

Some comments on the possible “exculpation” of Bishop Colenso from Various sources.

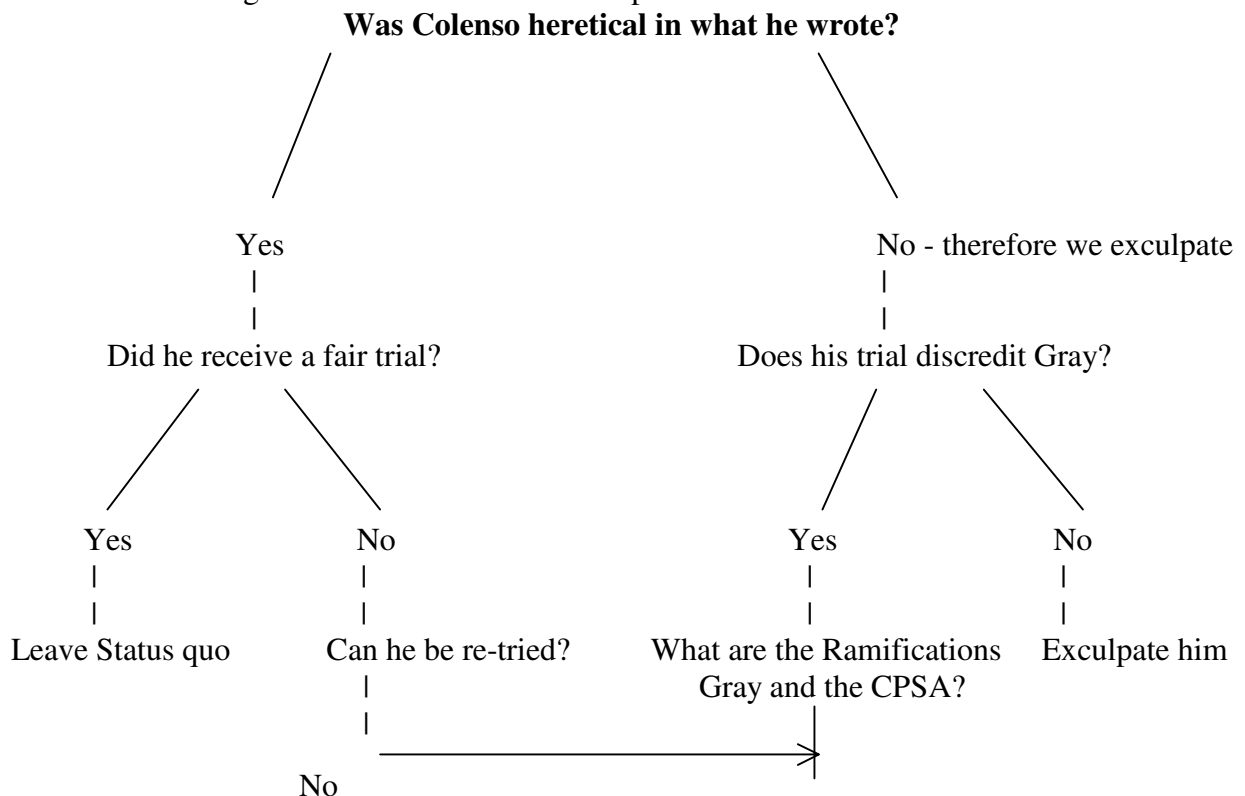
By D Pratt

Bishop John William Colenso (1814-1883) was the first Anglican Bishop of Natal. A graduate of St. John's College, Cambridge and a Broad Churchman, he was appointed to the newly created diocese of Natal in 1853, as both bishop to the colonists and missionary bishop to the Zulu. Applying his Broad Church principles to the missionary context, he increasingly questioned conventional and theologically conservative missionary teaching and preaching, culminating in the publication, in 1861, of his study of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans: newly translated and explained from a missionary point of view, in which he rejected the doctrines of both substitutionary atonement and everlasting punishment. The following year he also published the first part of his study of The Pentateuch and Book of Joshua Critically Examined, in which he challenged the historicity of the biblical narrative and applied historical critical methods to the text of the Pentateuch.

