DEVELOPING AN ECCLESIOLOGY BASED UPON KALEIDOSCOPE ATONEMENT THEORY

by

Timothy Clayton, Bachelor of Theology

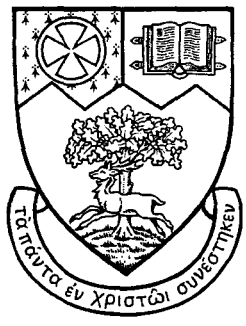
A thesis submitted to
The Faculty of McMaster Divinity College
In partial fulfilment of the requirements
For the degree of Master of Arts (Christian Studies)

McMaster Divinity College
Hamilton, Ontario
2013

Master of Arts
Hamilton, Ontario

McMASTER DIVINITY COLLEGE

TITLE:	Developing an Ecclesiology Based Upon Kaleidoscope Atonement Theory
AUTHOR:	Tim Clayton
SUPERVISOR(S):	Dr. Steven Studebaker
NUMBER OF PAGES:	vii + 185



McMASTER DIVINITY COLLEGE

Upon the recommendation of an oral examining committee,

this thesis by

TIMOTHY CLAYTON

is hereby accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts (Christian Studies)

Primary Supervisor: Steven M. Studebaker, Ph.D.

Secondary Supervisor: Lee Beach, Ph.D.

Academic Dean: Phil C. Zylla, D.Th.

Date: November 30, 2012

ABSTRACT

Developing an Ecclesiology Based Upon Kaleidoscope Atonement Theory

Tim Clayton
McMaster Divinity College
Hamilton, Ontario
Master of Arts, 2013

Kaleidoscope theory inspires the beliefs and practices of the church in a variety of ways. The atonement is God's action on behalf of humanity to remove the barrier and repercussions of sin. The works of Joel Green and Mark Baker have been instrumental in advancing the kaleidoscopic perspective. These works have called into question the current articulation and practices of the atonement within the western church. Kaleidoscope theory inspires a church that encourages a diversity of views on the atonement. Furthermore, the church continues the work of interpreting the scriptural account of the atonement in a culturally sensitive manner. Yet, every interpretation of the atonement must account for the creative purpose of God, Jesus' life and death, and the propulsion towards community. The church embraces the tensions within competing reflections upon the atonement. Kaleidoscope theory encourages the church towards atonement-filled teaching and practice.

Dedications

To my beautiful wife Stephanie

and my precious daughters Norah and Hannah.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction

Atonement theology has long been at the heart of the church's doctrine. The work and mission of Christ is central to Christian identity and the identity of the church. In particular, Paul's writings speak to the centrality of the cross in the life of the Christian. The cross and resurrection are the motivations for Christian life (1 Cor 2:2) and the hope for the future (1 Cor 15). Yet, the message of the cross is not easily proclaimed and understood. Paul opens his letter to the Corinthians proclaiming, "For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God" (1 Cor 1:18). However, many have gone before us and proclaimed the foolishness of God that is wiser than our wisdom and they have demonstrated the weakness of God that is stronger than our might. Great preachers and historians have contextualized the cross into their own contexts and provided us with great word pictures and narratives of the saving power of Christ.

During Paul's ministry with the Corinthians, he committed to straightforward teaching and preaching of the cross so that Christ would be the sole subject of ministry while he was with them (1 Cor 2:1–2). The atonement forms not only the foundation for Christian living, but also the foundation of the church. This thesis builds upon the convictions of those who have gone before and shown that the church emerges directly from the mission of Jesus. Jesus' mission, and by extension the doctrine of the atonement, gives birth to the church. For Christ has all authority under heaven and earth and exercises that authority in and through the church (Eph. 1:20–23).[1] The Nicene Creed defines the church as apostolic. The church is apostolic in the sense that it is sent into the world as the Father sent Jesus. Jesus sends the church into the world to continue the

[1] Harper and Metzger, *Exploring Ecclesiology*, 35–36.

works he began (John 14:12; 20:21). This is seen in scripture as Jesus first sends out his twelve apostles and then Paul and the expanding apostolic witness (Rom 16:7; Eph 4:11).[2] Therefore, those such as Peter Schmiechen have shown that the ways in which the church arranges the atonement directly affect the belief and practices of the church.[3] The way one thinks about Christ's life, death, and resurrection will decisively shape not only ecclesiology, but the entirety of Christian thought.[4]

There is a positive correlation between the doctrine of atonement and the doctrine of ecclesiology. Thus, to change the foundation of the atonement is to change the foundation of the church. Kaleidoscope atonement theory, particularly the work of Joel Green and Mark Baker, has captivated the attention of systematic theologians. Green and Baker argue against the predominance of penal substitution theory in the North American church.[5] They highlight the diversity of images for the atonement in the New Testament and encourage the ongoing process of contextualizing the atonement in the present. Though many have weighed in concerning the legitimacy of these claims, very few have taken time to discover the importance of these assertions for the doctrine of ecclesiology. Kaleidoscope theory's change in methodology for articulating the atonement is of upmost importance as the characteristics and practices of the church are based on the life and mission of Jesus Christ. This is observed in how the church chooses to articulate its identity, mission, righteousness, and holiness.[6] All of these characteristics are derived from God's character and involvement in the life of the church. The church's call to be apostolic ties ecclesiology and the atonement together as the church's apostolic mission is

---

[2] Snyder, "The Marks of Evangelical Ecclesiology," 87.
[3] Schmiechen, *Saving Power*, 354–7.
[4] Dearborn, "Recovering a Trinitarian and Sacramental Ecclesiology," 41.
[5] Green and Baker, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross*, 11–34.
[6] Jinkins, "The 'Gift' of the Church," 192.

to establish communities that continue to witness to that which brought them into being; the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.[7] Therefore, just as Christ entered into our world to bring about the atonement, the church is also to be incarnational in its teachings and practices.[8]

As one may abstract from the title of this thesis, this thesis builds an ecclesiology based upon kaleidoscope theory. Before launching into a kaleidoscopic ecclesiology a few words must be said about the current state of evangelical ecclesiology. Throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth century, evangelical ecclesiology made authentic Christian experience and practice central.[9] This is not as opposition to doctrine but rather as the intent, meaning, and authentication of doctrine. Contemporary evangelical ecclesiology remains a hybrid as it involves the entire spectrum of the social embodiment of the church. It encapsulates not only the doctrine of the church but also the social practices, manner of life, and ecclesiastical structures.[10] This thesis attempts to articulate a kaleidoscopic perspective on ecclesiology that produces an understanding of both the doctrine of the church and allows for the individual contextualization of the local church's practices, structures, and teachings. Historically, the evangelical movement is unparalleled. From the beginning of the movement in the eighteenth century, Evangelicalism has been transdenominational, international, and public in a way that is unique in Christian history.[11] Early Evangelicals questioned whether the evangelical consciousness should result in individuals and churches leaving behind their former

---

[7] Guder, "The Church as Missional Community," 116–7.
[8] Harper and Metzger, *Exploring Ecclesiology*, 155.
[9] Snyder, "The Marks of Evangelical Ecclesiology," 93.
[10] Snyder, "The Marks of Evangelical Ecclesiology," 93.
[11] Hindmarsh, "Is Evangelical Ecclesiology an Oxymoron?" 17–18.

denominations for the establishment of new evangelical churches and denominations.[12] A kaleidoscopic ecclesiology, in the same manner as Evangelicalism, does not seek to separate from the existing church. A kaleidoscopic understanding of the atonement, and the ecclesiology it inspires, fits within both biblical and evangelical Christianity. Much the same as evangelical ecclesiology, a kaleidoscopic ecclesiology seeks to live out an understanding of the church that fully embodies what the New Testament means by the body of Christ. This includes forming churches that are authentic, visible signs of God's reign.[13]

Modern ecclesiology has seen a shift as the doctrine of the church has become innately tied to the doctrine of individual salvation. For Evangelicalism, true spirituality is not a product of the church, but is witnessed in the life of the individual. Therefore, churches are no longer the mediators of grace and divine judgement. In his historical survey, D.G. Hart argues that in an evangelical ecclesiology, theologians only articulate the defining characteristics of the church when they contribute tangibly to the individual's conversion and sanctification.[14] This articulation of evangelical ecclesiology further establishes the connection between the atonement and ecclesiology. This thesis joins evangelical ecclesiology in articulating the church in a manner that highlights the church's facilitation of the individual's encounter with the gospel and the atonement. Continuing his analyses, Hart articulates that the flipside of the current state of evangelical ecclesiology is more troubling. Evangelicals have often viewed the formal or institutional church as a barrier to genuine spirituality. Therefore, most have disregarded it as it is unessential to the Christian walk. The church is perceived as either a site for the

[12] Hindmarsh, "Is Evangelical Ecclesiology an Oxymoron?" 17–18.
[13] Snyder, "The Marks of Evangelical Ecclesiology," 103.
[14] Hart, "The Church in Evangelical Theologies, Past, and Future," 28–29.

inspiration and fellowship of those really saved or a scheme of offices that prevent free and open communion between God and his people.[15] A kaleidoscopic ecclesiology attempts to give purpose to the church as it defines a central mission and purpose. Kaleidoscope theory rejuvenates the church's call to spread the good news of the kingdom of God through its words and deeds. This renewed sense of purpose is through recognition of God's purpose that the atonement be fully realized throughout the world.

Kaleidoscope theory inspires the church in a variety of beliefs and practices. Kaleidoscope theory asserts that the scriptural narrative may be plotted in a variety of ways. The life, death, and resurrection of Christ are the pinnacle of the scriptural narrative. Furthermore, Christ's death on the cross can be described using a kaleidoscope of atonement metaphors. The work of Christ includes the formation of the church. In Jesus' instruction of the Great Commission, Jesus grounds the teaching and ministry of the church in his own life, death, and resurrection. The kaleidoscope church is a community of believers committed to the continual work of proclaiming and practicing the atonement in a culturally sensitive manner. The church incorporates diverse contexts in its articulation of the atonement and holds the conflicts of competing interpretations of the atonement in tension. The kaleidoscope church recognizes that the multiplicity of interpretations of Christ's death inspires a variety of church practices. The kaleidoscope church inspires an atonement-filled community that allows all members of the body of Christ to name and identify the ongoing work of God in his or her own context.

This thesis is divided into two parts. The first part, chapters one and two, will define kaleidoscope theory. In 2000, Joel Green and Mark Baker ignited a debate in evangelical theology with the publication of their book, *Recovering the Scandal of the*

[15] Hart, "The Church in Evangelical Theologies, Past, and Future," 28–29.

Cross. In their book, Green and Baker argue that the atonement is represented in Scripture in a kaleidoscope of metaphors. Since Green and Baker's book in 2000, the definition of kaleidoscope theory has become more nuanced. Chapter one will establish a working definition of kaleidoscope theory, metaphor, and the narrative of scripture. Chapter two outlines kaleidoscope theory's guidelines for interpreting the atonement. The atonement is God's work on behalf of humanity to remove all barriers and consequences of sin. All interpretations of the atonement must account for God's creative purpose, the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and propulsion towards community.

Chapters three to six constitute the second part of this thesis. This part of the thesis will focus on the church characteristics and practices that kaleidoscope theory inspires. Chapter three establishes the church's missional impulse for proclaiming and practicing the atonement. Kaleidoscope theory invites the believer and church into participation with the ongoing work of God in their particular context. Kaleidoscope theory inspires the church towards the missional work of articulating the atonement in culturally appropriate manners. Chapter four will examine the diversity which kaleidoscope theory calls the church to embody. Kaleidoscope theory asserts that no one interpretation of the atonement can encompass the entirety of the atonement. A diverse audience is needed to reflect upon God's work in their own context in order to provide the church with a fuller picture of the atonement. Kaleidoscope theory's mandate of cultural sensitivity in the articulation of the atonement requires the church to include a diverse group into the conversation. Chapter five will examine the tensions between conflicting atonement interpretations. The evangelical church has traditionally brought unity to its interpretation of the atonement through either a quest for doctrinal purity or

through silencing competing voices in areas of potential conflict. Both approaches are insufficient. The church must engage the multiplicity of atonement interpretations in a manner that highlights their individual uniqueness and strengths. Lastly, chapter six discusses the pastoral nature of kaleidoscope theory and its implications for the church. Green and Baker's work was motivated by a concern for individuals uncomfortable with the current articulation and application of the atonement in the western church.[16] Kaleidoscope theory inspires a church in which the atonement is the primary message of the church. All of the beliefs and practices of the church are articulated and conducted in a manner that highlights God's work on behalf of humanity to remove the barriers and consequences of sin. The church partners with God's work as it proclaims to new contexts the good news of Scripture.

[16] Green and Baker, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross*, 30.

Chapter 1: Understanding the Scene

In recent years, evangelical theology has produced a large number of works surrounding the subject of the atonement. The current debate in evangelical theology regarding the atonement strikes at the heart of the church's identity. Kaleidoscope theory critiques the western church's understanding of the atonement at the popular level and attempts to redefine the atonement for various contexts. This chapter sets the stage by presenting the current context for this thesis. First, this chapter will describe the current debate in evangelical theology surrounding the atonement. The works of Joel Green and Mark Baker have been instrumental in advancing the kaleidoscopic perspective. This section will also highlight other notable authors and their works, such as Peter Schmiechen, Scot McKnight, and the London Symposium on the Theology of Atonement. Second, this section will establish a working definition of kaleidoscope theory. This definition will be the foundation for building an understanding of a church in which kaleidoscope theory motivates the work of the body of Christ. Furthermore, it will elaborate upon the multiplicity of images and call for the kind of contextualization that Green and Baker support. Lastly, this chapter will examine the foundation of kaleidoscope theory in the function of narrative and metaphor. The foundation of kaleidoscope theory in narrative and metaphor leads it to a rejection of propositionalism and embraces contextualization.

Current Context

Interpretations of the atonement have varied throughout the history of the church and provided the church with a rich variety of views about Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. Various theologians in different contexts have championed these atonement

theories. Each of these interpretations draws upon a particular biblical or cultural image to explain the atonement. Kaleidoscope theory promotes this diversity of interpretation with the assertion that the diversity of images throughout the biblical narrative is an integral element of interpreting the atonement. This section will highlight the works that have been most influential in the current discussion of kaleidoscope theory. First, this section will examine the works Joel Green and Mark Baker and the kaleidoscopic perspective upon the atonement that they encourage. Joel Green and Mark Baker have championed kaleidoscope theory and brought it to predominance in evangelical theology. Their writings have encouraged many other authors to join the ongoing debate promoting a re-examination of the atonement in the western church at a popular level. Second, this section will examine the numerous other works involved in the conversation. In addition to the works of Green and Baker, writings by Peter Schmiechen and Scot McKnight have been vital in propelling the kaleidoscope perspective of atonement into the life of the church. This section will outline each of these authors' works and their points of interaction with this thesis. These authors and their writings provide the dialogue partners for this thesis. Lastly, this section will examine the shortage of writings that develop an ecclesiology based on kaleidoscope theory. This void is the basis for the work of this thesis.

Since its formation in the 1730s, Evangelicalism has always stressed the importance of the atonement in the lives of its followers and in the proclamation of its message.[1] Many resources have been devoted to the formation, proclamation, and defense of atonement theology. Fundamentalism made great efforts in defense against liberalism strengthening and fortifying an objective model of the atonement that bases itself upon

[1] Hilborn, "Atonement, Evangelicalism and the Evangelical Alliance," 15.

biblical evidence.[2] Penal substitution emerged during the Reformation era and in subsequent Protestant traditions as the foremost depiction of the work of Christ.[3] However, it was not without critique, as evidenced by Gustaf Aulén's book, *Christus Victor: A Historical Study of the Three Main Types of the Idea of the Atonement*, written in 1931. Nevertheless, this thesis predominately focuses on the debate surrounding the western church's understanding of the atonement at the popular level over the last decade.

In recent years, systematic theology has seen the emergence of many theologians stressing diversity in the interpretation of atonement theology. Chief among these revisionists is Joel B. Green and Mark D. Baker's book *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross*, published in 2000. Green and Baker mark a break from the traditional three approaches to the atonement. Green is the Associate Dean for the Center for Advanced Theological Studies and Professor of New Testament Interpretation at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California, and the author of numerous books, most of which are related to the New Testament. Baker is an associate professor of mission and theology at Fresno Seminary at Fresno Pacific University. While their work follows a steady stream of critique against penal substitution, it decisively breaks away from the three historical approaches to atonement theology: dynamic, subjective, and objective.

Throughout history, theologians have articulated the atonement using a variety of imagery. These images can be categorized into three groups: dynamic, objective, and subjective imagery. The first way of speaking of Jesus' atoning work employs dynamic imagery. For this category, the images used articulate the reality that Jesus has overcome

---

[2] Hilborn, "Atonement, Evangelicalism and the Evangelical Alliance," 18.
[3] Hilborn, "Atonement, Evangelicalism and the Evangelical Alliance," 19.

the powers that enslave humanity. This imagery for the atonement was prominent in the early church, somewhat revived in the Reformation, and has gained notoriety in the modern era.[4] This view includes such notable figures as Irenaeus, Gregory of Nyssa, many liberation theologians, and contemporary authors such as Gregory Boyd and Walter Wink. The second type of imagery for articulating the atonement is that of objective imagery. Through the use of these image theologians have stressed the mechanism of the atonement. The emphasis is on the historical validity of the sacrifice of Christ and its effects as actual happenings in history.[5] Within this perspective are notable theologians such as Anselm of Canterbury, most of the Reformation leaders such as Martin Luther and John Calvin, Charles Hodge, and contemporary authors such as Thomas Schreiner, Kevin Vanhoozer, Gary Williams, and Oliver Crisp. The last category of imagery contains those metaphors that are classified as subjective imagery. For holders of these interpretations, the emphasis is usually placed on the life of Christ as an exemplary model for all believers. Christ is understood to be committed to demonstrating the true nature of love even to the result of death on a cross.[6] This imagery is most notably located in the writings of Peter Aberlard and continues in modern theologians such as Bruce Reichenbach.

Green and Baker's contribution to the atonement debate is the important first step of recognizing the diversity of atonement images used both in the New Testament and in the teaching and preaching of the church since the first century.[7] In their book, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross: Atonement in New Testament and Contemporary*

---

[4] Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, 340.
[5] Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, 342.
[6] Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, 343.
[7] Baker, "Contextualizing the Scandal of the Cross," 14.

Contexts, Green and Baker argue that the recognition of the diversity of atonement images in the New Testament and church history guide the church in its articulation of the atonement in diverse contexts. However, this diversity of images is in contradiction of the present articulations of the atonement in the western church, which largely explains the atonement in terms of penal substitution. Furthermore, Baker asserts that articulating the atonement in exclusively penal terms mutes the scandal of the cross and is inappropriate in contextualizing the saving significance of the cross in other cultures and settings.[8] Both Baker and Green lament that the popular understanding of the atonement in the western church is penal substitution and that most see no other way to proclaim Jesus' life, death, and resurrection in practical terms.[9]

The "misunderstanding" of penal satisfaction as the only understanding of the atonement is the motivation for Baker and Green's book, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross*, as well as their numerous follow up works, such as *Proclaiming the Scandal of the Cross* and *Salvation*. Though the term "kaleidoscope theory" is never used or referenced in *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross*, the book encourages a pluralistic interpretation of the atonement based upon a metaphorical evaluation of the language of the atonement. The term "kaleidoscope" first appears in James Beilby and Paul R. Eddy's book *The Nature of the Atonement*. This book is a compilation of four perspectives and responses to the current atonement conversation. Beilby and Eddy entitle Green's contribution to their book the "Kaleidoscopic View." The kaleidoscopic view presented by Green in *The Nature of the Atonement* is in keeping with his previous works including those with Baker. The kaleidoscope theory asserts that rather than identifying one foundational

[8] Baker, "Contextualizing the Scandal of the Cross," 14.
[9] Green and Baker, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross*, 30.

paradigm for the atonement, the systematician should utilize the multiplicity of atonement metaphors in the articulation of the atonement. Green and Baker's kaleidoscopic view builds upon a metaphorical understanding of the atonement presented in Colin Gunton's *The Actuality of Atonement: A Study of Metaphor, Rationality and Christian Tradition* (1989). The understanding of metaphor inherent within kaleidoscope theory will be discussed at length later in this chapter.

