

A Classic Defense of Substitutionary Atonement

Written by Calvin Fox

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Dr James Packer, evangelical, Reformed Anglican wrote a classic explanation and thorough defense of the Biblical Doctrine of Penal Substitution (the cross as substitutionary atonement sufficient for the sins of the world) in 1973.

http://www.the-highway.com/cross_Packer.html

Recently, he revisited that Doctrine and wrote this new essay. [HERE](#) It begins with Dr Packer saying,

"Throughout my 63 years as an evangelical believer, the penal substitutionary understanding of the cross of Christ has been a flashpoint of controversy and division among Protestants. It was so before my time, in the bitter parting of ways between conservative and liberal evangelicals... . It remains so, as liberalism keeps reinventing itself and luring evangelicals away from their heritage. Since one's belief about the atonement is bound up with one's belief about the character of God, the terms of the gospel and the Christian's inner life, the intensity of the debate is understandable. If one view is right, others are more or less wrong, and the definition of Christianity itself comes to be at stake.

[Note: this is indeed the crux of the matter (no pun intended). "One's belief about the atonement is bound up with one's belief about the character of God, the terms of the gospel and the Christian's inner life" Exactly! These are the very issues undergoing radical revision today, resulting in the revision of the classic Reformed view of Atonement.- CF]

An evangelical theologian, dying, cabled a colleague: 'I am so thankful for the active obedience (righteousness) of Christ. No hope without it.' [Note: This is the corollary Doctrine of Justification by Imputed Righteousness- also questioned and even rejected by young "Evangelicals" today-CF .] As I grow old, (JIP says) I want to tell everyone who will listen: 'I am so thankful for the penal substitutionary death of Christ. No hope without it.' That is where I come from now as I attempt this brief vindication of the best part of the best news that the world has ever heard."

Dr Packer concludes, saying "The Church is and will always be at its healthiest when every Christian can line up with every other Christian to sing P. P. Bliss's simple words, which really say it all:

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

Please study both Essays, especially the first, for full treatment of the subject!