispossessed.⁶⁷ Allied to the emerging Independent Labour Party in Britain, the Social Gospel became, for a time, a powerful force,⁶⁸ but its concept of salvation was far removed from the traditional preoccupations of evangelicals. For some advocates of the social gospel, such as John Morgan Jones in Wales, talk of theories of the atonement were just stumbling blocks put between people and the gospel of Jesus Christ.⁶⁹

For many evangelicals at the beginning of the twentieth century, it seemed as though every aspect of the faith was up for grabs. When the process of theological redefinition turned to the death of Christ, it looked like the very gospel was at stake. The backlash from conservative evangelicals was loud and sustained; in denominations in Britain and America, the newly dubbed Fundamentalists sought to fight back against the inexorable tide of liberal and modernist ideas. In their manifesto, *The Fundamentals* (1910–1915), a series of twelve booklets covering the essentials of the Christian faith, bankrolled by Lyman Stewart, a Californian oilman, and sent to every English-speaking Protestant minister around the world, the indispensability of the penal substitutionary view of the atonement was asserted in no uncertain terms. Franklin Johnson's essay affirmed that the 'Christian world as a whole believes in a substitutionary atonement'.⁷⁰ The moral influence theory, so much in vogue, he dismissed as the preferred choice of those who denied the inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture. Both went hand in hand.

While British fundamentalists were never quite as belligerent as their American counterparts, there were a number of flashpoints in which the doctrine of the atonement played a significant part. Within the Church of England, controversy between conservative and more liberal evangelical voices focused around liberalizing tendencies within the Church Missionary Society;⁷¹ in a book of essays summarizing the conservative evangelical position, C. H. Titterton accused

63 R. J. Campbell, *The New Theology* (New York: Macmillan, 1907), p. 111.

64 Campbell, *The New Theology*, pp. 113–4.

65 Campbell, *The New Theology*, p. 132.

66 Campbell, *The New Theology*, p. 162.

67 For Campbell and his 'New Theology', see Keith Robbins, 'The Spiritual Pilgrimage of Rev. R. J. Campbell', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* vol. 30 (April 1979), 261–76.

68 For some American context on the social gospel, see Christopher H. Evans, *The Kingdom is Always but Coming: A Life of Walter Rauschenbusch* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004).

69 Robert Pope, *Seeking God's Kingdom: The Nonconformist Social Gospel in Wales, 1906–1939* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1999), p. 71.

70 Franklin Johnson, 'The Atonement', in *The Fundamentals*, edited by Dixon and Torrey, VI: 50.

71 See Andrew Atherstone, 'Evangelicalism and Fundamentalism in the Inter-war Church of England', in *Evangelicalism and Fundamentalism in the United Kingdom in the Twentieth Century*, edited by David W. Bebbington and David Ceri Jones (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 63–4.

those who had abandoned forensic language when explaining the atonement of ‘toning down . . . Divine revelation, a toning down which emasculates the Atonement of its vital saving truths and makes the . . . New Covenant sealed by the Saviour’s precious blood of none effect’.⁷² Among conservative evangelical Baptists, there was consternation when the liberal T. R. Glover, a classical scholar at Cambridge, was nominated to the presidency of the Baptist Union in 1923. His dismissal of substitutionary atonement, which he argued in a 1931 publication is ‘hardly to be found in the New Testament’,⁷³ laid bare for all to see the gulf of views on the death of Christ which could be found in most of the British mainline denominations by this point. They represented a major challenge to evangelical identity.

