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Of Babies and Bathwater? Recent Evangelical Critiques of Penal Substitution in the Light of Early Modern Debates Concerning Justification

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SUMMARY

Penal substitutionary models of the atonement have recently been criticised for their lack of ethical consequences. This essay examines such criticisms in the light of Roman Catholic and Anabaptist criticisms of justifica-

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tion by faith alone and early nineteenth-century debates about atonement. I attempt to show that similar, although not identical, arguments were deployed in all three cases, and suggest some possible responses to the recent criticisms based on the historical analogues.

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ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Strafrechtliche Stellvertretermodelle von Sühne sind kürzlich für ihren Mangel an ethischer Konsequenz kritisiert worden. Dieser Artikel untersucht diese Kritik im Lichte römisch-katholischer und täuferischer Kritik der Rechtfertigung allein aus Glauben und im Lichte von

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Debatten aus dem frühen 19. Jahrhundert zur Sühneproblematik. Ich versuche zu zeigen, dass in allen drei Fällen ähnliche, wenn auch nicht identische Argumente benutzt wurden, und ich schlage einige mögliche Antworten auf die kürzlich geäußerte Kritik vor, die auf den historischen Analogien basieren.

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RÉSUMÉ

La compréhension de l'expiation en termes de substitution pénale a récemment fait l'objet de critiques pour son manque de conséquences éthiques. Le présent article considère ces critiques en les comparant aux critiques des catholiques et des anabaptistes concernant la doctrine de

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la justification par la foi seule, ainsi qu'aux débats du XIX^e siècle sur l'expiation. L'auteur s'efforce de montrer que des arguments similaires à ces critiques, sans leur être identiques, ont été avancés dans les trois cas. Il indique des réponses possibles aux critiques récentes en s'inspirant des réponses apportées par le passé.

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1. By Way of Introduction

Let¹ me state a thesis, bluntly and boldly, that I intend to argue in this paper: one recent criticism of penal substitutionary atonement, offered by Evangelicals as well as others, repeats lines of argument first advanced by the Roman Church against the Reformation doctrine of justification *sola fide*. If this criticism stands, then we will be forced to conclude that the Reformers were simply wrong

on the *articulus stantis vel cadentis ecclesiae*.

I am conscious that this could be a rather inflammatory thesis in the wrong hands, so I will say as clearly as possible now that I do not for a moment suppose that penal substitutionary atonement is the article by which the church stands or falls; nor do I accept that there is any reason to call for those who object to penal substitution to be expelled, on account of that rejection *per se*, from Evangelical bodies, let alone from the church. I have argued in

public against such an idea before, and I re-affirm that position now. It seems to me that most criticisms of penal substitution are misguided in several ways, central among them the fact that the criticisms are aimed at a caricature, rather than a clear statement, of the doctrine. As such, I generally find myself able to agree entirely with the criticism (and hence regarding well-meaning defenders of an indefensible caricature as misguided). Further, there are valid concerns even with a well-formed statement of penal substitution, and this is not a doctrine so clearly advanced in Scripture (even in Is. 53) that rejection of it must entail expulsion by Bible-believing Christians. All that said, it seems to me that one common line of criticism, perhaps the most theologically serious, can be related to Reformation debates in interesting and worthwhile ways. Hence this paper.

2. Reformation and Early Modern Accounts of Reconciliation

The story of the Reformation beginning with Martin Luther's transformative discovery that the *iustitia Dei* is gift not demand is familiar enough. No doubt it needs all sorts of qualifications, but for Luther at least, the free and incomprehensible gift of justification given by God through Christ, and known only in the cross, is absolutely the heart of the doctrine of reconciliation, and of all Christian teaching and piety. Indeed, at one point, and with characteristic boldness, Luther announced that he would concede the Pope his claim to authority, if only the Pope would confess the free justification of sinners in Christ.² The slogan that sums up such a concern for this particular belief about reconciliation is the insistence that justification is the *articulus stantis vel cadentis ecclesiae*. This phrase is not used by Luther, although similar phrases are;³ McGrath suggests its first employment is by Alsted in 1618, and that the belief expressed by the phrase was by then general.⁴

I have neither space nor knowledge to trace the lines of development or dispute between different Reformers. Clearly, at times what is at stake is definitions. (So, when McGrath argues that Luther stands 'closer to the position of the Council of Trent than is generally realized,'⁵ it is in connection with Luther's claim that *justificare* will in different ways describe the beginning, the continuation, and the consummation of the life of the saints; I suspect that Luther's avoidance of the language of sanctification has more to do with his construc-

tion here than any particular closeness to the doctrines developed at Trent, which on this point were developed explicitly to deny the freeness of God's justifying grace.) To trace the lines of controversy, I will turn to the relatively settled thought of the confessions, with only occasional references back into history.

God freely justifies the sinner, and so the sinner is reconciled with God. This may not be the most basic claim of the Reformers (it is consequent on the claims *solus Christus* and *sola gratia*), or even perhaps the most important (surely *soli Deo gloria!*), but it became the signature claim. In the Lutheran symbols, this point is promoted as high as article IV of the Augsburg Confession, with free justification and imputed righteousness being stressed.⁶ Indeed, Melancthon's Apology for the confession⁷ describes the free gift of justification as 'the chief topic of Christian doctrine'. The 'Smalcald Articles,' written by Luther, and also a part of the *Book of Concord*, alike insist on the centrality of this doctrine: 'Of this article nothing can be yielded or surrendered [nor can anything be granted or permitted contrary to the same], even though heaven and earth, and whatever will not abide, should sink to ruin... And upon this article all things depend which we teach and practice in opposition to the Pope, the devil, and the [whole] world.'⁸ Unsurprisingly, then, the *Formula of Concord* denounces any who believe

'[t]hat in the prophetic and apostolic declarations, which treat of the righteousness of faith, the words *justify* and to be *justified* are not the same as to absolve and be absolved from sins, and to obtain remission of sins, but that we, through love infused by the Holy Ghost, through the virtues and through the works which flow forth from charity, become in very deed righteous before God.'⁹

For the Lutheran symbols, reconciliation between human beings and God is the central matter of Christianity, and so necessarily the central topic of Christian doctrine, and at the heart of the locus is the confession of free justification, given graciously by God in Christ, apprehended by faith, and comprising both passive and active righteousness.

On the Reformed side, virtually identical positions can be found. The Second Helvetic Confession makes the point at length in ch. XV, which begins with a summary, *Justificare significat Apostolo in disputatione de justificatione, peccata remittere, a*

culpa et poena absolvere, in gratiam recipere, et justum pronunciare (sec. 1), and then expands the point at length in §§4-5. The Heidelberg Catechism is briefer, but similarly clear: ‘Our Lord *Jesus Christ*... is freely given unto us for complete redemption and righteousness’¹⁰ I have no wish to labour the point, which should already be clear enough: as Lutheran and Reformed faith was codified in the sixteenth century, the centrality and truth of the free gift of justification in Christ as the heart of reconciliation was uniformly insisted upon.