Accused of heresy by his fellow bishops in Southern Africa, excommunicated by the Bishop of Cape Town, and also rejected by the overwhelming majority of the bishops of the Church of England, Colenso nevertheless established his legal right to remain Bishop of Natal. He continued as Bishop of Natal - despite the presence of a second and rival Bishop - until his death in 1883. His study of The Pentateuch and Book of Joshua Critically Examined eventually ran to seven large volumes, the last of which was published in 1879. In his later years he also took up the cause of the Zulu, arguing that they had been betrayed and mistreated by the British and colonial authorities.

A neglected and often caricatured figure in conventional histories of nineteenth century theology and church history, Bishop Colenso merits reconsideration and reassessment.

What I propose to do is use the flowchart below to see what various authors express about Bp Colenso’s heresy and his trial. Prof Jonathon Draper says that any call for exculpation must not be based purely on whether Colenso was heretical in his teaching and writings but also on whether he received a fair and just trial by his metropolitan, Bp Robert Gray. Thus I will follow the format given in the flow diagram to examine the various opinions.



Besides being concerned whether Colenso wrote heresy and whether he received a fair trial from Gray, it is necessary to consider how a presumably thoroughly orthodox clergyman should happen to suddenly start writing heresy once he came into the missionary context. Jonathan Draper in an excellent paper¹ states that the 19th Century missionaries “left home with a social universe which appeared self-evident, secure and superior to the indigenous cultures and beliefs of the colonized peoples”². This was the attitude Colenso found among the missionaries in Natal on his arrival – especially from the American Missionaries based there. However, as John and Jean Comaroff point out, in spite of what the missionaries might think, the mission process was a “long conversation” and a “dialectical process” between the missionaries and the possible converts. The missionaries found no *tabula rasa* among the “heathen African” but people with a faith system of their own and a people who were willing to talk back. But this could only occur if there was a common language. Many of the missionaries spoke and listened through interpreters and therefore were not really engaged in conversation. This was not the case of Colenso who learnt Zulu and was soon publishing a Zulu grammar book and a Zulu dictionary. He could and did become involved in this conversation and through the questioning of Zulu converts began to write scriptural commentaries from “a Missionary Point of view”³.

The whole missionary process became a struggle for both the missionary and the converts. The missionary came from an England that was facing acute intellectual and social crises brought about by The Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution. While the converted Zulus were forced to relinquish their cultural heritage of a continuing link between the converts themselves and their ancestors. Thus they became deviants from the African social system. Into this Colenso introduced a missiological approach that would try not to disrupt the social world of the Zulu⁴. Draper says that Colenso’s *Commentary on Romans* “begins with an extraordinary, but concealed contradiction between his role as missionary (who identified himself with his Zulu community) and his role as bishop (a peer and an official of the empire), which was not clear to him or others at the time, though it was to become painfully so later.”⁵

Influences on Colenso from his upbringing and education in England also played a role on the position he took. These included F. D. Maurice whose Christian Universalism and rejection of eternal damnation greatly influenced Colenso; and Samuel Taylor Coleridge who had spoken of “a universal harmony underlying all particulars, rooted in a God apprehended by all humankind experientially through natural phenomena.”⁶. Colenso was also convinced of the importance of the Evolutionary Theory of Darwin and Sir Charles Lyell and he translated and taught these theories at the Mission School in Natal.

¹ Jonathan Draper, *Bishop John William Colenso’s interpretation to the Zulu people of the Sola fide in Paul’s Letter to the Romans* a paper present at the Society for Biblical Literature 18-21 November 2000 at Nashville TN. Hereafter called “Draper, *Sola Fide*”. Downloaded from www.vanbilt.edu/AnS/religious_studies/SBL2000

² Draper, *Sola Fide* pg.1. .

³ Colenso’s two most famous books and the ones the heresy charges were based upon were *St Paul’s Epistle to the Romans: Newly Translated and Explained from a Missionary Point of View* (Pietermaritzburg: Elukanyeni Mission Press) 1861, [hereafter called *Commentary on Romans*] and *The Pentateuch and Book of Joshua Critically Examined* (London: Longman & Green) 1862-63.

⁴ Hence his pro-Polygamy view.

⁵ Draper *Sola Fide*, pg.7

⁶ Draper *Sola Fide*, pg 6-7

Was Colenso Heretical in what he wrote and taught?

