

Those that deny 'penal substitution' are "the enemies of the cross of Christ"

[Philippians 3:18]

Over recent years there has been a steady build up of opposition to and outright rejection of what some term as 'the theory' of 'penal substitution'. Amongst the definitions for 'theory' is one that reads – 'a conjectural view or idea'. When it comes then to understanding what was happening on "the cross of Christ" for the faithful Christian the doctrine of 'penal substitution' is not a matter of 'conjecture' but it is the factual and glorious heartbeat that sustains God's gift of "eternal life" [Romans 6:23]. 'Penal substitution' is a factual divine truth that leaps from the pages of the Bible and to deny otherwise is quite simply to set oneself up as an 'enemy of the cross of Christ'.

To begin with I want to quote a few lines from my own personal testimony that for years has been posted to our ministry web site –

'The verse that began to impact upon me was Leviticus 1:4 'And he [THE SINNER] shall put his hand upon the head of the burnt offering [THE SUBSTITUTE] and it [THE SUBSTITUTE] shall be accepted for him [THE SINNER] to make atonement [SALVATION] for him [THE SINNER]'...The reality of my sin and its consequences [eternity in hell] became very real to me...but I know that during the service God revealed to me that the sinless life and substitutionary death of Jesus Christ would solve my problem...I deserved punishment for my sins and HE didn't for HE was sinless but HE suffered in my place ["For Christ [the substitute] also hath once suffered for sins, the just [the substitute] for the unjust [the sinner] that he [by his sinless life and substitutionary sufferings and death - no work on my part] might bring us [not assist us to get there by our own works/endeavours] to God" 1st Peter 3:16].

Here I saw Christ fulfilling the role of SUBSTITUTE as pictured in Leviticus 1:4...I went out of that service having been "born again" - I was like the man born blind in John 9 who declared in verse 25 "one thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see". I knew that Christ had given me a perfect and permanent righteousness [HIS] and that ALL my sins had been removed from me because "HE was wounded for our [my] transgressions, HE was bruised for our [my] iniquities...and the Lord hath laid on HIM the iniquity of us all [me]" Isaiah 53: 5&6. That is the glorious and full gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ [His sinless life] and Him crucified' [His substitutionary death]

My sure hope for "eternal life" is not grounded upon any 'conjectural view or idea' but foursquare upon the factual truth of the 'penal substitution' of Christ on the Cross of Calvary. For me I simply do not believe that anyone can be a true convert to Christ who denies what I consider in 'penal substitution' to be the very heart of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. I should add that I'm not alone in this view – when confronted by a quotation from **Steve Chalke's** book 'The Lost Message of Jesus' in which Mr Chalke denies this truth, as we shall see later, Pastor John MacArthur simply said – '**Anyone who believes that is not a Christian**'.

I have just mentioned **Steve Chalke** and this brings me now to those that I view as **“the enemies of the cross of Christ”** for it was really the published views of Mr Chalke that seemed in some ways to kick-start this most recent attack upon the veracity of the doctrine of **‘penal substitution’**.

Before elaborating on Mr Chalke’s denial and then going on to identify other deniers who are masquerading as Christians, I want to quote some thoughts from the **‘Devotional Studies in Philippians’** by **Lehman Strauss**. Commenting on the verse in question, **Philippians 3:18** Mr Strauss wrote –

‘It is a sad state of affairs that there are many who are “the enemies of the cross of Christ”. I say it is a sad state of affairs when men oppose all for which the Cross of Christ stands, for it caused the great apostle deep emotion and tears. This is not Paul’s first warning in this Epistle against such, for he spoke of these enemies as “dogs” and “evil workers” (3:2). They may have professed that they were Christians. However, they were of the opposition in disguise, wolves in sheep’s clothing (Matthew 7:15), dogs and sows pretending to be chiefs (2nd Peter 2:22) ... To have to write so severely of professed followers of Christ brought tears to Paul’s eyes. These were not drunkards and harlots that caused him to weep, but men who said they were Christians... the Church must contend with this peril which is one of the greatest hindrances to the progress of Christianity.

When a man speaks the language of the Church and professes to be a part of her life and labours and at the same time is an enemy of her very foundation, he inflicts greater havoc than does a Bertrand Russell [who vacillated between being an atheist and an agnostic] and his kind... These internal enemies “would pervert the gospel of Christ (Galatians 1:7) and in so doing will “trouble you” ... In contrast to the true children of God who glory in the Cross (Galatians 6:14) these are Christ’s enemies to whom the preaching of the cross is foolishness (1st Corinthians 1:18). How sad when the latter profess to be one of the former!

STEVE CHALKE



As stated earlier the first **‘enemy of the cross of Christ’** that I want to identify is **Steve Chalke**. I dealt with his rejection of **‘penal substitution’** in earlier articles posted to the web site and they can be viewed on

<http://www.takeheed.info/news-from-the-front-december-2004/>
<http://www.takeheed.info/news-from-the-front-march-2005/>
<http://www.takeheed.info/news-from-the-front-june-2006/>

The 'offending' views expressed by Steve Chalke in his book run as follows on page 182 – **'The fact is that the cross isn't a form of cosmic child abuse – a vengeful Father punishing His Son for an offence he has not even committed'**.

I do not plan to repeat fully what I wrote in response to this heresy but feel it would be helpful, as I go on to identify other **'enemies of the cross of Christ'**, to include here some of what I quoted from John MacArthur's book **'The Murder of Jesus'** – I wrote –

In his book **'The Murder of Jesus'** Pastor John MacArthur gives an explanation of what Paul wrote in **2 Corinthians 5:21** of how God **"hath made Him [Christ] who knew no sin to be sin for us"**. Pastor MacArthur wrote [pp 71&73] **'When Christ hung on the cross, He was bearing the sins of His people and He was suffering the wrath of God on their behalf. Second Corinthians 5:21 explains the cross in a similar way "He made him who knew no sin to be sin for us". In other words, on the cross, God imputed our sin to Christ and then punished Him for it (cf. 1 Peter 2:24) ...The holy Son of God who had never known even the most insignificant sin would *become* sin – an object of God's fury' and that is *'penal substitution'*.**

Later in his book [pp 218-221] Pastor MacArthur wrote words that could have been specifically penned to answer Steve Chalke's denial of **'penal substitution'**. Pastor MacArthur wrote **'As Christ hung there, He was bearing the sins of the world. He was dying as a substitute for others. To Him was imputed the guilt of their sins and He was suffering the punishment for those sins on their behalf. And the very essence of that punishment was the outpouring of God's wrath against sinners. In some mysterious way during those awful hours on the cross, the Father poured out the full measure of His wrath against sin and the recipient of that wrath was God's own beloved Son! IN THIS LIES THE TRUE MEANING OF THE CROSS. THOSE WHO TRY TO EXPLAIN THE ATONING WORK OF CHRIST IN ANY OTHER TERMS INEVITABLY END UP NULLIFYING THE TRUTH OF CHRIST'S ATONEMENT ALTOGETHER. [EMPHASIS MINE] ...God was punishing His own Son as if He had committed every wicked deed done by every sinner who would ever believe.**

And He did it so that He could forgive and treat those redeemed ones as if they had lived Christ's perfect life of righteousness. Scripture teaches this explicitly: **"He made him who knew no sin to be sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" ...It was God's own wrath against sin, God's own righteousness, and God's own sense of justice that Christ satisfied on the cross.** The shedding of His blood was a sin offering rendered to God...when Christ ransomed the elect from sin (1 Timothy 2:6), the ransom price was paid to God. Christ died in our place and stead and He received the very same outpouring of divine wrath in all its fury that we deserved for our sin...The physical pains of crucifixion, dreadful as they were, were nothing compared to the wrath of the Father against Him...all our worst fears about the horrors of hell, and more, were realised by Him as He received the due penalty of other's wrongdoing".

Just to conclude this section I want to quote some extracts from an email I sent to a man that had challenged my articles on Steve Chalke. This is what I wrote –

Finally, you asked – **‘Did Jesus preach penal substitution’?** God’s Word states –

Matthew 16:21 “From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed and be raised again the third day”

Matthew 26:28 “this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed FOR many FOR the remission of sins”

John 10:11 “I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life FOR the sheep”

John 10:14-15 “I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life FOR the sheep”.

These are only a few of the MULTITUDE of verses in the gospels where the Lord preached salvation through His **‘penal substitution’** on behalf of His people – just as the angel told Joseph in **Matthew 1:21** “and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins”.