The careful statements of the ‘Decree on Justification’ of the Council of Trent were devised to exclude this claim; particularly Canons IX and XI.¹¹ These are built upon the positive teaching of the earlier sections concerning the doctrine of reconciliation, notably ch. VII, which serves as something of a summary of the whole decree: ‘[j]ustification itself, which is not remission of sins merely, but also the sanctification and renewal of the inward man, through the voluntary reception of the grace, and of the gifts, whereby man of unjust becomes just, and of an enemy a friend, that so he may be an heir according to hope of life everlasting.’¹² There is, here, a three-fold division in the nature of justification: the remission of sins and sanctification; continual renewal; and glorification – which division can be traced through the Decree.¹³ There are, to be sure, other polemical points about the doctrine of reconciliation being made in this Decree (notably: the continuation of free will after the fall; the possibility of falling away from grace; and the impropriety of seeking assurance of salvation), but this single point, the question of whether justification is an external declaration or an internal change, and so the question of whether there is any human involvement in being reconciled, are clearly at the heart of the issue. Reformation debates over justification essentially turn on this question: for the Lutherans and Reformed, God reconciles us sovereignly and freely, of his grace, in Christ, through faith, for His glory; for Roman Catholics God graciously and sovereignly provides the possibility of reconciliation, certainly, but the accomplishment of reconciliation requires our action and cooperation with God’s grace.¹⁴

One of the arguments offered at Trent will become important in a moment in this paper, so let me highlight it. The Council suggested in various ways that one of its core concerns about the ‘new’ Reformation doctrines of grace was their failure to give any motive to ethical living. Concerning the use of acts of penance, for example, the Coun-

cil insists: ‘these satisfactory punishments greatly recall from, and check as it were with a bridle, and make penitents more cautious and watchful for the future; they are also remedies for the remains of sin, and, by acts of the opposite virtues, they remove the habits acquired by evil living.’¹⁵

I do not suppose that any of this is news to any reader of this journal, but bear with me a little, and I hope its importance will become clear. Let me first, however, turn to the parallel disputes between the Reformed and Lutheran, on the one hand, and the Anabaptists on the other.

A concern for visible holiness as necessary to reconciliation between humanity and God is one of the (few) constant marks of the various groups who made up sixteenth-century Anabaptism. Michael Sattler’s basic claim in the preface to the *Schleitheim Articles* is that ‘we have agreed that we will abide in the Lord as obedient children of God,’ and this demand that reconciliation implies visible obedience runs through the articles as a constant axiom which drives each argument. Baptism is to be given to those ‘who have learned repentance, amendment of life, and faith through the truth that their sin has been removed by Christ’; the ban is to be ‘used against all who have given themselves to the Lord and agreed to follow his commandments... and who nevertheless sometimes slip and fall into error and sin’; the article on the breaking of bread stresses repeatedly that the Lord’s table is for the community that has been ‘called out of the world to God’; separation is to be made from ‘all who have not submitted themselves to the obedience of faith’; and so on.¹⁶

Of course, a demand for visible holiness is not yet a denial of the freeness of justification in Christ. Reconciliation can imply obedience and amendment of life in two senses. It might be that reconciliation, itself achieved through the freeness of God’s grace, still necessarily leads to holiness and obedience, and so the absence of holiness is adequate evidence that reconciliation has not, in fact, taken place. On the other hand, it might be that obedience and so visible holiness is a part of reconciliation, not just a consequence of it, and so reconciliation can no longer be understood as the free gift of God in Christ through faith. The *Schleitheim* articles do not notice this distinction, and so do not ask the question; other sixteenth-century Anabaptist writings do pose the question, and many, at least, do indeed deny the freeness of justification. Conrad Grebel, writing to Müntzer, wastes few words in condemning Luther: ‘You

have the Bible (of which Luther had made bubel and Babel) for your defense against the idolatrous sparing of Luther... against the deceitful, negligent faith, against their preaching in which they do not teach Christ as they should.¹⁷ Hans Denck's *On the Law of God* is (after a brief consideration of the meaning of defeat in the Peasant's War) almost entirely a discussion on this very point, pressing the doctrine of reconciliation with the question of whether justification is free or depends on human obedience and holiness, with Denck repeatedly attacking standard points of Lutheran teaching.¹⁸ Again, Denck in his 'Recantation' teaches 'Faith is to obey God and trust in his promise through Jesus Christ. Where there is no such obedience the trust is false and deceptive.'¹⁹

Balthasar Hubmaier, probably the most able theologian amongst the early Anabaptists, seems to develop through his life on this point. Unsurprisingly, in his first published work, the 'Achtzehn Schlussreden', he adopted a basically Zwinglian position on justification, asserting straightforwardly that '[f]aith alone makes us righteous before God.'²⁰ In later works this position is no longer central, with a classically Anabaptist mix of faith, repentance, baptism and good works being necessary to reconciliation, although there is sometimes still a sense that faith alone justifies, along with a strong emphasis that real faith produces good works.²¹ By the time he writes the two tracts of free will, the place of works is even more central: these essentially advance a theology of reconciliation that claims that Christ's death has sufficiently healed our human nature that it is our choice whether to repent, believe the gospel, and follow the law or not.²² The only straightforward assertion that justification is not free I can find, however, is in Hubmaier's *Apologia*,²³ where he begins his first article with the claim '[m]ere faith alone is not sufficient for salvation,²⁴ and the second with the assertion '[s]ince mere faith is not sufficient for salvation, good deeds must truly be added to the faith.'²⁵ The *Apologia*, written in prison, tends to stress Hubmaier's points of agreement with Roman Catholic doctrine, as for instance on the perpetual virginity of Mary, and her status as 'mother of God',²⁶ but never to the point of misrepresenting his views, so he denies the existence of purgatory (article XIII) and the possibility of seeking the intercession of the Saints (article XXIV).

Melchior Hoffman is perhaps on the edge of the Anabaptist movement (like Denck), but develops a similar theology in a much more complete way. For

Hoffman, there are two justifications. The first is by faith alone and grace alone, and gives a 'foretaste of the Kingdom of God'. The second justification comes about through our own efforts, and leads to true reconciliation.²⁷ In his attempt to synthesize sixteenth-century Anabaptist doctrine, Friedmann claims that the distinctive Anabaptist idea of salvation is not justification, the forensic declaration of the sinner as righteous, but an actual change of status and relationship which he characterizes with the word 'Fromm-Machung', a word first used by Hubmaier.²⁸ As witnesses to this position he cites Hans Hut, Peter Riedemann and Leupold Scharnschläger. It seems to me that Friedmann falls a little into the trap of over-synthesizing, and viewing the Anabaptists (and indeed the Lutherans) more as a distinct and coherent group than they in fact were, but the perspective is helpful.