However, by the 1930s the tide was beginning to change. The horrors of the Great War and the growing spectre of Nazism, brought home the reality of evil, something that some of the more liberalizing voices had underplayed. The renewed supernaturalism of many of the Neo-Orthodox theologians saw a focus once more on the objective realities of Christ’s sacrificial death. Karl Barth came close to affirming substitutionary atonement, although he was more reluctant to stress some of its penal dimensions.⁷⁴ Equally influential was the work of the Swedish theologian Gustav Aulén; his *Christus Victor* (1930) identified three approaches to the atonement, one which, indebted to Anselm, stressed the substitutionary aspect of the atonement, another which focused on its role to effect moral change, and a third, favoured by Aulén himself, which charted a middle way, arguing that the atonement was a ‘cosmic drama’, in which Christ won ‘a victory over the hostile powers’ and ‘brings to pass a new relation, a relation of reconciliation, between God and the world’.⁷⁵ Under attack for so long, there were suddenly persuasive and scholarly voices calling for a return to more traditional understandings of the sacrificial death of Christ.

They coincided with the renaissance of conservative evangelicalism in Britain and America, though the latter preferred the designation neo-evangelicalism. The first inklings of this upturn in Britain could be detected in the universities; at Cambridge the split between evangelicals and liberals within the Student Christian Movement in 1910 was specifically over the SCM’s equivocation over penal substitutionary atonement.⁷⁶ The Inter-Varsity Fellowship which came into being in 1928 as an alternative to the SCM for more conservative evangelicals enshrined within its doctrinal basis a commitment to a penal substitutionary view of Christ’s sacrificial death:

Sinful human beings are redeemed from the guilt, penalty and power of sin only through the sacrificial death once and for all time of their representative and substitute, Jesus Christ, the only mediator between them and God.⁷⁷

72 C. H. Titterton, ‘The Atonement’, in *Evangelicalism: By Members of the Fellowship of Evangelical Churchmen*, edited by J. Russell Howden (London: Thynne and Jarvis, 1925), p. 59.

73 T. R. Glover, *Fundamentals* (London: Baptist Union Publication Department, 1931), p. 12, quoted in David W. Bebbington, ‘British Baptist Crucicentrism since the Late Eighteenth Century: Part 2’, *Baptist Quarterly* vol. 44 (2012), 283.

74 Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics, IV. 1: The Doctrine of Reconciliation*, edited by G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance (London: T. & T. Clark, 2009), §59, pp. 204–77.

75 Aulén, *Christus Victor*, p. 21.

76 See, for example, the recollections of one of the evangelical dissentients: Norman P. Grubb, *Once Caught, No Escape: My Life Story* (Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 1969), p. 56. See also, David Goodhew, ‘The Rise of the Cambridge Inter-Collegiate Christian Union, 1910–1971’, *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* vol. 54 (January 2003), 63–4.

77 <http://www.uccf.org.uk/about/doctrinal-basis.htm> (accessed 24 February 2018).

T. C. Hammond, an Irish Anglican, who wrote what can best be described as the doctrinal handbook for the IVF, *In Understanding be Men* (1936), urged evangelical students to ‘fiercely contend’ for views of the atonement which had the propitiatory work of Christ at their heart.⁷⁸ It was a clarion call. Attacks against the concept of propitiation continued. In his commentaries on Romans and on the letters of the apostle John, as well as through his role in the production of the New English Bible, the theologian C. H. Dodd argued that the concept of propitiation was totally foreign to the New Testament.⁷⁹

By mid-century there were still more persuasive voices on the British evangelical scene exemplifying a new found confidence in the penal substitutionary view. The ministry of Martyn Lloyd-Jones was key in the resurgence of Calvinism within postwar evangelicalism. Lloyd-Jones had been helped in his understanding of the atonement by the slightly mixed-bag of R. W. Dale, P. T. Forsyth and James Denney,⁸⁰ three figures who were hardly of one mind in the interpretations they adopted. He played an important role in formulating the doctrinal basis of the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students in 1946, adopting the IVF statement on the atonement verbatim,⁸¹ and his own ministry consistently maintained the central importance of penal substitution, although even he could sometimes hint that penal language did not do complete justice to the richness of the biblical testimony concerning Christ’s sacrificial death.⁸²