What is heresy? Stephen Sykes defines it as:

The traditional meaning of the term was rigorously defined in mediaeval canon law to signify the sin of a person who, having been baptized and calling him or herself a Christian, denies a defined doctrine of the faith even after having been formally instructed. 'Formal' heresy is such persistent adherence to erroneous teaching; 'material' heresy means adherence to error, without any culpability (for example, because the truth has never been presented as such). The definition of heresy is logically dependent, therefore, on that of defined doctrine. It supposes that Christian truth may be known in such a way that one can recognize doctrines bearing a certain resemblance to the truth, but denying its substance.⁷

Two additional but important comments are made by Sykes in his definition of heresy:

In the first place historical scholarship has been increasingly willing to accept the fact that the risk of material heresy at least seems an inevitable consequence of theological activity. Only if theologians are willing to say things which have never been said in precisely the same way before would it be possible for theology to meet new intellectual challenges. Secondly, with the developing realization of the plurality of special fields with their own canons of judgment, theologians have been increasingly unwilling to identify Christian truth with the grammatical meaning of a single text or series of texts. The application of strictly legal methods to the interpretation of religious texts artificially restricts the range of possible meanings in Christian symbolism. The identification of formal heresy has consequently become a more questionable and inherently disputable process.⁸

Hinchliff lists the nine charges of heresy levelled against Colenso by Gray.

- (1) That he denied that our Lord died in man's stead, or to bear the punishment or penalty of our sins, and that God is reconciled to us by the death of his Son.
- (2) That he taught that justification is a *consciousness* of being counted righteous, and that all men, even without such a consciousness, are treated by God as righteous, and that all men are already dead unto sin and risen again unto righteousness.
- (3) That he taught that all men are born into righteousness when born into the world; that all men are at all times partaking of the body and blood of Christ; denying that the holy sacraments are generally necessary to salvation, and that they convey any special grace, and that faith is the means whereby the body and blood of Christ are received.
- (4) That he denied the endlessness of future punishments.
- (5) That he maintained that the Bible contained but was not the Word of God.
- (6) That he treated the Scriptures as a merely human book, only inspired as any other book might be inspired.
- (7) That he denied the authenticity, genuineness, and truth of certain books of the Bible.
- (8) That, by imputing errors in knowledge to our Lord, he denied that He is God and Man in one Person.
- (9) That he brought parts of the Book of Common Prayer into disrepute (e.g. the Athanasian Creed and the vow at the ordination of deacons which spoke of 'unfeigned belief' in the Scriptures).⁹

⁷ S.W. Sykes in *A New Dictionary of Christian Theology* (edited by Alan Richardson and John Bowden) SCM: London 1983.

⁸ *Ibid*

⁹ Peter Hinchliff, *The Anglican Church in South Africa* (London: DLT) 1963 p92-3.

Hinchliff was an authority on the Anglican Church in South Africa but also comes from a fairly pro-Gray-Tractarian background, although his writing does not state this directly. He was a licensed priest of the CPSA, professor at Rhodes University where he taught many of the Anglican clergy of his era, and his book is a history of the Anglican Church in South Africa and unlikely to picture its founding Bishop in a too negative light. The publishers of his book (Longman, Darton Todd) are also known as an Anglo-Catholic publishing house. He also wrote the book at a time (early 1960s) in the CPSA's history where the difference between the CPSA and CESA were still strongly felt. Furthermore differences in the policy of the CPSA and CESA towards Church-and-State Relationships resulted in many white South Africans leaving the former for the latter. Yet in spite of the above, Hinchliff writes off many of these charges:

... not all the charges were strictly fair to Colenso. On charges 5, 6, and 8 neither he nor his accusers were entirely free from error. On charges 7 and 9 he was really being accused of 'biblical criticism'. On charges 2 and 3 he did teach what he was accused of teaching, and his teaching was wrong. On charges 1 and 4 he was in revolt against certain contemporary errors and one sympathises with him. But in so far as his teaching was universalist it was both wrong and dangerous.¹⁰

My reading of this paragraph is that Hinchliff views Colenso as guilty of charges 1 and 4 as well as 2 and 3.

Although Gray formulated the charge as nine separate charges they are basically a series of charges that cascade, each developing because of the theological position Colenso adopts in another charge.