The same point is made by later confessions in a similar tradition. Take, for instance, the fifteen theological propositions which make up the Apology of Robert Barclay, widely considered to be the most authoritative statement of the teachings of the Society of Friends in the seventeenth century. In proposition seven, 'Concerning Justification', Barclay writes:

As many as resist not this light, but receive the same, in them is produced an holy, pure, and spiritual birth, bringing forth holiness, righteousness, purity, and all those other blessed fruits which are acceptable to God; by which holy birth, to wit, Jesus Christ formed within us, and working his works in us, as we are sanctified, so we are justified in the sight of God, according to the apostle's words, 'But ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.'²⁹

In classical scholastic language, Barclay makes justification consequent on sanctification. Forgiveness follows holiness; reconciliation is dependent upon obedience. This is blunter and less nuanced than the earlier Anabaptist writers, but recognizably in the same tradition.

We do not need to read very far in Lutheran and Reformed writings to find condemnations of this move. The *Formula of Concord* offers specific condemnation of seventeen Anabaptist teachings (nine doctrinal, five political and three moral). The articles are hardly fair to the variety, or even the centre of gravity, of Anabaptist teaching, despite the rather grudging acknowledgement of the preamble that there are 'many sects', who maintain

more or fewer errors. The first article criticizes the distinctive Christology of Melchior Hoffman and Menno Simons,³⁰ which was hardly universal amongst the Anabaptists; and the second, remarkably, coolly suggests that Anabaptists did not believe in the true deity of Christ. The third, on justification, seems more general in application, at least in its first sentence: '[t]hat our righteousness before God does not consist in the merit of Christ alone, but in our renewal, and thus in our own uprightness in which we walk'; when it goes on to insist that 'this righteousness of the Anabaptists consists in great part in a certain arbitrary and humanly devised sanctimony, and in truth is nothing else than some new sort of monkery' we must, I think, discount the comment almost entirely.³¹

On the Reformed side, whilst Anabaptist beliefs concerning baptism and the magistracy are repeatedly condemned, I can find no symbol that rejects their beliefs about justification by name. The matter of the teaching is repeatedly condemned, however. Consider, for example, the bold claim of the Second Helvetic Confession: 'we must first be just before we can love or do any just works.'³² The point is also common enough in Reformed polemical literature. For Calvin, I need to no more than refer to Willem Balke's treatment of the issues.³³ For a later controversialist, consider Turretin's long and careful controversial topic on justification.³⁴

Before I move on, please notice a particular feature of the debate. In measured or immoderate tones, whether from Roman prelates or Anabaptist radicals, the complaint against the Lutheran and Reformed doctrine of free justification was always the same: it led to carnal Christianity, or cheap grace, or belief without practice. That is, the doctrine of free justification was inadequate because it was ethically inadequate. An account of reconciliation that does not, somehow, promote and demand holiness of life amongst the reconciled is assumed for that very reason to be deficient. Now, of course the Reformed and Lutherans had answers to this charge, albeit different ones. Lutheran teaching insists that faith should bring forth good works,³⁵ and that the gift of 'renovation' given by the Spirit to all the justified should lead to daily growth in holiness;³⁶ the Reformed rather more that gradual sanctification and instant justification both flowed from the same source, the union of the believer with Christ.³⁷ They were alike strident in their opposition to antinomianism, to any suggestion that free justification removed ethical responsibility from women and men. But to their detractors, that

appeared the logical conclusion of their doctrine, and so that was the charge they had to face. I have pressed this, I acknowledge fairly obvious, point, at such length because it is basic to the argument of this paper. Let me now move a little forward in time, however, and discuss what has been the primary Evangelical account of how men and women are reconciled to God, the doctrine of penal substitutionary atonement.

3. Evangelical Debates about Penal Substitution in Context

Penal doctrines of the atonement are, of course, common in the Reformation symbols. The Heidelberg Catechism follows Calvin's lead in reading the trial of Christ before Pilate as an image or type of Christ's suffering the punishment that our guilt deserved; the Belgic Confession reads the atonement in straightforwardly penal terms;³⁸ as does the Scotch Confession:

It behooved farther the Messias and Redemer to be very God and very man, because he was to underlie the punishment due for our transgressions, and to present himselfe in the presence of his Fathers Judgment, as in our persone, to suffer for our transgression and inobedience... (Art. VIII)

It seems to me that this adoption of penal theories of the atonement, whilst not required by a belief in free justification (the Lutheran symbols tend to retain the language of sacrifice or satisfaction, rather than penal imagery), is consonant with it. A penal account of the atonement stresses the completeness and finality of Christ's work: he has done all that is to be done; there is nothing left. We are reconciled because of what Christ has done, not because of what we do. This doctrine thus coheres well with a stress on the freeness of God's gift of justification in Christ.

This acceptance of penal substitution amongst mainline protestants largely continues into the early eighteenth century, when the Evangelical movement began. It is there in Quenstedt's *Theologia Didactico-polemica* (1685) as clearly as in Turretin's *Institutio Theologiae Elencticae* (1682);³⁹ in English-speaking theology it is assumed by the great Bishop Butler to be normal and natural, corresponding to the observable ways of the world.⁴⁰ I have argued elsewhere⁴¹ that penal accounts of atonement were more often assumed than argued for by Evangelicals through the eighteenth century,

and that serious criticism of the idea begins in the nineteenth century, amongst both Evangelicals (Edward Irving; Thomas Erskine of Linlathen; and of course John McLeod Campbell) and non-Evangelicals (rather too numerous to mention...). It is perhaps useful to examine some of these criticisms in a little more detail.

McLeod Campbell offers a discussion of John Owen, Jonathan Edwards and Thomas Chalmers as exponents of traditional Calvinism, largely focussing on the relationship between their accounts of atonement and the doctrine of limited election. When he turns to 'Calvinism, as Recently Modified',⁴² however, he is more expansive about his critiques of penal conceptions of the atonement. It seems he felt able to dismiss the earlier writers with the claim '[t]hat cannot be a true conception of the nature of the atonement which implies that Christ died only for an election from among men'.⁴³ However, he believes more recent Calvinism to hold that the atonement was indeed for all,⁴⁴ and so other arguments are needed. He sees several other changes also: a shift from forensic justice being a perfection of the divine nature to it being seen as required by God's moral governance; a shift from seeing Christ as suffering the exact penalty merited by the sins of the saved, to seeing him as undergoing sufferings which were acceptable to God's moral government as a substitute for that punishment; and a shift from definite atonement and election to the atonement as merely providing the possibility of salvation to all.⁴⁵

If this is indeed what was being taught as Calvinism in the Kirk in the middle of the nineteenth century, then it is surprising: right or wrong, the vision of reconciliation Campbell describes is Grotian and Arminian, not Calvinistic.⁴⁶ However, it is Campbell's reasons for preferring the new system that are relevant to my argument. On the first, '[a] necessity for an atonement arising out of rectoral or public justice, is felt less repulsive than one that implies a demand in the divine nature for a certain amount of suffering as the punishment for a certain amount of sin'.⁴⁷ As to the second, '[a]ll the men have revolted from in the idea of the Son of God being actually in His Father's eyes as a criminal through the imputation of man's sin...'⁴⁸ In both cases, the phrases I have emphasised indicate that it is a sense of revulsion that drives the objection to the traditional penal scheme, at least in Campbell's mind.