BRIAN McLAREN



Moving on to our next **‘enemy of the cross of Christ’** I will mention briefly someone else that I have written about at length, someone who is a close friend of Steve Chalke and who, like him, rejects the truth of **‘penal substitution’** and that person is **Brian McLaren**. Altering slightly Steve Chalke’s expression of **‘cosmic child abuse’** Mr McLaren came up with the expression **‘divine child abuse’**. For a full treatment of my how I responded to this I would direct readers to the article on this link

<http://www.takeheed.info/the-summer-madness-of-an-invite-to-brian-mclaren/>

JEFFREY JOHN

Right at the outset I would state that this person should not be confused with the 'evangelist' known as J John. Rather the **Jeffrey John** in question is a 'gay' Anglican clergyman that the Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams wanted to elevate to be Bishop of Reading in 2003 but because of opposition was forced to shelve the plan. Today **Jeffrey John** is the Dean of St Albans. An informative article about him and one that is also very revealing where a former Bishop of Oxford, Richard Harries is concerned can be found on

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1519625/Bible-supports-homosexual-partnerships-says-bishop.html>

On BBC Radio 4 on Wednesday 4th April 2007 during a series of broadcast services for the period of 'lent' **Jeffrey John** delivered a talk on '**The God of Wrath**'. In the course of his talk Mr John said –

Crucifixion may or may not be the worst form of torture in the world, but it had a particular theological significance we mustn't miss. As St Paul explains, crucifixion was the method of execution which, according to the Law, was the special sign of God's ultimate punishment, his absolute curse: "Cursed be he that hangs upon a tree". On the cross, says Paul, Jesus took the place of all those who were supposed to be punished according to the Law. "God made him into sin who knew no sin". "He became a curse for us". But hang on – you may well say - what exactly does that mean – 'Jesus took our place' ? Does it mean, then, that we are back with a punishing God after all, and that the Cross is somehow to be understood as God's ultimate punishment for sin?

That's certainly what I was told in my Calvinistic childhood. The explanation I was given went something like this. God was very angry with us for our sins, and because he is a just God, our sin had to be punished. But instead of punishing us he sent his Son, Jesus, as a substitute to suffer and die in our place. The blood of Jesus paid the price of our sins, and because of him God stopped being angry with us. In other words, Jesus took the rap, and we got forgiven, provided we said we believed in him.

Well, I don't know about you, but even at the age of ten I thought this explanation was pretty repulsive as well as nonsensical. What sort of God was this, getting so angry with the world and the people he created, and then, to calm himself down, demanding the blood of his own Son? And anyway, why should God forgive us through punishing somebody else? It was worse than illogical, it was insane. It made God sound like a psychopath. If any human being behaved like this we'd say they were a monster.

Well, I haven't changed my mind since. That explanation of the cross just doesn't work, though sadly it's one that's still all too often preached. It just doesn't make sense to talk about a nice Jesus down here, placating the wrath of a nasty, angry Father God in heaven. Christians believe Jesus is God incarnate. As he said, 'Whoever sees me has seen the Father'. Jesus is what God is: he is the one who shows us God's nature. And the most basic truth about God's nature is that He is Love, not wrath and punishment... The cross, then, is not about Jesus reconciling an angry God to us

Just like Steve Chalke, **Jeffrey John** highlights God's attribute of 'love' to the detriment of His supreme attribute which is 'holiness' and in my articles on Steve Chalke I responded to that error, particularly in my article located on

<http://www.takeheed.net/MARCH2005.htm>

As for Mr John's statement '**The cross, then, is not about Jesus reconciling an angry God to us**' let me state what God's Word says about 'reconciliation' –

“when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son...we also joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ by whom we have now received the reconciliation” [Romans 5:10-11]

“And all things are of God who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation. To wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their tresspasses unto them. Now then...we beg you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him, who knew no sin, to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him” [2nd Corinthians 5:18-21].

The **penal substitutionary** death of Christ did most surely effect gracious and glorious divine reconciliation – it reconciled guilty sinners to a Holy God who by His very nature is angered by sin.

Michael Wakelin

A year before the **Jeffrey John** BBC Radio 4 April 2007 ‘lent’ broadcast, on Monday 3rd April 2006, another Radio 4 broadcast service, this time their Daily Service was presented by a Methodist Lay Preacher (and sometime producer of BBC TV’s ‘Songs of Praise’) called **Michael Wakelin**. As a result of what he said I sent the following letter to the BBC in Manchester –

Louise Malone
c/o BBC, PO Box 27
Oxford Road, Manchester
M60 1 SJ
3 April 2006

Dear Louise,

Radio 4 Daily Service 3 April 2006

I want to thank you for your sympathetic hearing given to my phone call today concerning the distress caused by the content of today’s ‘**Daily Service**’ that was presented by **Michael Wakelin**. I haven’t had time as yet to transcribe what Mr Wakelin said but in essence Mr Wakelin basically advocated the view expressed last year by **Steve Chalke** (well-known presenter in times past of BBC TV’s ‘Songs of Praise’ which Mr Wakelin produces) that when Christ died on the cross it was not a ‘**substitutionary atonement**’ nor was it what is also known as ‘**penal substitution**’. **Steve Chalke** blasphemously labelled such a view as ‘**cosmic child abuse**’.

Mr Wakelin basically traced this view to John Calvin and to some ‘Protestant Churches’. The reality is that this is not some novel, sectarian view put forward by John Calvin but it is a, if not the, central theme of God’s inspired Word, the Bible. Recently **I had some email exchanges with a ‘fan’ of Steve Chalke** in response to articles posted on our ministry website called ‘**Don’t take your cue from Steve Chalke**’. **I am enclosing copies of these exchanges** (and articles) as they get to the heart of the distress caused by Mr Wakelin’s unbiblical opinions expressed in today’s ‘**Daily Service**’. My hope is that in a near future ‘**Daily Service**’ the truth of the Glorious Gospel of Christ as set out clearly in **1 Corinthians 15:1-4** (‘**substitutionary atonement**’) will be proclaimed.

Your servant for Christ

Cecil Andrews

I shall not include here all the email exchanges with the initially anonymous correspondent that I sent to Louise Malone but the following final email to Barry will hopefully be helpful in giving understanding of the Biblical grounds for the glorious doctrine of of **'Penal Substitution'**.

Dear Barry [I do appreciate you identifying yourself]

You state that you do not find **'penal substitution'** summed up in **Hebrews 9: 26 & 28** – I actually find that a staggering statement by you. A few verses earlier in **verse 22** we read **“without shedding of blood is no remission”** – God’s judgment upon lost souls because of their sins cannot be removed by God unless the suitable sacrificial shed blood of a ‘substitute’ [paying the death penalty proscribed by God for sin] has been shed for this very purpose.

The [**'penal substitution'**] animal sacrifices of the Old Testament, as we read for instance in **Leviticus 1:1-4**, were only a temporary measure sanctioned by God and were designed to picture the ultimate and only effective substitutionary, permanent sin-remitting sacrifice that would be made by Christ at Calvary.

That’s why the Lord took the 2 on the road to Emmaus through the Old Testament and we read what He said to them **“Ought not Christ to have suffered these things [**'penal substitution'** as pictured in the Old Testament] and to enter into his glory. And beginning at Moses and all the prophets he expounded unto them, in all the scriptures the things concerning himself”** [Luke 24:26-27].

Going back to **Hebrews**, in the following **chapter 10** we find a full explanation of **'penal substitution'** as summed up in **chapter 9: 26 & 28**. We read verses like these in **chapter 10 verse 4** – **“For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins” verse 10** **“And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins”**: [These verses refer back to the Old Testament animal sacrificial system]. Then **verse 12** **“But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God...verse 14** **For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified”**.

Jesus Christ is God’s anointed prophet, priest and King. Up to the end of **John 16** He has fulfilled the role of **'prophet' – bringing God to people** but from **John 17** onwards He moves to His role of **'priest', bringing His people to God** and that of necessity involves a propitiatory sacrifice, but not a sacrifice of some animal that can never permanently remove sins as we already read above, but rather the sacrifice of Himself. Peter wrote **“Christ also hath once suffered for sins [**'penal substitution'**] the just for the unjust that he might bring us to God’** [1Peter 3:18].

According to God’s Word there is no **'gospel'** if there is no **'penal substitution'** [see 1 Corinthians 15:1-4]. If someone denies Christ’s **'penal substitution'** then they cannot be believing, as the Bible teaches, that salvation is by grace alone [not merited on the grounds of any personal works] through faith alone [‘not of works’] in Christ [**'penal substitution'**] alone.

Steve Chalke is denying that salvation is found in the substitutionary work of Christ alone – he perceives that notion or idea as trusting in **'cosmic child abuse'** whereas to God it is His **“glory”** – that’s what **John 17** is all about. Barry, I am not standing on **'dangerous ground'** in asserting this – I am standing on **'redemption ground'** as many saints have phrased it.

God's people likewise "glory" in the saving substitutionary death of Christ at Calvary when "The Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all" [Isaiah 53:6] – we echo Paul who wrote "God forbid that I should glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ" [Galatians 6:14]. Steve Chalke does not 'glory' alone in the cross of Christ – he views those who do so as foolishly trusting in what he views as 'cosmic child abuse'.

Paul wrote about such a situation in 1 Corinthians 1:18 when he said, "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God".

Barry, in your emails you have referred to '*one aspect of belief*' – in this case the biblical truth of '**penal substitution**' – and the truth is that this '*one aspect of belief*' will determine the eternal destiny of all people – it is no mere side issue! The Apostle Paul stated in his letter to the Corinthians '**I determined not to know any thing among you except Jesus Christ** [the believers' 'righteousness'] and him crucified [the believer's 'redemption'].

Commenting on this verse Pastor John MacArthur wrote 'Though Paul expounded the whole counsel of God to the church [Acts 20:27] and taught the Corinthians the Word of God [Acts 18:11] *the focus of his preaching and teaching to unbelievers was Jesus Christ who paid the penalty for sin on the cross. Until someone understands and believes the gospel there is nothing more to say to them*'.

Finally, you asked – '**Did Jesus preach penal substitution**'?