Atonement

The majority of the charges brought against Colenso by Gray are taken from his opinions expressed in *Commentary on Romans*. The reason Colenso wrote it in the first place was to re-interpret Paul's teaching on *sola fide* taking into account the situation among the Zulu. Colenso disapproved of the particular and exclusivist interpretation and emphasis given to *sola fide* by the protestant missionaries in Natal¹¹. The missionaries view was that all human beings are fallen sinners and God's wrath is waiting to punish them with death. These missionaries therefore presented the atonement or 'the work of Christ' as Alister McGrath prefers to call it as substitutionary – Jesus Christ suffering and dying in our place, Christ taking on the punishment rightly belonging to us. The missionaries understood that to be saved, human beings had to make an act of faith and be baptised. This was an individual view of faith and baptism that separated the Zulu from their community, culture and ancestors. Against this, Colenso understood that the work of Christ did not require any act on the human's part to be efficacious but merely the joyful acceptance of what God had already done.

The idea of atonement and salvation is "an exceptionally complex one"¹² with numerous "models" presented in most theological text books¹³. McGrath says:

...different aspects of the Christian understanding of salvation have proved to have especial attractions for different periods of church history, or specific situations, reflecting the manner in which one aspect of this understanding interlocks with the specifics of the situation it addresses¹⁴

¹⁰ Peter Hinchliff, *Ibid* pg.93.

¹¹ Draper *Sola Fide* p. 12.

¹² Alister McGrath, *Christian Theology: An introduction* (Blackwell: Oxford) 1994. Pg.360.

¹³ See **Appendix A** for definitions as found online.

¹⁴ McGrath, *Christian Theology* pg. 360.

In other words, the understanding of atonement is dynamic, growing and changing according to time, place and people addressed. McGrath goes on:

Recent studies of the theory of Christian mission have laid considerable emphasis upon the importance of *contextualisation* and the notion of the *receptor-orientation* of the Christian proclamation. In other words, the Christian gospel is recognized to address specific situations, and to contextualize the notion of salvation in these situations. To those who are oppressed, whether spiritually or politically, the gospel message is that of liberation. To those who are burdened by the weight of personal guilt, the “good news” is that of forgiveness and pardon.¹⁵

Universalism

The colonists of Natal had their own agenda. Draper points out that the colonist found in their Christian faith and baptism a ground, namely their “election” as Christians, for feelings of superiority over the Zulu people and “Doctrines of evolution and election go hand in hand in the popular mythology of colonialism.”¹⁶

Colenso based his *Commentary on Romans* on the understanding that Paul was writing to both Jewish and Gentile Christians in Rome but the Jewish believers thought that they had special status as “the people of God”. Colenso showed that Paul was determined “to show in his letter that salvation is pure gift of God, that it is meant for both Jews and Gentiles ‘without any special favour or distinction’ (quoting Colenso, *Commentary* pg.9)¹⁷. Colenso linked this to the English Christian settlers having no grounds for racial pride over against the Zulu.

God has simply provided a righteousness to the whole human race in Christ, whether they know it and accept it by an act of faith on their part or not (Colenso’s *Commentary* pg.14). All of us, Christians, Jews, heathen, are dealt with by Creator God as righteous creatures, not only now, but “from all eternity.” This is the reason for the universality of human religious experience, which impels people to live moral lives.¹⁸

Colenso understood “faith” as a simple trusting hope rather than an act of conversion. This led to the universalist position that Colenso was accused of taking.

It is inherently possible for a heathen to have this kind of faith, to trust in a God experienced through nature and served by obedience to the promptings of conscience, since there is “a faith in the Living Word, which speaks within them” and “a living obedience to the law of truth and love, which they find written upon their hearts by the finger of God” (quoting from Colenso’s *Commentary* pg.63-64).¹⁹

Eternal Punishment

Colenso viewed punishment purely as a corrective measure and therefore believed it could not be eternal. He interpreted Rom 8:21(...that creation itself would one day be set free from its slavery to decay and would share the glorious freedom of the children of God GNB) to mean that all, including the unrighteous have hope in the end of being set free.

...while there will be judgment for all now and at the hour of death, according to the light given each, and all will experience the “worm” of

¹⁵ McGrath, *Christian Theology* pg. 360.

¹⁶ Draper, *Sola Fide* pg. 14.