There were also other voices who took the opportunity to restate the centrality of penal substitution. A new and abridged edition of James Denney’s *The Death of Christ* (1902) was issued under the auspices of Tyndale House,⁸³ a new research centre at Cambridge designed to encourage serious evangelical scholarly engagement with the New Testament. Denney’s work was important because he had singled out penal substitution as the point ‘which ultimately divides interpreters of Christianity into evangelical and non-evangelical’.⁸⁴ Leon Morris, an Australian Anglican theologian, published a series of comprehensive studies over a forty-year period, once again reiterating the centrality of the language of penal substitution.⁸⁵ In the postwar years, penal substitution had been brought to the foreground of evangelical identity. When the newly formed Evangelical Movement of Wales drew up its basis of faith in the late 1940s, Christ’s ‘substitutionary, atoning death on the cross’ was given pride of place.⁸⁶

The advent of charismatic renewal in the 1960s brought renewed challenge to evangelical understandings of the cross. While penal substitution was not ignored by charismatics, their

78 T. C. Hammond, *In Understanding be Men: A Handbook of Christian Doctrine* (London: Inter-Varsity Fellowship, 1936), p. 122.

79 See C. H. Dodd, *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1932), pp. 54–5; *The Johannine Epistles* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1946), pp. 25–6.

80 David Ceri Jones, ‘Lloyd-Jones and Wales’, in *Engaging with Martyn Lloyd-Jones: The Life and Legacy of ‘the Doctor’*, edited by Andrew Atherstone and David Ceri Jones (Nottingham: Apollos, 2011), pp. 65–6.

81 John Brencher, *Martyn Lloyd-Jones (1899–1981) and Twentieth-Century Evangelicalism* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2002), p. 219.

82 In a series of sermons on ‘Great Doctrines’ between 1952 and 1955, Lloyd-Jones preached three times on the subject of the atonement. In two of the sermons he defended penal substitution, but in the third argued just as strongly for the ‘Christus Victor’ view, specifically naming Gustav Aulén’s book of the same name. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Great Doctrines Series, vol. 1: God the Father, God the Son* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1996), Ch. 31.

83 James Denney, *The Death of Christ*, edited by R. V. Tasker (London: Tyndale Press, 1951).

84 James Denney, *The Atonement and the Modern Mind* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1903), p. 82.

85 The most important of his works are Leon Morris, *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross* (London: Tyndale Press, 1955); *The Cross in the New Testament* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1965).

86 Noel Gibbard, *The First Forty Years: The History of the Evangelical Movement of Wales, 1948–98* (Bridgend: Bryntirion Press, 2002), p. 167.

emphasis was often on the achievements of Christ's death beyond individual salvation. Their early twentieth-century predecessors, the Pentecostals, had maintained that Christ's atoning work made provision not just for spiritual but also physical healing. The fourfold gospel, they said, consisted not just of personal salvation, but also Holy Spirit baptism, divine healing, and the imminent second coming of Christ. In the pages of *Confidence*, the first Pentecostal magazine in Britain, the Sunderland Anglican Alexander Boddy published an article by his wife, who exercised her own healing ministry, asserting;

On Calvary we can rejoice to-day that the Redeemer fulfilled the Scriptures and bore away not only our sin, but our sickness.⁸⁷

Pioneering Pentecostal leaders such as George Jeffreys, who with his brother Stephen, established the Elim denomination in 1916, were typical in including opportunities for healing at their evangelistic services, including at Jeffreys' mammoth Easter campaigns at the Royal Albert Hall in the mid-1930s.⁸⁸ Physical healing was often as important as spiritual; indeed the former was often seen as confirmation of the later.