God's Word states –

Matthew 16:21 "From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day"
Matthew 20:28 "the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many"
Matthew 26:28 "this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins"
John 10:11 "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep"
John 10:14-15 "I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep".

These are only a few of the MULTITUDE of verses in the gospels where the Lord preached salvation through His '*penal substitution*' on behalf of His people – just as the angel told Joseph in **Matthew 1:21** "and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins".

Barry, as you know I'm in the midst of a hectic ministry visit by Pastor Gary Gilley so perhaps you will take much time to reflect upon these matters and if you want to come back to me could I ask you to leave it until after Gary's visit ends on 4th April [DV]. Meantime I pray that God will speak clearly through His Word to your heart and understanding.

Your servant for Christ

Cecil Andrews
'Take Heed' Ministries

JOHNSTON McMASTER

On Sunday 12th April 2009 a godly minister and gifted preacher who is personally known to me stated publicly that it would be very rare that he would ever get angry and knowing the man I would accept that as being an honest and accurate statement. He then went on to 'confess' that he had become angry on the preceding Friday morning when he had listened to a 'Good Friday Meditation' broadcast on Radio Ulster. He mentioned no name as to who the speaker had been but I was able to go to the Radio Ulster web site and listen to the talk titled '**At The Cross**' that had been given. It had been given by **Johnston McMaster**, a Methodist who heads up the Irish School of Ecumenics in Belfast that is also linked to Trinity College in Dublin. You can view biographical details for Mr McMaster on <http://www.tcd.ie/ise/staff/johnston-mcmaster.php> The Belfast location actually played host to the talk given on 13th June 2007 by Pete Rollins, who heads up the 'Emergent' grouping in Belfast known as IKON, that I refer to in my article 'God in the Hands of Angry Sinners' that can be viewed on <https://www.takeheed.info/reflections-on-emerging-ikon/>

In his talk **Johnston McMaster** tried, where events at Calvary were concerned, to paint a scenario that would be familiar to and resonate with those living in Northern Ireland – he described Jesus as having been a victim of paramilitarism who, thanks to state collusion, was eventually executed. This flight of imaginative fantasy would not have been the trigger for my friend's [and my own] anger but rather a statement that Mr McMaster then went on to make. To the very best of my recollection this is what he said – "**Christ didn't die FOR our sins but BY our sins**". No one can dispute that Christ was "**taken and by wicked hands and was crucified and slain**" [Acts 2:23] – actions that were sinful and for which Christ prayed for the forgiveness of the perpetrators [see Luke 23:34] so in a sense Christ did die '**by our sins**' - but what did **Johnston McMaster** mean when he said "**Christ didn't die FOR our sins**"?

On Wednesday 8th July 2009 I spoke to **Johnston McMaster** by phone and I asked him for clarification and in particular I asked him if he subscribed to the **penal substitution** understanding of Christ's death on the cross. The short answer is that he does not accept the **penal substitution** view of Calvary. He views it as something that St Anselm came up with about 1000 years after the crucifixion and something that was centuries later latched onto by John Calvin. I asked Mr McMaster if it was his view that the Scriptures themselves do not clearly teach **penal substitution**, specifically the aspects of **propitiation** and **expiation**, and his response was that these English word translations do not accurately reflect the original Greek in which the New Testament was written.

On page 493 of Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words under the heading **Propitiation (to appease)** we read this – '**It is God who is "propitiated" by the vindication of His holy and righteous character, whereby, through the provision He has made in the vicarious and expiatory sacrifice of Christ, He has so dealt with sin that He can show mercy to the believing sinner in the removal of his guilt and the remission of his sins... it is man who needs to be reconciled to God and not God to man. God is always the same and, since He Himself is immutable, His relative attitude does change towards those who change. He can act differently towards those who come to Him by faith, and solely on the grounds of the "propitiatory" sacrifice of Christ, not because He has changed, but because He ever acts according to His unchanging righteousness. The expiatory work of the Cross is therefore the means whereby the barrier which sin interposes between God and man is broken down. By the giving up of His sinless life sacrificially Christ annuls the power of sin to separate between God and the believer.'**

For my own fuller treatment of the *propitiatory* and *expiatory* elements of Christ's sacrifice on the cross I would direct readers to an article I actually wrote on Seventh-day Adventism and it is located on <https://www.takeheed.info/news-from-the-front-sept-1999/>

Mr McMaster basically claimed during our phone conversation that for about 1000 years after the completion of the New Testament, there was no 'appeal' to **penal substitution** until St Anselm appeared on the scene. From an article that is located on <http://midwestoutreach.org/blogs/losing-sight-of-the-lamb> I want to quote this quite lengthy but very enlightening section –

'... soon after the New Testament was complete, we find references to Christ's penal substitutionary death for us in the writings of Christian leaders. For example, **in the ninth chapter of the Epistle to Diognetus, the second century author tells us that** "when our unrighteousness was fulfilled, and it had been made perfectly clear that its wages—*punishment and death*—were to be expected, then the season arrived during which God had decided to reveal at last his goodness and power..." How did God reveal his goodness and power? He Himself came down from heaven, and "in his mercy *he took upon himself our sins*; he himself gave up his own Son as *a ransom for us*, the holy one for the lawless, the guiltless for the guilty, 'the just for the unjust,' the incorruptible for the corruptible, the immortal for the mortal."

God the Son, according to the author, was our penal substitute, and he practically breaks out into song in the middle of writing about it, marvelling, "O the sweet exchange, O the incomprehensible work of God...!" (Epistle to Diognetus 9:2-5, in Michael W. Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations*, updated edition, [Grand Rapids, MI, USA: Baker Books, 1999], 547. Emphasis mine.)

During the same century, in chapter 89 of his *Dialogue with Trypho, A Jew*, by **Justin Martyr (A.D. 100-165)**, Justin's debate partner makes reference to Deuteronomy 21:23, which includes the statement, "for everyone that is hanged on a tree is cursed by God"—in the Greek translation that Justin and his Jewish friend would have shared in common, the Septuagint (or LXX; cf. *The Septuagint Version, Greek and English*, [Grand Rapids, MI, USA: Zondervan Publishing House, reprinted 1977], 260).

This causes an obvious problem for a Jew who is unaccustomed to thinking of the Messiah as being cursed by God. (Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, eds., *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 1, [Peabody, MA, USA: Hendrickson Publishers, reprinted 2004], 244).

Justin does not shrink back. In chapters 94 and 95 he assures Trypho that Christ was not cursed for his own sins, but the fallen human race had earned God's curse by breaking God's law (ibid., 247).

And then **he summarized the matter by declaring** (in the form of a rhetorical question) that, "...the Father of all wished His Christ for the whole human family to take upon Him the curses of all..." (ibid.). In the context of his dialogue, **it is clear that to take our curses upon Himself means that Christ bore our penalty as our substitute. Justin Martyr assumed that Christ's death was a penal substitutionary atonement.**

In the first volume of his *Proof of the Gospel*, the early church historian, **Eusebius of Caesarea (c. 265- c. 339)** quoted from the prophecy in Isaiah 53:3-8, and then wrote:

In this he shews that Christ, being apart from all sin, will receive the sins of men on Himself. And therefore He will suffer the penalty of sinners, and will be pained on their behalf; and not on His own.
[*Proof of the Gospel*, W.J. Ferrar, ed., and trans., Vol. 1, (Grand Rapids, MI, USA: Baker Book House, reprinted 1981), 113.]

In his second volume he wrote:

And the Lamb of God not only did this [i.e., shared the woes and labours of humanity], but was chastised on our behalf, and suffered a penalty He did not owe, but which we owed because of the multitude of our sins; and so He became the cause of the forgiveness of our sins, because He received death for us, and transferred to Himself the scourging, the insults, and the dishonour, which were due to us, and drew on Himself the apportioned curse, being made a curse for us. [Ibid., Vol. 2, 195.]

Thus, at the beginning of the fourth century, the doctrine of penal substitution was still central to the church's understanding of Christ's sacrificial death. And as the great controversy over Christ's nature sparked by the heresy of Arius (c. 250-336) heated things up in the first quarter of the fourth century, Athanasius wasted no time in picking up the ball. One of the most noticeable things about his famous treatise, *On the Incarnation of the Word of God (De incarnatione verbi dei)* is how intertwined and interdependent the doctrines of Christ and salvation were in his thinking. You can find a very helpful discussion of his view of the atonement in the recent book, *Pierced for Our Transgressions: Rediscovering the Glory of Penal Substitution*, by Steve Jeffery, Michael Ovey, and Andrew Sach (Wheaton, IL, USA: Crossway Books, 2007), on pages 169-173. The authors of that book carefully examine Athanasius's several statements in chapters 1 through 9 and 21 of Athanasius's work and also urge their audience to read chapters 27 through 29, all of which make his understanding of penal substitution abundantly clear. But I especially appreciate the way that Athanasius picks up the theme discussed earlier by Justin Martyr, as he does in chapter 25:

But if any of our own people also inquire, not from love of debate, but from love of learning, why He suffered death in none other way save on the Cross, let him also be told that no other way than this was good for us, and that it was well that the Lord suffered this for our sakes. For if He came Himself to bear the curse laid upon us, how else could He have "become a curse," unless He received the death set for a curse? and that is the Cross. For this is exactly what is written: "Cursed is he that hangeth on a tree."