¹⁷ Draper, *Sola fide* pg. 14

¹⁸ Draper, *Sola Fide* pg. 17

¹⁹ Draper, *Sola Fide* pg. 19.

guilt and the “fire” of God’s anger against sin, at the last all will be brought into the light of God’s glory and presence.²⁰

John Macquarrie also takes this view:

If God is indeed absolute letting-be, and if his letting-be has power to overcome the risks of dissolution, then perhaps in the end (so we must speak) no individual existence that has been called out of nothing will utterly return to nothing, but will move nearer to the fulfilment of its potentialities, as the horizons of time and history continually expand, and it is set in an ever wider reconciling context. In other words, we prefer a doctrine of “universalism” to one of “conditional immortality”, and this seems more in line with the eschatological hope that all things will indeed find their fullness in God. These remarks imply that, after all, achievement of selfhood and fullness of being is a matter of degree, and a sharp dividing line cannot be drawn between the “righteous” and the “wicked”.²¹

Work of the Sacraments

A further accusation from Gray concerns the Sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion.²² This developed from the idea that the white settlers were not the sole recipients of God’s grace.

For the “the many” who died in Adam were, of course the whole race; and therefore also, Blessed be God! ‘the many,’ to whom the grace of God abounded, and the free gift by grace of the one man Jesus Christ the gift of righteousness, must be the whole race, the whole family of man²³

Colenso continues by stating that:

...if all are already redeemed by the work of Christ as Head of humanity, then what role could the sacraments play? Certainly they do not effect redemption but they show it forth. Baptism, like circumcision for the Jews, is an outward sign of God’s blessing; already given, but does not guarantee any special privilege for the Christian.”²⁴

He goes on to paraphrase Paul in Romans 2:25 as follows:

The Baptism of a Christian has a meaning and use, if he walks faithfully; otherwise his baptism becomes a mere nullity. If, then, an unbaptised heathen does that which is good and right and true, shall not his unbaptised state be reckoned for baptism? And they that are heathen by nature and walking according to the light vouchsafe to them, judge those, who, baptised Christian as they are, yet knowingly transgress the Law of the Lord?²⁵

Colenso said the same about the Eucharist. It likewise represents a gift already given to all in their daily experience of life, but signified outwardly in the sacrament:

²⁰ Draper, *Sola Fide* pg. 23.

²¹ John MacQuarrie, *Principles of Christian Theology* (SCM: London) 1977. Pg. 361.

²² “That he taught that all men are born into righteousness when born into the world; that all men are at all times partaking of the body and blood of Christ; denying that the holy sacraments are generally necessary to salvation, and that they convey any special grace, and that faith is the means whereby the body and blood of Christ are received.”

²³ J W Colenso, *St. Paul’s Epistle to the Romans: Newly translated and explained from a missionary point of view.* (Printed at Ekukanyeni, Natal) 1861. Pg.60

²⁴ Draper, *Sola Fide* pg.32

²⁵ J W Colenso, *St. Paul’s Epistle to the Romans:* pg.30.

The Body and Blood of Christ are represented to us by the Elements, whether we come to feed by faith upon them at that particular time or not. These things, *out of ourselves*, are set forth to us in that Holy Sacrament, as the source of all Life of every kind to us all, of all the blessings which we enjoy in our daily life, personal, family, social, or national — as the great provision of our Father’s Love for us, of which we are partaking, day by day, at every moment, as redeemed creatures, though we may not know it or may not heed it, — of which every man everywhere is partaking, though he may not know what the Word made Flesh has done at His Father’s bidding for the children of men. But, in that Holy Supper, these things are brought vividly before us by their — outward and visible sign — of them; and we are called more closely and deeply to consider them, and to feed upon them in our hearts by faith. Whether we do feed by living faith upon them or not, at such times, these things are then set forth to us, as God’s free gift, His gift of grace, to the children of men.²⁶

This conclusion that the Body and blood of Christ are given “to all the human race, not only in the sacrament, but at all times, and of which, in fact all men are everywhere partaking, through God’s mercy, and so receiving all the life they have”²⁷ was one of the conclusions which most outraged the Anglo-Catholic orthodoxy of Bishop Gray and his supporters in the heresy trial.