Leading charismatics have continued to believe that Christ's atonement included healing from disease and sickness. The former Anglican clergyman and founder of Kingdom Faith Ministries, Colin Urquhart, was only unusual in the vividness of the imagery he deployed:

When Jesus stood bearing the lashes from the Roman soldiers, all our physical pain and sicknesses were being heaped upon him . . . It is as if one lash for cancer, another for bone disease, another for heart disease, and so on. *Everything that causes physical pain was laid on Jesus as the nails were driven into His hands and feet.*⁸⁹

The American John Wimber, leader of the so-called Third Wave of renewal in the 1980s, used the phrase 'power evangelism' to describe his view that Christians should expect to see supernatural signs and wonders to authenticate the message of the cross. 'Healing', Wimber said, is a 'gospel advancer'.⁹⁰ Often this stress on healing was combined with a more general stress on wholeness and prosperity, financial, spiritual and physical. The prevalence of larger than life personalities such as Benny Hinn and Reinhard Bonnke teaching a gospel of health and wealth characterizes much of the evangelical world, especially in the Global South.⁹¹

The sense that the evangelical focus on penal substitution had become blurred lay behind the English Anglican J. I. Packer's decision to pick penal substitution as his subject for his Tyndale Biblical Theology Lecture for 1973. This approach to the cross, he wrote, 'is a distinguishing mark of the worldwide evangelical fraternity'.⁹² While he recognized that there were other legitimate perspectives on the atonement, he mounted a detailed case for the centrality of penal substitution, engaging closely with some of its main critics both historically and of more recent vintage. 'Can we', he urged in his conclusion, 'justify ourselves in holding a view of the

87 'Health and Healing in Jesus', *Confidence: A Pentecostal Paper for Great Britain* no. 2 (May 1908), 16.

88 Malcolm R. Hathaway, 'The Elim Pentecostal Church: Origins, Development and Distinctives', in *Pentecostal Perspectives*, edited by Keith Warrington (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1998), pp. 17–18.

89 Colin Urquhart, *Receive your Healing* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1986), p. 38

90 John Wimber and Kevin Springer *Power Healing* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1986), p. 60.

91 See Kate Bowler, *Blessed: A History of the American Prosperity Gospel* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

92 James I. Packer, 'What did the Cross Achieve? The Logic of Penal Substitution', *Tyndale Bulletin* vol. 25 (1974), 3.

atonement into which penal substitution does not enter? Ought we not to reconsider whether penal substitution is not, after all, the heart of the matter?⁹³ However, his voice was increasingly falling on deaf ears, particularly within his own Church of England. The final published statement issued by the second National Evangelical Anglican Congress in 1977 affirmed evangelical agreement about the importance of the death of Christ, but reflected the preference of many to 'lay greater stress on the relative significance of . . . other biblical pictures'.⁹⁴ Despite the efforts of others to shore up confidence in penal substitution – John Stott's *The Cross of Christ* (1986) was a particularly exhaustive treatment by one of the evangelical movement's most respected leaders – unanimity on the nature of Christ's sacrificial death was increasingly hard to find.

If anything the chorus of voices questioning penal substitution has grown louder in more recent times.⁹⁵ Furthermore, that criticism is no longer confined to just the speculations of theologians, but has some high profile advocates. One of these, the Baptist minister and minor television personality, Steve Chalke, outraged many in 2003 when he referred to the notion of penal substitution as 'a form of cosmic child abuse'.⁹⁶ Others, using slightly less pejorative language, have also levelled criticisms of the traditional evangelical approach to the atonement.⁹⁷ The Evangelical Alliance held a public debate in the immediate aftermath of the furore over Chalke's remarks; in a public statement they distanced themselves from his views, reaffirming the EA's commitment to penal substitution. They accepted that while the Bible does use other metaphors and pictures to speak of the cross, it never does so at the expense of penal substitutionary atonement.⁹⁸ The most vigorous response to Chalke came from the Reformed wing of the British evangelical movement; three authors from the conservative evangelical Anglican college, Oak Hill in London, expressed their deep concern that 'Christ will be robbed of his glory, that believers will be robbed of their assurance and that preachers will be robbed of their confidence in "the old, old story" of the life-transforming power of the cross of Christ' if belief in penal substitution were abandoned altogether.⁹⁹ A newly penned hymn by Stuart Townend, 'In Christ Alone', prominently and explicitly affirmed penal substitution: in the second half of its first verse

Till on that cross as Jesus died,
The wrath of God was satisfied –
For every sin on Him was laid;
Here in the death of Christ I live.¹⁰⁰

93 Packer, 'What did the Cross Achieve?', 45.

94 *The Nottingham Statement* (London: Falcon Press, 1977), p. 13.