[*On the Incarnation of the Word of God* 25.2, in Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, eds., *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers (NPNF)*, 2nd series, Vol. 4, (Peabody, MA, USA: Hendrickson Publishers, reprinted 2004), 49. Emphasis mine.]

And what was this "curse" that Christ bore all about? It was

... because *all were under penalty of the corruption of death He gave it over to death in the stead of all*, and offered it to the Father—doing this, moreover, of His loving-kindness, to the end that, firstly, *all being held to have died in Him*, the law involving the ruin of men might be undone (inasmuch as its power was fully spent in the Lord's body, and had no longer holding-ground against men, his peers), and that, secondly, whereas men had turned toward corruption, He might turn them again toward incorruption, and quicken them from death by the appropriation of His body and by the grace of the Resurrection, banishing death from them like straw from the fire.

[*On the Incarnation of the Word of God* 8.4, in *ibid.*, 40.]

He died for us. We died "in Him." And it was all because we had incurred the curse, which was the penalty of God's law, broken by us. Athanasius's language here derives unmistakably from Paul's epistles, and points forward to the comprehensive, precise formulations of penal substitution that would come out of the Protestant Reformation some twelve centuries later.

The resounding affirmations of penal substitution go on and on in the early church. **Gregory of Nazianzus (c. 330-c. 390)**, also called Gregory the Theologian, picks up the theme of the curse and declares that in taking away the sin of the world “Christ is also called disobedient on my account” (“Fourth Theological Oration,” chap. 5, *NPNF*, 2nd series, Vol. 7, 311). **Ambrose of Milan (c. 337-397)** speaks of the curse Christ took for us in terms of fulfilling the sentence of death upon us, and satisfying God’s judgment (*Pierced for Our Transgressions*, 174-175).

John Chrysostom (c. 350-407) compares the benefits we receive from Christ’s death to that of a hypothetical “robber and malefactor” for whom a king allows the guilt of his crimes to be transferred to his only son, who is then slain in place of the criminal (“Homilies on Second Corinthians,” 11.6, in Schaff, ed., *NPNF*, 1st series, Vol. 12, 335).

Augustine of Hippo (354-430) repeatedly declares in no uncertain terms that the Son of God died “for our offences,” and “bearing our punishment” (“Against Faustus,” 14.1, in *NPNF*, 1st series, Vol. 4, 207). **Cyril of Alexandria (375-444)** assures Christians that “...we have paid in Christ himself the penalties for the charges of sin against us...” (*Pierced for Our Transgressions*, 180), and **Gelasius of Cyzicus** (active around 475) declares that “...he, the Saviour of all, came and received the punishments which were due us into his sinless flesh, which was of us, in place of us, and on our behalf” (*ibid.*, 181).

Finally, as Christians in Western Europe had for some time been viewing the glory days of Rome through a rear-view mirror, and the dawn of the medieval period was giving way to its full daylight, **Gregory the Great (c. 540-604)** wrote of Christ as the One “...Who, being made incarnate, had no sins of His own, and yet being without offence took upon Himself the punishment of the carnal” (*ibid.*, 183).

If anything seemed certain in the early church, it was that Christ bore the penalty for our sins in our place on the cross. If any doctrine seemed so simple and clear that it did not require a comprehensive and precise formulation, along with a detailed response to objections, it was the doctrine of penal substitution’.

To conclude this section I want to quote two portions of scripture – firstly **Luke 24:25-27** - “Then he [Christ] said unto them. O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not Christ to have suffered these things [crucifixion – see verse 20] and to enter his glory. And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them, in all the scriptures, the things concerning himself”. Then secondly **1st Corinthians 15:1-3** – “Moreover brethren I declared unto you the gospel... By which also ye are saved... that Christ died FOR our sins according to the scriptures”.

GILES FRASER

On Saturday 11th April 2009 [Easter Saturday] an article by **Giles Fraser** was published in The Guardian newspaper and it can be viewed on <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2009/apr/11/christianity-easter>

In the course of that article Mr Fraser wrote the following – ‘**Thinking about the celebration of Holy Week in my new adopted cathedral** [An Anglican Cathedral in Western Ghana] **brings home to me quite how important it is for Christians to insist upon a non-sacrificial reading of the death of Christ. For too long, Christians have put up with a theory of salvation that has at its core the idea that God requires the sacrifice of his own son so that human sin can be cancelled. "There was no other good enough to pay the price of sin," we will all sing. The fact this is a disgusting idea, and morally degenerate, is obvious to all but those indoctrinated into a very narrow reading of the cross.**

No, Jesus is not a blood sacrifice to appease a vicious God. The story is not an endorsement of the idea that sacrifice brings peace with God but an attack on it'.

Then on this link <http://www.churchtimes.co.uk/content.asp?id=74030> the following article was published by The Church Times on 24th April 2009.

Giles Fraser: No tasks left for the risen Jesus



THIS WEEK it is 900 years since the death of Anselm of Canterbury, arguably most noted for his invention of the ontological argument, and for putting up the scaffolding for the theory of **penal substitution**, only really finished off by Calvin in the 16th century.

Now, while I think the ontological argument is a pretty harmless parlour game for brain boxes with too much time on their hands, **penal substitution** is a very bad thing indeed. Some Christians get very worked up by anyone's having a go at **penal substitution**. This is largely, I think, because they confuse this medieval-cum-Reformation reading of salvation with the gospel itself, and just cannot see that **penal substitution** is one reading of the text among others.

The basic idea is that human beings owe God an unpayable debt on account of their sin, and that Jesus pays off this debt by being nailed up on a cross. To many of us, this account turns God into a merciless loan shark, deaf to our pleas for forgiveness. Whatever happened to "I desire mercy not sacrifice" (Hosea 6.6, Matthew 9.13)?

Another weakness is that it gives the resurrection nothing to do in the overall scheme of human salvation. If we are saved on the cross, then there is no saving work left for the resurrection to do. Thus, it gets side-lined as a spectacular after-party to the main event, which gets wrapped up on Good Friday.

That just can't be right. Those who insist otherwise might like to take a closer look at Anselm's *Cur Deus Homo?* ("Why a God-Man?"), where he sets out his understanding of salvation. It is made up of 47 mini-chapters; all have titles, but not one of them refers to the resurrection. Indeed, the resurrection hardly merits a mention throughout the whole book — a book on human salvation. No wonder so many of us find **penal substitution** so unconvincing.

My views on all this are mild and moderate compared with some of the things said about **penal substitution** by members of the Orthodox Church.

Take Dr Alexander Kalimoros's celebrated essay on Eastern Orthodox soteriology, *The River of Fire*, where he insists that "The 'God' of the West is an offended and angry God, full of wrath for the disobedience of men, who desires in his destructive passion to torment all humanity unto eternity for their sins, unless he receives an infinite satisfaction for his offended pride."

This theology, Dr Kalimoros asserts, is the work of the devil, leading Western Christians to atheism. That may be a little strong, but it might just wake some people up to reconsider Anselm's dubious legacy.

Canon Giles Fraser is Team Rector of Putney, in south London.

Other than quoting **Hebrews 10:12** "But this man [Christ] after he had offered **ONE SACRIFICE for sins**" and **Ephesians 5:2** "And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us [on the cross] an offering and **A SACRIFICE to God for a sweet-smelling savour**" I do not plan to rehearse again the arguments from scripture for the truth of the **penal substitution** of Christ for His people on the Cross of Calvary despite **Giles Fraser** labelling that glorious truth as being '**disgusting**' and '**morally degenerate**'. Rather I want to address the portion highlighted in red from The Church Times article where Mr Fraser asserts that if **penal substitution** were true then the resurrection has no salvation role to play in "**the gospel of Christ (that) is the power of God unto salvation**" [**Romans 1:16**].

The Apostle Paul was very careful to include the resurrection as a crucial element when he stated the gospel in **1st Corinthians 15:1-4**. Earlier I quoted portions from the first 3 verses - "**Moreover brethren I declared unto you the gospel... By which also ye are saved... that Christ died FOR our sins according to the scriptures**". Continuing his detailed outline of the gospel Paul went on to say in verse 4 "**And that he was buried and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures**".

The expression "**Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures**" points us to the sinless life of Christ that made Him worthy to be a suitable sacrifice for sin, without blemish and without spot [see **1st Peter 1:19**] and also points to His substitutionary/vicarious sufferings on behalf of His people on the cross.

Geoffrey Wilson in his commentary on **1st Corinthians** writes concerning this expression on page 214 - "**Since "our sins" were the only reason for Christ's death, this means that he died for us sinners, as the substitutionary sacrifice through whom we receive the forgiveness of sins**". Then quoting from '*Studies in Theology*' by James Denney (p 104) Mr Wilson writes - "**In other words, there was no gospel known in the primitive church, or in any part of it, which had not this as its foundations - that God forgives our sins because Christ died for them**".

The expression "**he was buried and ... he rose again the third day according to the scriptures**" confirms that as a sacrificial offering for sin He truly did die and that 3 days later He truly rose again from the dead. Did the resurrection have any 'role' to play where the **penal substitution** aspect of what happened on the cross is concerned. Contrary to what **Giles Fraser** asserted it most certainly did. In the lead up to His crucifixion the Lord instituted a memorial of what He would accomplish on the cross - it is observed today when His people meet around the Lord's Table to observe Communion or The Breaking of Bread. When speaking to His disciples in **Matthew 26:28** the Lord spoke in terms that His substitutionary work on the cross would be "**for the remission of sins**".