Following the work of Baker and Green, numerous critiques of the penal substitution theory appeared and ignited a debate in evangelical theology over the nature of the atonement. Some of the more notable works include *The Non-Violent Atonement* (2001) by Denny Weaver, *The Violent Grammar of Christian Atonement* (2001) by Anthony Bartlett, *Salvation: Understanding Biblical Themes* (2003) by Joel Green, *The Lost Message of Jesus* (2004) by Steve Chalke and Alan Mann, *The Drama of Doctrine: A Canonical Linguistic Approach to Christian Theology* (2005) by Kevin Vanhoozer, *Proclaiming the Scandal of the Cross: Contemporary Images of the Atonement* (2006) by Mark Baker, *Saved from Sacrifice: A Theology of the Cross* (2006) by Mark Heim, *The Nature of Atonement: Four Views* (2006) edited by James Beilby and Paul Eddy, and *Stricken by God?* (2007) edited by Brad Jersak and Michael Hardin. These numerous critiques prompted the Evangelical Alliance UK and the London School of Theology to convene a symposium in the summer of 2005 to address the issue.[10] The result of this symposium was the publication of *The Atonement Debates* in 2008. The objections raised in these works center around one or more of five themes: exegetical, philosophical, mimetic impact, historical development, and missiology. Those approaching the atonement from an exegetical perspective have argued for a broader perspective that

[10] Hilborn, "Atonement, Evangelicalism and the Evangelical Alliance," 22.

would include themes such as incorporation, expiation and propitiation.[11] Secondly, philosophical objections have been raised because of the skewed view of God's love in association of divine love with violence.[12] Third, the alleged mimetic impact produced by the violent nature of the atonement renders penal substitution morally suspect.[13] Fourth, many have pointed to a relatively late historical development beginning with Anselm as evidence that penal substitution should be considered historically suspect. Lastly, those such as Joel Green and Mark Baker argue that penal substitution is an inappropriate interpretive model of the west imposed upon the worldwide church.[14] This projection of a culturally western interpretation of the atonement is culturally offensive. Central to the current controversies on atonement theology in Evangelicalism is how the cross operates at the heart of Christian faith.[15]

Two other works provide specific developments imperative to this thesis. Peter Schmiechen's work, *Saving Power: Theories of Atonement and Forms of the Church* (2005) endeavors to show the correlation between theories of the atonement and the forms of the church. In his book, Schmiechen demonstrates that there are many theories of the atonement that the church may utilize in its articulation of the life, death, and resurrection of Christ. Schmiechen's assertion contradicts two conventional views in the western church: that there is only one monolithic theory, typically penal substitution or

---

[11] See Gathercole, Simon. "The Cross and Substitutionary Atonement." *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 11 (Summer 2007): 64–73.

[12] See Boersma, Hans. *Violence, Hospitality, and the Cross: Reappropriating the Atonement Tradition*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004.

[13] See Blount, Brian. *Then the Whisper Put on Flesh: New Testament Ethics in an African American Context*, Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2001.

[14] See Green, Joel and Mark Baker. *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross*. Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2000.

[15] Hilborn, "Atonement, Evangelicalism and the Evangelical Alliance," 16–17.

christus victor, or that there are three: objective, subjective, and dynamic.[16] In response, in the final chapter, Schmiechen briefly develops four theses for understanding the interaction between particular interpretations of the atonement and ecclesiology: (1) An atonement theory includes both an interpretation of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection as well as some indication of how the saving power of Christ is transmitted to believers across time and space. (2) In general, it is the mode of transmission that is determinative for the life and structure of the church. (3) Interpretations of Jesus may be connected to more than one mode of transmission. Finally, (4) the connection between interpretations of Jesus and modes of transmission is variable, depending on the selection of key ideas and the context of communities of faith.[17] From a historical perspective, Schmiechen argues that shifts in atonement theology affect the theology and practice of the church.[18] Therefore, proponents of kaleidoscope theory must examine the ecclesial changes resulting from kaleidoscope theory's use of narrative and metaphor in formulating interpretations of the atonement.

The second work of specific relevance to this thesis is Scot McKnight's book, *A Community Called Atonement* (2007). Throughout his book, McKnight draws upon the metaphor of a golf bag to illuminate the kaleidoscope approach. He asserts that each club, just like each atonement theory, has a specific purpose and use. In the same way that playing an entire game of golf with one club would be foolish, using only one atonement theory is functionally inadequate. In the preface of his book, he introduces the guiding question for his work, "What does each club in our bag offer us, are we using all the clubs in our bag, and is there a bag defined enough to know where to place each of those

[16] Schmiechen, *Saving Power*, 313
[17] Schmiechen, *Saving Power*, 354–5; 359.
[18] Schmiechen, *Saving Power*, 358.

clubs?"[19] *A Community Called Atonement* pursues its thesis through an affirmation of the multiplicity of views surrounding the atonement. It identifies the metaphorical nature of the atonement, and it attempts to employ this view of the atonement in the life of the church, addressing such areas of ecclesiology as fellowship, justice, mission, praxis, baptism, Eucharist, and prayer. McKnight's work is a valuable contribution to the ongoing evangelical debate surrounding the theology of the atonement, but it is incomplete in two respects. First, it does not adequately develop the narrative structure of the kaleidoscope theory of atonement. Secondly and more detrimental to his work is McKnight's fixation with providing an adequate structure or "golf bag" to hold all the atonement theories. McKnight chooses the theme of "incorporation" to bring organization and meaning to the atonement and thus leaves the convictions of kaleidoscope theory altogether. McKnight defines the atonement as the incorporation of the believer into the community of God. He argues that sin is ultimately a breakdown of community and that the atonement's ultimate goal is the restoration of God's community. Thus, despite the use of a variety of metaphors, McKnight asserts that all metaphors of the atonement speak of one monolithic understanding of the atonement: the restoration of community.[20] In doing so, McKnight no longer upholds a kaleidoscopic understanding of the diversity of atonement metaphors for articulating the atonement. McKnight has fallen into the same monolithic tendencies, which led Green and Baker to write *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross* in which they criticize penal substitution for taking such an approach.

---

[19] McKnight, *A Community Called Atonement*, xiii.
[20] McKnight, *A Community Called Atonement*, 109.

This survey of the historical development of the research surrounding kaleidoscope theory shows the need for more reflection and development on the theology of the atonement. The implications of kaleidoscope theory in other areas of theology need more examination and reflection. Specifically, the kaleidoscope church would be naïve to assume that the shift to a more metaphorical understanding of the atonement does not affect the church's teaching and practices. In the introductory chapter to *The Atonement Debate: Papers from the London Symposium on the Theology of Atonement*, editor David Hilborn stresses the centrality of the atonement in the life of the church.[21] Faithful exposition of Christ's life, death, and resurrection is no doubt at the center of true biblical church. Hilborn praises the participants of the symposium and the contributors of his publication for their faithful exegetical and theological work on the atonement. While at the same time, encouraging the readers of this publication to consider and reflect upon the ecclesiological and relational issues that arise from the work contained within it. There is no doubt that these issues and the debate surrounding the atonement has the ability to divide the evangelical church because of the ramifications for its life and mission. This division has unfortunately been the pattern of the past and continues to hamper gospel ministry.[22] This ecclesiological reflection is the primary concern of this thesis.

Defining Kaleidoscope Theory

Green and Baker's introduction of kaleidoscope theory provides a new context for discussing the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. While Green and Baker's work gave rise to the current debate surrounding the atonement, as stated previously, the debate has

[21] Hilborn, "Atonement, Evangelicalism and the Evangelical Alliance," 28.
[22] Hilborn, "Atonement, Evangelicalism and the Evangelical Alliance," 28.

gathered the interest of a number of authors and conferences. Thus, the kaleidoscopic view has become more nuanced with the entrance of a melange of voices into the conversation. This section will establish an understanding of kaleidoscope theory for its use in this thesis. First, this section will establish a definition for understanding kaleidoscope theory. This definition is primarily reliant upon the works of Joel Green, Mark Baker, and Scot McKnight. Second, this section will examine the diversity of metaphors used in the biblical narrative to describe the atonement. Kaleidoscope theory includes an understanding of how the multiplicity of images is authentic to the biblical narrative. Third, this section will include kaleidoscope theory's motivation to contextualize the atonement for new contexts. The plurality of images found in the biblical narrative provides motivation to contextualize the atonement into new contexts. This emphasis on contextualization motivates the missional practices of the church. Lastly, this section will illuminate kaleidoscope theory's rejection of propositionalism. Kaleidoscope theory maintains that the context in which each metaphor was developed and deployed is an essential element in its understanding. Kaleidoscope theory rejects the monolithic approach to the atonement seen in the western church.

Kaleidoscope theory asserts that in the church's articulation of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, it is impossible to exhaust the possibilities for describing the work and experience of the atonement.[23] The underlying presumption of this theory is that those who read the Bible and base their beliefs upon it should not imagine that the variety of New Testament images of atonement is simply a result of the different biblical authors.[24] Jesus' death cannot be grasped outside of the historical context of the biblical

[23] Green, "Kaleidoscopic View," 157.
[24] Green, "Kaleidoscopic View," 167.

narrative nor apart from the expansive reality of God's purpose in creation.[25] Kaleidoscope theory asserts that no one model or metaphor is able to articulate and proclaim the significance of Jesus Christ's life, death, and resurrection in the world today. Joel Green continues to put forth the assertion that with the wealth of images depicting the interactions between God and humanity, it should not be a surprise that early Christians brought forth a large variety of images from Israel's scriptures.[26] This is also seen in the numerous ways the Early Church interpreted the life and ministry of Jesus. Green maintains that the scripture, as exemplified in the Early Church, can be plotted in different ways and still remain faithful to the one purpose of God. This is because the narrative is determined "not in all of its details but only in broad outline by its key markers."[27]

Scot McKnight furthers the understanding of kaleidoscope theory in his book *A Community Called Atonement*. McKnight draws upon the canonical-linguistic approach of Kevin Vanhoozer, established in the publication *The Drama of Doctrine*. Though Vanhoozer is not a proponent of kaleidoscope theory, Scott McKnight utilizes the canonical-linguistic approach to assert that any given theory of atonement is not a set of timeless propositions, nor an expression of religious experience, nor grammatical rules for Christian speech and thought. Rather, McKnight asserts that all readers of scripture must utilize the narrative and metaphorical nature of the biblical text in all interpretations of the atonement. The reader utilizes metaphor in a manner that corresponds to and

[25] Green, "Kaleidoscopic View," 157.
[26] Green, "Kaleidoscopic View," 169.
[27] Green, "The (Re-)Turn to Narrative," 34.

continues the gospel by making positive theological judgments about how to live and proclaim the message of the atonement in light of the reality of Jesus Christ.[28]

The Old Testament concept of salvation was holistic. It included a wide range of images. These images ranged from the impersonal to the interpersonal. The benefits of God's work on behalf of his people form a comprehensive kaleidoscope of images and testimonies, which include numerous benefits; physical and spiritual, corporate and individual.[29] The atonement of the Old Testament includes national deliverance, personal healing, protection from evil, and spiritual vibrancy. The atonement of the Old Testament is salvation both from something and for something.[30] The rich assortment of images in the Old Testament provided the gospel writers with numerous points of reference for the work of Christ. However, just as Jesus had done, the gospel writers adapted the Old Testament images to the realities of their message and the context of their audience.[31] The gospel writers drew on the breadth of images to make sense of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, which they had experienced firsthand.

Jesus, Peter, Paul, the disciples, the first Christians, and the Gospel writers were all Jews. Their worldviews and practices were that of a first-century Jew. The gospel writers repeatedly used their first-century Jewish context to interpret the events of the atonement.[32] Their interpretations centered around first-century life; including the court of law, the world of commerce, personal relationships, worship, and the battleground.[33] Further examination of these five first-century images will be done at the end of this

---

[28] Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine*, 30.
[29] Harris, "Salvation," 762.
[30] Harris, "Salvation," 762.
[31] Driver, *Understanding the Atonement for the Mission of the Church*, 15.
[32] Morris, *The Atonement*, 9.
[33] Green and Baker, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross*, 23.

chapter. Any proclamations about the saving power of the cross were made in terms they encountered and understood in their context and culture. The earliest Christians saw no discontinuity between the Jewish faith they believed and this Messianic understanding of Christ and his death. As Leon Morris highlights, the separation from the Jewish nation as a result of their belief in Christ's death and resurrection was not seen as a foregone conclusion.[34] Yet, their proclamations of the cross and Christ's new covenant would be the decisive issue in the split. The life, death, and resurrection stand as the defining act of history for Christianity and mark a separation between those who believe and those who do not believe.

This first-century, multi-facet view of the cross presents challenges and opportunities for the twenty-first century Christian. Scripture remains the primary source for Christian ministry among Evangelicals. The biblical narrative supplies a range of stories and images that present the atonement in partial but complementary ways.[35] Each image, metaphor, or narrative points to a truth about the atonement. However, the meaning of these images, metaphors, and narratives are ultimately removed from the context of the twenty-first century. The twenty-first century reader must move beyond the temptation simply to read the first-century metaphors into the contemporary context of the twenty-first century church.[36] Their meanings, though steeped in a rich imagery and resonating with the original audience, speak little if at all to present culture and context. Even when the same terms are used in a twenty-first century context, such as "sacrifice" or "redemption," they are associated in the mind of the audience with different pictures and therefore do not carry the same meaning as when they were used by the New

[34] Morris, *The Atonement*, 11.
[35] Stevenson and Wright, *Preaching the Atonement*, xi.
[36] Green and Baker, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross*, 65.

Testament writers.[37] The danger for the twenty-first century audience is the temptation to equate perpetually their own understanding of the atonement with the "biblical" way of understanding.[38]

The separation between the twenty-first century audience and the original writers does not imply that the study of the biblical images and metaphors used in the first-century context have no bearing on the twenty-first century North American church. Rather, the present church has a rich background to draw upon for its understanding of the atonement. In the examination of these first-century pictures, the church discovers the original intentions of the biblical authors. The intentions of the gospel writers were both theologically reflective and missionally motivated.[39] The biblical authors intended to inspire their audience to reflect upon the atonement. Following the experience of the disciples with the atoning work of Christ, it was their desire that all would experience a life of mission to which the atonement had called them. Simply put, they attempted to encapsulate what Christ had saved them from and what he had saved them for. Directly following Pentecost in Acts 2, Peter preaches to the crowd that the life and death of Christ has led to the release of the Holy Spirit and a new way of life. Thus, theological reflection and pastoral instruction is an ongoing and ever changing conversation. Different models and stories of the atonement will ultimately appeal to different individuals, groups, and eras. The cultural context will produce many factors upon which certain atonement accounts will resound or alienate.[40] Encapsulated within the diversity of the biblical narrative is the motivation for pastoral and church ministry in the present

---

[37] Morris, *The Atonement*, 12.
[38] Stevenson and Wright, *Preaching the Atonement*, xii.
[39] Green and Baker, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross*, 112–3.
[40] Stevenson and Wright, *Preaching the Atonement*, xii.

context. This ministry maintains the same agenda of contextualizing the atonement for new contexts.

Every reflection upon the atonement is an incomplete, partial interpretation. The moment of delivery marks its formation from a particular vantage point and/or for a particular context. The interaction with the community of believers and the ongoing atonement story no longer changes and molds the reflection. Peter Stevenson and Stephen Wright highlight the fallible nature of any reflection on the atonement in their book *Preaching the Atonement*. Any interpretation of the atonement by a theologian or pastor is constrained by the fallible nature of the deliverer. The delivery is an arbitrary point that constrains the interpretation based on the deliverer's background, state of mind, limitations in understanding and reading, spiritual integrity, and knowledge of the context of the audience.[41] The mortal reality of humanity makes an interpretation that fully encapsulates the work of God in humanity impossible. The arbitrary point of departure from the atonement story means that what has been printed and proclaimed is simply a road map of what has taken place at one time in a specific context. It is an example of what was once done for a specific purpose at a specific time.[42] However, the theologian and pastor must contextualize the atonement for his or her own context and time. The images, metaphors, and stories that have contributed to the Christian tradition provide a wealth of inspiration, but they do not dictate how one must view or reflect upon the atonement. Yet, we fool ourselves if we imagine that we can read Scripture and reflect upon the atonement without any influence of the Christian tradition. Reflection upon the atonement will inevitably have to engage the Christian tradition allowing one's own view

[41] Stevenson and Wright, *Preaching the Atonement*, xiv.
[42] Stevenson and Wright, *Preaching the Atonement*, xiii–xiv.

of the atonement to be enriched and supported.[43] In keeping with a New Testament use of imagery, kaleidoscope theory is solidly rooted in the story of the believing community.[44]

Kaleidoscope theory puts the emphasis on articulating the atonement from within a particular context in a manner that is relevant to the context and faithful to God's purpose in the biblical narrative. The actions of God in the life of the believers have been formulated into confessions, hymns, testimonies, and sermons about the saving work of Christ in his life, death, and resurrection. These accounts of God's interaction with his people are statements of subjective personal interaction rather than propositional monolithic definitions of the meaning of the work of Christ.[45] They are personal reflections about an individuals' encounter with God's active work of the atonement. Both the early church and the church throughout history have followed the trajectory of the gospel writers. Rather than offering dogmatic assertions, they chose to depict the work of Christ utilizing a series of metaphors to communicate its meaning. As John Driver asserts, the modern western reader tends to favor literal definitions and cogent theories in order to clarify and solidify his or her understanding of the atonement, but this is not the biblical approach.[46] Driver continues on to assert that the remolding of images into a propositional theory has separated the images from an authentic experience of the individual. Thus, understandings of the atonement have become little more than a mirror for self-contemplation and a yardstick to measure orthodoxy.[47] This kind of separation robs the images of their transformative power. The contextual nature of a particular metaphor roots it in a specific testimony of transformation. This connection of the

[43] Stevenson and Wright, *Preaching the Atonement*, xii.
[44] Driver, *Understanding the Atonement for the Mission of the Church*, 16.
[45] Driver, *Understanding the Atonement for the Mission of the Church*, 15.
[46] Driver, *Understanding the Atonement for the Mission of the Church*, 16.
[47] Driver, *Understanding the Atonement for the Mission of the Church*, 19.

infallible to the fallible through metaphor allows the audience of the good news to form connections between their own lives and contexts and the mystery of the meaning of Christ's life, death, and resurrection. Kaleidoscope theory asserts that in articulating the atonement, the believer and the church must make use of the multiplicity of imagery in the biblical narrative and articulate the atonement in a culturally sensitive manner.[48]

By contextualizing the reader and the metaphors, kaleidoscope theory does not make any room for propositionalism, which promotes a view of the atonement that is binding for all time in all contexts.[49] Propositionalism is the belief that the theologians task is to survey scripture, abstract the revealed truths, and arrange them in a logical order void of context.[50] This abstracted core is considered the infallible truth. Kaleidoscope theory does not assume that there is no core, infallible truth found in God or scripture. Rather, humanity is simply unable to free itself of its limitations in order that it might find such a reality. Green asserts that it is impossible for humanity to jump out of its skin, leaving behind our presuppositions, histories, insights, and stories in order that we might generate a truth that is outside of our influence.[51] Not only is it not possible, but the church should not strive for such a goal, for it is within finite contexts that the church finds its identity. Kaleidoscope theory openly embraces a narrative reading that attempts to embrace metaphors of the biblical text and attempts to admire their literary purpose. The theory supports a view that, because of metaphor's literary function, the reader is unable to strip away the context of the metaphor to place it into a propositionalist

---

[48] Green and Baker, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross*, 112–3.
[49] McKnight, *A Community Called Atonement*, 38.
[50] Vanhoozer, *Drama of Doctrine*, 226.
[51] Green, "The (Re-)Turn to Narrative," 17.

perspective void of context.[52] The surrounding context is a critical element of reflections upon the atonement. To displace the context of the metaphor cuts any interpretation based on the metaphor off from any personal relation or interaction with the atonement itself. Our goal must be the direct engagement of our whole selves with the biblical text and with the atonement as believers live it out in their own contexts and in their own lives.