Campbell will go on to argue that these modifications merely render the 'Calvinism' of those who

hold to them incoherent, without actually solving any problems, and so will claim that his preferred 'filial' view is more helpful than any form of 'legal' view. The point of interest for this paper, however, is that questions of morality or acceptability drive the criticisms in large measure. This is also of course true of many of the non-Evangelical criticisms of the penal theory. Grensted, writing in the early twentieth century, offers a telling example. In recounting the history of the doctrine of the atonement, he tells it (from the Reformation on) as a history of the rise and collapse of penal ideas. The collapse is repeatedly described as the coming of 'a more human theology';⁴⁹ it is due to the fact that 'the conception of penal justice remains repugnant to man's moral sense';⁵⁰ the supposed ending of the dominance of penal theories is 'the dawn of a better age'.⁵¹ The 'days of the Penal theory... are over', a 'fact obvious to any student of doctrinal history.' One question alone remains: '[w]hether the theory is capable of moderating its claims, and so of surviving in a sense that does not repel the moral sense of mankind.'⁵² The criticism is clear: penal substitutionary atonement gives us an account of justice, and a doctrine of God, that is morally repugnant. Reconciliation on this account is immoral.

For a second Evangelical writer from the early nineteenth century, and a second, although linked, criticism of penal substitution, let me turn to Thomas Erskine. Erskine also believed penal theories of the atonement to be morally unworthy,⁵³ but pressed also the charge that penal substitution had nothing to say about the moral transformation of the believer. This is made very clear in Erskine's 'Introductory Essay' to some letters he published.⁵⁴ In that essay he argues that we should believe all people antecedently forgiven through Christ's death, rather than any account of election or justification through faith. Along the way he claims that traditional doctrines of the atonement fail morally for two reasons. On the one hand, whatever motive they provide for action is mere selfishness: I believe that I may be saved, not out of love for God, but out of desire for salvation; and, claims Erskine, 'Every such religion must in the nature of things be false, because its necessary tendency is not to produce love, but selfishness, and to train the mind in the very element of rebellion.'⁵⁵ On the other, Erskine claims (with his characteristic concern for the Biblical teaching) that all the commands of the epistles presume the readers already know themselves to be saved.⁵⁶

The point is pressed in another direction in the first essay on the ‘freeness of the gospel’.⁵⁷ Erskine begins that essay with a candid acknowledgement that there are many ‘who oppose the doctrine of justification by faith, from the honest conviction that it opposes the interests of practical holiness’.⁵⁸ Erskine confesses himself in some sympathy with such complaints, finally concluding that ‘I cannot help thinking that they are borne out to a considerable extent by the way in which that doctrine is very commonly stated.’⁵⁹ The restatement asserts that humanity faces two problems: guilt and corruption, both of which must be dealt with if we are to be reconciled. Of these, by far the more serious is corruption. Again we find the teaching that all are forgiven through Christ’s action, but that does not mean that all will enter into heaven. ‘Heaven is the name for a character conformed to the will of God... [t]he idea, therefore, of having heaven, without holiness, is like the idea of having health without being well... a contradiction in terms.’⁶⁰ Faith, then, for Erskine, becomes the means by which the pardon proclaimed freely to all becomes morally effective for some: ‘The use of faith, then, is not to remove the penalty, or to make the pardon better – for the penalty is removed, and the pardon is proclaimed, whether we believe it or not – but to give the pardon a moral influence...’⁶¹ In the second essay, this point is pushed to its conclusion, with regard to the idea of penal substitution, which pictures forgiveness, pardon, as the only significant result of the atonement. Says Erskine:

Whilst pardon is conceived to depend on faith, and whilst it is confounded with eternal life, it is very difficult to press the warnings, and precepts, and exhortations of the Bible, as the Bible itself presses them. If pardon and eternal life are by faith alone, what is the use of obedience? And how can the preacher urge it as absolutely necessary, without some inconsistency in his plan of instruction?⁶²

The ‘salvation’ pictured by a penal doctrine of the atonement becomes a purely extrinsic matter, a forensic change of state from technically guilty before God to technically righteous before God, which can have no moral consequences.

In another book, the *Brazen Serpent*, Erskine squarely faces a penal substitutionary doctrine of the atonement, describing it as ‘[o]ne answer that would be pretty generally given to [the question of why Christ came into the world]’.⁶³ Erskine’s comments are generous, but blunt: ‘I believe that the

Spirit of God has made this view of the atonement spirit and life to many souls – and yet, I believe that, with some truth in it, it is a very defective view, to say the least of it.’⁶⁴ Erskine’s first objection concerns the justice of substitution, which he meets with a strong doctrine of the ‘mystical body’ of Christ (‘The whole nature is as one colossal man, of which Christ continues the head during the whole accepted time and day of salvation...’⁶⁵). His second objection, more relevant to my argument, picks up again the demand that a doctrine of the atonement should have some moral outcome. ‘[H]e did not suffer the punishment of sin... to dispense with our suffering of it, but to change the character of our suffering, from an unsanctified and unsanctifying suffering into a sanctified and sanctifying suffering.’⁶⁶ Erskine’s idea is that all punishment is reformatory, and so we should not want to escape the punishment for our sin, because only that punishment can make us holy; we must be punished in order to be reconciled. Right or wrong, the core of his complaint, that penal substitutionary doctrines of the atonement have no moral or ethical consequence, is clear.

All this background enables us to put recent Evangelical debates in a bit more context. In perhaps the most serious of the recent Evangelical critiques, Joel Green and Mark Baker offer five ‘pressing questions’ concerning the doctrine of penal substitution: Scriptural accuracy (is it consonant with Biblical teaching?); cultural conditioning (is it merely a product of modern culture?); cultural relevance (if so, will it continue to be helpful in a post-modern culture?); missional relevance (and will it be helpful in non-Western cultures?); and ethical issues (is the portrayal of justice meaningful, and is the theory ethically generative?).⁶⁷ Obviously, the last of these relates to the questions I have been discussing above. Let me then look at Green and Baker’s criticisms in this area more carefully.