Through the substitutionary shedding of His blood He was going to “**offer himself without spot to God**” [Hebrews 9:14] and in doing so He would by Himself “**purge our sins**” [Hebrews 1:3].

However, how ‘on earth’ were the followers of Christ to know that His sacrifice on the cross on their behalf, **penal substitution**, had been accepted by God the Father to the extent that He would pardon or JUSTIFY those for whom Christ died? Concerning the events at Calvary and what followed Paul wrote in **Romans 4:25** “**(Jesus)... who was delivered for our offences** [penal substitution] **and was raised again for our justification**”.

Commenting on this verse in his Bible Study notes Pastor John MacArthur wrote – ‘**The resurrection proved that God had accepted the sacrifice of His Son and would be able to be just and yet justify the ungodly**’ [see Romans 3:26].

Charles C Ryrie in his Study Bible wrote – ‘**Christ’s resurrection was because of our justification; i. e. as a proof of God’s acceptance of His Son’s sacrifice**’.

Louis Bekhof in his ‘**Systematic Theology**’ wrote on page 520 – ‘**In Romans 4:25 we read that Christ was “raised up for (día, causal, on account of) our justification” that is, to effect our justification**’.

Progressing further through 1st Corinthians 15 and in the wake of Paul’s outline of the gospel in verses 1-4 the ‘**Evangelical Dictionary of Theology**’ on pages 938-939 makes these points on the importance of the resurrection – ‘**Then Paul relates the importance of this event** [the resurrection] **for if Jesus did not literally rise from the dead then the entire Christian faith is fallacious (v 14)** [‘your faith is also vain’] **and ineffective (v 17)** [‘your faith is vain and ye are yet in your sins’].

Additionally preaching is valueless (v 14) [‘our preaching is vain’] **Christian testimony is false (v 15)** [‘we are found false witnesses of God’] **no sins have been forgiven (v 17)** [‘ye are yet in your sins’] **and believers have perished without any Christian hope (v 18)** [‘they also who are fallen asleep in Christ are perished’]. **The conclusion is that, apart from this event** [the resurrection] **Christians are the most miserable of all people (v 19)** [‘If in this life only we have hope in Christ we are of all men most miserable’].

The assertion by **Giles Fraser** that **penal substitution** basically renders the resurrection of Christ as being without value and meaning is just not sustainable in the light of the witness of God’s Word to the infinite and eternal value and meaning of the resurrection for God’s people.

I began this section by referring to the article by **Giles Fraser** that was published in The Guardian newspaper of 11th April 2009. I shall conclude this section by quoting a large portion of a response to it by Dr Ian Paisley that was published shortly afterwards in the British Church Newspaper –

The Atrocious Blasphemy!
by the Rt. Hon. the Rev. Dr. Ian R.K. Paisley MP, MLA

“What vicious God would demand Jesus sacrificed for our sins? We should ditch this view of Easter!” – Giles Fraser, the Church of England Vicar of Putney, writing in *The Guardian*, Saturday 11th April 2009.

Who would have thought that *The Guardian*, and its religious commentator Giles Fraser, would print such a hellish slander on the death of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Cross is God's answer to man's sin. The whole history of man's battle with sin is the sad story of the success of man's sin and the damnation of man's soul. Man is the great victim of his own sin and sinning. Man is helpless in view of the power of his sinning. 'Sin', the Word of God declares, 'entered into the world and death by sin.' Sin is the great killer. Sin is the conqueror of all men. Sin reigns unto death. Where sin is, the death-knell rings for all mankind. Death is the finality of sin. When man sins, that act of sin breeds other sins. One sin condemns the sinner for ever. It is impossible for the sinner to free himself from sin. There is absolutely no self-salvation. There is no salvation by self-effort. Man is completely under the dominion of sin. He is imprisoned in the arms of the great Suicide. The only lock-breaker of the prison-house of sin is the Cross of Christ.

What an outrageous blasphemy, that any man should write that which the Vicar of Putney has written. Remember, his words are from the lips of a so-called Protestant clergyman. To libel God Almighty as a 'vicious God' because He sacrificed His only Son on the Cross to make possible the freeing of sinners from the damnation of sin and hell, is the language of Satan's vocabulary. To blaspheme God because God the Father demanded the payment of the ransom in order that sinners can be justified by faith alone in Christ alone is to rake in the debris of hell. This is hell at its work. The fact that the pen of a Protestant clergyman is the instrument employed is the twilight of a lost soul. The whole message of the glorious gospel of our Lord Jesus is that He came into the world to save sinners. There was a debt to be paid. There were sins to be erased. There was a ransom to be paid. There was a redemption to be accomplished. There was a law to be honoured. There were lost souls to be loved and saved. There was a payment of the price of salvation to be procured for the sinner, without money and without price. There was God's love to be exalted and His grace to be eternally glorified. There was the vindication of the Almighty to be attained. There was precious blood to be shed. To decry these objectives is the howling of the beasts of hell's pit, and the roaring of the Devil himself.

Further evidence of just how 'spiritually lost' **Giles Fraser** is appeared in a Telegraph report that can be viewed on <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/newstoppers/religion/5744559/Change-and-repent-bishop-tells-gays.html>

The report focussed on comments by the soon retiring Bishop of Rochester, Dr Michael Nazir-Ali. In an interview for the Sunday Telegraph timed to coincide with the 'Gay Pride' parade through London Dr Nazir-Ali reportedly said, "**We welcome homosexuals, we don't want to exclude people, but we want them to repent and be changed... The Bible's teaching shows that marriage is between a man and a woman. That is the way to express our sexual nature... We want to uphold the traditional teaching of the Bible. We believe that God has revealed his purpose about how we are made. People who depart from this don't share the same faith. They are acting in a way that is not normative according to what God has revealed in the Bible.** "

In the article, reported comments by **Giles Fraser** made it clear that he does not share the 'same faith' as Dr Nazir-Ali. The article stated, **The Rev Dr Giles Fraser, the president of the Inclusive Church, a liberal grouping in the Church of England, said: "Homosexuality is not a sin. It is the way many people love each other and is a gift from God. Ordinary people in the pews know this. And they are a lot more theologically aware than the handful of narrow-minded bishops who want to play politics with the Anglican Communion."**

In closing I will paraphrase part of what Dr Paisley wrote earlier – ‘**What an outrageous blasphemy that any man should say that which the Vicar of Putney has said.**’

BRENNAN MANNING

In December 2006 I received an email from Lighthouse Trails Publishing in the USA and in it they stated the following –

“Some leading contemplative proponents say that a loving God would not send His son to a violent death on a Cross. **Brennan Manning**, in his book ***Above All*** states:

The god who exacts the last drop of blood from his Son so that his just anger, evoked by sin, may be appeased, is not the God revealed by and in Jesus Christ. And if he is not the God of Jesus, he does not exist (p. 58).

Although Manning takes credit for penning these words, they are actually the words of panentheist mystic, **William Shannon**, from his book ***Silence on Fire***, who wrote them several years ago. Shannon stated:

He is the God who exacts the last drop of blood from His Son, so that His just anger, evoked by sin, may be appeased ... This God does not exist. This is not the God whom Jesus Christ reveals to us" (p. 110).

What are the implications of Shannon's statement? [a statement clearly endorsed by Manning] Basically, making someone suffer a violent death to save others is not something a loving God would do”.

So, just who is **Brennan Manning**? From the first biographical article listed on this link <http://unjobs.org/authors/brennan-manning> here are some enlightening extracts –

Brennan Manning Biography

In the springtime of Depression-era New York City, Brennan Manning -- christened Richard Francis Xavier -- was born to Emmett and Amy Manning. He grew up in Brooklyn along with his brother, Robert, and sister, Geraldine. After graduating from high school and attending St. John's University (Queens, NY) for two years, he enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps and was sent overseas to fight in the Korean War.

Upon his return, Brennan began a program in journalism at the University of Missouri. But he departed after a semester, restlessly searching for something "more" in life. "Maybe the something 'more' is God," an advisor had suggested, triggering Brennan's enrollment in a Catholic seminary in Loretto, Pennsylvania.

In February 1956, while Brennan was meditating on the Stations of the Cross, a powerful experience of the personal love of Jesus Christ sealed the call of God on his life. "At that moment," he later recalled, "the entire Christian life became for me an intimate, heartfelt relationship with Jesus." Four years later, he graduated from St. Francis College (major in philosophy; minor in Latin) I and went on to complete four years of advanced studies in theology. May 1963 marked his graduation from St. Francis Seminary and ordination to the Franciscan priesthood...