Kaleidoscope theory rejects the methodology of propositionalism in the western church. Opponents of propositionalism critique the monolithic methodology in which the church acknowledges only what conforms to its own categorical scheme and absorbs or rejects that which does not conform.[53] In a monolithic conception of the atonement, it does not matter whose interpretation it is or in what context such an interpretation takes place. All that matters is the propositional statement of truth, irrespective of context.[54] Kaleidoscope theory also rejects propositionalism's propensity to discount figurative language and literature. Propositionalism opts to restate such symbols and metaphors in terms of unambiguous statements. Kaleidoscope theory rejects a propositionalist theology that attempts to master the divine revelation of the biblical narrative and package it in a conceptual scheme that is tidier than the original. In an attempt to disciple its believers, the western church has promoted the belief that knowing more biblical information makes better Christians. While knowing scripture is an important element in being grounded in biblical faith, if faith stops their then a believer is deceived about his or her Christian walk. Scripture commands that believers must be doers of the Word (James 1:22–24). Propositionalism solidifies truth into formulated knowledge that either decays

---

[52] McKnight, *A Community Called Atonement*, 37.
[53] Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine*, 269.
[54] Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine*, 269.

into obscurity and uselessness or exercises as an abuse of power over those without such an understanding.[55]

The rejection of propositionalism does not mean that there is no proposition within constructs of theological systems. Rather, proposition is a factual ingredient in the communicative action.[56] Kaleidoscope theory does not use the terms "image" and "metaphor" as an alternative to the "literal" or "real" meanings of the work of Christ. Nor does it refer to mere figments of the imagination in the minds of believers. The use of metaphor and image references terms or concepts whose meanings do not exhaust the strictly literal sense of the depiction.[57] Inherent within any particular metaphor is both a figurative and literal meaning. Metaphors of the atonement such as reconciliation, liberation, redemption, and victory are rooted in concrete realities. As an example, the metaphor of redemption is rooted in the historical reality of liberation from Egyptian slavery, the emancipation of a slave, and the work God has done in Christ to free people from oppression by the powers of evil. While redemption refers to an observable, historical event in the life of God's people, it is also an image that refers to a restored relationship with God, which is not equally visible in the same historical sense. When the New Testament writers applied this concept to the meaning of the death of Christ, they brought the imaginable power of this metaphor to the forefront. [58] The use of metaphor in our interpretation of the atonement forms the basis for our understanding of the kaleidoscopic view and the work of the church that it inspires.

---

[55] Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine*, 87–90.
[56] Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine*, 91.
[57] Driver, *Understanding the Atonement for the Mission of the Church*, 16.
[58] Driver, *Understanding the Atonement for the Mission of the Church*, 16–17.

The appeal of Green to do away with propositionalist claims of truth in the atonement has led opponents of kaleidoscope theory to dismiss Green and Baker's work as unsubstantial relativism. There is no denying that Green and Baker's work emphasizes subjectivity in the application of the atonement to particular contexts. Kaleidoscope avoids becoming relativistic through its commitment to the biblical narrative. The biblical narrative is the revelation of the purpose of God for his creation. Establishing an understanding of God's purpose and utilizing it as a criteria for evaluating metaphors of the atonement is the subject of the following chapter. While maintaining a commitment to God's revelation of his purpose, kaleidoscope theory also asserts that interpretations of the atonement may plot the narrative of God's purpose in numerous ways. Kaleidoscope theory asserts that the biblical narrative is a broad outline of God's purpose. All interpretations of the atonement must maintain connection with key markers of the biblical narrative.

Significant to kaleidoscope theory's methodology is the evaluation of interpretations of the atonement based upon their interaction with their context. Contrary to relativism, kaleidoscope theory does not evaluate the truth of an interaction based on its acceptance in a particular context. Rather, kaleidoscope theory's evaluation of interpretations' interactions with context is based upon missional appropriateness. An interpretation of the atonement may not be missionally appropriate for a particular context, but that does not mean it is not true. Kaleidoscope theory differentiates between the truth of an interpretation and the appropriateness of an interpretation. The truth of an interpretation is based upon its adherence to the biblical narrative, while the appropriateness of an interpretation is based upon its ability to interact with the context.

This interaction includes recognizing the limited revelation of God's purpose for that context and the work of the church to bring about God's purpose. While penal substitution may be constructed in a manner that is appropriate to the biblical narrative, Green and Baker question its use in all contexts. However, the use or non-use of penal substitution in a particular context does not prove or negate its claim to truth. Interpretations of the atonement must be both faithful to the biblical narrative and appropriate to the context of the audience so that the atonement may be heard and understood. This is not relativism of all interpretations and contexts, but a call for relevance in all interpretations of the atonement in every context.

Defining the Atonement

The atonement is God's action on behalf of humanity to remove the barriers and repercussions of sin. The atonement is the action by which God brings about salvation. The gospel narrative is unmistakable in its pronunciation that Christ's life, death, and resurrection have made salvation possible. While the affirmation that the atonement took place is held in all segments of Christian theology, how Christ affected the atonement and how the atonement affects the believer are articulated in a variety of ways. This section will establish an understanding of both the reality and significance of the atonement. First, this section will examine the reality of the atonement. Kaleidoscope theory's usage of metaphor to understand the biblical articulation of the atonement does not negate the reality of the atonement. The atonement must be maintained as an objective reality while also requiring a subjective response from all those that encounter it. Lastly, this section will establish the methodology for interpreting the significance of the cross. The reality of the cross may be understood through a variety of storylines in the biblical narrative. The

New Testament authors made use of a variety of themes from their own Jewish context and the first-century context that surrounded them. Furthermore, the orthodoxy creeds of the early church, while unapologetically upholding the reality and centrality of the life, death, and resurrection of Christ, do not articulate the mechanism by which the atonement affects the believer.

Christianity is unwavering in its core doctrine that the hope of salvation is Jesus Christ. Christ's historical actions in his life, death, and resurrection are the heart of Christian soteriology. The atonement can only be viewed through the lens of Christ. Christ's mission was the salvation of his people. As Stan Grenz articulates, the vocation of Christ can only be understood as "his calling to be obedient to his divine mandate to the point of death."[59] Christ came as the fulfillment of the Old Testament hope that God would act decisively in history to bring about salvation for his people. Christ's actions must be understood as the action by which God brought about salvation for the entire world. The divine entered into human history, not just through interaction, but through the incarnation. He proclaimed and embodied the good news that God's eschatological rule is already inaugurated. Furthermore, he came to die on behalf of the cause of God.[60] While the atonement is understood through the lens of his work in the Old Testament, the incarnation of the divine marked a vital and fundamental chapter in the story of the atonement. The atonement is the action of bringing about salvation. This can only be understood through the life, death, and resurrection of Christ.

The centrality of the cross in the New Testament serves as the defining feature of the Christian faith. While Christianity certainly originated within a Jewish context, it

---

[59] Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, 340.
[60] Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, 339–40.

articulated its beliefs in Christ in a manner that could not be synthesized with the first-century understanding of Judaism. As Leon Morris articulates, "whatever subordinate and incidental issues were involved, the essential difference between Judaism and Christianity was the cross."[61] In 1 Corinthians 1:18–25, Paul testifies to the divisive nature of the cross in his first-century context, while maintaining its centrality to the Christian faith. The reality of the atonement does not make sense to the first-century Roman or Jew. The modern reader should not assume that he or she has moved beyond the difficult challenge of articulating the life, death, and resurrection of Christ and has arrived with a simple articulation of the atonement that seems aesthetically pleasing.[62]

In articulating the atonement, one must differentiate between the reality of Christ's death and the metaphors for interpreting its meaning. As Green and Baker articulate in their book, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross*, "[the believer] should not be tempted to confuse the various metaphors Paul uses for describing the death of Jesus and its effects ... with the actuality of the atonement."[63] This view of the mechanism of metaphor in the biblical narrative is based upon Colin Gunton's work in *The Actuality of the Atonement*. Gunton asserts that the modern, western church's interpretation of the atonement in penal substitution terms commits a hermeneutical error as it reads the atonement metaphor literally and void of context.[64] While the significance of the atonement varies depending upon the cultural context of the audience, the life, death, and resurrection of Christ affects every context. The biblical writers' use of metaphor does not negate the reality of the atonement. Gunton continues that, "at issue is the actuality of

---

[61] Morris, *The Atonement*, 11.
[62] Green and Baker, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross*, 33.
[63] Green and Baker, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross*, 65.
[64] Gunton, *The Actuality of the Atonement,* 165.

atonement: whether the real evil of the real world is faced and healed ontologically in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus."[65] The biblical narrative's answer to the question of the reality of the atonement is an emphatic, "Yes, the world is different now!"

The New Testament declares that the atoning life, death, and resurrection of Jesus is an objective, completed fact (1 Pet 3:18). This act made a fundamental alteration in the relationship between God and humanity, between humanity and the spiritual powers, and the spiritual powers and God. Furthermore, the New Testament indicates that humanity is meant to appropriate the provisions of Christ.[66] For example, in the gospel of Luke, Jesus articulates the necessity of his own death, "Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" (Luke 24:26, TNIV) When presented with his own suffering, Jesus did not reference a particular cultural implication of his death, but rather articulated the necessity of his death as the defining act of the atonement. He presents his disciples with the reality that his life, death, and resurrection would usher in a new era of salvation.[67] The historical creeds of the church maintain the New Testament emphasis on Christ in their articulation of the centrality of Christ's life, death, and resurrection. There is no Christianity apart from the cross.

While the New Testament is unanimous in its declaration that the atonement has been made possible by the life, death, and resurrection of Christ, it depicts the implications of the atonement in each context to be varied. In this sense, missiological and pedagogical concerns press models of the atonement in different directions.[68] This does not make the atonement any less real, nor does it mean nothing certain can be said

---

[65] Gunton, *The Actuality of the Atonement*, 165.
[66] Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, 349.
[67] Green and Baker, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross*, 33.
[68] Green, "Christus Victor: Kaleidoscopic Response," 64.

of the atonement. Green and Baker call this the diversity in the church's understanding of the atonement's saving significance.[69] This "saving significance" must be articulated in a particular interpretation of the atonement. The mechanism of the atonement is understood in Christian orthodoxy through the use of a variety of metaphors. The classic creeds of the church are silent regarding the mechanics of the atonement. Similarly, the "rule of faith," as this was articulated variously in the ante-Nicene period, leaves undeveloped, or at least underdeveloped, the soteriological implications of the cross.[70] Although all Christianity agrees on the reality that Jesus was crucified under Pontius Pilate, this is not the same thing as admitting the uniformity of the significance of that event.[71] It is the use of metaphor in the work of the biblical authors and theologians through history in articulating the application of the atonement to a particular situation that remains the primary issue for atonement theology.[72]

Theology and homiletics have paid an increasing amount of attention to the form in which biblical revelation is delivered to its audience. The revelation of the Gospels and Acts are unmistakably delivered in a narrative form. However, the Pauline epistles, often treated as theological treaties or summaries, are built upon a rich narrative substructure. This substructure produces the characteristics of narrative form in the epistles.[73] Kaleidoscope theory identifies this narrative form and substructure as the defining feature of all reflections upon the atonement. Therefore, to treat Scripture as a propositional handbook of atonement doctrine is foreign and obtrusive to the purpose and directives of

---

[69] Green and Baker, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross*, 53.
[70] Green, "Penal Substitution: Kaleidoscopic Response," 111.
[71] Green, "Christus Victor: Kaleidoscopic Response," 64.
[72] Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, 349.
[73] Stevenson and Wright, *Preaching the Atonement*, xi.

the text and authors. To reflect upon the atonement authentically means to engage in the atonement stories.

Green expands an understanding of narrative reading of scripture in his book *Narrative Reading, Narrative Preaching*. In this publication, Green suggests that kaleidoscope theory speaks of the narrative of scripture, in which the entire work of scripture serves to reveal God's work and character. Even if a particular passage gives no mention of the cross or God's interaction with humanity, it identifies characters and actions that are in agreement or disagreement with the central work of God. Green insists that the whole of the Bible is more than the sum of the parts. Readers can and should account for the missional revelation of God's actions and character that lies behind the collection of books. A narrative approach to scripture is the recognition of a single, unifying plot central to the formation and interpretation of the biblical canon. These words, these books, these collections of books, read as a whole, are said to generate a coherence that might otherwise be missing, or hidden, apart from the whole.[74] However, kaleidoscope theory rejects propositionalism in that, unlike propositionalist theory, kaleidoscope theory asserts that the plot of the narrative may be charted in a variety of ways and still maintains its faithfulness to God's purpose. The interpretations, teachings, and practices of the church are biblical because they are faithful to God's character and action in both scripture and in the present. God's revelation of his purpose and its implications for interpreting the mission and ministry of Christ and the church is the topic of chapter two of this thesis.

[74] Green, "The (Re-)Turn to Narrative," 28.

More basic even than narrative form is the metaphorical revelation of the atonement. Metaphor is the application of an alien name or image by transference.[75] A metaphor is a term or image, belonging to one context, used outside of its native context to describe a second unrelated context.[76] It applies a name or image that belongs to something else. The redirection entails a movement that constitutes a deviation for a current usage.[77] In the redirection from one context into another context, the metaphor may retain all or only some of its references to the reality of the original context. The use of a metaphor to articulate the atonement does not necessarily embrace or legitimize all aspects of a given image.[78] Metaphors do not imply a complete similarity between the atonement (A) and the metaphor (B), but draws on some partial likeness. Therefore, the metaphor (B) is only true in the aspects that it represents the atonement (A). All attributes of B that are outside of A are not true.[79] However, metaphors are determinate enough to convey stable meaning without being exhaustively specifiable.[80]

Thus, the task of the linguist, and theologian, is to identify the aspects of the metaphors that speak to the realities of the original context and the aspects of the metaphors that are not applicable. As Anthony Thiselton discloses in his book, *New Horizons in Hermeneutics*, the process of understanding any symbol is the interpretation of a double-meaning linguistic expression, which creates a richness of endless possibilities for expression.[81] Some metaphors, indeed, are of little importance and help in elaborating doctrine as they only draw attention to superficial or accidental

---

[75] Gunton, *The Actuality of the Atonement*, 28.
[76] Gunton, *The Actuality of the Atonement*, 28.
[77] Thiselton. *New Horizons in Hermeneutics*, 352–5.
[78] Green and Baker, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross*, 118.
[79] Blocher, "Biblical Metaphors and the Doctrine of the Atonement," 639.
[80] Blocher, "Biblical Metaphors and the Doctrine of the Atonement," 638.
[81] Thiselton. *New Horizons in Hermeneutics*, 347.

similarities.[82] The church must articulate the atonement with deep meaningful imagery that attempts to illuminate the richness of the atonement. The atonement and the problem of sin in the biblical narrative express a richness of possibility. Metaphors function on both a physical reality and point to a reality beyond; such as, the stain of sin being removed. It is in examples such as the former that the power and necessity of metaphor in the atonement language is recognized. Humanity has the ability to express what it cannot fully fathom in terms that it knows and in the context that surrounds it.

Metaphor presents the possibility for the finite and deeply fallible human race to reach beyond itself into what Thiselton summarizes as "possibility."[83] This new "possibility" of interpretation does not cut the metaphor loose from its moorings in the biblical text. Rather, the "possibility" of the metaphor can open up new understandings more readily than a purely descriptive or scientific statement.[84] While descriptive and scientific statements reflect the already-perceived actualities of this world, metaphors create possible ways of seeing or understanding the world, humanity, and salvation.[85] However, in our desire to reach beyond humanity's actuality into these possibilities, we must not use metaphor in a literary imaginative function. As Colin Gunton points out, we must not speak about God as "imaginative expressions of human experience of the world rather than as means by which we speak about the reality of God."[86] Gunton expounds the reality of the theological language as different from and more difficult than the language of science because God relates to the human mind in a different way than the

---

[82] Blocher, "Biblical Metaphors and the Doctrine of the Atonement," 638.
[83] Thiselton. *New Horizons in Hermeneutics,* 344.
[84] Thiselton. *New Horizons in Hermeneutics*, 352.
[85] Thiselton. *New Horizons in Hermeneutics*, 351.
[86] Gunton, *The Actuality of the Atonement*, 42.

things in the natural universe.[87] A memorable metaphor has the power to bring separate domains into the same reality by using language directly appropriate for one as a lens for seeing into the other.[88] The ability for humanity to use its known, fallible context to describe the infallible reality is the primary manner in which humanity is able to describe its relation to God and to others.

Metaphor permeates our English language and is the primary way in which the believer articulates his or her relationship to God. The believer and the church describe the God who is outside of English language with what he or she knows in this world. This is why kaleidoscope theory asserts that speaking of the "propositional truth" of scripture is discontinuous to the entire narrative of scripture. Atonement metaphors can be single images, such as redemption, reconciliation, justification, and so on, or it can be an entire story or discourse.[89] Green further elaborates on the function of metaphors in theology and the acquisition of knowledge in his contribution to *The Nature of the Atonement: Four Views*. Metaphors are non-literal descriptions of reality that allow the interpreter to avoid idolatrous claims of knowledge. Green maintains that this use of metaphor is divinely inspired. Metaphors allow the interpreter to utilize the surrounding world in all of its fallibility and access the infallible divine. The reality of God is a context and understanding to which the reader will never gain direct and complete access. The universal profundity of Jesus' death as a saving event, the variety of contexts within which Jesus' death required explication, and the variety of ways in which the human situation can be understood motivate a divinely inspired use of metaphor.[90] This use of

---

[87] Gunton, *The Actuality of the Atonement*, 42–43.
[88] Thiselton. *New Horizons in Hermeneutics*, 352.
[89] Stevenson and Wright, *Preaching the Atonement*, xi–xii.
[90] Green, "Kaleidoscopic View," 167.

metaphor is fostered out of a desire to use words that we know to describe the partial aspects of God and his work that has been revealed to us. The metaphor identifies an indirect subject and compares it to a known object. Firstly, we use a word which points to part of the world we know so that we can begin to talk and think about it. Secondly, in this description we allow the meaning of the identified language to be adopted by the described, so that we can come to understand its features by our experience.[91] For instance, in penal substitution the western church uses the imagery of the western criminal system to illuminate the importance of Christ's death.

The multiplicity of metaphors in the biblical narrative is a foundational characteristic of kaleidoscope theory. As stated above, the multiplicity of metaphors for describing the atonement is not an implication of multiple biblical authors. Rather, the metaphorical nature of the atonement fosters a multiplicity of interpretations. This multiplicity of metaphorical interpretations in the New Testament exists for a number of reasons. First, the language of the atonement is metaphorical, and thus, it is difficult to imagine a single metaphor that would summarize the entirety of the atonement. Certainly, the metaphors of the New Testament all speak to the reality of salvation and its accomplishment in the work of Christ.[92] However, salvation expresses a multiplicity of views in part because of the diversity of the human predicament. The human predicament is expressed in the biblical narrative in terms of lostness, blindness, deafness, hard-heartedness, slavery, enmity, and more.[93] The biblical narrative is clear that humanity is lacking and is in need of salvation. Humanity lacks the ability to save itself and thus a

[91] Gunton, *The Actuality of the Atonement*, 45.
[92] Baker, "Contextualizing the Scandal of the Cross," 15–16.
[93] Baker, "Contextualizing the Scandal of the Cross," 16–17.

variety of salvation images need to illustrate salvation from a variety of human predicaments.

The second reason for the multiplicity of metaphorical images is the reality that all reflections upon the atonement are an indispensable pastoral exercise. As stated above the language in which the atonement is depicted is dependent upon the context of the audience. The manner in which God's purpose intersects with the audience's predicament dictates which aspects of the atonement will be present in that particular context.[94] This does not negate the other aspects of the atonement, but simply highlights those aspects most of need in a particular situation. Cross-cultural contexts also express this pastoral imperative. While the atonement of the gospels was initially expressed in a first-century Jewish context, the atonement is a universal reality that must identify with all of humanity in all cultures. If the gospel is being proclaimed to Judea, Samaria, and the ends of the earth, then the vast amounts of cultures must all find an avenue to grasp the message of salvation in their own culturally specific manners.[95] To articulate the atonement in a propositional system for all people, of all ages, and of all cultures is to assert that all of humanity experiences its lostness and salvation in the same manner. While the biblical narrative shows that all humanity is lost and may experience salvation, it does not affirm that all people experience this lostness and salvation in the same way.[96] The biblical narrative shows that the content of Christian salvation is rich and satisfying. Whatever our need, Christ has met it.[97] Kaleidoscope theory warns against the tendency simply to read the metaphors of the first-century Jews into our own culture. Rather,

---

[94] Baker, "Contextualizing the Scandal of the Cross," 16.