As first stated, the question about justice and the nature of God is directed at ‘misunderstanding[s]’ and ‘caricature[s]’ of penal substitution.⁶⁸ The view of the angry Father venting his wrath on the loving Son, and the more extreme language of ‘divine child abuse’ are to the fore here. By the time the agenda is summarised, however, it is less clear that such criticisms address only misrepresentations of the theory: it ‘at the very least invites more careful articulation.’⁶⁹ Later in the book, when the theme re-emerges, the caution of the initial statement is lost completely. After a review of some recent criti-

cisms of atonement theology by feminist theologians, notably Rita Nakashima Brock, Beverly W. Harrison, and Carter Heyward, the authors offer their response:

However we might want to urge... that atonement theology, either biblically or classically understood, is misappropriated and misrepresented when coerced into the popular mold of the model of penal substitution, the fact remains that [various manifestations of American Christianity] often represent this model as nothing less than *the* historical teaching of the Christian church. As such, when criticisms of this view are raised, we can do nothing less than admit straightforwardly that, on biblical and traditional grounds, this contemporary manifestation of atonement theology is both deficient and disturbing...⁷⁰

The criticism is now directed straightforwardly at penal substitution per se, not at any misrepresentation or caricature.⁷¹

What is particularly interesting about this criticism in Green and Baker's hands is that it is no longer primarily a theological criticism. McLeod Campbell cared what was being said about the doctrine of God itself; Green & Baker, following the feminist critics, care far more about the ethical consequences of what is being said about the doctrine of God. This doctrine 'represents the sadomasochism of Christian teaching at its most transparent',⁷² it 'legitimizes and perpetuates abuse in human relationships... advising the abused to participate in their own victimization.'⁷³ The 'scandal' is not what is being said about God, but '[t]hat atonement theology might be placed in the service of abusive behavior, and indeed serve to provide the divine imprimatur for that behavior...'⁷⁴

Of course, this extension of the critique the theological implications of penal substitution to ethical issues is not new, although the link to child abuse might be. Timothy Gorringer's *God's Just Vengeance*⁷⁵ argued for a link between satisfaction theories of the atonement more generally, although most of his examples were advocates of a penal theory, and criminal justice systems.⁷⁶ René Girard has for some decades been advancing a sophisticated theory of scapegoating which interprets the gospel story as an act of reconciliation through the undoing of the primal violence of culture.⁷⁷ This has passed into Christian discourse through Walter Wink's discussion of 'the myth of redemptive violence',⁷⁸ which phrase is used regularly in

criticisms of penal substitution, and more recently in J. Denney Weaver's book, *The Nonviolent Atonement*.⁷⁹ On all these tellings, satisfaction theories of the atonement, at least including, and sometimes paradigmatically, penal substitutionary theories, lead to an illegitimate acceptance of, or support for, violence.⁸⁰

Green and Baker's second ethical critique is not the penal substitutionary theories promote improper ethics, but that they fail to promote proper ethics, or indeed any ethics at all. 'Proponents of this theory often leave little room for the importance of ethical comportment (sic)... Apart from allowing my name to be moved to the correct side of God's legal ledger, what significance has the cross of Christ for faith and life, according to this view?'⁸¹ The point is expanded in the next paragraph:

It is also true that this particular way of portraying the significance of the Jesus' death has had little voice in how we relate to one another in and outside of the church or in larger, social-ethical issues. That a central tenet of our faith might have little or nothing to say about racial reconciliation, for example, or issues of wealth and poverty, or our relationship to the cosmos, is itself a startling reality. It is all the more discomforting, though, when it is remembered that the death of Jesus was the consequence of social and political factors, as well as theological ones... a faith grounded in the cross of Christ is a faith that has profound and far-reaching, this-worldly implications.⁸²

The form of this criticism is important. It is not that penal substitution as it has been taught has happened not to be applied to social or ethical issues, but that the very shape of the theory specifically denies the possibility of it having any relevance to such issues. Salvation, on this account, it is argued, is nothing more than a change of legal state; it provides no impetus, no motive, and no power for me to live in any other way than I have always lived, just as Erskine had argued. An account of the vertical dimension of reconciliation must have consequences for the horizontal dimension of reconciliation; if it does not, that is sufficient evidence that it is false.

Now, of course, it is rather obvious, and probably should have been to Green and Baker, that at most one of these criticisms can hold. If penal substitution justifies child abuse, violence, and punitive penal policies, then it rather obviously cannot

be a doctrine that is structurally unable to have any ethical consequences. For what it is worth, I regard the former position as more nearly right: Barth's Christological argument that every doctrine is at the same time an ethic just seems right, to me, and to criticize a profound and far-reaching statement of who God is and what he has done as having no ethical impetus shows an intolerably modernistic view of the nature of doctrine. The feminist and post-colonial theologians, schooled as they are in at least some aspects of postmodernity, are right in their methods, if not in their arguments: an account of what God has done necessarily contains within it an account of the way life is to be lived. If I disagree rather fundamentally as to what way of life is promoted by penal substitution, I suspect it is because I have a rather clearer view of what is actually taught by that doctrine than most American feminists, on which more in a moment.

The point I have been trying to make thus far is that, whereas in the nineteenth century criticisms of penal substitutionary ideas, particularly ideas about God, were at stake at least as much as actions, in the twenty-first century, ethics reigns supreme. This doctrine is held to be inadequate because it is ethically inadequate. It may be that a logical presentation could be made, that had an adequate account of justice, and did not distort the character of God; it may even be that the Biblical roots of the doctrine could be demonstrated to the satisfaction of all; but so long as the doctrine promotes, or at least does not prevent, violence and child abuse, it is not to be held to.

4. A Comparison and some conclusions

I have so far argued the following points:

1. that the core criticisms against the doctrine of free justification, the *articulus stantis vel cadentis ecclesiae*, from both Roman and Anabaptist opponents were ethical; the doctrine was inadequate because it either had no ethical import, and so gave no impetus to holy living, or it had unhelpful ethical import, in that it encouraged the continuance of carnal living;
2. that, particularly in the Reformed confessions, this doctrine was related closely to a penal substitutionary account of the atonement;
3. that recent criticisms of penal substitutionary accounts of the atonement by Evangelical

writers have stressed, amongst other things, that the doctrine is inadequate because it either has no ethical import, and so gives no impetus to holy living, or it has unhelpful ethical import, in that it encourages or legitimates improper actions.