As can be seen, each theological position adopted by Colenso was in consequence to a position adopted on a previous doctrine. In a cascade theory such as this, there is usually a “first” position, which, because of its adoption, forces the subsequent cascade to occur. It is difficult to know which particular doctrine this was in Colenso’s case. He brought with him to Natal the influence of universalism and Christian socialism of F D Maurice but his own interaction with intelligent and questioning Zulus such as William Ngidi caused him to re-think his stance and apply his mind to the influences of his time, place and receptors of his message.

So, “Was Colenso a heretic?”

The broadness of theological positions in the Anglican Church even in the 19th Century can be demonstrated by publications such as *Essays and Reviews* (1861) and *Lux Mundi* (1889) both of which contained theological positions similar to that taken by Colenso. While their authors were viewed as controversial they were not prosecuted for heresy as Colenso was. It would appear that Gray’s prosecution of Colenso was not so much on theological grounds but on that of authority. Gray felt that Colenso did not accept him as his Metropolitan, which is in fact true of Colenso. In their correspondence, Colenso addressed Bishop Gray as “My dear Colleague...”. The difference between Gray and Colenso appears on this level to be simply a personality clash of who had seniority over whom.

Was Colenso given a fair trial?

Draper makes it very clear that Colenso did not receive a fair trial. Draper lists these reasons in his paper presented to the current Bishops of our Province²⁸

1. Colenso had not consented to accept Gray as his metropolitan and therefore Gray had no legal grounds to try him.

²⁶ J W Colenso, *St. Paul’s Epistle to the Romans*: pg.67.

²⁷ J W Colenso, *St. Paul’s Epistle to the Romans*: pg.67.

²⁸ Jonathan Draper, *The Trial of Colenso* (handed to Bishops at Provincial Synod)

2. Colenso refused to attend the trial, as he did not recognise Gray's authority to try him. He was therefore tried *in absentia*,
3. Gray was both Colenso's prosecutor and his Judge and therefore was not impartial nor did he have any legal training.
4. Gray used private correspondence in the trial as evidence against Colenso and also as an attempt to introduce a pseudo-defence for Colenso. Colenso's representative was not willing to accept this evidence into the trial.
5. Gray used the legal device known as "cumulative charges" where he used more than just the charges of heresy as presented above but add other accusations in the evidence presented to the court
6. Colenso was refused any leave to appeal except to the Archbishop of Canterbury thus Colenso was denied justice.

Further information on the above points is given very clearly by Draper in his article.

Can Colenso be re-tried?

No, as he is dead a re-trial is not possible.

What are the ramifications of exculpation on the CPSA?

Draper says Gray's motives were "high minded and his intentions sincere."²⁹ But is Draper not being too generous? Gray, in a letter to Colenso describes him as 'a man of honour'. Isn't Draper taking this at face value?

On the other hand, more evangelical members of the Anglican Church in South Africa (and particularly Natal) have joined with traditionalist Anglo-Catholics in expressing concern about the exculpation of Colenso both from a theological point of view but also because of the situation in the Anglican Communion at this particular moment. Greg Rogers, a freelance religious journalist trained at the Rosebank Bible College and based in Durban states in an article appearing in the e-zine, *Contact*:

Regarding atonement: the biblical parallels of Christ with the Old Testament lamb dying in our place are clear, as are the various New Testament texts. The whole gamut of Scripture testifies to a God whose wrath must be appeased. The doctrine has been part of the Christian corpus for millennia.³⁰

In all the discussions I've read on the atonement, although much is made about the 'making right' the relationship between God and humans, it is always described as an ever-loving God trying to free us humans from sin and ensuring reconciliation with God. Nothing is mentioned about appeasing God's wrath. Roger's also presents a theory that Colenso, like most Oxbridge graduates of the pre-20th Century, were not trained in theology but merely ordained because of the monastic tradition of those universities³¹. Chris Meyer in another Article in *Contact* relates the whole matter to the current crisis in Anglican Church and by doing so turns a logical and (perhaps) academic exercise into an emotive and (church) political one³². Statements such as, "Now as then, a crisis brought about by maverick bishops set on a misguided agenda to accommodate the culture of the day, departing from the clear teaching of Scripture and 2000 years of church history...compounded by complete disregard for the official position of the Anglican Communion as agreed at the

²⁹ Draper, *Trial* pg. 14.