[95] Baker, "Contextualizing the Scandal of the Cross," 16.

[96] See Green and Baker, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross*, 222–64, in which they both articulate the significance of the atonement and the sin which it speaks to in variety of contexts.

[97] Morris, *The Atonement*, 205–6.

theology must seek words and pictures from a particular indigenous culture and apply them metaphorically to the act of the atonement. Theology must follow the New Testament authors' missiological aims and draw images from the experiences of people's lives to express God's divine initiative and decisive action.[98]

Biblical Metaphors

The biblical authors used a variety of word pictures to depict the importance of Christ's life, death, and resurrection. This section will examine five biblical metaphors used in the first century context to convey the meaning of the atonement. These word pictures include the court of law (justification), commercial dealings (redemption), personal relationships (reconciliation), worship (sacrifice), and the battleground (triumph over evil). These five word pictures are borrowed from significant spheres of public life in ancient Palestine and the larger Greco-Roman world.[99] These five categories are not strict categories, but have been expanded and condensed by various scholars.[100] The emphasis of the biblical authors was not on the exclusive use of five categories, but rather the biblical authors sought to articulate the life, death, and resurrection of Christ in culturally relevant word pictures.

The culturally relevant word pictures used by Paul demonstrate this motivation. In explaining the significance of Jesus' ministry, Paul continually adds new metaphors to his writings. More pointedly, Paul tailors his interpretation of the life and death of Jesus

---

[98] Baker, "Contextualizing the Scandal of the Cross," 18.

[99] Green and Baker, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross*, 123.

[100] Green and Baker in *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross* identify five categories for understanding the metaphors of the New Testament: justification, redemption, reconciliation, sacrifice, and triumph over evil. Peter Schmiechen in his book, *Saving Power*, identifies ten theories for interpreting the New Testament metaphors organized into four overarching categories: Christ died for us, liberation from sin, the purposes of God, and reconciliation. Leon Morris in his book, *The Atonement*, categorizes the biblical metaphors into eight categories: covenant, sacrifice, the day of atonement, the Passover, redemption, reconciliation, propitiation, and justification.

to the needs of a particular audience and context.[101] As Schmiechen asserts, Romans 3:24–25 serves as a case study for Paul's missional intentions in his proclamation of the atonement.[102] Paul articulates the atonement using the image of sacrifice and redemption. If Paul assumed that the readers already viewed Jesus using the image of redemption and sacrifice, he would not have taken time to explain the images' meanings. Furthermore, when Paul does articulate the meanings for redemption and sacrifice he adds elements critical to the basic argumentation regarding salvation for all by faith as a gift. As Schmiechen argues, Paul weaves together two culturally significant images to argue that the righteousness of God has been revealed in Jesus, apart from the law.[103]

The first metaphor at use in the biblical narrative is taken from the court of law. Justification is the central point for the collection of terms taken from the first century court of law. The biblical authors' use of justification must account for its cultural context of the Jewish first century. The cultural context of the term justification and other terms rooted in the metaphor of the Law must include an orientation toward Jewish context of covenantal law. An understanding of the first century context must disregard the modern era's criminal justice system. The biblical use of justification is rooted solely in the Jewish understanding of law.[104] Paul's use of the metaphor of the law to describe the work of Christ in the atonement to the Galatians demonstrates this use of a Jewish understanding of the law.

Legal observation drove the church of Galatia's understanding of God. Therefore, Paul expounds upon the salvific character of the cross with a legal metaphor familiar to

---

[101] Green and Baker, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross*, 83.
[102] Schmiechen, *Saving Power*, 59.
[103] Schmiechen, *Saving Power*, 59.
[104] Green and Baker, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross*, 173.

the Galatia context.[105] Paul uses the legal imagery familiar to the audience to name their sinful attitudes. Christ's death overcomes the obvious problem of Jewish prejudice against the Gentiles. This distinction centered on the status of the law-abiding Jew in contrast to the lawless Gentile.[106] Paul takes the imagery further connecting it directly to the old covenant law of Israel. Paul quotes for Deuteronomy 21:22–23, "Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law" (Gal 3:10, TNIV). In his death, Christ has exhausted the power of the law to segregate people from the covenant. Christ has been placed outside the community of God's covenant on our behalf. It is not accidental that in constructing his argument Paul refers to Christ bearing the curse, for this combines two contradictory images: the anointed one is also the cursed one. For the Galatians, Paul makes it clear that the death of Christ marks the beginning of a new age in which Gentiles may be embraced, in Christ, as children of Abraham.[107]

The New Testament's use of legal imagery is contextual to the first-century. For the first-century Jew, law was understood in the relational terms of the old covenant. Justification is a restoration of the individual to a state of righteousness. The relationship of the believer with God's law is in view, rather than the character of the individual. This cultural understanding of the legal imagery separates it from modern concepts of criminal and/or punitive justice. Furthermore, in the biblical text, the norm of righteousness varies depending on the situation. For instance, in Genesis 38, despite the clear immorality of her actions, Tamar was considered more righteous than Judah. Judah was considered unrighteous because he was out of sorts with God's old covenant, as he had not fulfilled

[105] Green, "Kaleidoscopic View," 170.
[106] Green, "Kaleidoscopic View," 170.
[107] Green, "Kaleidoscopic View," 171.

his obligations as her father-in-law. Another example is David in 1 Samuel. Despite the anointing of God and the opportunity to seize God's promised throne, David's refusal to slay Saul was said to be righteous, because he was abiding by the standards of the monarch-subject relationship. Righteousness is understood as a matter of living up to the standards set for a relationship. God's own person and nature stand as the standard of righteousness.[108]

Paul also uses the legal imagery to describe the atonement in his letter to the Romans. Paul asserts that "Christ is the culmination of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes" (Rom 10:4, NIV). The culmination of the law is understood as the completion or goal, suggesting that Christ fulfills the old covenant.[109] Paul uses the cultural reality of the Jewish old covenant to elaborate upon Jesus' significance. Jesus' life was developed and characterized by his essential Jewishness. It is reported that he was circumcised in his infancy (Luke 2:21), his parents went through the standard Jewish purification ceremonies (Luke 2:22–23), he was brought up to observe the Jewish feasts such as the Passover (Luke 2:41–42), and it was his custom to worship in the synagogue on the Sabbath (Luke 4:16).

Throughout his entire life, Jesus followed the Jewish pattern and practice for life. This is not to say that Jesus' life did not challenge the beliefs of that day. Christ was very clear in Matthew 5:17 that his role was to fulfill the law and not to abolish it.[110] For the disciples this meant that they placed Jesus in the highest place of authority while at the same time maintaining their essential Jewishness.[111] Furthermore, none of the early

---

[108] Millard, *Christian Theology*, 968.
[109] Schmiechen, *Saving Power*, 59.
[110] Morris, *The Atonement*, 9–10.
[111] Morris, *The Atonement*, 11.

Christians regarded themselves as anything other than faithful Jews. Certainly, the disciples believed that the Judaism portrayed by some of their contemporaries was at certain points incorrect. This is most notable in the disciples' insistence that Judaism had missed the fulfillment of the writings of Moses and the prophets in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth.[112] However, they continued to live as Jews, unless it contradicted the message of Christ. However, it was only a short time after Jesus' death that the Christ-followers were excluded from the synagogues.[113]

The second metaphor at use in the first century is that of slave redemption. The semantic range of the biblical redemption metaphor includes a variety of terms taken from the first-century slave trade.[114] These terms include redemption, ransom, release, deliverance, and salvation to name a few. To the first century audience, the metaphor of redemption provided a very prominent image within their own context. For first-century Christians, the experience of literal slavery was present in their everyday lives. Those who knew what literal slavery was and some of whom were literally slaves, insisted that in Christ people are free. Paul proclaims in Galatians 5:1, "It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery" (TNIV).[115] The metaphor of redemption brought one of two images to the mind in the first century audience. To the Gentile, it brought to mind the Roman slave trade in which a ransom served as the price of emancipation. To the Jew, it brought to mind the deliverance of Israel from Egyptian slavery.[116]

---

[112] Morris, *The Atonement*, 10.
[113] Morris, *The Atonement*, 10.
[114] Green and Baker, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross*, 58.
[115] Morris, *The Atonement*, 106–7.
[116] Green and Baker, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross*, 58.

For the first-century audience, especially the Gentile audience, redemption was not a religious word. For the New Testament writers, their use of the term was rooted in the non-religious nature of the entire word-group. A hearer in the original context did not need any exposure to a particular religious context to interpret the meaning, as it was secular terminology. Redemption was part of the language of the ordinary people in their ordinary life.[117] It was for this reason that the biblical writers and early church used this vivid picture-word. It is a word that everyone could understand and when properly used, it conveyed an important aspect of Christian teaching. Furthermore, it was the fact that it was not a religious word that allowed for its usefulness and spread into the wider Roman world.[118]

To the first century biblical writers and their audience the meaning of redemption was very specific. It meant not simply a deliverance, but deliverance in a very particular way. Following a battle, the victors would round up all the defeated soldiers. They would then make these survivors their slaves. However, if a particular individual was of certain standing or worth, the victors would let it be known back in his or her homeland that they would release the specific captive for a particular price. The remaining nationals in the homeland would collect money and possessions from everyone to pay the required amount. The sum of money paid to free the slave was called the "ransom." This process of buying back their fellow brothers or sisters was called "redemption." Furthermore, anyone who carried out this act was considered a "redeemer."[119]

In Judaism, the concept of "kinsman" provided a variation on the first-century action of redemption. Leon Morris notes that English does not contain an equivalent for

[117] Morris, *The Atonement*, 107.
[118] Morris, *The Atonement*, 107.
[119] Morris, *The Atonement*, 107–8.

the action of the kinsman redeemer.[120] However, the basic idea is rooted in the promotion of family interests. Since a family does many things, this covers a wide range of activities.[121] It denotes a man "who acted in any one of a number of ways to forward the welfare of the family."[122] In the context of slavery, individuals who have become very poor might have sold themselves into slavery as a means of settling their debt. However, the Old Covenant in Leviticus 25:47–49 dictated that the purchaser did not have the right to hold the slave for life. All Israelites who became slaves were entitled to be redeemed. The slave owner could not refuse to sell the slave to their kinsman redeemer, the next of kin. However, the slave owner could refuse to sell the slave to anyone else. This was known as the right to redemption.[123]

To the Jewish audience, the metaphor of slavery and redemption took on another nuance. For the Jewish reader it was impossible to mention deliverance from slavery without evoking the memory of Israel's deliverance from Egypt. The writings of Luke, in his Gospel and the book of Acts, both utilize a number of redemption terms. Luke uses these terms in such a way as to link the concept of redemption with the great act of God's deliverance of Israel in the Old Testament.[124] As Baker and Green articulate, the Lukan account of Jesus' entire mission, including his coming, his public mission, his death, his exaltation, and his present activity via the Spirit, was to play the role of instigating God's redemption.[125] Luke draws a clear similarity between the actions of Jesus and Moses.

---

[120] Morris, *The Atonement*, 110–11.
[121] Morris, *The Atonement*, 110–11.
[122] Morris, *The Atonement*, 111.
[123] Morris, *The Atonement*, 111.
[124] Green and Baker, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross*, 126–7.
[125] Green and Baker, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross*, 126–7.

Like Moses, the work of Christ marks the deliverance of the children of God from the oppression of the enemy.

The third metaphor at use in the biblical narrative is taken from the realm of interpersonal relationships. While Green and Baker admit that the term reconciliation is not used with much prominence in the New Testament, the conceptual umbrella used in the metaphor has a wide reach in the biblical narrative. The work of Christ is portrayed as bringing peace into all areas of the believer's world.[126] The metaphor implies a relationship that experiences three states: first friendship, then a quarrel, then friendship again. However, the metaphor does not always insist that there must be these three stages. If there are two parties that have always been at odds and they subsequently are brought into agreement the term of reconciliation most certainly can be applied to such a relationship.[127]

Reconciliation is not used as a catch all term for the atonement throughout the writings of Paul. Rather, Paul uses the term in context specific scenarios. Paul uses the term in Romans 5:10–11 to reference the relational reconciliation of humanity to God, in Colossians 1:20 to reference the reconciliation of the cosmos to God, and in Ephesians 2:16 to reference the interpersonal reconciliation between both Jew and Gentile to God and one another.[128] In 2 Corinthians 5, Paul's use of the reconciliation metaphor and the logic of his argument are both contextual. Paul's need is to counter the boasting of his opponents and to overcome the disharmony between himself and his audience at

---

[126] Green and Baker, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross*, 133.
[127] Morris, *The Atonement*, 133.
[128] Green and Baker, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross*, 84.

Corinth.[129] Paul turns the belief of the day on its head as he uses a familiar metaphor to proclaim,

> All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. (2 Cor 5:18–19, TNIV)

Similarly, in Galatians 3, Paul utilizes the metaphor of reconciliation to overcome the obvious problem of the fundamental distinction between Jew and Gentile. This distinction centered on the status of the law-abiding Jew in contrast to the lawless Gentile. Such a distinction had already caused Peter and Barnabas, along with other Jewish Christians, to withdraw from the Gentiles.[130]

The forth metaphor used in the biblical narrative is the image of sacrifice. The image of sacrifice comes from Israel's rich history in the temple sacrificial system. For instance, the writer of Hebrews qualifies the salvific significance of Jesus' death specifically in terms borrowed from Israel's sacrificial cult.[131] Green and Baker argue that Paul's theological categories were grounded in Jewish thought and that Jewish thought was prominently concerned with sacrifice for sins. Accordingly, for Paul, Jesus' death was best interpreted in sacrificial terms.[132] However, sacrifice did not have a monolithic meaning in ancient Israel. In part because of the loss of the temple, Israel had begun to think of various interpretations for the concept of sacrifice.[133] In the New Testament, when sacrificial language is used, it most often emphasized what Christ has done. Over and over again, the biblical authors emphasized the only sacrifice that matters

---

[129] Green and Baker, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross*, 84–85.
[130] Green and Baker, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross*, 86.
[131] Green and Baker, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross*, 124.
[132] Green and Baker, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross*, 64.
[133] Green and Baker, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross*, 129.

is the death of Jesus on Calvary's cross. This is clearly a metaphorical use of sacrificial imagery as Jesus' death was not a sacrifice in the literal sense any more than the redemption that he brought about was a literal purchase.[134]

In both the Scripture and the church's present theological papers, sacrifice is almost always used in a metaphorical sense. Other than the sacrificial system of the temple, reference to sacrifice does not describe a literal offering of animals. Typically the reference to sacrifice denotes some act done at a cost to oneself and for the benefit of others or for the future good for oneself.[135] For instance, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, the idea of sacrifice is present in the life of the Christian as he or she gives praise to God, serves his purposes in the world and cares for the disadvantaged amongst the community.[136] In Paul's letters and 1 Peter sacrifice is also spiritualized in terms of Christian living. Since Christ gave himself for our sake, the believer may draw near, which is a reference to the priest approaching the altar of sacrifice.[137]

When the New Testament writers used references to sacrifice, they meant that Christ had died with a purpose. Certainly, the image of sacrifice recalled the imagery of bloodshed, but the imagery was more about the meaning than the act of death. The death of Jesus was seen to accomplish in reality what the old sacrifices pointed to but could not do.[138] The accomplishment of Christ was the fulfillment of two specific aspects of the temple sacrifices. First, the death of Christ was believed to deal with the purification of the sinner and/or community. The sacrifice was not an exchange between human and

---

[134] Morris, *The Atonement*, 65–66.
[135] Morris, *The Atonement*, 43.
[136] Driver, *Understanding the Atonement*, 141.
[137] Driver, *Understanding the Atonement*, 142.
[138] Morris, *The Atonement*, 63.

God, but rather transference from human to animal.[139] Second, the imagery of animal sacrifice relied heavily on the identification between the sinner and the animal. Since the purpose was purification, the substitute needed to be pure, whole, and unblemished.[140]

Sacrifice provided the first century Jewish audience with an interpretive metaphor from their authoritative tradition and practice. For this reason, the metaphor quickly entered the theological and liturgical traditions of the church. The metaphor was a natural way of seeing Jesus and explaining the meaning of his death to the Jewish people. This interpretive tradition has continued as a major category for interpreting the death of Jesus in the modern church. The concept of sacrifice is virtually a constant in Christological discussions of the work of Christ down through the Reformers.[141] However, the use of the sacrificial metaphor does not contain the same traction within modern cultures unless the interpretive framework of the Old Testament is also taught and explained.

The fifth and final biblical metaphor is taken from the first-century battlefield. This fifth metaphor stems from a reinterpretation of the human condition. The metaphor of triumph over evil shifts the awareness towards the belief that humanity has lost control. Humanity is no longer themselves and is unable to choose or do good. In some cases, the affliction has come by humanity's own action, thus adding an element of ironic self-deception. In other cases, humanity has been subjugated to a loss of control because of the long-standing traditions, practices, and/or systems.[142] The first-century audience was very familiar with the same oppression named in the gospels. The gospel records numerous instances of people suffering from structures of exclusion and oppression.

---

[139] Schmiechen, *Saving Power*, 35–36.
[140] Schmiechen, *Saving Power*, 35–36.
[141] Schmiechen, *Saving Power*, 35–36.
[142] Schmiechen, *Saving Power*, 123.

Women, Samaritans, the sick in body and mind, the poor, and the social outcasts were all victims of this oppression.[143]

Jesus and his followers believed that the devil had significant control over the entire world. They referred to the world as the kingdom of the roaring lion in which the devil was an ever-present reality.[144] This understanding of the cosmic battle present in everyday life prompted Paul to instruct the Ephesians accordingly. Paul instructs the Ephesians,

> For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. (Eph 6:12, TNIV)

While the modern scientific era may reinterpret or outright dismiss these notions as an archaic and misinformed understanding of the world, it was none the less a pervasive perspective in the first-century.[145] The New Testament describes the demonic forces as serious opposition to the kingdom of God. These hostile forces desired to enslave and oppress people in bondage, trapping them in an inescapable state. These forces were understood to lie behind many of the religious, social, and political institutions.[146] It is this outlook on the human condition that leads the author of 1 John to proclaim that the meaning of Christ's life, death, and resurrection was to destroy the works of the devil (1 John 3:8).

Not only did the biblical authors and early church use the metaphor of conflict and triumph over evil, but Christ also used these metaphors. Jesus warned his listeners that there was another kingdom, another way, another master, who vied for humanity's

---

[143] Schmiechen, *Saving Power*, 123–4.
[144] Boyd, "Christus Victor View," 28.
[145] Driver, *Understanding the Atonement*, 71.
[146] Driver, *Understanding the Atonement*, 71.

loyalty (Matt 12:29).[147] The biblical account of Jesus' ministry provides many examples of Jesus casting out evil spirits or demons. These interactions further the metaphorical understanding of conflict with evil. In Judaism, individual demons were viewed as somewhat autonomous. However, in his interactions with the demonic, Jesus was instructing his believer of the demonic's solidarity with Satan, a view different from his contemporary's understanding.[148] Jesus instructed his followers that Satan was to be understood as an enemy with power who rules over a kingdom whose soldiers are demons. This enemy was disrupting creation and had entrenched humanity in an inescapable fallen state.[149] With God's authority, Jesus enters a world enslaved by Satan and does battle with the evil one. Exorcism is depicted using the imagery of the battlefield. This metaphor of conflict over evil was in keeping with the Old Testament vision of God's triumph on behalf of his people. Not only was God the great deliverer, but he would campaign military takeovers on their behalf. He would fight for his people, free them, and then dispel the evil, handing over the promise land to his chosen people.[150] To the first-century audience, interpreting the life, death, and resurrection of Christ using the conflict metaphor was grounded in their scriptural understanding of God. It created continuity between the scripture they knew and the life they witnessed.