95 See, for example, Colin E. Gunton, *The Actuality of Atonement: A Study of Metaphor, Rationality and the Christian Tradition* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1988), and some of the contributors to *Atonement Today*, edited by John Goldingay (London: SPCK, 1995).

96 Steve Chalke and Alan Mann, *The Lost Message of Jesus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), p. 182.

97 See, for example, Brian D. McLaren, *The Story we Find Ourselves In: Further Adventures of a New Kind of Christian* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003), pp. 100–8; Tom Wright, *The Day the Revolution Began: Rethinking the Meaning of Jesus' Crucifixion* (London: SPCK, 2016).

98 Evangelical Alliance Board Statement on the Atonement, <http://www.eauk.org/church/resources/theological-articles/upload/Board-Statement-on-penal-substitutionary-atonement.pdf> (accessed 23 February 2018). Papers from this symposium were published as *The Atonement Debate: Papers from the London Symposium on the Theology of Atonement*, edited by Derek Tidball, David Hilborn and Justin Thacker (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008).

99 Steve Jeffrey, Michael Ovey and Andrew Sach, *Pierced for Our Transgressions: Rediscovering the Glory of Penal Substitution* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2007), p. 21.

100 *Christian Hymns* (Bridgend: Evangelical Movement of Wales, 2004), no. 647.

It has taken on an almost anthemic quality among some on the more conservative wings of the contemporary evangelical movement, although it is also appreciated in other not exclusively evangelical contexts, such as at the enthronement of the Archbishop of Canterbury in 2013. However, it has been common practice to change these lines (without Townend's permission) to: 'Till on the cross as Jesus died, the love of God was magnified'.¹⁰¹ For many in the present day, the heart of the evangelical understanding of the gospel is at stake once more.

That the cross of Jesus Christ has been at the heart of evangelical self-understanding since the eighteenth century is plain. In one of his final books in 1999, John Stott, by this time the elder statesman of British, if not worldwide evangelicalism, issued an 'appeal to the rising generation' urging a renewed focus on those things which evangelicals around the world held in common, what he called 'essential evangelical truth'.¹⁰² He roused evangelicals to 'protect' the doctrine of penal substitutionary atonement 'from misunderstanding and hedge it about with every possible safeguard'.¹⁰³ As this chapter has shown, evangelical understandings of the sacrificial death of Christ have been liable to change and development over time. While a commitment to penal substitution was largely taken for granted in the eighteenth century, it was rarely held on its own. Through the later eighteenth and nineteenth centuries there were efforts to adapt penal substitution, particularly with the development of governmental approaches to the atonement, but these gave way in the later nineteenth century to much more radical attempts at redefinition. During the twentieth century, the atonement has remained a contested doctrine, and more recent attempts to discredit it from within the evangelical movement itself have led some evangelicals to argue that penal substitution is effectively the only approach that does full justice to the significance of Christ's death and passion. If the cross of Christ has been at the heart of evangelical identity, evangelical understanding of it has often been less than unanimous.

101 'Keith Getty on What Makes "In Christ Alone" Accepted and Contested' (2013), at <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/keith-getty-on-what-makes-in-christ-alone-beloved-and-contested> (accessed 24 February 2018).

102 John Stott, *Evangelical Truth: A Personal Plea for Unity* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1999), p. 10.

103 Stott, *Evangelical Truth*, p. 91.