³⁰ Greg Rogers, "The Do's and Don'ts of Bishop Colenso" in *Contact* August 2003 (Internet edited by The Rev David MacGregor)

³¹ Rogers, *Ibid*. "One could blame the system of the day which allowed for those with minimal training to attain to positions of high estate. Lack of theological training and acumen was no doubt a major reason for his aberrance. "

³² Chris Meyer, "Restore Colenso?" in *Contact* January 2004.

Lambeth Conference and in defiance of the pleas of the Primates and Archbishop of Canterbury. Sounds familiar doesn't it?" do not help in making a decision on Colenso's exculpation.

The more I've looked into this case it appears to be a personality clash between Gray, the traditional Anglo-catholic authoritarian and Colenso, the intellectual and child of the age of Enlightenment. Fear of the consequences of the Enlightenment was the very reason for the start of the Oxford Movement and rise of Anglo-Catholicism. Draper also presents the idea of a class struggle where Gray as a son of a bishop and married into landed gentry was able to influence powerful people against Colenso, the son of middle class intelligentsia. This seems to counteract Roger's view on Colenso's lack of theological training. If anything Gray was less theologically intelligent than Colenso.

In all this Gray does not come out in a good light. What are the ramifications for the CPSA if Colenso were to be exculpated? Should Gray is proved to be in the wrong should he not be removed as a person we commemorate in our liturgical calendar? The negative points against Gray are that he was vindictive, that he had poor judgement, that he took ill advice and that he was authoritarian and controlling.

On the other hand, the positive points for Gray are that he was the founder of our church; that he worked hard for the building up of our church. His biographers state that he had "rheumatism of the brain" (lovely name for stress!). Gray planted churches and priests and created an independent Anglican church with its own constitution and thus the idea of the worldwide Anglican Communion.

What are the ramification for the world wide Anglican Church in exculpating Colenso? Someone like Sheena Duncan would most probably become very irate that we are wasting time and energy even discussing this while people are dying of HIV/AIDS and poverty. Many other 21st Century members of the CPSA would agree. However, such a move might signal to other Anglicans that the CPSA is not concerned about what it believes and "that good works and political correctness are more important than the Truth"³³

Derek Pratt
April 2003- April2004.

APPENDIX A

Four Models of Atonement as presented on the Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy and Christian Theology website.

Traditional Christianity holds that sin separates human creatures from God, and that reconciliation can occur in virtue of something that happens through the incarnation, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. But how are these claims of separation and reconciliation to be understood? The answer to these questions makes up the **doctrine of atonement**. Throughout the history of Christian theology, a variety of models have been proposed. Most of these models fall into one of four types. **Ransom theories** contend that sin has rendered humans enslaved to the Devil. In order to free his beloved creatures from this enslavement God was required to pay a ransom, and the price was the death of his sinless incarnate Son. **Penal Substitution** models contend that through sin humans have incurred a moral debt which needs to be paid. These views hold that the price to be paid is spiritual death and separation from God. No one man can pay the debt of any other since all men have sinned equally. Thus, God chose to send his incarnate Son, free from original or committed sin, to die on behalf of others, and so satisfy their debt.

³³ Chris Meyer, *Ibid*

Sacrifice models are similar to substitution models, but differ in that they do not think that any moral debt of human creatures can be transferred and satisfied by another. Sacrifice theories acknowledge that wrongdoers incur an obligation to “make things right” with the person wronged. Sometimes this means making restitution. Other times it means undertaking acts of penance which demonstrate the wrongdoer's genuine remorse. Thus, if I, in a fit of anger, throw a brick through the window of your house, I might come to seek forgiveness. In doing so I agree to fix the broken window (restitution) but might also do something more, such as bring you a gift as way of demonstrating my genuine remorse. This latter is the act of penance. However, sometimes restitution and suitable penance cannot be carried out by the wrongdoer himself because restitution or suitable penance is beyond his means. In the case of human sinfulness towards God, this is exactly the case. As a result, God sent Christ to earth, where Christ willingly offered his life as a restitution and penance for the sin of the world. Thus, although human sinful creatures cannot make restitution or penance for their wrongdoing on their own, they can, in their repentance, offer up to God the sacrifice of Christ which was made on their behalf.