---

[147] Driver, *Understanding the Atonement*, 71–72.
[148] Driver, *Understanding the Atonement*, 72.
[149] Driver, *Understanding the Atonement*, 72.
[150] Driver, *Understanding the Atonement*, 72–73.

Chapter 2: Boundaries for Proper Interpretation of the Atonement

Kaleidoscope theory encourages the church to contextualize the atonement in a manner that is appropriate for its own setting. This task of contextualizing the atonement tests the boundaries for proper interpretation of the atonement. This chapter will establish the church's invariables for proper interpretation of the atonement. First, the primary orientation for interpretation of the atonement is God's purpose in the world. The purpose of God and his missional character sets the boundaries for proper interpretation of the atonement. Second, every interpretation of the atonement must include the non-negotiable of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. While Christ's life, death, and resurrection are interpreted differently in the gospels and New Testament letters, it is the pinnacle of the biblical narrative. The biblical narrative is clear that Christ only does what the Father God instructs (John 5:19), rooting the work of Christ within God's purpose to bring restoration through the atonement. Third, through the mission of Christ, God establishes his church. The believer can take confidence that the church is an intended reality of God's purpose and not an additional by-product or benefit of Christ's ministry. The intentional formation of the church for the purpose of mission gives meaning to the church's practices. Lastly, this chapter will examine two case studies based upon the boundaries of proper interpretation of the atonement. First, we will examine Green and Baker's critique of penal substitution. The biblical narrative's structure establishes both Father God and Jesus Christ as primary subjects in the atonement. This perspective on God is at odds with the common interpretation of penal substitution. Second, we will examine the church's practice of baptism and the Lord's Supper. These two sacraments stand as the evangelical protestant church's primary actions for remembering,

celebrating, and proclaiming the atonement in both word and action. The purpose of God to bring the atonement and the resulting message of the atonement to the world gives impetus to the practice of the church. God's purpose for creation, Christ's life, death, and resurrection, and the propulsion toward community influence the practices of the church. A proper interpretation of the atonement perpetuates a communal perspective within the church.

God's Purpose

Kaleidoscope theory identifies God's purpose for humanity and creation as the primary criterion for evaluating a proper interpretation of the atonement. God's purpose sets the trajectory of scripture, Jesus Christ's earthly ministry, and the ministry of the church. Kaleidoscope theory inspires the church to contextualize the atonement for new cultures in a manner that interprets God as the primary subject of the atonement with the intent of bringing about the kingdom of God. This section will establish the boundaries for understand God's redemptive action in pursuing humanity. First, this section will examine God's purpose for creation in his creative and redemptive action. By comparing events and people to God's purpose, kaleidoscope theory identifies those things that agree or oppose the work of God. Second, this section will examine the nature of the narrative plot of scripture. While God's creative action starts the biblical narrative, the problem of sin serves as the defining conflict. The middle of the biblical narrative includes God's work to overcome the issues of sin on behalf of humanity. This is the action of the atonement. Lastly, this section will examine the believers' call to participation with God's purpose. It is through participation with God's purpose that the believer brings the atonement into a particular context.

All interpretations of the atonement must arise out of a biblical vision of God's overall purpose.[1] The biblical narrative's use of metaphor is therefore not the end result, but rather it attempts to describe and characterize something greater than itself. The "thing" that metaphor points to is the atonement. However, the atonement is not the destination, but rather the means. The "there" of the biblical narrative is the fully realized new heaven and earth in the eschaton. The purpose of God is the biblical description of God's design for human life. The atonement is the work of God on behalf of humanity to confront and resolve the problem of sin in all of God's creation. This work of God includes both Christ's earthly ministry and the present and future reality to which God calls the church to participate and benefit. Kaleidoscope theory asserts that humanity is unable to comprehend the atonement in its entirety, because humanity is unable to free itself from its fallible nature and fully comprehend the incomprehensible nature of God. The central aim of scripture is the revelation of God and his purpose, around which all else is oriented. Scripture, while written from a human perspective, is not first and foremost about humanity. Nor is the Bible about a particular segment of humanity, such as Israel or the early church. The Bible is arranged in a particular manner that plots the theological principle of God bringing about his purpose throughout history.[2] While recounting historical events of the work of a particular people, the biblical narrative is not a chronological book. The hermeneutical key for a Christian reading of the scriptures is the recognition that holding the two testaments together is the one aim of God. The purpose of God in history illuminates the character of God.[3] Historical accounts such as Israel's release from bondage in Egypt or the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus of

[1] Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, 350.
[2] Green, "Practicing the Gospel in a Post-Critical World," 394.
[3] Green, "Practicing the Gospel in a Post-Critical World," 394.

Nazareth point towards a larger trajectory running throughout the whole of the biblical narrative. This purpose of God is the defining trajectory through which the church must view all other scriptural stories and subsequent theology. God's purpose serves as a predominant correlation between kaleidoscope atonement and ecclesiology.

The church must contextualize the atonement in a manner that is accurate to the purpose of God. The natural outflow of the kaleidoscope church is the mission to contextualize the gospel message for every audience.[4] Joel Green and Mark Baker charge the church with the task of grappling with the biblical witness and the theological tradition. The church must make sense of the biblical narrative, the historical tradition of the church, and the context of the audience. Green and Baker admit the difficult reality that there is no guarantee that the church's contextualization will be authentically Christian.[5] While this is not very comforting to most Christians, it is true throughout church history, including in the life of the early church. Within the New Testament, there was a need for corrective and conversation as to the limits for proper understanding of the atonement. The most visible example of this corrective is the Jerusalem Council recounted in Acts 15, in which the apostles came together to sort out what would become the common witness to a grand question of Christian practice in different contexts.

The church evaluates the significance of events and people in their accordance with God's purpose. As Kevin Vanhoozer states, "The true, the good, and the beautiful alike are what they are only by virtue of their respective 'fits' with the divine theo-drama."[6] The trajectory of God's purpose decisively welcomes those people and events that work to fulfill God's purpose and rejects those in opposition. This trajectory

---

[4] Green and Baker, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross*, 261.
[5] Green and Baker, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross*, 261.
[6] Vanhoozer, *Drama of Doctrine*, 108.

continues into our present day. As Paul proclaims, "And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose" (Rom 8:28, NASB). God calls humanity into alignment with his purpose, so that God may realize his purpose here on earth. However, to treat scripture as only a witness about God undercuts its authoritative nature. The scriptural narrative is more than a particular perspective on God. It is God's authoritative story about his trajectory.[7] The narrative is a vehicle by which God presents his own perspective. The events of Exodus, Calvary, Pentecost, and the second coming are all part of a larger story. They are God's purpose coming to fruition by his own initiative, as illuminated by himself to his people.

At the heart of kaleidoscope theory is not the desire to create importance, but the identification of kernels. These kernels cultivate the trajectory between the beginning, middle, and end of the biblical narrative, and so identify certain events over others as cruxes in the development of the narrative.[8] The plot and structure of scripture identifies the narrative need found in the conflict and resolved within the climax. The need represented in the narrative of scripture is unmistakably the conflict of sin in humanity and the world. The biblical narrative identifies sin as the conflict of the biblical plot. The resolution of sin in God's work of the atonement constitutes the heart of the biblical narrative. This situates the life, death, and resurrection of Christ within the overarching narrative, which is the story of God's purpose coming to fruition. Scripture is the narrative of God's history with us. In an important sense, the Bible is nothing less than the record of the actualization and ongoing promise of the purpose of God in the history

[7] Green, "Reading the Gospels and Acts as Narrative," 47.
[8] Green, "Practicing the Gospel in a Post-Critical World," 394.

of the cosmos.[9] Narratives move forward in the service of a central aim, in relation to which all else is oriented. The kaleidoscopic church asserts that the aim of the biblical narrative is unmistakably God's desire and action to bring about restoration to all brokenness in his creation.

Kaleidoscope theory necessitates a narrative understanding of the scripture that involves a dynamic plot of beginning, middle, and end. The atonement is realized progressively through the story as God works to bring about his purpose. This perspective implies a divine freedom that brings God into the world, and not away from it.[10] The middle section of the story is the ongoing conflict of sin disrupting the purpose of God. Based upon such a perspective of the atonement, it is possible to speak of sin as the denial of God's purpose for humanity within the creation and in relation to God. Therefore, Scripture shows humanity as alienated from God in his character and plan for humanity. Humanity is alienated from God, creation, and itself because it is not working towards God's purpose. Divine judgment, therefore, maintains the integrity of God as the biblical narrative views God as implementing his will over sin and evil in creation. As Schmiechen states, "God exercises sovereignty, not in the form of withdrawal, but in terms of the faithful God who upholds the divine purpose in the face of opposition."[11]

The biblical narrative is not capable of an infinite breadth of meaning. In Acts, Paul is found in the synagogues locked in proposal and counterproposal regarding a messianic reading of the Scriptures.[12] The presence in Scripture of diverse witnesses of Jesus demonstrate that the narrative of Scripture can be plotted in different ways and still

---

[9] Green, "Practicing the Gospel in a Post-Critical World," 392.
[10] Schmiechen, *Saving Power*, 218.
[11] Schmiechen, *Saving Power*, 219.
[12] Green, "The (Re-)Turn to Narrative," 34–35.

remain faithful to the one purpose of God.[13] It is impossible to tell the story of God in relation to God's people without showing how the path of God's eternal purpose passes through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus and the propulsion into the community of the Church.[14] Any interpretation of the atonement that attempts to bypass God's creative activity, the life, death and resurrection of Christ, or the church cannot represent itself as Christian. Furthermore, an interpretation of the atonement must also remain faithful to the orthodox Christian creeds' interpretations of God, Jesus, and the church. While the atonement may be represented in a kaleidoscope of interpretations, every interpretation of the atonement must remain faithful to Scripture.

The believer must inhabit the canonical drama and live out the drama of the atonement. As Vanhoozer reminds the church, the church's pursuit to construct doctrines and proper theological understanding is not to define God as an object, but rather to aid the believers' right relationship to God.[15] The church participates in the biblical narrative in the same way. The church, acting within the narrative of God's story, becomes part of the theo-drama, communicating and acting out the atonement in the present. This present contextualization of the atonement is the driving force behind kaleidoscope theory. The scriptural narrative recounts God's purpose from the origins of creation to the consummation of this world and the creation of a new world.

Kaleidoscope theory understands the predestination of God as God calling the believer into synchronization with his purposes. The believer receives God's directives and obeys the call to partnership. The writer of Ephesians tells us that faith and not works save believers (Eph 2:8–9), but God still created the believer for works predestined by

---

[13] Green, "The (Re-)Turn to Narrative," 34–35.
[14] Green, "The (Re-)Turn to Narrative," 34–35.
[15] Vanhoozer, *Drama of Doctrine*, 107.

God. Believers read the scriptural narrative in an attempt to participate more deeply, passionately, and truthfully in the drama of redemption. The participation of the believer in the scriptural narrative protects against intellectual apprehension and hypocrisy. Furthermore, it encourages the transformation of the heart and motivation of the hand.[16] Jesus mixes no words calling those concerned with only intellectual legalism "whitewashed tombs." Jesus calls out the legalism and lack of heart conversion in the Pharisees, saying, "So you, too, outwardly appear righteous to men, but inwardly you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness" (Matt 23:28, NASB). The atonement inspires believers beyond intellectual assent towards participation in the kingdom of God.

Jesus Christ

Any interpretation of the atonement must account for the life, death, and resurrection of Christ. The earthly ministry of Christ remains the center of Christian faith. The work of Christ serves as the motivation for the body of Christ. This section will examine Christ's nature as a non-negotiable for interpretations of the atonement. First, this section will establish that Jesus Christ's ministry is grounded in the purpose of God. The biblical narrative is insistent in its claim that Christ's ministry was an outflow of God's redemptive action for humanity. Second, the biblical narrative describes the life, death, and resurrection of Christ as the pinnacle of the atonement. Therefore, any interpretation of the atonement must also promote Christ as the pinnacle of the atonement. This goes beyond the current practice of utilizing only the death and resurrection of Christ in its articulation of the atonement. Lastly, Jesus' life, death, and resurrection give meaning to Christian belief and practice. Kaleidoscope theory

[16] Vanhoozer, *Drama of Doctrine*, 107.

encourages the church to form church belief and practice that articulates the importance of not only the death of Christ, but also the life of Christ in interpreting the atonement.

An orientation to the purpose of God in the atonement allows for a proper understanding of God's relationship with Christ's death. Though Jesus is obedient to the point of death on a cross, as Joel Green indicates, God's saving act is not a response to Jesus' actions. Rather, Jesus' actions are those of the Father. Luke 5:19–23 indicates that Jesus' ministry was the Father's ministry. The Gospel of John indicates in a number of places that Jesus only ministered in correlation with God's purpose. As the gospel writer of John emphasizes,

> Therefore Jesus answered and was saying to them, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, unless *it is* something He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner. For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself is doing; and *the Father* will show Him greater works than these, so that you will marvel. For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son also gives life to whom He wishes. For not even the Father judges anyone, but He has given all judgment to the Son, so that all will honor the Son even as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son, does not honor the Father who sent Him.' (John 5:19–23, NASB)

The Son does nothing that is not in the will of the Father. Despite the potential for discontinuity, the biblical narrative portrays the mission and ministry of Christ as the very action and desire of God. The biblical authors took great care to orient the mission of Jesus and his personhood within the monotheistic Jewish view of Yahweh. It is only through an examination of the purpose of the Father that the Son's mission has any relevance and context in the scriptural narrative.

Jesus' mission has God's purpose as the motivating factor and driving force. Jesus' mission only finds its authority when it is placed within the context of the Father's purpose. Certainly, one would not expect discontinuity between the Father and Son, yet

that reality is present as a possibility in the gospel of John. The Gospel of John clearly establishes that Jesus came with the authority of the Father and spoke only what he was given to speak and did what he saw the Father do (John 5:19–20). The gospel writer John draws the clear tension between the continuity of Christ's work with the purposes of God and yet maintains its uniqueness. The complexity of Christ's divinity and humanity establishes itself in its relation to the atonement. The humanity of Jesus shows the potential for discontinuity and reveals the obedience of the Son to the Father. The writer of the Gospel of John highlights Jesus' partnership with the plans of God for his children. The atoning work of Christ must then arise out of a biblical vision of God's overall purpose.[17] The life, death, and resurrection of Christ cannot be interpreted in a manner that is in opposition to God's purpose for humanity.

The life, death, and ministry of Christ are decisive acts in the script of the atonement. Certainly, there is no understanding the atonement without an interpretation of Jesus Christ. As Green and Baker establish, all reflections upon the atonement must include a reflection upon the life of Christ. The early church established that the life, death, and resurrection of Christ are an incontestable historical event that constitutes the Christian rule of faith.[18] Furthermore, the rule of faith establishes that the eternal purpose of God is central to comprehending the life, death, and resurrection of Christ.[19] Lastly, while every interpretation of the atonement must include an interpretation of the life, death and resurrection of Christ, the historical creeds of the church are silent on how the benefits of the atonement are transferred to the believer.[20] While interpretations of the

---

[17] Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, 350.
[18] Green and Baker, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross*, 17.
[19] Green and Baker, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross*, 18.
[20] Green and Baker, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross*, 18.

atonement may describe the benefits of the atonement to the believer in a kaleidoscope of ways, all interpretations must maintain a connection to the life, death, and resurrection of Christ.

A proper interpretation of the atonement must include not just the death of Christ, but also his life. Kaleidoscope theory encourages the western church to expand its interpretation of the atonement to go beyond just the substitutionary death of Christ. The biblical narrative employs a kaleidoscope of purpose statements for the earthly ministry of Christ. These purpose statements include,

> to fulfill the law (Matt 5:17), to call sinners to repentance (Matt 9:13), to bring a sword (Matt 10:34), to give his life as a ransom for many (Mark 10:45), to proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God in the other cities (Luke 4:43), to seek and to save the lost (Luke 19:10), and more.[21]

The kaleidoscope of purpose statements within Scripture gives meaning to the death of Christ. Any interpretation of the atonement with a claim to being Christian must represent the death of Jesus in a manner that accounts for the life of Christ. Jesus' death must be viewed as a consequence of "a life lived in service of God's purpose and in opposition to all manner of competing social, political, and religious agenda."[22] The historical execution of Christ does not have meaning without the larger context of God's purpose.

The mission of Christ in the atonement is the foundation by which all Christians must orient their lives. However, in many Christian circles defining what it means to be a Christian does not include the same acts that Jesus performed. As Leon Morris asserted, "no-one can study the meaning of the cross without coming to see that it has its implications also for the daily life of every follower of the crucified one."[23] The author of

---

[21] Green, "Kaleidoscopic View," 164.
[22] Green, "Kaleidoscopic View," 165.
[23] Morris, *The Atonement*, 13.

the Gospel of John draws a clear connection between Christ's ministry and the believers' ministry,

> As [God] sent [Jesus] into the world, I also have sent [the disciples] into the world. (John 17:18, NASB) So Jesus said to [the disciples] again, 'Peace be with you; as the Father has sent Me, I also send you.' (John 20:21, NASB)

The body of Christ receives its mandate from the headship of Christ. His mission becomes our mission, and his passion becomes our passion. The believer models his or her life after the cross and therefore has self-sacrificial love as its basic orientation.

While this connection between the atonement and the work of the believer are certainly not new, it goes beyond the common affirmation in the western church of what it means to be a Christian.[24] Certainly, the cross saves believers from bad things, as most churches openly profess. However, Christ also saves the believer for something.[25] A kaleidoscopic approach to the atonement is caught in the tension of the past and future of the atonement. Colin Gunton illuminates this point in his book, *The Actuality of the Atonement*. Because of the emphasis on the forensic exchange of penal substitution, the western church speaks too easily of the wiping out of the past, as if the whole of salvation has already happened. Certainly, the death of Christ provides forgiveness for sins and is complete. As the writer of Hebrew states, Christ was a sacrifice once for all time (Heb 9:28). However, the salvation of Christ continues into the present. The past action of Christ motivates the actions of the believer. Theology has made this distinction through use of progressive and positional sanctification. A kaleidoscope church must openly embrace the tension of competing metaphors that describe the atonement as both

---

[24] Guder, "The Church as Missional Community," 118.
[25] Baker, "Contextualizing the Scandal of the Cross," 17.

complete and ongoing. Chapter five will discuss at length the ability of the church to live in the tensions of the atonement.

The Church

The final coordinate for interpreting the atonement is the church. An interpretation of the atonement must account for the church. This section will establish that a proper interpretation of the atonement will encourage inclusion into the body of Christ. First, this section will establish that the formation of the church is rooted in God's purpose for humanity. God's design for human life includes the believers' inclusion in the life of the church. Second, this section will establish that the primary work of Jesus on earth was the revelation and formation of community. Christ's life was lived out drawing people into community. Furthermore, his life, death, and resurrection have removed any barrier to enjoying the true fellowship of community with God and in the church. Lastly, a proper interpretation of the atonement draws believers into participation within community. With the barrier to community removed by Christ, the believer experiences the atonement in the life of the church. Interpretations of the atonement describe the benefits of community in a variety of ways.