A two-year leave of absence from the Franciscans took Brennan to Spain in the late sixties. He joined the Little Brothers of Jesus of Charles de Foucauld, an Order committed to an uncloistered, contemplative life among the poor -- a lifestyle of days spent in manual labor and nights wrapped in silence and prayer. Among his many and varied assignments, Brennan became an aguador (water carrier), transporting water to rural villages via donkey and buckboard; a mason's assistant, shoveling mud and straw in the blazing Spanish heat; a dishwasher in France; a voluntary prisoner in a Swiss jail, his identity as a priest known only to the warden; a solitary contemplative secluded in a remote cave for six months in the Zaragoza desert. During his retreat in the isolated cave, Brennan was once again powerfully convicted by the revelation of God's love in the crucified Christ. [Cecil – keeping in mind what happened to Mohammed when he secluded himself in a cave outside Mecca we can see that such isolation can lead to 'dark' spiritual encounters]

...The early seventies found Brennan back in the U.S. as he and four other priests established an experimental community in the bustling seaport city of Bayou La Batre, Alabama. Seeking to model the primitive life of the Franciscans, the fathers settled in a house on Mississippi Bay and quietly went to work on shrimp boats, ministering to the shrimpers and their families who had drifted out of reach from the church. Next to the community house was a chapel that had been destroyed by Hurricane Camille. The fathers restored it and offered a Friday night liturgy and social event, which soon became a popular gathering and precipitated many families' return to engagement in the local [Roman Catholic] church.

From Alabama, Brennan moved to Ft. Lauderdale, Florida in the mid-seventies and resumed campus ministry at Broward Community College. His successful ministry was harshly interrupted, however, when he suffered a precipitate collapse into alcoholism. Six months of treatment, culminating at the Hazelden treatment center in Minnesota, restored his health and placed him on the road to recovery.

It was at this point in his life that Brennan began writing in earnest. One book soon followed upon another as invitations for him to speak and to lead spiritual retreats multiplied exponentially. Today, Brennan travels widely as he continues to write and preach, encouraging men and women everywhere to accept and embrace the good news of God's unconditional love in Jesus Christ. His publications include:

Above All
Abba's Child
A Glimpse of Jesus: Stranger to Self Hatred
Journey of the Prodigal
The Wisdom of Tenderness
Ruthless Trust: The Way of the Ragamuffin
The Boy Who Cried Abba: A Parable of Trust and Acceptance
Lion and Lamb: The Relentless Tenderness of Jesus
Signature of Jesus
The Ragamuffin Gospel
Reflections for Ragamuffins: A Daily Devotional
Posers, Fakers and Wannabes
The Rabbi's Heartbeat
The Importance of Being Foolish

Back in 2001 I hosted a ministry visit by 2 former Roman Catholics, Rob Zins and Mike Gendron. Mike wrote a very helpful article analysing the teachings of Mr Manning and also telling of several personal encounters he had with **Brennan Manning** in. This is the article as found on <http://www.reachingcatholics.org/beware.html>

Beware of Wolves in Sheep's Clothing

Mike Gendron

The Lord Jesus Christ warned His followers, "Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves (Matthew 7:15). The warning was important because Jesus later said to them: "Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; therefore be shrewd as serpents, and innocent as doves" (Matthew 10:16). The apostle Paul, with a deeply troubled spirit and in tears, penned a similar warning: "I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock" (Acts 20:29).

Throughout church history these warnings concerning professing Christians who deceive even the elect have seldom been taken seriously. How can the church be so easily deceived? According to *Webster's Dictionary* "deceive" means "to lead astray or to cause to accept as true or valid what is false or invalid." Could it be the church has not only lost its ability to discern truth from error but also to discern wolves from sheep?

Consider **Brennan Manning**, an inactive Roman Catholic priest, who has some obvious characteristics of a "wolf," yet goes mostly undetected. In the last ten years, he has become a popular speaker in many "evangelical" churches. Manning was ordained to the Franciscan priesthood after graduating from St. Francis Seminary in 1963. Later he was theology instructor at the University of Steubenville (a Catholic seminary and catalyst for Mary to be named co-redeemer). After being treated for alcoholism and leaving the Franciscan Order in 1982, he married Roslyn Ann Walker. The marriage has since ended in divorce but his popularity as a writer and speaker continues to grow despite his proclamation of "another" gospel.

The teachings of Manning are charming, seductive, cunning and dangerous as he takes advantage of his undiscerning audiences. He teaches that you can overcome fear, guilt and psychological hang-ups, even alcoholism, through meditation. His meditation techniques are drawn from a mixture of eastern mysticism, psychology, the New Age Movement and Catholicism. Manning gives the impression that he has a very intimate relationship with God and reports having many visions, encounters and conversations with Him. He assures his audiences that if they apply his teachings, they too can become more intimate with God.

I first met Manning at the Christian Booksellers Association in New Orleans last summer. As he was signing autographs for his book, *The Ragamuffin Gospel*, I asked him if his "ragamuffin gospel" followed the Catholic plan of salvation or the biblical plan of salvation. He responded, "Read it and find out for yourself." Still trying to gain insight into his theology, I gave him a tract I had written called *Roman Catholicism: Scripture vs. Tradition* and asked for his comments. After looking at it for a couple of minutes he tore it into pieces and threw it in the trash.

The next time I saw Manning was January 21st at Hillcrest Church, a growing congregation of over 5,000 members in north Dallas. Manning's message was about our need for a second conversion, a conversion that can only take place when one overcomes self-rejection and gains esteem through self-acceptance. How contradictory were his words with the words of Christ! "If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me" (Luke 9:23).

After the service I asked two elders of Hillcrest Church how they could allow a Roman Catholic priest speak to their congregation. Their response "we welcome everyone who loves God" was a fulfillment of Paul's prophetic words: "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires; and will turn away their ears from the truth, and will turn aside to myths" (2 Timothy 4:3-4).

All Mankind is Redeemed

As with many such teachers who gain popularity by tickling ears, Manning overemphasizes the love and grace of God while ignoring His attributes of justice, righteousness and holiness. He teaches that Jesus has redeemed all of mankind. **His "good news" is that everyone is already saved.** Among those Manning believes he will see in heaven is "the sexually abused teen molested by his father and now selling his body on the street, who, as he falls asleep each night after his last 'trick' whispers the name of the unknown God." [1]

Manning's theology opposes God's word again and again: "those who practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God" (Galatians 5:21). "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him" (John 3:36). Accordingly, the only faith Manning thinks sinners need is to "trust the love of God."

This is a major theme of *The Ragamuffin Gospel*, "trusting the love of God," because God loves you no matter what you do. There is no call to sanctification or holiness. Instead Manning excuses sin as human weakness that God will tolerate regardless of whether the sinner is repentant or not. In saying this, Manning has turned "the grace of our God into licentiousness" (Jude 4). He writes: "False gods, the gods of human understanding, despise sinners, but the Father of Jesus loves all, no matter what they do. But of course, this is almost too incredible for us to accept." [2] Yes, too incredible because it violates God's word: "Thou dost hate all who do iniquity" (Psalm 5:5).

Stop Thinking About God

In *The Signature of Jesus*, another one of Manning's books, he teaches his readers how to pray, using an eight-word mantra. [3] He says, "the first step in faith is to stop thinking about God at the time of prayer" (p. 212). The second step is "without moving your lips, repeat the sacred word [or phrase] inwardly, slowly, and often." If distractions come, "simply return to listening to your sacred word" (p. 218). He also encourages his readers to "celebrate the darkness" because "the ego has to break; and this breaking is like entering into a great darkness" (p. 145). Jesus said, "He who follows me shall not walk in the darkness" (John 8:12).

The Spirit of Antichrist

Manning often cites Catholic saints, humanist philosophers, heretics, monks and medieval mystics. Some of the monks he quotes maintain that salvation is really a transformation of consciousness to be awakened to the oneness of all creation. **Possibly the most dangerous practice and teaching of Manning is his New Age mind-emptying method of meditation. This is an open invitation to satanic activity.** Many of the expressions and techniques Manning employs in *The Signature of Jesus* are not found in the Scriptures such as: centering prayer, paschal spirituality, the discipline of the secret, contemplative spirituality, mineralization, practicing the presence, inner integration, yielding to the Center, notional knowledge, contemporary spiritual masters and masters of the interior life.

Extra-biblical spiritual practices can only produce confusion. They originate from the father of lies in whom there is no truth. **What a contrast Manning is to the way Paul described the first century teachers.** He said: "We have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God. On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God." (2 Corinthians 4:2)

Manning rarely uses Scripture and shows his disdain for those who do and for those who believe "The Word was God" (John 1:1). He writes: "I am deeply distressed by what I only can call in our Christian culture the idolatry of the Scriptures. For many Christians, the Bible is not a pointer to God but God himself.

In a word “bibliolatry.” I develop a nasty rash around people who speak as if mere scrutiny of its pages will reveal precisely how God thinks and precisely what God wants” (p. 188). He criticized several churches he visited, where “religiosity has pushed Jesus to the margins of real life and plunged people into preoccupation with their own personal salvation” (p. 193). Although Manning believes and teaches the life, death, and resurrection of Christ, *The Signature of Jesus* is not a guide to follow Jesus, but to follow “the masters of the interior life.” Paul wrote, “For such men are slaves, not of our Lord Christ but of their own appetites; and by their smooth and flattering speech they deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting” (Romans 16:18).

Manning reinterprets some of the most essential biblical truths in the light of psychological healing. He looks upon “human nature as fallen but redeemed, flawed but in essence good” (p. 125). **His instruction to meditate on nothingness instead of God’s Word is an exercise of modern occultism. This practice invites demonic influence and contact with the spirit world.** Manning’s Catholic mysticism has no place in the true Church of Jesus Christ. **Christian leaders should warn others about Manning** and all “deceitful workers who masquerade as apostles of Christ” (2 Corinthians 11:13). They must be exposed (Ephesians 5:11). We all live in days of great deception. May God give His church the gift of discernment as we take Paul’s warning seriously: “See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ” (Colossians 2:8).