Finally, *Moral Exemplar theories* hold that the atonement is secured by moral reform of the sinner. But such moral reform was not fully possible without someone to set the moral example for fallen creatures. Christ became incarnate, on these theories, in order to set this example and thus provide a necessary condition for moral reform and thus restoration of the relationship between creature and Creator.

Ransom theories have no defenders in the recent literature. While each of the remaining theories has defenders, each faces certain key difficulties as well. *Substitution theories*, for example, require a few central controversial claims. For **one**, these theories seem to entail that a person can incur an infinite moral debt for a finite amount of earthly wrongdoing. **Second**, they entail that the moral debt in question cannot simply be forgiven by God, but that it must be settled by full payment. Some have argued that this entails that God does not forgive sin at all. (Stump 1988, 61-5) Forgiveness involves remitting some of the payment owed. On these theories however, the debt is paid in full. Most controversial, however, is the claim that moral debts of the sort in question here are transferable. That is, on this view it seems that the punishment of one can be fairly borne by another. While this might be acceptable in certain cases where monetary fines are involved, many think that it cannot apply to specifically moral debts.

Sacrifice theories do not encounter these difficulties. Instead they, like *moral exemplar theories*, face difficulties of two main sorts. **First**, both views seem unable to account for the Biblical emphasis on the necessity of Christ's passion to remedy the problems brought forth by sin. It is hard to see why Christ's passion plays any essential role in establishing him as moral exemplar. **Further**, it is hard to see why Christ's death would provide a suitable sacrifice. Why would it not suffice for Christ to dwell among us and live a perfect human life, resisting all earthly temptation? **Second**, both views seem unable to account for the necessity of the horrible nature of Christ's death on the cross. The reason for this is that both hold that God either could or does forgive the sin of creatures without such grave sacrifices being offered. As a result, one is left to wonder why a solution which does not involve such horrific suffering is preferred to simple forgiveness. This is especially problematic for the moral exemplar theories, which lay almost exclusive emphasis on the importance of Christ's moral example during his life and on the centrality of creaturely moral reform for reconciliation with God.

Defenses of **substitution models** seem to be on the wane in recent literature, with **sacrifice and exemplar theories** becoming more widely defended. Can the substitution models overcome the difficulties posed for it above? Some have defended substitution models according to which punishment is a fitting response to human sin, and yet also such that it might nonetheless be fairly

borne by a surrogate, in this case, the perfect Christ. Stephen Porter, for example, argues that our moral intuitions generally incline us to view punishment of a surrogate as a bad thing, and that some case needs to be made for its permissibility in this instance (Porter 2001). In run of the mill cases of punishment, the good reasons for punishment (such as reform of the wrongdoer, making reparation, deterrence, and so forth) usually weigh in favor of not transferring the punishment to a surrogate. But here, Porter argues, the good reasons for punishing human sinners are not undercut, and that, in fact, there are outweighing reasons for allowing Christ to bear the punishment due human sinners.

Specifically, Porter claims that the goods that come from God's punishment of sin (namely, reparation, manifesting an objective correction to distorted human values, and moral education/reform) justify the punishment. What is more, Porter claims, these ends are more fittingly served through the suffering of Christ on our behalf. The reasons for this are two-fold. First, were we to bear the punishment directly, it might further serve to alienate us from God. Second, the gravity of human sin against an infinite God cannot be suitably expressed by punishment of merely finite humans. Punishment of an infinite God-man better expresses the seriousness of sin.

In Porter's account we have an attempt to respond to the three objections raised earlier against substitution views. First, the (infinite) severity of the punishment is required in order to adequately express the gravity of human sin against an infinite and perfect God. Concerning the second objection (namely, that paying the full price of sin means that there is no forgiveness on God's part), Porter can reply that the objection is simply misguided. God can forgive without any punishment being exacted. However, certain goods arise as a result of punishment being meted out, and God thus metes out punishment suitable for securing those goods. The third difficulty (i.e., the non-transferrability of moral debts) initially seemed to be the most formidable of the three. Porter argues, however, that as long as (a) offender, offended, and surrogate are willing participants, and (b) the goods of punishing can be secured through the punishment of the surrogate, then substitution is permissible, perhaps even preferable. The reason it is permissible, however, is not because the moral debt is "transferred" from sinner to Christ (as the objection assumes) but simply because punishing wrong is a good and punishing a surrogate can equally or better serve the aims of punishing.

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