Guiding a narrative reading is the belief that God is a missionary God. The biblical narrative's use of metaphor is therefore not the end result, but rather it attempts to describe and characterize something greater than itself. The "thing" that metaphor points to is the purpose of God. However, the atonement is not the destination, but rather the means. The church, fully realized in eschatology, is the "there." The guiding theme is the notion of *missio Dei*. God is a missionary God and his church is on mission. The church exists by the grace of God's missional work and for the furtherance of his missional

aims.[26] The purpose of God is his missionary work towards humanity. This missional work of God draws the church into the biblical narrative as ambassadors for God amongst humanity. Much has been written on the topic of *missio Dei* and a full treatment of this doctrine goes far outside the scope of this thesis. What needs to be stated is that the church's involvement in bringing the purpose of God into reality in the present is a missionary participation with God. Missional presence and activity is participation in the purpose of God and results in an orientation towards the praxis of the atonement.[27]

When the church leaves the purpose of God out, it leaves theology void of any sense of purpose for the church. Schmiechen identifies this reality as the primary problem with the North American church's ability to define its purpose and benefits to the believer:

> In American religion, this has led to the question: Does God love me? The conservative answer is 'Yes, if ....' God's love is conditional, depending on adherence to doctrines and practices of churches. But this attempt to control and channel grace usually provokes great protest in the name of God's sovereignty. By contrast, the liberal answer is a resolute 'Yes!' with an affirmation of God's unconditional love. But since there is no expectation to participate in the community of faith or to place oneself at the disposal of God's purposes, then faith becomes a matter between the individual and God.[28]

Certainly, Schmiechen paints with a broad, crude brush in this hyperbolic statement. Yet, the driving principle rings true. God's purpose in his actions, in scripture, and continuing until the consummation of history, show us that the atonement is something done not only by God for us on an individual basis, but also something accomplished by God through the community of believers. This characterizes the theology as primarily about praxis. McKnight is quick to defend this understanding, asserting that it is not an attack

---

[26] McKnight, *A Community Called Atonement*, 135.
[27] McKnight, *A Community Called Atonement*, 135.
[28] Schmiechen, *Saving Power*, 323.

on what God does for us, but rather, "atonement is embodied in what God does for us in such a way that we are summoned to participate with God in his redemptive work."[29] God invites believers in to participate in the act of the atonement in the life of the church. The church finds its identity and mission in the purpose of God to bring about the kingdom of God. Those who have experienced this atonement devote themselves to taking up the banner of God and bringing about the kingdom of God in our churches, our neighborhoods, our families, and our lives.

The biblical narrative depicts Father God as the author of the atonement, but the church must pay specific attention to Jesus Christ's actions in the gospels and their interpretations by the apostles. The scriptural narrative's inclusion of the church as a participator in God's purpose puts the church in a special relationship with God. Yet, the foundation of the church finds its origins in the work of Christ. Certainly, one cannot separate the work of Jesus from God, yet Jesus' entire life, death, and resurrection points to his role as the originator of community here on earth. This community stands as a foretaste of the eternal fellowship in the kingdom of God, which is yet to be realized. All of the biblical metaphors in the New Testament speak to the reality of a new life created through Christ. In his life, climaxing in his death, Jesus provided a means of participating in this new way of life. The incarnate life speaks to God's desire to enter into the world and human history and live out the divine principle of life.[30] Christ enters our world and lives out true life so that we may know what it looks like and be willing to share in it ourselves.

---

[29] McKnight, *A Community Called Atonement*, 117.
[30] Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, 351–2.

Jesus' life, death, and resurrection lead us to the conclusion that Christ reveals both God's essence and his design for human life. More pointedly, in the words of Stanley Grenz, "[Jesus] reveals the God who is the eternal community (the social Trinity), and he discloses God's intention for human existence, namely, life-in-community."[31] As stated above, Jesus embodies the divine principle of life, namely, that living in obedience to the Father and for the sake of others is the true pathway to community, which constitutes the divine reign.[32] However, Christ is not only the revealer of community, but he is also the effecter of community. He opens up the way for us to participate in true fellowship, with both God and the rest of humanity.[33] Proponents of kaleidoscope theory, like Colin Gunton, have argued that the calling of the church is the creation of reconciled forms of community. These reconciled communities are for both the internal benefit of the church and the external benefit to the world.[34] The kaleidoscopic church views human community as a gift of the God, who is himself in divine communion in the trinity. God calls the church to establish reconciled communities in the present, so that they might be echoes of God's very being. The church not only fellowships in community, but also worships and does mission in community in harmony with the life of the Trinity.

Jesus forms the foundation for a new fellowship of humanity. Our Lord Jesus stands at the beginning of this new fellowship for humanity. This community is named "the church" by the New Testament writers. The new fellowship is an eschatological community of God that finds its pattern for life in the triune love relationship of the

---

[31] Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, 350.
[32] Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, 350.
[33] Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, 351.
[34] Gunton, *The Actuality of Atonement*, 199–200.

eternal divine community. As Stanley Grenz states, "Jesus' entire life, death, and resurrection mark his work in originating the proleptic community, the foretaste of the eternal fellowship in the kingdom of God."[35] The second return will complete Christ's work as the originator and effecter of community as he establishes the eschatological community in the fullness of a new heaven and new earth. Until that day, the Spirit provides the power and influence of Christ to sustain the church today. As Jesus himself proclaims,

> Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on My own initiative, but the Father abiding in Me does His works. Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me; otherwise believe because of the works themselves. Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do, he will do also; and greater works than these he will do; because I go to the Father. Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it. (John 14:10–14, NASB)

The gospel writer of John draws a direct line from the purposes and authority of Father God to the Son, Jesus Christ, straight through to the believer and the church.

Jesus' life and mission was lived out gathering people into community. The actions of Christ in calling together the disciples and entering into fellowship with the marginalized, outcast, sinner, Samaritan, and Gentile established the expanding nature of the eschatological community. As Peter Schmiechen says, "Atonement theology must connect the cross of Christ with the body of Christ."[36] Kaleidoscope theory urges leaders of the church to proclaim, through preaching and teaching, the social ethic and bonds of community that the believer does not realize in isolation from other believers today.[37] Jesus' entire life, death, and resurrection points to his role as the originator of community

---

[35] Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, 352.
[36] Schmiechen, *Saving Power*, 335.
[37] Schmiechen, *Saving Power*, 335.

here on earth. This community stands as a foretaste of the eternal fellowship in the kingdom of God, which the church has yet to realize fully in the present. As Stanley Grenz states, "Until that great day, the risen Lord continues to function as the originator of community life through his ongoing presence in the church, a presence mediated by his Spirit."[38]

The narrative of scripture comes into its own only when the church realizes it in the life of the church as they understand and respond in action.[39] The message of the scriptural narrative is transformative by its very nature. To read it simply as a historical report would be to miss the Holy Spirit's work of inspiration and illumination. The church can only understand the realities of the scriptural narrative when it participates and transforms itself by utilizing the message of the biblical narrative. God's purpose throughout the scriptural narrative draws the life of the church into participation. It may seem like an obvious conclusion that the church seeks to live in alignment with the purpose of God. However, much of the discussion surrounding the atonement and ecclesiology includes what the church does, at the expense of the formation of the church. As Stanley Grenz indicates in his work *Theology for the Community of God*, participation in the scriptural narrative draws the church into formation termed "community."[40] The church may summarize God's purpose for the world by employing the term community. Just as the triune God is the eternal fellowship of the Trinitarian members, so also God's purpose for creation is that the world participate in "community." The participation of the church in the scriptural narrative includes both what the church does and how the church forms itself.

---

[38] Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, 352.
[39] Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine*, 235.
[40] Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, 112.

Kaleidoscope theory pushes this "how" into the mission of the church. Atonement theory in the North American church has been concentrated on the how of atonement, most often placing it in a forensic exchange. However, in kaleidoscope theory, the church communicates Christ's benefits to the believer primarily through the mission of the church.[41] Schmiechen has worked hard to show that any given atonement theory includes both an interpretation of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection as well as some indication of how the saving power of Christ is transmitted to believers across time and space.[42] The how of the atonement is the formative correlation between atonement and ecclesiology. The church finds its identity and mission in the purpose of God to reach the world with his message. Alternatively, to put it in the scriptural metaphor of interpersonal relationships:

> All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. (2 Cor 5:18–20, NIV)

The church is a group of gathered ambassadors for God. The shift towards a kaleidoscopic view of the atonement will drive churches in the missional effort of representing Christ with culturally appropriate metaphors of the atonement.

The kaleidoscope of metaphors for the atonement describes participation in Christ's new community in a variety of ways. Jesus' sacrifice covers the sin of humanity, which incites God's condemnatory verdict against us, the wall of guilt can no longer bar us from enjoying reconciliation with God, and the alien powers that reign over us have

---

[41] Schmiechen, *Saving Power*, 355.
[42] Schmiechen, *Saving Power,* 354–5.

been dethroned. This most definitely includes our guilty nature before God as a result of sin, but it goes beyond such an understanding to include reconciliation between others, ourselves, the world itself, and victory over any powers ruling over us. Jesus' life and death facilitates the community God purposes to establish. Through his life and death, Jesus opened the way to fellowship with God by transforming us from enemies into his friends.[43] His death is the opening up of the definition of God's people. It creates a way for all to come into community, not just the select few of a specific ancestral heritage.

Case Study I: Penal Substitution

The initial aim of Joel Green and Mark Baker in publishing *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross* was to provide the church with new ways to understand the meaning of the cross that goes beyond the present understanding in the western church. This has brought kaleidoscope theory into direct conflict with proponents of penal substitution. This section will examine the conflict between kaleidoscope theory and penal substitution in the present church. First, this section will examine Green and Baker's evaluation of penal substitution. This evaluation will examine both the theological and practical critiques leveled against the western church's understanding of penal substitution. Secondly, this section will examine the criticisms waged against Green and Baker's work from proponents of penal substitution. This will also include later responses from Green and Baker regarding these criticisms. Finally, this section will examine Green and Baker's attempts to recover a biblical understanding of substitutional atonement.

Green and Baker have utilized God's purpose, Jesus' work, and propulsion towards community to critique the common representation of penal substitution in the western church. Much of the writing emerging from the supporters of kaleidoscope

[43] Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, 351.

theory has called for a rejection of penal substitution and a reconstruction of substitutional atonement. For instance, Joel Green's work "Must We Imagine the Atonement in Penal Substitutionary Terms? Questions, Caveats, and a Plea" from *The Atonement Debate: Papers from the London Symposium on the Theology of Atonement* spends a substantial amount of time critiquing penal substitution, rather than building a positive view of kaleidoscope theory. There is no doubt that kaleidoscope theory emerges in direct antagonism to the North American assertion of penal substitution atonement. This contrast arises from the shift in the foundational methodology.

Kaleidoscope theory identifies God's purposes as the paradigm through which all metaphors must view the cross. Penal substitution certainly maintains Father God's role and purpose in the atonement drama, but it does not do enough to maintain both Jesus Christ and Father God's roles as subject and not object. Proponents of penal substitution have also articulated this objection.[44] Baker critiques penal substitution in his book, *Contextualizing the Scandal of the Cross,* from a narrative perspective. The biblical narrative depicts the events of Christ's life, death, and resurrection upon two story lines. The first is God as acting subject and the second is Jesus Christ as the acting subject. In neither story line does the biblical narrative portray God or Jesus as the object being acted upon by the other. Based on this assessment of the biblical narrative Baker rejects penal substitution because of its tendencies to portray God and/or Christ as the object, being acted upon.[45] God's purpose is the defining criteria for evaluating a reflection upon the atonement. God's purpose is not maintained when the cross is depicted as God's

[44] Williams, "Penal Substitution," 78.
[45] Baker, "Contextualizing the Scandal of the Cross," 17.

punishment falling on Christ (God as subject, Christ as object) or as Christ's appeasement or persuasion of God (Christ as subject, God as object).[46]

Kaleidoscope theory promotes a reading of Scripture that portrays God as passionately pursuing humanity. Unlike the unhealthy consequences of Anselm's approach to the atonement, God is not unalterably alienated from the world and in need of human appeasement. Rather, God will not accept the present state of the world and thus enters into relation with creation to achieve his purpose. The entrance into relationship with creation includes not only the work of Christ, but also that of Yahweh in the Old Testament and the Holy Spirit in the early church. Green puts a significant distance between his interpretation of the atonement and penal substitution in his insistence that the atonement is much larger than just the exchange within the cross. Green criticizes penal substitution for its inability to integrate the reality of Jesus' death within the broader context of Jesus' life, his resurrection, and God's purpose. Darrell Guder recounts the historical reduction of the biblical message of salvation within evangelical theology. In his chapter, "The Church as Missional Community," Guder asserts that evangelical theology underwent a reductionism that resulted in emphasis upon individual salvation, how it was attained, and how it was maintained. This perspective diminished or distorted the biblical understanding of the corporate and cosmic scope of the atonement.[47] Gary Williams, a proponent of penal substitution, agrees with Green and Baker that the western evangelical church's articulation of penal substitution has not adequately made the connection between the life of Christ and the atonement. Furthermore, he encourages fellow proponents of penal substitution to take

[46] Baker, "Contextualizing the Scandal of the Cross," 17.
[47] Guder, "The Church as Missional Community," 118.

seriously this task and maintain a thoughtful articulation of penal substitution that takes seriously the implications of Christ's life for the meaning of the atonement.[48] The mission of Christ most certainly included an opposition to all competing social, political, and religious agenda's of Jesus' context.[49] Schmiechen echoes these sentiments in his work, *Saving Power*. For it is only when one starts from the position of God's faithfulness to his own divine purpose, that anyone can begin to understand the events of scripture and today in correlation with history's movement towards God's goal.[50]

Green and Baker have also identified negative impacts that penal substitution theory has breathed into the life of the church. In his paper, *Must We Imagine the Atonement in Penal Substitutionary Terms? Questions, Caveats, and a Plea*, Green crystallizes his dissatisfaction with the reception of penal substitution in the western church. Green calls for accountability for the way in which a number of readers have heard penal substitution theory and responded wrongly. The negative impact calls for a scrutiny surrounding penal substitution. Green continues by challenging proponents of penal substitution in his assertion that the church must assess an articulation of a doctrine, such as penal substitution, at least in part, with respect to how the church receives it and continues to articulate and represent it within the church.[51] God intends the atonement to inspire the life of church, and thus, if it inspires wrongly, the church must examine the inspiration's source. Kaleidoscope theology takes issue with the intensely individualistic approach that penal substitution inspires.[52] Much of the problem directly relates to the implications for community life in regard to salvation. If salvation deals only with the

---

[48] Williams, "Penal Substitution," 81.
[49] Green, "Kaleidoscopic View," 165.
[50] Schmiechen, *Saving Power*, 218.
[51] Green, "Must We Imagine the Atonement in Penal Substitutionary Terms?," 160.
[52] Green, "Must We Imagine the Atonement in Penal Substitutionary Terms?," 166.

individual, with no connection to any surrounding community, then the interpretation leaves no basis to inspire the life of the church. In the individualistic approach, the interpretation transforms the church into a people-pleasing institution that caters to the desires and needs of the individual.

Opponents of kaleidoscope theory have suggested that Green and Baker's assessment of penal substitution is nothing more than a theological "straw man."[53] These opponents have questioned Green and Baker's decision not to interact with more nuanced articulations of penal satisfaction written by some contemporary theologians.[54] Baker defends their work sighting the focus of their critique. Green and Baker were primarily concerned with the understanding of the atonement at a popular level. Scholarly discussion with professional theologians was of secondary concern. Rather, Green and Baker desired to construct an alternative to penal substitution for church leaders such as Sunday school teachers, Christian camp counselors, preachers, and evangelists. In his follow up work, *Proclaiming the Scandal of the Cross*, Baker laments his opponents' evaluation of Green and his work. Baker hopes that those interacting with his and Green's work at a scholarly level will not dismiss it with the belief that it is only caricature or straw man. However, Baker maintains that though the understanding of penal substitution in his book is crude and misguided, it is a straw man that is alive and well at the popular level in the western church.[55] Despite criticism of their articulation of

---

[53] Williams, "Penal Substitution," 86.

[54] Williams, "Penal Substitution," 86. In "Contextualizing the Scandal of the Cross," (29–30) Baker recounts Green and his decision not to interact with current nuanced views of penal substitution. Baker highlights both Kevin Vanhoozer in *The Drama of Doctrine* and Hans Boersma in *Violence, Hospitality, and the Cross* as steps in the right direction by proponents of penal substitution. Baker acknowledges that Green and himself chose to critique a misrepresentation of penal substitution that they both believed to be alive in the western evangelical church of today.

[55] Baker, "Contextualizing the Scandal of the Cross," 193.

penal substitution, proponents of penal substitution have also committed to correcting misrepresentations of penal substitution in the western evangelical church.[56]

In *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross*, Green and Baker do refer to some contemporary proponents of penal satisfaction. However, the representation of penal satisfaction in Green and Baker's book is a crude understanding of Charles Hodge's atonement theology alive in the western church today.[57] In the eyes of Green and Baker, it does not represent an authentically biblical interpretation of the atonement. They chose Hodge's perspective because it represents the most significant theological interpretation formulated within the context of American modernism. Baker acknowledges that despite the pitfalls of the many interpretations of penal substitution, there are contemporary scholars who have put forward notable corrections. Among these interpretations are Hans Boersma and Kevin Vanhoozer.[58] Both of these interpretations of the atonement avoid the pitfalls of divine violence from the Father against the Son. However, Baker reemphasizes that the motivation for writing their first book was not works like these, but rather what they had heard and read at a popular level.[59]

In their second edition of *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross*, Green and Baker pay specific attention to Vanhoozer's postmodern penal substitution theory. Baker agrees with Vanhoozer that the church does not need to understand God's wrath as ever on the verge of striking out. Baker even concedes that well-argued explanations of penal

---

[56] See both Williams, Garry. "Penal Substitution: A Response to Recent Criticisms." *JETS* 50/1 (March 2007) 71–86. and Crisp, Oliver. "The Logic of Penal Substitution Revisited." In *The Atonement Debate*, 208–27. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008.

[57] Baker, "Contextualizing the Scandal of the Cross," 29–30.

[58] Green and Baker promote the work of Hans Boersma in *Violence, Hospitality, and the Cross* and Kevin Vanhoozer's work in *The Drama of Doctrine* and *The Glory of the Atonement*. Other works such as *Saving Power* by Peter Schmiechen have contributed to positive incorporation of penal substitution into kaleidoscope atonement. Schmiechen highlights four positive assumptions that penal substitution provides in the kaleidoscope of atonement interpretations.

[59] Baker, "Contextualizing the Scandal of the Cross," 29–30.

substitution avoid this problem.[60] Green and Baker commend Vanhoozer for his work, drawing attention to Vanhoozer's ability to make God's love and character the foundation for penal substitution and his insistence that the believer understands the legal imagery of the metaphor in a covenantal law context rather than a Roman or western courtroom context.[61] However, the most beneficial aspect of Vanhoozer's work in the eyes of Green and Baker is his use of metaphoric language and his desire to embrace the complexity of the atonement and the finite nature of humanity's theological constructs. Vanhoozer is able to avoid the common insistence that penal substitution is the only complete and faithful way to interpret the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Green and Baker embrace Vanhoozer's construction of penal substitution deeming it faithful to the biblical text and worthy of incorporation into a true kaleidoscopic view of the atonement.[62]

Despite Green and Baker's acceptance of Vanhoozer's penal substitution theory, they repeat their affirmation that the understanding of penal substitution at a popular level is misguided and inappropriate. Despite Vanhoozer's exceptional contributions to the atonement debate, his perspective has not penetrated the majority of Christian communities. The reality remains that within the western church, most congregants continue to link their understanding of the atonement with a theology of penal substitution that views God's wrath as an integral element.[63] Green and Baker appeal to Vanhoozer and other proponents of positive constructions of penal substitution to take up their responsibility to deal with the problematic issues in their own camp.[64] Even if Green and Baker's interactions with penal substitution are based on a caricature and do not

---

[60] Baker, "Contextualizing the Scandal of the Cross," 193.
[61] Green and Baker, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross*, 2nd ed., 188–9.
[62] Green and Baker, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross*, 2nd ed., 188–9.
[63] Baker, "Contextualizing the Scandal of the Cross," 193.
[64] Boersma, *Violence, Hospitality, and the Cross*, 42.

isolate the real heart of penal substitution, the mass of books and papers following Green and Baker's work show that their observations are not isolated incidents. Both proponents and opponents of penal substitution must work to root out the misunderstandings and misuses of the doctrine in the western evangelical church.

Other opponents of kaleidoscope theory have challenged Green and Baker's work on the basis that it does not represent a true kaleidoscopic approach. While including all of the major historical perspectives on the atonement and some brand new perspective from current contextualization, they are unwilling to include penal substitution as a legitimate perspective. First, the kaleidoscope view has become much more nuanced over the last decade and not all constructions of kaleidoscope theory reject penal substitution. Second, Green and Baker have countered this critique in their subsequent works in two main ways. First, as noted above, they have argued, in follow up publications and specifically their second edition to *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross*, true interpretations of penal substitution do exist and have included Vanhoozer as an exemplary case of such an interpretation. Second, they have tried to redeem the substitution and legal imagery that is within the biblical narrative. This has primarily been done by separating the images from each other and casting a vision for proper interpretation of each metaphor.