It seems to me, then, that there is an interesting comparison in the doctrine of reconciliation to be drawn between Roman and Anabaptist criticisms concerning justification in the sixteenth century and more recent criticisms of penal substitution. Let me therefore note a number of conclusions, deliberately moderately stated, that might follow from this comparison:

1. The comparison raises the question, already raised in passing above, as to whether the arguments concerning the lack of ethical implications of penal substitution hold. The sixteenth-century debates over justification show that it is possible to so describe a doctrine that it appears to be ethically weak, whilst ignoring the defences that can be mounted with a properly-ordered account of the doctrine in relation to other doctrines. The core Lutheran and Reformed defence against charges of antinomianism or cheap grace was to point to a wider matrix of teaching concerning reconciliation within which the doctrine of free justification stood as a central and defining part. Its ethical import, then, came not from a consideration of the doctrine itself in splendid isolation, but from a consideration of a more rounded theology of which it was a necessary and intrinsic component. I suppose, without attempting to demonstrate, that a similar defence could be made for the doctrine of penal substitution within Evangelical theology.
2. Further, the sixteenth-century examples include examples of pointing to the failings in the lives of those who claim to believe a particular doctrine of atonement (as the Anabaptists repeatedly did over justification) as evidence for its ethical weakness; this is a core part of the arguments of Green and Baker, and of others, against penal substitution; given this example, and others that could be drawn from the history of the Church, it is not clear to me that it is a helpful way of arguing. (The regular Reformation response to Anabaptist criticisms in this direction was to draw comparisons with Augustine's defences against

the Donatists; the doctrines of grace and belief in a mixed and imperfect visible church do seem to belong together.)

3. These things said, no more direct lesson can be drawn from the sixteenth-century disputes to more recent debates without more research. That similar sorts of arguments were used does not mean that the same arguments have been used, hence my cautions about a too-easy willingness to condemn those of our sisters and brothers who object to penal substitution at the beginning.
4. There is perhaps a need to draw a very sharp distinction between Anabaptist-influenced criticisms of penal substitutionary atonement (Stuart Murray-Williams; J. Denney Weaver) and more general Evangelical criticisms. The former may well have an intellectual integrity, due to the coherence with the older Anabaptist witness against the Reformation doctrine of justification, which cannot be given to the latter. As I understand it, most Anabaptist-influenced Evangelicals in recent times have not been so ready to jettison the notion of justification by faith, rather holding to a middle way that stresses the genuinely transformative nature of true justifying faith; this weakens the point I am currently making, but does not remove it.

Let me finish by outlining both why the standard ethical criticism of penal substitution does not work, and some of the ethical consequences that do in fact follow from the position. In simplest outline, the standard criticism goes like this: penal doctrines picture an angry Father venting his rage on His Son, who, because of His love for humanity, bears the Father's violence uncomplainingly to protect us from it. The Son thus becomes the justifying example for abused women who become complicit victims of their partner's violence in the belief that by so doing they will protect the children, and so on. Now, let us first of all be fair: we have, I am sure, all seen tracts or heard evangelistic presentations which fit this caricature remarkably well. But let us next point out that it is a caricature: it stresses a separation between Father and Son which no informed Christian theology could ever countenance. Indeed, if we take seriously the claim of classical trinitarianism, codified by the sixth ecumenical council, that there is only one activity in the Godhead, we cannot even say that the Father and Son are engaged in similar or complementary

actions; we have to say that they are about the same action.

(This is complicated a bit by Christology; the Council decreed that there are two activities in the incarnate Son, the one activity of the triune God, and a true and proper human activity. Given this, it might seem that a theologically sophisticated form of the 'divine child abuse' argument could be developed if any of its supporters actually understood the core grammar of Christian theology. This is not so, of course: insofar as the human nature, maintaining its own integrity of course, is anhypostatic of itself, and enhypostatic only in the hypostasis of the eternal logos [that is, the human nature of Christ has no independent existence apart from the incarnation of the divine Word], both activities of the hypostatic union are activities of the Second Person of the Trinity, and so there is no room to create the separation of activity necessary for the 'divine child abuse' argument to make sense. It would only work if we accepted straightforward Nestorianism in Christology.)

So, if the ethical import of an acceptance of penal substitutionary atonement is not the legitimation of domestic abuse, what is it? I suspect that there are many ethical ramifications of the doctrine, but let me note just two, one that I have written about before, and one that answers another common charge against penal doctrines of the atonement.

The first argument runs like this: one of the things a penal account of the atonement claims is that wrongdoing cannot be forgotten or hidden, but must be dealt with. This is asserted to be a part of the nature of things on a penal telling. Now, one of the big issues with sin in our world is the abuse of power to hide wrongdoing. Whether it is a politician using the power of office to hide his corruption or adultery, or a colonial oppressor murdering an entire village to eradicate all evidence of his theft, or a businesswoman using bribes and threats of unemployment to cover over her inappropriate financial dealings, the point is the same. But let me consider again child abuse: one of the enormously common features of child abuse is manipulation by the abuser using shame mechanisms to prevent the abused child from revealing what is going on. We all know, from direct pastoral experience or from the media, of cases where such silencing mechanisms have been effective for decades – it may be that there are many other cases where they have been effective for lifetimes, which naturally we don't know about. A penal account of the atonement, with a strong stress on the reality

and ineradicability of guilt maintains a witness that even the most successful oppressor or abuser will be held accountable for his or her crimes. This is an ethical consequence, which it seems to me speaks very directly and helpfully to certain aspects of our culture, which comes straight out of a penal doctrine of the atonement.

My second argument is an answer to the common complaint against, not just penal substitution, but any account of the atonement which presupposes the need for some sort of satisfaction. The argument as usually phrased goes like this: we are commanded in the Gospels to forgive without conditions; why then does God impose a condition – the death of His Son, no less – before He will forgive us? The answer, of course, is once again to point to the fact that it is God Himself who provides the lamb for the sacrifice. Penal substitutionary accounts of atonement teach in fact that God requires nothing of us; hence the connection with the Reformation doctrine of *sola fide*. Reconciliation comes to us as free gift, born of grace alone, known in Scripture alone, found in Christ alone, apprehended through faith alone, and directed to the glory of God alone. God does not ask us to do anything, precisely because He – Himself, and not another – remember the Trinitarian theology above – He has in and of Himself done everything necessary. And so the Gospel call is to go and do likewise. Understanding the atonement as an act of penal substitution teaches us that forgiveness is not free and easy, it is hard, hard as nails, and costly, even unto death. And thus when we are called to forgive freely we are called to love as God first loved us, to go to our sister or brother, to bear the pain and the cost, ourselves, whatever it may be, so that they may find in being reconciled to us, freely for them, costly and painful for us, some small echo of the way God has antecedently reconciled each of us to Himself through Christ – free, wonderfully, astonishingly, amazingly, free for us; costly and painful for Him.