End Notes

1. Brennan Manning, *The Ragamuffin Gospel*, Portland, OR: Multnomah Press, 1990, page 33.
2. Ibid, page 22.
3. Brennan Manning, *The Signature of Jesus*, Sisters, OR: Multnomah Books, 1996, pp. 94, 219.

I began this section with a quote from Manning’s book *Above All* – a quote that rejects the truth of **penal substitution**. A further detailed and very helpful analysis of the life and ministry of **Brennan Manning** is found on David Cloud’s **Way of Life** ministry website. By way of concluding this section, herewith is a portion of the article on <http://www.wayoflife.org/files/9ad06042d49138696773e1f9849f1aff-144.html> where David Cloud quotes what Mr Manning wrote and then responds with biblical truths that refute Mr Manning’s views –

MANNING DENIES THE SUBSTITUTIONARY ATONEMENT OF JESUS CHRIST

He writes:

“[T]he god whose moods alternate between graciousness and fierce anger ... the god who exacts the last drop of blood from his Son so that his just anger, evoked by sin, may be appeased, is not the God revealed by and in Jesus Christ. And if he is not the God of Jesus, he does not exist” (Brennan Manning, *Above All*, p. 58-59; the foreword to this book is written by CCM artist Michael W. Smith). Manning boldly states that the God that required a blood sacrifice is an idol, but throughout the Old Testament we are taught that **“it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul”** (Leviticus 17:11) and **“without shedding of blood is no remission”** (Hebrews 9:22). Jesus Christ fulfilled all of the Old Testament blood sacrifices when He came and died on Calvary. John the Baptist said, **“Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world”** (John 1:29). Hebrews says: **“Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us”** (Hebrews 9:12). In reality, it is Manning’s god of unconditional love that is the nonexistent idol.

WILLIAM PAUL YOUNG author of 'THE SHACK'

On the blog site of a David Westerfield on this link <http://www.davidwesterfield.net/2009/03/shack-author-william-p-young-denies-penal-substitution-mp3/> there is a very frank posting concerning the denial of **penal substitution** by **William Paul Young**, the author of the very successful book 'The Shack' – a book that has been misguidedly promoted in professing Christian circles.

The following are I believe very helpful sections from that posting –

'In the interview, Young has specifically rejected penal substitutionary atonement, the very heart of the Gospel we proclaim, that Christ, as our substitute, took our place on the cross, willingly bearing God's just wrath for our sins. And in the interview, even before he denies this crucial, crux-point of the Gospel, he clearly demonstrates to possess a flawed view of the justice and holiness of God, which necessarily affects his view of wrath, which is then necessarily going to affect his view of the atonement.

At the end of the interview, in contrast to the interviewers' recommendation of the book [*Pierced For Our Transgressions*](#), Young recommends a book on atonement theory that includes some of the most prominent, Gospel-rejecting scholars of our day entitled, [*Stricken by God? Nonviolent Identification & the Victory of Christ*](#) After looking at the site for this book, I can't help but think that all the questions that are asked sound oddly familiar to the Garden of Eden in which Satan asks of Eve, "Hath God said?"...

Based on this interview, with these presuppositions in place, it is clear Young has intentionally sought to paint a picture of God in the book that is contrary to how He has clearly revealed Himself to us in His Word. Sure, Young believes it's Biblical, but under close scrutiny, it clearly is not. And so goes post-modern theology, where you are the standard-bearer, not the Scriptures. And on this point of penal substitution in particular, his distorted view is at the very least passively (if not actively) implied at various points in the book based upon his own words in the interview.

If Christ did not substitute Himself for sinners, taking the Father's just wrath upon Himself on our behalf, *in our place*, then what in the world is the good news of the Gospel? That God merely loved us enough to die on the cross, non-violence triumphing over violence, without any regard to God's own Name, glory and honor being smeared by sin, justice due to that sin, and Christ Himself satisfying divine wrath? That is the (theological) liberal's gospel, not the evangelical Gospel. Or did Christ rather come to effectually accomplish something, namely the assuaging of God's wrath in our place, i.e. propitiation? Young's view of the Gospel is severely distorted and frankly dead wrong because of this denial...

And this is what I do not like about fad-driven Christianity in evangelicalism in America: we accept and market a product (in this case *The Shack*) based primarily on emotions *first*, because it "feels" right and may be a good story, and only after that will we analyse it in a constructively critical manner based upon the Word of God. Shouldn't we be doing this the other way around, while doing our best to be kind and generous to all with whom we disagree?... I want to remind us all that many of those who have gone before us in church history have died, given their lives, over doctrine. These are not unimportant things. Heresy is called heresy for a reason, because those who believe heretical doctrines result in them being condemned, because though they confess Christ with their lips, they disbelieve the Biblical Gospel in their hearts... the point is that those who deny orthodox doctrine, particularly the heart of the Gospel itself, and outright deny the central "offence" of the cross spoken of by Paul in 1 Corinthians 1, can have no assurance they are saved from God's wrath and may even rest under it now... And I would like to add that this severely grieves my heart.

Whilst I do not know David Westfield personally, **Pastor Gary Gilley** most certainly is personally known to me, as he was my guest here for a series of meetings back in March/April 2006.

On his church web site Gary has an extensive section on 'Book Reviews' and one of the books reviewed by him is '**The Shack**' and I want to conclude this section by reproducing his review that can be located on

<http://www.svchapel.org/resources/articles/22-contemporary-issues/536-the-shack-a-book-review>

The Shack - A Book Review



Written by Gary Gilley

(September 2008 - Volume 14, Issue 9)

One of the most popular and controversial Christian books of recent years is the fictional work by first time author William Young. Evangelical recording artist Michael W. Smith states, "*The Shack* will leave you craving for the presence of God." Author Eugene Peterson believes "this book has the potential to do for our generation what John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* did for his. It's that good!" On the other hand, seminary president Al Mohler says the book "includes undiluted heresy" and many concur. Given its popularity (number one on the *New York Times* bestseller list for paperback fiction), influence and mixed reviews, we need to take a careful look.

Good Christian fiction has the ability to get across a message in an indirect, non-threatening yet powerful, way. Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* is the most successful in the genre and has been mightily used of the Lord to teach spiritual truth. **What determines the value of fiction is how closely it adheres to Scripture. It is by these criteria that we must measure *The Shack*.**

As a novel, while well written, its storyline is not one that would attract many people. The plot is developed around the abduction and murder of six year old Missy, beloved daughter of nominal Christian Mackenzie Philips (Mack). This great tragedy has, of course, shaped the lives of Mack and his family in horrific ways. Mack's life is simply described as living under "The Great Sadness." Then one day four years later God drops Mack a note in his mailbox and invites him to the isolated shack where Missy was murdered. Obviously sceptical, Mack takes a chance that God might really show up and heads alone to the shack. There God, in the form of all three members of the Trinity, meets with him for the weekend. God gives Mack new insight about Himself, about life and about pain and tragedy and Mack goes home a new man.

It should be mentioned that the Trinity takes human form in the novel: the Father (called Papa throughout) appears as a large African-American woman who loves to cook; the Holy Spirit is called Sarayu (Sanskrit for air or wind) and is a small Asian woman who is translucent; and Jesus is a middle-age man, presumably of Jewish descent, who is a carpenter. Much interesting dialog takes place as members of the Trinity take turns explaining to Mack what they want him to know.

***The Shack*, like many books today, decries theology on the one hand while offering its own brand on the other. A story has the advantage of putting forth doctrine in a livelier manner than a systematic work can do—which is why we find most of Scripture in narrative form. The question is, does Young's theology agree with God's as revealed in Scripture? The short answer is "sometimes" but often Young totally misses the mark.**

Scripture and the Church

Young's message centres on the Trinity and salvation, but before we tackle Young's main objective it is significant that he has a couple of axes to grind concerning the Bible and the church. Young passionately rejects the cessationist view of Scripture which his character Mack was taught in seminary: "In seminary he had been taught that God had completely stopped any overt communication with moderns, preferring to have them only listen to and follow sacred Scripture, properly interpreted, of course. God's voice had been reduced to paper, and even that paper had to be moderated and deciphered by the proper authorities and intellects...Nobody wanted God in a box, just in a book" (pp. 65-66). Young would prefer a God who communicates with us in our thoughts rather than on paper (i.e. the Bible) (p. 195). Realizing the subjectivity of such revelation he assures us that we will "begin to better recognize [the Holy Spirit's] voice as we continue to grow our relationship" (p. 196). Scripture comes in second to inner voices in Young's theology. Scripture puts God in a box; inner voices make God alive and fresh. This is what Young wants to convey.

Young also has little good to say about the church or other related institutions. While Mack had attended seminary, "none of his training was helping in the least" (p. 91) when it came to understanding God. He consistently depicts the activity of the church in a negative light: Mack is pretty sure he hasn't met the church Jesus loves (p. 177), which is all about relationships, "not a bunch of exhausting work and long list of demands, and not sitting in endless meetings staring at the backs of people's heads, people he really didn't even know" (p. 178). Sunday school (p. 98) and family devotions (p. 107) both take hits as well. Systematic theology itself takes a post-modern broadside as the Holy Spirit says, "I have a great fondness for uncertainty" (p. 203). While Scripture does not place such words in the mouth of the Holy Spirit, Young's love for uncertainty becomes frustratingly clear as he outlines his concept of salvation.