Much of the writings emerging from Joel Green, Mark Baker, Scott McKnight, and Peter Schmiechen, though attempting to utilize all atonement metaphors, are forced to re-envision and recast what substitutionary atonement means and looks like. In his follow up works, Baker is clear that despite Green and his critical concerns surrounding

the model of penal substitution, they do not reject the idea of substitutionary atonement.[65] Many within the western church assume that substitutionary atonement is just a short hand to refer to a classical understanding of penal substitution. Many, including both proponents and opponents of penal substitution, have such a narrow definition of the atonement that they cannot allow for any understanding other than a punitive one.[66] In Green and Baker's second edition of *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross*, they retell C. S. Lewis' *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, highlighting the substitutionary act of Aslan for Edward. Green and Baker highlight that Lewis' metaphor of the atonement avoids the appeasement of an angry God, but instead roots the metaphor in the deeper magic of God's self-sacrificial love.

Green and Baker do not deny the legal imagery present within the biblical narrative. There is no denying that legal imagery constitutes a biblical perspective in the kaleidoscope of the atonement. However, Green and Baker have encouraged the western church to recognize the context of the legal imagery within the biblical narrative. Though Paul's writings took place in the context of the Roman Empire, the biblical narrative is from a Jewish context. Based on this assumption, Green and Baker argue that the church should understand all imagery relating to judgement and law as reference to covenantal law. The western church must remove its twenty-first century and/or Roman imagery of a courtroom and retributive justice.[67] In a covenantal context, law is the expression of God's intention for relationships within his redeemed community. The law's primary priority is not the pronouncement of guilt, but the restoration of covenant relationship. Covenantal law assumes a covenant relationship where God is gracious in his provision

[65] Baker, "Contextualizing the Scandal of the Cross," 25.
[66] Green and Baker, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross*, 169–70.
[67] Green and Baker, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross*, 2nd ed., 189.

for forgiveness.[68] Therefore, the legal imagery of the biblical narrative is not motivation for punishment or retaliation but is the motivation for reconciliation.

Case Study II: Baptism and the Lord's Supper

The church's practices of baptism and the Lord's Supper are direct interpretations of the atonement. The manner in which the church interprets the atonement will affect their celebration of both baptism and the Lord's Supper. This section will examine two sacraments maintained in the majority of western Christianity. The emphasis on the legal exchange of sin in penal substitution has led the western church to an overly individualized approach to both baptism and the Lord's Supper. A proper interpretation of the atonement necessitates a movement towards community. This communal nature of the atonement directly affects the practice of the church in baptism and the Lord's Supper. First, this section will examine the church practice of baptism. In scripture, baptism is the act of entrance into the body of Christ. Second, this section will highlight the communal imperative of the atonement in the Lord's Supper. The Eucharist is represented in the scripture as a fellowship meal, in which there is no division or animosity amongst the members of the body of Christ.

The church remembers and enacts the connection between the work of Christ in the atonement and the formation of the church through its practices of baptism and the Lord's Supper. Jesus' inauguration of the church is not only a conclusion of narrative theology from an examination of the text, but the practices of the church continue to enact the inaugurating work of Christ in their life and church practice. The practice of baptism marks the conversion work of Christ in the believer. It celebrates the believer's reception of the atoning work of Christ. The Lord's Supper, on the other hand, is the

[68] Driver, *Understanding the Atonement for the Mission of the Church*, 32.

ongoing remembrance of the atoning work of Jesus Christ. Baptism marks the entrance into the church and the Lord's Supper is the continued fellowship within the church.

Based upon the belief that baptism marks the conversion of the believer, baptism is thus also the entrance into the community of believers. Those whom have been baptized will form a community that lives according to their encounter with the atoning work of Christ.[69] To be baptized is to enter into a form of community in which the atonement of Jesus is the basis for life. The apostle Paul describes this entry into a new life in Christ through baptism, in his letter to the Romans,

> What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We are those who have died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. If we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his. For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin — because anyone who has died has been set free from sin. Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. (Rom 6:1–10, TNIV)

Paul's entire argument for living out the new life of the atonement hinges on the Christian's participation with Christ death in baptism. Baptism not only marks the entrance of the believer into a new life with Christ, but also the entrance into the fellowship of believers. The apostle Paul establishes this correlation between the atonement and the church in the practice of baptism in his writings,

> For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to

---

[69] Gunton, *The Actuality of Atonement*, 190.

> Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. (Gal 3:27–29, TNIV) Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many. (1 Cor 12:12–14, TNIV)

Baptism not only connects the atonement with the new life of the believer, but it brings with it incorporation into community. In both of these passages, baptism marks the inaugurating work of the atonement in the life of the believer which results in adoption into the family of God in which all segregation and alienation is dissolved.

Through baptism, the believer publicizes the work of the atonement in his or her life so that they may experience true community. When the baptism maintains its vital link to salvation, it is only after baptism that the believer experiences true incorporation into Christ and his body. Scot McKnight elaborates on this point,

> Baptism is the church's rite of offering to others entrance into the waters in order to be purified so that the person can enter into union with Christ and the body of Christ. That is what atonement is all about. Baptism is the church's praxis-rite of atonement; it is one way that the church offers atonement to others; and it is how the church offers purification and incorporation — or relationship — with God, self, and others as a missional people.[70]

Baptism is about the church incorporating the new believer into the family of God. It is ecclesial and the quintessential "act of church membership."[71] While once experiencing alienation from God, self, the world, and community, the new believer enters into a foretaste of the divine reconciliation that will take place in eternity. It is unfortunate that in many evangelical churches baptism has lost its emphasis and importance because of its separation from the initial salvation of the believer. Baptism at conversion emphasizes the connection between the atonement work of Christ and our participation in it today as

---

[70] McKnight, *A Community Called Atonement*, 152.
[71] McKnight, *A Community Called Atonement*, 151.

a member of the body of Christ. While the connection between the atonement and the church takes center stage in the act of baptism it is not the only practice of the church that draws the connection between the atonement and the church's formation and work.

The Lord's Supper is widely misunderstood in the pew because the connection between community and the atonement is absent. Rather, the individualistic understanding of the Eucharist is in complete opposition to its foundations in the Passover. In his book, *The Actuality of the Atonement*, Colin Gunton highlights the misrepresentation of the Lord's Supper, even more so than baptism, because of an over individualized approach to its administration. Gunton argues that the Lord's Supper has become a "clerically controlled rite" where "a sacrament is administered to individuals, as medicine by a physician."[72]

The New Testament provides various accounts of the institution of the Lord's Supper. Paul, Mark, and Matthew all link the cup with the covenant and with death, deliberately relating Jesus' death with an earlier covenantal sacrifice; while Luke and almost certainly John make a direct link with the Passover.[73] While debate surrounds the nature of the Last Supper meal, Jesus conducted, at the very least, a Passover-like meal. Jesus transformed an ordinary Passover-like meal into a memorial feast of his saving death, resurrection, and promised renewal of table fellowship.[74] The church and the believer cannot fully understand the Eucharist until it views the Eucharist as a fellowship meal. Jesus draws a clear trajectory from his actions on the cross to participation in community.

---

[72] Gunton, *The Actuality of Atonement*, 195.
[73] Gunton, *The Actuality of Atonement*, 196–7.
[74] McKnight, *A Community Called Atonement*, 152.

While baptism marks the inauguration of the believer into the community of God, the Eucharist is the practice of ongoing participation in that community. As stated above, the crucial link joining the atonement and the life of the community as a whole is often missing. Gunton elaborates upon his critique stating, "The deficiency is ecclesiological: we lack a conception of the church as the space in which God gives community with himself and so between human people."[75] This understanding of the Eucharist would stress the fact that communion is *koinonia* and with that, there comes a change of emphasis, from the individual's communion with God, which the church does not have deny when utilized in its proper place, to the community's participating in the wedding feast of the lamb.[76] The Eucharist is the church's ongoing practice of incorporation fellowship with God and God's people.[77] The Eucharist shows that Jesus' mission in the atonement propels believers into community fellowship. The Eucharist is the communal remembrance of the atonement.

Conclusion

The church must interpret the atonement in a manner that is congruent with the biblical narrative. These interpretations of the atonement inspire the believer and the church as a whole in their beliefs and practices. While kaleidoscope theory encourages the church to interpret the atonement in a manner that is congruent with the context of the believer and scripture, the believer and church may not make the atonement state whatever they like. Scripture remains the foundation for all interpretations of the atonement. A proper interpretation of the atonement must include a reflection of God's purpose for creation, Jesus' work as in relation to this purpose, and the propulsion

[75] Gunton, *The Actuality of Atonement*, 196.
[76] Gunton, *The Actuality of Atonement*, 195.
[77] McKnight, *A Community Called Atonement*, 152.

towards community. God and Jesus' role as subject in the biblical narrative and God's design for human community shape both the church's interpretation of the atonement and the ecclesial practices they inspire. The writings of Green and Baker are aimed primarily at the western church. The western church must re-evaluate it beliefs and practices so that they reflect the imperative of the biblical narrative.

Chapter 3: Community and Scripture

Scripture inspires the beliefs and practices of the church. The atonement is the foundation of the church. The atonement is God's work on behalf of humanity to remove the barriers and consequences of sin. This action may be expressed in a variety of statements. An interpretation of the atonement includes the action of how the God removes the barrier and consequences of sin. While the barrier of sin has been removed in the life, death, and resurrection of Christ, the church must continue to proclaim its removal in all contexts. The work of God to remove the consequences of sin continues in the present. The ongoing work of God to remove the consequences of sin shapes the ecclesial practices of the church. This chapter will establish that scripture inspires the church to interpret and practice the atonement in a variety of ways. First, Scripture motivates the mission of the church. The church must partner with God in the proclamation and practice of the atonement. Second, kaleidoscope theory inspires the church to continually proclaim the atonement in culturally appropriate interpretations. Kaleidoscope theory opens up scripture so that all members of the church may interpret the atonement for their context. Lastly, this chapter will establish that the church enacts the atonement in its practices. The atonement shapes the identity of the believer. The transformation of the believer by the atonement includes the actions of the believer. As the church meets together in fellowship and partners with God to counter the consequences of sin, the church enacts God's atonement. The diversity of interpretations for how the atonement counters sin provides the church with a variety of practices.

Scripture Motivates the Church's Mission

Kaleidoscope theory maintains the evangelical assertion that scripture forms the foundation of Christian ministry. Scripture inspires the belief and work of the church. This section will establish Scriptures' inspiration of the church's formation and mission. First, this section will assert that Scripture inspires community. Scripture is an atoning work that draws people into the community of the Church. Second, scripture establishes the purpose of God for the church. Through the proclamation of Scripture, the church makes God's desire for humanity and creation known in all contexts. Lastly, scripture grounds the mission of the Church as an extension of God's mission. God desires that the atonement be realized in all contexts. The church partners with God's mission as it brings the message of the atonement into every context. The church both proclaims and enacts the mission of God as they bring the atonement into new contexts.

The biblical narrative and the testimony of the atonement contain within it an inherent move towards community. The gospel is the good news of the ever expanding nature of the kingdom of God. What was once available to only one tribe has become the salvation for the entire world. What happened on the cross was of universal significance and the New Testament recounts a work of atonement in Christ that puts no one group over another. In the language of the biblical era, the narrative proclaims,

> For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise. (Gal 3:27–29, NASB)

The cross was the expression of God's grace for all, for all persons regardless of their orientation to the world. The scriptural message of the atonement rejects the ancient and

modern attempts to segregate people. The ancient world used a variety of contrasting labels for describing humanity: Jews and Gentiles, slaves and free, male and female. These labels categorized, isolated, and alienated. The labels positioned individual against individual, class against class, tribe against tribe, nation against nation. The words of Paul break down all barriers as all may come to the cross. However, this message inherently sets up one final polarity as Paul distinguishes between those who are perishing and those who are being saved.[1] As Paul writes to the church in Corinth, "the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God" (1 Cor 1:18, NASB). However, for the first time, the work of Christ is realized in a community in which the gracious invitation of God's gift of salvation is available to all humanity.[2]

Narrative theology identifies the proclamation of Scripture as a primary action of the church. Modern Evangelicalism asserts that the gospel message facilitates salvation through hearing and receiving the work of the atonement. Narrative theologians do not downplay the authority of the biblical narrative, but rather emphasize that scripture arises from the church, speaks about God's purpose and the atonement, and inspires greater actualizations of the atonement present in ecclesial communities. The scriptures are not a passive record of historical events, but are themselves an ecclesial inspiring work. Based upon 1 Peter 1:22–25, narrative theology identifies the direction of God's purpose as through scripture to community.[3] The gospel inspires a genuine mutual love that manifests itself in Christian communities identified as those that love one another deeply from the heart.

---

[1] Carson, *The Cross and Christian Ministry*, 14.
[2] Green and Baker, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross*, 113.
[3] McKnight, *A Community Called Atonement*, 121.

> Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart, for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, *that is*, through the living and enduring word of God. For, 'All flesh is like grass, and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls off, but the word of the lord endures forever.' And this is the word which was preached to you. (1 Pet 1:22–25, NASB)

The proclamation of the gospel inspires a life fashioned after the life and ministry of Christ. This life and ministry as stated in the previous chapter includes a design for life in community. Scripture recounts this life and ministry and continues to inspire the believer today in a life that bases itself upon the divine design for life in community.

As argued in the previous chapter, the biblical text makes the purpose of God known to the world. God communicates his desire for reconciliation between himself and all of humanity by this medium. For this reason, the church reads scripture not to know the biblical text better or more in-depth, but rather, to know God better and more intimately. The church does this because Scripture is the voice of God that leads us to God. Therefore, the church identifies scripture as an agent of atonement in our relationship to God.[4] Scripture allows the believer to fully engage with God's historical and decisive action in the life, death, and resurrection of Christ. McKnight charges modern Evangelicalism with committing "bibliolatry," as believers add the Bible as the fourth member to the Trinity.[5] However, despite the church's potentially flawed relationship to the text in the present, the assertions of McKnight are not in keeping with the theological convictions of the historical church. Certainly, our faith finds expression in Scripture, but that faith remains in the Trinitarian God and not in the Bible.[6] The church has faith in the validity of the Bible because of scripture's relationship to God. It

[4] McKnight, *A Community Called Atonement*, 144.
[5] McKnight, *A Community Called Atonement*, 143.
[6] McKnight, *A Community Called Atonement*, 143.

is trustworthy because it holds the words of God and presents the church with God's intentions for creation and history. It is through active participation with the scripture, through the power of the Holy Spirit, that the kaleidoscopic church comes to know God and make him known to the world.[7]

Guiding a narrative reading is the belief that God is a missionary God. To use the term "missio Dei" is to make the theological claim that God the Father sends the Son, God the Father and the Son send the Spirit, and that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit send the church into the world. Therefore, mission is not primarily an activity of the church, but an attribute of God.[8] From this theological affirmation, the church understands the world as the place of mission, not as something to be repelled or walled off.[9] The kaleidoscopic church promotes an open engagement with culture out of concern for God's mission. Furthermore, Scripture displays God's mission of the atonement. Scripture recounts that Christ came with purpose and sought to call his church into the same mission. This community of the cross and of the crucified, is bound in Christ to God's mission, a mission to a world that God creates and seeks, redeems and reconciles in love (Mark 8:31–38).[10]

God is a missionary God and his church is on mission. The church exists by the grace of God's missional work and for the furtherance of his missional aims.[11] This missional work of God draws the church into the biblical narrative as ambassadors for God amongst humanity. The theological claim that the church is missional is to view mission as the fundamental, the essential, and the centering understanding of the church's

---

[7] McKnight, *A Community Called Atonement*, 143.
[8] Guder, "The Church as Missional Community," 124.
[9] Wilson, "Practicing Church," 65.
[10] Jinkins, "The 'Gift' of the Church," 203–4.
[11] McKnight, *A Community Called Atonement*, 135.

purpose and action.[12] The theology of the missio Dei upholds the Nicene Creed's definition of the church as apostolic.[13] It is through the church's apostolic witness to the atonement that the world will see the love of God (1 John 4). A full treatment of the missio Dei doctrine goes far outside the scope of this thesis. What needs to be stated is that the church's involvement in bringing the purpose of God into reality in the present is a missionary participation with God. Missional presence and activity is participation in the purpose of God and results in an orientation towards the praxis of the atonement.[14]

The purpose of God reorients our missional involvement. This re-orientation is best characterized through the shift from the request of God to bless what we do, to the request of God to reveal what he is doing and our role to play. Each Christian has a role to play in bringing God's purpose to fruition, yet the biblical narrative clearly emphasizes that it is God who motivates and empowers the work. Paul communicates this orientation to the Corinthians with an agricultural metaphor,

> What then is Apollos? And what is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, even as the Lord gave opportunity to each one. I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth. So then neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but God who causes the growth. Now he who plants and he who waters are one; but each will receive his own reward according to his own labor. For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building (1 Cor 3:5–9, NASB).

There is no need to assume that Paul reserves the defence of the co-worker relationship for only the Christian leader. Rather, all Christians enjoy standing as a fellow worker with God. Not that they may claim status based upon their own work, but rather, they draw authority for their actions from their foundation in the purpose of God. Certainly,

---

[12] Guder, "The Church as Missional Community," 116.
[13] Guder, "The Church as Missional Community," 125.
[14] McKnight, *A Community Called Atonement*, 135.

this orientation to our participation in the purpose of God highlights the need for clear discernment about God's activity and desire for this world.[15]

The Church Continually Interprets the Atonement

The desire of God to bring the message of the atonement to the world draws the church into the task of proclaiming the atonement for new contexts. The proclamation of the atonement is not a regurgitation of established theological perspectives. Rather, the church interprets the atonement in new, culturally appropriate ways. This section will establish the church's role in interpreting and proclaiming the scriptures in culturally appropriate methods. First, this section will examine the open engagement with scripture and the scriptural account of the atonement, which kaleidoscope theory inspires. Kaleidoscope theory maintains the assertion that scripture is the church's and may be approached by all members of the body of Christ. Secondly, the church continues to interpret the atonement for new contexts. God is at work in all contexts and the church proclaims this work in all contexts. These interpretations of the atonement, while subjective to the particular contexts, must maintain the non-negotiables of the scriptural narrative discussed in the previous chapter. Lastly, this section will establish the need for a congregation of scripture readers. Pastor's and theologians play an important role in coaching and directing the church in its formulation of interpretations of the atonement. However, scripture belongs to all members of the church and must be interpreted for the context of every believer. Kaleidoscope theory inspires a church in which all members take up the mission of interpreting and proclaiming the atonement of scripture.

The kaleidoscopic church enacts an open engagement with scripture so that the believer may identify with the story. Howard Snyder evaluates evangelical ecclesiology

[15] McKnight, *A Community Called Atonement*, 135.

in his chapter, "The Marks of Evangelical Ecclesiology." In this work Snyder asserts that while the Reformation developed the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers, most churches have not allowed the doctrine to change the fundamental clergy/laity division. The evangelical church has only adopted the priesthood of all believers in soteriology and not in ecclesiology.[16] The kaleidoscopic church must enact a re-opening of scripture to all members of the church in its practises. Kaleidoscope theology invites the church to identify with Jesus, "to let his story be our story, by dying to self, by being raised to new life with Christ, and by being overcome by the grace of God's Spirit."[17] The kaleidoscopic church is definitively a missionally shaped church, in which people are equipped for every good work. Scott McKnight states, "The church becomes a community called atonement every time it reads the story of Jesus and every time it identifies itself with that story and every time it invites others to listen in to hear that story."[18] Being a community of scripture reading is the primary action of the church because reading scripture, listening to scripture, and letting scripture incorporate us into its story is atoning. Kaleidoscope theory once again opens the door so that the congregation may come into the church and engage the scripture from their experiences, with their hopes, with their suffering, with their hurts, and allow it to transform the community.