Notes

- 1 This paper was originally delivered at the 2006 FEET conference. I am grateful for the comments I received there, and particularly to Prof Henri Blocher, who offered a response to the paper that was as perceptive as it was gracious.
- 2 ‘Once this has been established, namely that God alone justifies us solely by His grace through Christ, we are willing not only to bear the pope aloft on our hands but also to kiss his feet.’ *LW* 26 p.99 (1535

- Commentary on Galatians, on 2:6)
- 3 e.g., *quia isto articulo stante stat Ecclesia*, riente ruet Ecclesia WA 40 III.352.
- 4 Alister E. McGrath *Iustitia Dei: A History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification* (2 vols) (Cambridge: CUP, 1986). See II.193 for Alsted and II.1 for the generality of the idea.
- 5 McGrath, II.18.
- 6 *Item docent, quod homines non possint justificari [Vergebung der sünde und Gerechtigkeit erlangen] coram Deo propriis viribus, meritis aut operibus, sed gratis [aus Gnaden] justificentur propter Christum per fidem, cum credunt se in gratiam recipi, et peccata remitti propter Christum, qui sua morte pro nostris peccatis satisfecit. Hanc fidem imputat Deus pro justicia coram ipso.* Text from Schaff.
- 7 Included in the Book of Concord.
- 8 Article 5 of Pt. II.
- 9 *In dictis Prophetis et Apostolicis, ubi de justificatione fidei agitur, vocabula ‘justificare’ et ‘justificari’ non idem, esse ac a peccatis absolvere et absolvi, et remissionem peccatorum consequi: sed nos per caritatem, a Spiritu Sancto infusam, per virtutes et per opera, quae a caritate promanant, reipsa coram Deo justos fieri.* From the Epitome, Antithesis III; the Solid Declaration expands in like terms.
- 10 ‘Unser Herr Jesus Christus, der uns zur vollkommenen Erlösung und Gerechtigkeit geschenkt ist.’ Q. 18 Antwort.
- 11 Canon IX: *Si quis dixerit, sola fide impium justificari, ita ut intelligat nihil aliud requiri, quod ad justificationis gratiam consequendam cooperetur, et nulla ex parte necesse esse, cum suae voluntatis motu preparari atque disponi: anathema sit.*
Canon XI: *Si quis dixerit, homines justificari, vel sola imputatione justitiae Christi, vel sola peccatorum remissione, exclusa gratia et caritate, quae in cordibus eorum per Spiritum Sanctum diffundatur atque illis inhercat; aut etiam gratiam, qua justificamur, esse tantum favorem Dei: anathema sit.*
(Texts from Schaff.)
- 12 *justificatio... , quae non est sola peccatorum remissio, sed et sanctificatio et renovatio interioris hominis per voluntariam susceptionem gratiae et donorum, unde homo ex injusto fit justus, et ex inimico amicus, ut sit heres secundum spem vitae, aeternae.*
- 13 So McGrath, II.82.
- 14 Consider further: ‘they, who by sins were alienated from God may be disposed through his quickening and assisting grace, to convert themselves to their own justification, by freely assenting to and cooperating with that said grace...’ (Ch. V)
- 15 Decree on Satisfaction; see also Decree on Justification ch. VII & ch. IX.
- 16 I am using the translation found in Michael G. Baylor (ed. & tr.), *The Radical Reformation* (Cambridge: CUP, 1991), pp. 172-80.
- 17 From W.R. Estep, Jr (ed.), *Anabaptist Beginnings*

- 1523-1533: *A Sourcebook* (Nieuwkoop: B de Graaf, 1976), p. 38.
- 18 A translation can be found in Baylor, pp. 130-51; the attack of Lutheranism begins on p. 134: 'The carnal wisdom of this world...says that Christ has fulfilled the law, so we do not need to.'
- 19 Estep, p. 134.
- 20 I am using the English translations from H. Wayne Pipkin & John H. Yoder (trs & eds), *Balthasar Hubmaier (Classics of the Radical Reformation)* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1989). The Eighteen Theses can be found on pp. 31-4; the quotation is thesis 1.
- 21 So, e.g., in 'A Christian Catechism' (Pipkin & Yoder pp. 340-65), 'Hans' confesses that 'the Law is now fulfilled in Christ, who has paid the debt of sin for us and has already vanquished death, devil, and hell.' (p. 347) Faith is simply belief in this truth (p. 348), although 'living faith' necessarily 'produces the fruits of the Spirit and works through love' (p. 348).
- 22 Pipkin & Yoder, pp. 426-91.
- 23 Pipkin & Yoder pp. 525-62.
- 24 Pipkin & Yoder p. 526.
- 25 Pipkin & Yoder p. 527.
- 26 Pipkin & Yoder, pp. 537-8. Both articles are however quite carefully written. Hubmaier confesses his belief in the virginity of Mary before, during, and after the birth of Christ, but says nothing in either direction concerning the gospel texts about Jesus's brothers (he does, however, condemn 'Helvidians'; Helvidius was opposed by St Jerome for teaching that Mary had other children by Joseph after Jesus; whether Hubmaier would have known the details of the debate, or just the standard form of condemnation, I do not know). His confession of the Blessed Virgin as the mother of God is a straightforward repeating of conciliar orthodoxy, condemning Nestorius. Hence, both articles are designed to appeal to a Roman Catholic king, without actually conceding very much.
- 27 See Klaus Deppermann, *Melchior Hoffmann: Social Unrest and Apocalyptic Visions in the Age of Reformation* (tr. M. Wrenn) (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1987) pp. 229-40 for a summary of Hoffmann's doctrine, on which I am relying.
- 28 Robert Friedmann, *The Theology of Anabaptism: An Interpretation* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1973), p. 88.
- 29 The *Apology* was first issued in Latin in 1675. I have no access to a Latin edition. This English text is from Schaff, who dates it to the eighth English edition of 1765.
- 30 *Quod Christus carnem et sanguinem suum, non e Maria virgine assumserit, sed e caelo attulerit.*
- 31 *Quod justitia nostra coram Deo, non in solo Christi merito, sed in renovacione atque adeo in nostra propria probitate, in qua ambulemus, consistat. Ea vero Anabaptistarum justitia magna ex parte electitia et humanitus excogitata quadam sanctimonia constat, et revera nil aliud est, quam novus quidam monachatus.*
- 32 ...*nos prius justos esse, quam diligamus aut faciamus opera justa.* Ch. XV.5.
- 33 Willem Balke, *Calvin and the Anabaptist Radicals* (tr. W. Heynen) (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981).
- 34 *Inst. Elenc. Theol.* Topic XVI.
- 35 E.g., Augsburg Confession art. VI.
- 36 On which see most conveniently the catena of quotations in Schmid's *Doctrinal Theology of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* \$48.
- 37 See similarly Heppe's *Reformed Dogmatics* ch.22.
- 38 *Nous croyons que Dieu étant très-parfaitement miséricordieux et aussi très-juste, a envoyé son Fils prendre la nature en laquelle la désobéissance avait été commise, pour porter, en elle, la punition du péché par sa très-rigoureuse mort et passion Dieu donc a déclaré sa justice envers son Fils, chargé de nos péchés, et a répandu sa bonté et miséricorde sur nous, coupables et dignes de damnation...* Art. XX.
- 39 Grensted's assertion that Turretin illustrates 'the uneasy self-consciousness of the later Penal theory' which is 'already on the defensive, not only against the criticism of its opponents, but also against the human instincts of its supporters' (L.W. Grensted, *A Short History of the Doctrine of the Atonement* (Manchester: M.U.P., 1920), p. 245) seems to me to have more to do with Grensted's feelings about penal theology than Turretin's. Certainly Turretin is writing in elenctic mode, and so with a continual consciousness of the arguments that have been advanced against this theory; but I see nothing uneasy in his defence.
- 40 '[I]n the daily course of natural providence, it is appointed that innocent people should suffer for the faults of the guilty' and so that 'vicarious punishment is a providential appointment of every day's experience.' Joseph Butler, *The Analogy of Religion to the Constitution and Course of Nature* (London: RTS, n.d), pp.224-5.
- 41 Again in 'Ransomed, Healed,...'
- 42 John McLeod Campbell, *The Nature of the Atonement* (with a new introduction by James B. Torrance) (Edinburgh: Handsel Press, 1996), pp. 81-104; the quotation is the chapter title.
- 43 Campbell, p. 71; italics original.
- 44 'Calvinism, as recently modified, differs from the earlier Calvinism in these points. First, as to the reference of the atonement, which is held to have been for all men and not for the elect only.' Campbell, p. 81
- 45 Campbell, p. 81.
- 46 The writers Campbell quotes as representatives of this new Calvinism include Thomas W. Jenkyn, *On the Extent of the Atonement in its Relation to God and the Universe*; Andrew Fuller; William Stroud, *A Treatise on the Physical Cause of the Death of Christ and Its Relation to the Principles and Practices of Christian-*