Salvation

When Mack asks how he can be part of the church, Jesus replies, "It's simple Mack, it's all about relationships and simply sharing life" (p. 178). On an earlier occasion Jesus tells Mack that he can get out of his mess "by *re-turning*. By turning back to me. By giving up your ways of power and manipulation and just come back to me" (p. 147). Yet nowhere in *The Shack* is the reader given a clear understanding of the gospel. When Mack asks what Jesus accomplished by dying he is told, "Through his death and resurrection, I am now fully reconciled to the world." When pressed to explain, God says that He is reconciled to "the whole world," not just the believer (p. 192). Does this mean that all will be saved? Young never goes that far, however he certainly gives that impression when Mack's father (who was an awful man and showed no signs of being saved) is found in heaven (pp. 214-215), when God says repeatedly He is particularly fond of all people, when God claims that He has forgiven all sins against Him (e.g. 118-119), that He does not "do humiliation, or guilt, or condemnation" (p. 223) and, contrary to large hunks of Scripture, God is not a God of judgment. "I don't need to punish people for sin, sin is its own punishment, devouring you from the inside. It's not my purpose to punish it; it's my job to cure it" (p. 120). While Young's comment has some validity, it does not faithfully reflect the teaching of Scripture, which portray God as actively involved in the punishment of sin.

Young further muddies the waters as he has Jesus reply to Mack's question, "Is that what it means to be a Christian?" Jesus says, "Who said anything about being a Christian? I'm not a Christian...Those who love me come from every system that exists. They were Buddhists or Mormons, Baptists or Muslims, Democrat, Republicans and many who don't vote or are not part of any Sunday morning or religious institutions...I have no desire to make them Christians, but I do want to join them in their transformation into sons and daughters of my Papa, into my brothers and sisters, into my beloved."

With Mack we are confused. “Does that mean,” asks Mack, “that all roads will lead to you?” Jesus denies this but then says, “What it does mean is that I will travel any road to find you” (p. 182). Jesus apparently means that He will travel any road to “join them in their transformation.” The implication is that people are on many roads that lead to their self-transformation. Jesus will join people where they are on that road and apparently aid in that transformation. This is certainly not the teaching of Scripture, which tells us that we must come to the one road, the narrow way that leads to God through Jesus Christ.

The Godhead

The main thrust of the novel concerns itself with an understanding of God and how we are to be in relationship to Him. As already noted, the method by which mankind comes into the right relationship with God is cloudy at best in *The Shack*. Young’s Trinity is equally confusing. The author does not develop his understanding of God exclusively from Scripture and, in fact, often contradicts biblical teaching. The first issue is that of imagining and presenting human forms for the members of the Trinity. While some slack might be given for Young’s portrait of Jesus, who came in human form (although we don’t know what He looks like), the first two of the Ten Commandments would forbid us depicting the Father or the Holy Spirit in physical form. When we create an image of God in our imagination we then attempt to relate to that image—which is inevitably a false one. This is the essence of idolatry and is forbidden in the Word.

Further, the portrayal of God throughout the novel is one which humanizes Him rather than exalts Him. Young quotes Jacques Ellul, “No matter what God’s power may be, the first aspect of God is never that of absolute Master, the Almighty. It is that of the God who puts Himself on our human level and limits Himself” (p. 88). Really? This quote is in contradiction to the entirety of biblical revelation which first and often declares God to be absolute Master, yet in no way mitigates the incarnation, as Young and Ellul are trying to claim.

Young further humanizes God and contradicts Scripture by teaching that all the members of the Trinity took human form at the incarnation: “When we three spoke ourself into human existence as the Son of God, we became fully human” (p. 99). Is Young advocating modalism (an ancient heresy which teaches that the Trinity is not composed of three distinct members but three distinct modes in which God appears throughout human history)? If not, it is abundantly clear that Young believes that the Father died on the cross with the Son and bears the marks of the cross to this day (pp. 95-95, 164). He does not believe that the Father abandoned Jesus on the cross as Scripture declares (p. 96). And any concept of authority and submission in the Godhead is denied (pp. 122, 145), although [1 Cor. 11:1-3](#) is clear that such authority/submission exists. More than that, God submits to *us* as well (p. 145). By the end of the book God is reduced to being our servant as we are His (it’s all about relationships, not authority) (pp. 236-237).

The very essence of God is challenged when Young, quoting from Unitarian Universalist, Buckminster Fuller, declares God to be a verb not a noun (pp. 194, 204). In a related statement, Young has Jesus say of the Holy Spirit, “She is Creativity; she is Action; she is Breathing of Life” (p. 110). Yet the Bible presents God as a person (noun) not an action (verb). When this truth is denied we are moving from the biblical understanding of a personal God to an Eastern understanding of God in everything.^[1] Thus, we are not surprised when Mack asks the Holy Spirit if he will see her again he is told, “Of course, you might see me in a piece of art, or music, or silence, or through people, or in creation, or in your joy and sorrow” (p. 198). This is not biblical teaching. This idea seems repeated in a line from a song Missy creates, “Come kiss me wind and take my breath till you and I are one” (p. 233). At what point do we become one with creation? Again, this is an Eastern concept, not a biblical one.

Young reinforces his Eastern leanings with a statement right out of New Age (New Spirituality) teachings: Papa tells Mack, “Just say it out loud. There is power in what my children declare” (p. 227). Ronda Byrne would echo this idea in her book, *The Secret*, but you will not find it in the Bible. Further, we are told Jesus “as a human being, had no power within himself to heal anyone” (p. 100). So how did he do so? By trusting in the Holy Spirit. Jesus, the Spirit says, “is just the first to do it to the uttermost—the first to absolutely trust my life within him...” (p. 100). There is enough truth here to be confusing but not accurate. Jesus, never ceasing to be fully God, had all Divine power dwelling within Him. That He chose to limit His use of that power and rely on the Holy Spirit while on earth in no way diminishes His essence.

While Jesus is our example, He is not a guru blazing a trail in which in this life we too can be like God. This idea smacks of New Age teaching, not Scripture. Jesus even tells Mack that “God, who is the ground of all being, dwells in, around, and through all things—ultimately emerging as the real” (p. 112). This is pure New Age spirituality.

The Shack, while occasionally getting things right is, in the end, a dangerous piece of fiction. It undermines Scripture and the church, presents at best a mutilated gospel, misrepresents the biblical teachings concerning the Godhead and offers a New Age understanding of God and the universe. This is not a great novel to explain tragedy and pain. It is a misleading work which will confuse many and lead others astray.

[1] God IN everything is known as pantheism—an Eastern belief akin to pantheism which teaches that God IS everything. In reality there is very little difference between the two.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

For those who have managed patiently to work their way through this article I want now to conclude by sharing some devotional thoughts by Pastor John MacArthur that emphasise the vital need for believers to exercise biblical discernment when it comes to those who are clearly promoting false teaching. They are taken from his book ‘Daily Readings from the Life of Christ’ – and relate to thoughts for 4th & 5th July when Pastor MacArthur considers **Matthew 7:18-20** “**A good tree cannot bring forth bad fruit neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them**”. Pastor Mac Arthur wrote –

‘Careful examination of a false prophet’s teachings will always reveal unscriptural ideas and an absence of a solid, coherent theology. Often, he will teach a combination of truth and error... The creed of the false prophet cannot withstand any careful scrutiny by the pure light of the Word... False shepherds talk much about God’s love but not His wrath and holiness... much about God’s universal fatherhood toward everyone but not much about His unique fatherhood toward all who believe in His Son... Their message is full of gaps, the greatest of which leaves out a biblical view of the saving gospel...

We can spot false prophets by the kind of people they attract... “many shall follow their pernicious ways, by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of” [2nd Peter 2:2]... God has not ordained false prophets, but within His will He allows them to exist. And it is within His purpose that false factions develop... Factions often attract followers of false teachers. And, in a sense, this protects genuine saints by separating the chaff from the wheat in the church... A watchful, discerning, vigilant believer, armed with the Word of truth, will be able to isolate false teachers and withdraw from them because he or she “shall know them by their fruits”.

Those headlined and highlighted in this article, by their rejection of **penal substitution**, are producing a harvest of **“bad fruit”** and show themselves to be **“the enemies of the cross of Christ” [Philippians 3:18]**. A line in the sand has been drawn when it comes to **penal substitution** and according to God's Word, the side of the line on which people take their stand, indicates whether they are **“natural”** [unregenerate – see 1st Corinthians 2:14] or **“spiritual”** [regenerate and so able to judge in the light of God's Word – see 1st Corinthians 2:15].

Those in heaven sing a new song – **“Thou [Christ] art worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals; for thou wast slain and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood” [Revelation 5:9]**. This song focussing firmly on Christ's **penal substitution** echoes the praise of the beloved disciple John that is recorded earlier in **Revelation 1:5 “Unto him [Christ] that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood”**. Such praise in heaven could not and will not come from the lips of those who reject **penal substitution** – let any such, as might read this article, **“take heed”**.

Cecil Andrews – ‘Take Heed’ Ministries – 10th July 2009