- ity; John Pye Smith, *Four Discourse on the Sacrifice and Priesthood of Jesus Christ...*; Ralph Wardlaw, *Discourses on the Nature and Extent of the Atonement of Christ*; and most often, George Payne, *On the Reality of the Atonement*. Fuller is noted solely for introducing a distinction which he did in fact use; Pye Smith does not, as far as I can see, fit Campbell's picture of 'modified Calvinism'; the other works are unknown to me.
- 47 Campbell, p. 82, my italics.
- 48 *Ibid*; my italics; the grammar of this sentence is obscure to me (I suspect that it should begin 'All that...' rather than 'All the...'), but the broad sense is plain enough.
- 49 Grensted, p. 251, in connection with the supposed softening of penal doctrines in later Protestant scholasticism.
- 50 Grensted, p. 279, in the course of an argument why Edwards, and all successful evangelists who hold to the penal theory, are 'most convincing when [they are] least consistent.'
- 51 Grensted, p. 306, on the rise of Grotianism.
- 52 Grensted, pp. 312-3.
- 53 See *The Brazen Serpent; or, Life coming through Death* (Edinburgh: Waugh & Innes, 1831), pp. 36-9.
- 54 *Extracts of Letters to a Christian Friend by a Lady, with an Introductory Essay by Thomas Erskine* (Greenock: R.B. Lusk, 1830).
- 55 p. xiv.
- 56 p. xiv.
- 57 Thomas Erskine, *The Unconditional Freeness of the Gospel in Two Essays* (Edinburgh: Waugh & Innes, 18314).
- 58 *Unconditional Freeness*, p. 1.
- 59 *Unconditional Freeness*, p. 5.
- 60 *Unconditional Freeness*, p. 9.
- 61 *Unconditional Freeness*, p.22. Elsewhere Erskine comments: '[o]thers... have talked disparagingly of holiness and obedience, and have treated of faith as if it were the channel of justification, merely in virtue of an arbitrary appointment of God, and without any reference to its moral effect on the human character.' *An Essay on Faith* (Edinburgh: Waugh & Innes, 1822²), p. 3.
- 62 *Unconditional Freeness*, p. 143.
- 63 Thomas Erskine, *The Brazen Serpent: or, Life Coming through Death* (Edinburgh: Waugh & Innes, 18312), p. 36.
- 64 *Brazen Serpent*, p. 36.
- 65 *Brazen Serpent*, p. 38.
- 66 *Brazen Serpent*, p. 39.
- 67 Joel B. Green and Mark D. Baker, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross: Atonement in New Testament and Contemporary Contexts* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2000), pp. 27-32.
- 68 Green & Baker, p. 30.
- 69 Green & Baker, p.32.
- 70 Green & Baker, p. 92 (italics original).
- 71 It is, I suppose, just possible to read into this paragraph a distinction between 'the popular/contemporary model of penal substitution', which is itself a caricature, and some more scholarly presentation. There is no hint that Green and Baker do this, however. Indeed, a paragraph or two later there is a clear statement of a programme to 'reject penal-substitutionary atonement' (p.93).
- 72 Harrison & Heyward, cited by Green & Baker, p. 92.
- 73 Green & Baker, p. 92.
- 74 Green & Baker, p. 92.
- 75 Timothy Gorringer, *God's Just Vengeance: Crime, Violence and the Rhetoric of Salvation* (Cambridge: CUP, 1996).
- 76 A link I find wholly convincing – see my 'Ransomed, Healed,...' – although I do not except Gorringer's argument that the cause is from theology to culture, or his (rather quaintly modernist) attempt to imagine a different social praxis in the last chapter.
- 77 See, for example, his *Violence and the Sacred* (tr. Patrick Gregory) (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1977); *Things Hidden Since the Foundation of the World: Research undertaken in collaboration with Jean-Michel Oughourlian and Guy Lefort* (tr. Stephen Bann and Michael Metteer) (London: Athlone, 1987); *Job: Victim of his people* (London: Athlone, 1987).
- 78 Walter Wink, *Engaging the Powers: Discernment and Resistance in a World of Domination* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), pp. 13-31.
- 79 J. Denney Weaver, *The Nonviolent Atonement* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001). See especially pp. 46-9.
- 80 I have noted before now that the acceptance of such ideas into Christian discourse should not have been as easy as it was. Girard is honest that he can only substantiate his claims through a straightforward rejection of various bits of the Bible, notably the book of Hebrews, and an idiosyncratic Christology which denies any classical sense of the true deity of Christ.
- 81 Green & Baker, p. 31.
- 82 Green & Baker, p. 31.