The opening of scripture draws the church into participation with the fulfillment of the stories of God's purpose. The formation of the identity of the community of God is in the active retelling of the stories that shape the community. The kaleidoscopic church asserts that inhabiting the world of the biblical narrative is important because it produces

[16] Snyder, "The Marks of Evangelical Ecclesiology," 94.
[17] McKnight, *A Community Called Atonement*, 148.
[18] McKnight, *A Community Called Atonement*, 148.

biblical Christians as the biblical narrative decisively shapes the lives of the believer.[19] Green asserts that this retelling of the biblical story is the essence of human memory:

> We typically explain our behaviors not by physical and chemical chains of cause-and-effect, but through the historical narratives by which we collaborate to create a sense of ourselves as persons. Memory, then, is not passive retrieval of information, but active reconstruction through which we seek coherence.[20]

Therefore, the church is not a passive remembrance ceremony but an active reconstruction of who we are in coherence with the world. The community of God actively participates with God's purpose through actively reconstructing the biblical narrative in not only the past, but also in the present.[21] This active reconstruction in the present is not an addition or subtraction of the ancient text, but it is an active indwelling of the word of God in the present, a community committed to living out the stories of the biblical narrative. The tension of the kaleidoscopic church is between commitment to the original meaning and new applications geared towards new contexts. The text invites us into a "transformation of allegiances and commitments, which will manifest itself in behaviours appropriate to our social worlds."[22] The outlook of narrative theology is not towards the systematic restating of Scripture and its central propositions. Rather, the outlook of narrative theology is to answer the questions of active formations; such as, "What sort of world, what sort of person, and what sort of community is this text constructing?"[23]

The church participates in the ongoing narrative of realizing God's purpose for his creation. Certainly, as Vanhoozer states, the church participates in the drama in a manner

---

[19] Green, "Practicing the Gospel in a Post-Critical World," 393–4.
[20] Green, "Practicing the Gospel in a Post-Critical World," 391.
[21] Green, "Practicing the Gospel in a Post-Critical World," 395.
[22] Green, "Practicing the Gospel in a Post-Critical World," 395.
[23] Green, "Practicing the Gospel in a Post-Critical World," 395.

that defines itself by the trajectory of the biblical narrative.[24] The biblical narrative and the history of the church shape the manner in which the church participates in God's purpose. This ongoing participation shaped by the authoritative past of the biblical narrative presents a situation in which the canon is both "closed" and "open." Certainly, the biblical canon is closed in the formal sense. The books encompassed in the canon are the only books to be included. These books are definitive in their message and in their testimony of Jesus Christ. However, the canon remains open in its invitation to the church's ongoing understanding and participation. Vanhoozer exhorts the church saying, "Christians today can, and must, participate in canonical practices such as witnessing to Christ and praying to God as Father." This "open" verses "closed" nature of the canon creates a tension between engaging the history of its readers, on the one hand, and the closure of the historical account of Jesus Christ, on the other hand.[25]

While the scripture most certainly inspires a life of community, such a community then takes up the scripture as the defining message of what sets them apart from the rest of the world. The scripture defines what the community is and means in the context of God's purpose. However, scripture become theirs as they live it out and proclaim it in their particular contexts. The church is then, in partnership with God, responsible for the preservation and perpetualization of the message of the atonement. While the biblical narrative brings together the community, it is also the community that stimulates the biblical narrative. Scripture arises from the life of the church. This is true from a historical perspective as well as a theological perspective. While the scripture inspires theology, scripture does not occupy the center of Christian faith. God remains the

---

[24] Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine*, 237.
[25] Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine*, 237.

foundation of faith. The church gave birth to the biblical cannon and continues to facilitate its proclamation and understanding today. It is upon this work of the church to proclaim and provide understanding for the biblical narrative in new contexts that kaleidoscope atonement theory has been most vocal.

Kaleidoscope theory is adamant in its assertion that the church cannot separate the atonement metaphors from their emergence among the Christian community. It is the church that gives meaning to the metaphors. They portray their experiences and they are meant to interact with their contexts. As discussed in earlier chapters, the New Testament authors borrowed imagery from their own contexts to explain the significance of Christ's life, death, and resurrection.[26] Kaleidoscope theory identifies numerous reasons for the number of different metaphors present in the biblical narrative. Most pressing to our discussion here is the assertion that the multiplicity of metaphors exist, in part because of both the pastoral nature of the metaphors and the ever-expanding contexts to which the church must present the gospel.[27] Kaleidoscope Theory acknowledges that the biblical narrative of the atonement is inspired from the context in which it was written. The writers of the New Testament sought to create a retelling of the atonement that would speak to the problem of broken humanity and a broken world in a variety of contexts.

Scripture is the church's story of Jesus, which means, that God designed scripture for the church to read and interpret within the community of faith. This reading will interact with both the historical tradition of the church and the contemporary context of the audience.[28] Scripture is the Spirit-inspired story of Jesus as communicated through,

---

[26] Green and Baker, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross*, 23.
[27] Baker, "Contextualizing the Scandal of the Cross," 15–16.
[28] McKnight, *A Community Called Atonement*, 145.

to, and for the church. As Colin E. Gunton puts forth in his work, *The Actuality of the Atonement*:

> The central focus of the proclamation after Easter was that the events of Jesus' history, and particularly of the Easter period, had changed the status of believers, indeed of the whole world. The metaphors of atonement are ways of expressing the significance of what had happened and was happening. They therefore enable the Christian community to speak of God as he is found in concrete personal relationship with human beings and their world.[29]

Thus, the primary possibility presented through the narrative theology method is the power of participation.[30] Narrative theology holds to the belief that the narrative of scripture projects itself beyond the Bible. The second coming of Christ is yet to come, and therefore we continue in the anticipation of the New Testament. This grounds the church in the scriptures, and the scriptures inspire the church as the enactment of the people of God present in the world. Jesus' words to take the gospel to all nations become a word directed at the church and not just a select group of disciples.

However, the believer should not take the inherent missional character of the scripture as free reign to manipulate and direct the scriptures as the he or she sees fit. Believers are the enactors of the story, with a specific role to play. However, they are not the authors of the story. The story maintains its non-negotiable points of reference. Believers cannot understand the story apart from the decisive actions of God in establishing his purpose. The believer must commit to the reference points of the creative purpose of God, Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, and propulsion towards community. The church lives after the life, death, and resurrection of Christ, but before the final chapter. In narrative theology, the church knows what will happen. Yet, as Joel Green

---

[29] Gunton, *The Actuality of Atonement*, 46.
[30] Green, "The (Re-)Turn to Narrative," 33.

asserts, "This does not neuter this narrative of any sense of drama or suspense."[31] Though the biblical narrative declares God's purpose as inaugurated, unrealized in the present is who will serve this purpose.

Kaleidoscope theory establishes a church that actively reads and interprets the biblical narrative. The multiplicity of readers, who are intent on understanding the biblical narrative in their contexts, produces a multiplicity of readings. As mentioned above, narrative theology assures us that the church continues to write the story of God. The past work of God gives meaning to our present, and God's future casts its shadow backward reminding us how our present life and witness have consequences into eternity. This perspective shows the church the importance of its role and its need to continue in the same narrative, in the same manner as enacted before.[32] The evangelical movement was founded and remains dedicated to upholding the Word of God as primary in the life of the church and seeking out that which is "biblical."[33] 2 Timothy 3:15–17 speaks to the necessity for churches to adopt a central view of scripture:

> And how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

This is no different in those churches inspired by kaleidoscope theory. The Bible is the primary literature for the community and foundational to its endeavors.

Kaleidoscope theory has recognized that a chasm has begun to grow between the biblical text, the basis for atonement doctrine, and the congregation. Green highlights the problem as such:

---

[31] Green, "The (Re-)Turn to Narrative," 32.
[32] Green, "The (Re-)Turn to Narrative," 33.
[33] Green, "The (Re-)Turn to Narrative," 11.

> Biblical studies and preaching have grown distant from one another as a result of the shift from an ecclesial context to a scientific framework within which to engage the biblical materials. This is due in large part to the interests of the modern period, which pressed the study of the Bible more and more in the direction of historical inquiry, opening wider and wider the chasm between "the world of the Bible" and "the world of the congregation."[34]

Narrative theology asserts that we do not need to struggle with inorganic attempts to bridge the world between what it meant and what it now means. The reality of the Bible's formation within the community of God's people speaks to its purpose. The biblical narrative speaks from within and to communities of believers. Therefore, no interpretive tool, no advanced training can substitute for active participation in a community of Bible readers.[35] For kaleidoscope theory, the single most important practice to cultivate is involvement in reading the Bible with others who take its message seriously and who meet regularly to discern its meaning for faith and life.[36]

This community recounts in word, ritual, and practice the story of Jesus and his significance for all humankind. The church, as a corporate body, announces the message of Christ and people become believers.[37] Scripture is thus inherently missional. Its purpose and use bring people into a restored union with God, themselves, others, and the world. By rooting truth in metaphor, kaleidoscope theory is insistent in the belief of narrative theology that the church should not probe and pull apart scripture to find its inner secrets. [38] To probe and pull apart the biblical narrative is Gnostic-like in its assumption that those familiar with scripture's language and traditions are the only ones

---

[34] Green, "The (Re-)Turn to Narrative," 18.
[35] Green, "The (Re-)Turn to Narrative," 23.
[36] Green, "The (Re-)Turn to Narrative," 23.
[37] Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, 423.
[38] McKnight, *A Community Called Atonement*, 147.

able to find truth from it. Just like the voices of the Reformation, proponents of kaleidoscope theology are calling for a re-opening of the scripture.

The Church Enacts the Atonement in Its Practices

The atonement inspires the church to action. The church proclaims and partners with the mission of God. The mission of God is the realization of the atonement in all contexts. The atonement is God's work to remove the barrier and consequences of sin. While the barrier of sin was removed in the life, death, and resurrection of Christ it has not yet been realized in all contexts. The action of the church in proclaiming the atonement allows the atonement to be realized in the hearts and minds of new believers. However, the consequences of sin remain. The church partners with God to remove the consequences of sin. This section will establish that the atonement inspires the church to action in its practices. First, this section will examine the identity shaping nature of scripture. The identity shaping nature of the church includes a transformation of the individual's beliefs and practices. Scripture calls the believers work into alignment with God's work. Lastly, this section will establish that scripture and the atonement inspire action. The biblical narrative asserts that the work of the individual shows the beliefs to which they aspire. The practices of the church demonstrate the manner in which the atonement affects the life of the church. The kaleidoscope of atonement interpretations provides the church with a variety of church practices to enact the atonement.

The atonement shapes the identity of the believer and church. The identity shaping nature of the atonement includes the work that flows from belief. Jesus identifies with humanity in the incarnation, so that humanity can identify with Jesus. He lives humanity's life so that they can live his life. The apostle Paul calls this both co-

crucifixion and co-resurrection, and it reveals that Jesus' story is to become the story of the church as they identify with him and are incorporated into him. Galatians 2:19–20:

> For through the Law I died to the Law, so that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me. (Gal 2:19–20, NASB)

The biblical narrative invites the church to identify with Jesus, to let his story be their story, by dying to self, by rising to new life with Christ, and overcoming by the grace of God's Spirit to become, through this missionally shaped and atoning story, people who are equipped for every good work. The church becomes a community of atonement every time it reads the story of Jesus, identifies itself with the story, and invites others to listen in to hear that story.

As discussed earlier in this thesis, narrative theology draws the church into participation with the scriptural narrative through a recognition that the trajectory of God's purpose flows through the church in the present. The believer then not only finds connection between his or her actions and the biblical text, but the biblical text also helps to form his or her identity as a disciple of Christ. Narrative theology highlights the biblical narrative's overarching trajectory:

> [The biblical narrative] begins with creation and charts a path through the covenant with Abraham, the exodus under Moses, the kingdom of David, the attempt to live out the covenant in the land that quickly falls apart into the division of Israel, the necessary rise of the prophetic summons to live within the covenant, the seemingly inevitable exile, and the revival-like return to the land to re-establish worship and obedience to the Torah.[39]

The biblical narrative highlights the transformative effect of engagement with God's word. The transformative effect of God's word is not restricted to the biblical era but

---

[39] McKnight, *A Community Called Atonement*, 145.

continues to shape the identity of God's people in the present.[40] As Scot McKnight states, "The best way to describe Scripture is that it is identity-shaping."[41] The biblical narrative orients the believer to who he or she is, where he or she is, and where he or she is going. The primary point of orientation is between the believer and Christ.

Scripture inspires action. The gospel is not simply good news about an event that transpired centuries ago. Rather, the gospel is the power of God given freely to those who believe (Rom 1:16).[42] Certainly this is good news that was realized after a particular historical event, particularly the cross, resurrection, ascension, and coming of the Spirit. However, it is only once a believer of Christ participates with God for his purpose is God's power truly recognized. The biblical narrative proclaims the power available to all Christians. This power is not that of intellectual assent, but rather a power in action as the believer brings about the purpose of God in the world. This understanding of the biblical narrative characterizes it as a praxis-oriented, atoning work. Just as Paul writes,

> ...and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work. (2 Tim 3:15–17, NASB)

God designed scripture to work its story into persons of God so that they may become doers of his work. Scripture is atoning because God desires to utilize it in creating a restored humanity that is reconciled with God, others, and the world. The biblical text creates communities in which the mission of Christ, aligned with the purpose of God, by the power of the Holy Spirit, are lived out in such a manner that the gospel is proclaimed

---

[40] McKnight, *A Community Called Atonement*, 146.
[41] McKnight, *A Community Called Atonement*, 146.
[42] Carson, *The Cross and Christian Ministry*, 15.

to the world so that it may bring about reconciliation. God's desire is for life to be lived in community in such a way that the text would shape the lives of his followers so that they can live in the story that the church tells in scripture.[43] This includes a church that defined the new life in Christ through an orientation towards praxis.

Most Evangelicals would agree that scripture is more than information revealed so that Christians have a greater intellectual assent to God. Yet some proponents of kaleidoscope church have charged the church with treating the scripture as an ancient text that is to be exegeted, probed, and pulled apart until it yields some Gnostic-like secret to those whom know its code. With a specialized knowledge of scripture, its languages, and interpretive methodologies, one can provide the church with professionally constructed sermons given from behind pulpits on Sunday mornings.[44] Such an approach to the scripture is fundamentally hostile to the inclusive community creating nature of the scripture. The scripture is God's word to all of humanity. The church denies the priesthood of all believers when it establishes that only the specially trained may access the true, deeper meanings of the text. The western church's approach to scripture cheapens the pastor's role, as he is merely a dispenser of spiritual goods and services to the Christian consumer.

Scripture is more than information given to the consumer, so that by knowing more the consumer will be able to accomplish more. The cognitive behaviorist of modernism has taught that if we get things right in our minds, we will behave accordingly.[45] The church applies this approach to the spiritual formation and discipleship of the church so that the church teaches as much Bible as possible to

---

[43] McKnight, *A Community Called Atonement*, 147.
[44] McKnight, *A Community Called Atonement*, 147.
[45] McKnight, *A Community Called Atonement*, 144.

believers, or those interested in becoming believers, in an effort to make them better Christians. The simple formula being: the more Bible the believer learns, the better Christians they should be. Likewise, the more theology the churches teach, the more theology believers will grasp, and the better they will live.[46] As the great teacher and speaker Tony Campolo has lamented, the modern church is full of believers about Jesus Christ and has a serious deficiency of disciples of Jesus Christ. Many, including the Devil and demons, have given intellectual assent to the realities of who Jesus is, yet few have given themselves over to indwell the scriptural narrative, to be changed by the words of God and to be used according to his purposes.[47] No matter how much of the scriptural narrative the believer can memorize and dissect, the believer simply cannot experience any change until he or she has given himself or herself over to what McKnight highlights as "faith seeking understanding."[48] Knowing more Bible does not necessarily make someone a better Christian.

It is difficult to have confidence if one does not know what to proclaim regarding Christ. Thus, at the heart of the church's struggle to find its identity and mission are the Christological questions posed by the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.[49] Joel Green, and those in his camp, highlights the ecumenical councils' silence on the particulars of the atonement.[50] The doctrine is, at the least, under-developed at this stage as to how the atonement works. This thesis asserts that the work of the atonement serves as the foundation and confidence for the church's activity. The implication is therefore, if

---

[46] McKnight, *A Community Called Atonement*, 144.

[47] Campolo, "Com(passion)," sermon given at The Meeting House, Mississauga, Ontario, 30 October 2011.

[48] McKnight, *A Community Called Atonement*, 145.

[49] Schmiechen, *Saving Power*, 345.

[50] Green, "Must We Imagine the Atonement in Penal Substitutionary Terms?," 156.

leaders and pastors of the church are not confident in the message of Christ, who he was and what he did, then they will be unsure how best to lead their church and form its identity. To some, kaleidoscope theory may seem to cloud the water.

Conclusion

Scripture inspires the church to engage in the interpretation and proclamation of the atonement. Kaleidoscope theory inspires the church to engage with the atonement as it interprets the work of God in a manner that is culturally sensitive. The church further engages with the atonement as it develops church practices to partner with the work of God in a particular context. The assumption that the atonement inspires the life of the church is certainly not new. However, kaleidoscope theory's use of a variety of metaphors and interpretations for the atonement motivates the church in a diversity of church practices. A variety of interpretations on the atonement means a variety of church practices.

Chapter 4: The Necessity of Multiplicity in Articulating the Atonement

An ecclesiology developed from a kaleidoscope view of the atonement will possess as its primary traits both a necessity for essential diversity of interpretations of the atonement and an ability to live within the tensions of competing interpretations of the atonement. Living within the tensions of kaleidoscope theory will be addressed in the following chapter. This chapter will argue that a church committed to kaleidoscope theory must maintain a diversity of perspectives on the atonement. First, this chapter will examine the claim of kaleidoscope theory that all metaphors are subjective. The variety of interpretations on the atonement helps provide a fuller picture of God's work to remove the barriers and consequences of sin. This work of God is rooted in specific contexts. Second, this chapter will establish that the church must not remove its missional context in its proclamation and practice of the atonement. The church must proclaim and live out the atonement in a culturally sensitive manner. As established earlier in this thesis, God is at work in all contexts removing the consequences of sin. An interpretation of the atonement that is missionally sensitive must maintain the contextual factors in which God is working. Third, this chapter will establish the need for a diversity of interpreters to reflect upon the atonement. Certainly, a subjective interpretive approach such as kaleidoscope theory contains within it the danger of misuse. However, through an open and honest engagement with a community of diversity the kaleidoscopic church deflates the ability of an individual or group to misuse the subjective approach to the atonement. Fourth, this chapter will examine the relationship between kaleidoscope theory and the homogeneous unit principle. While the kaleidoscope church shares the same missional impulse as the homogeneous unit principle, kaleidoscope theory contains

a more pronounced and intentional discipleship towards fellowship in the body of Christ. Lastly, this chapter will examine the church's need to diversify its ecclesial practices. Kaleidoscope theory rejects the concept of celebrity in the western church and encourages participation of all members. An ecclesiology based on kaleidoscope theory creates a community of believers in which a diversity of views is necessary.

All Metaphors are Subjective

All interpretations of the atonement are a subjective retelling of an encounter with Jesus Christ. In formulating a reflection upon the atonement, a believer draws upon his or her education, discipleship, personal history, and church tradition. These subjective elements influence which metaphors an individual utilizes to articulate the atonement. First, this section will argue that all interpretations of Jesus, life, death, and resurrection are formulated within a particular context. This context shapes the interpretation, tying it to a particular culture and time. Second, kaleidoscope theory suggests that the gospel message of the atonement is missional by its very nature. This section will argue furthermore that the multiplicity of contexts to which the church speaks provide a missional impulse to contextualize continually the testimony of Jesus. Lastly, kaleidoscope theory asserts that all proper interpretations of the atonement speak to the broad reality of the atonement. Therefore, the church views no interpretation of the atonement as more legitimate than another interpretation. Each interpretation represents a context into which the life, death, and resurrection of Christ has been proclaimed and received. However, kaleidoscope theory does assume that one metaphor may be more useful for proclaiming the atonement in a particular context than another.

All interpretations of Jesus' death are formulated from a particular vantage point that is tied to a particular culture and time. As stated previously in this thesis, missional aims drive kaleidoscope theory and the kaleidoscopic church. Each interpretation of the atonement speaks to a specific culture and context. These interpretations are therefore partial and incomplete as they represent a specific interaction with the life, death, and/or resurrection of Christ. This reflection upon the atonement is fallible by nature as it represents a human construction constrained by the limitations of the deliverer. These limitations include the background of the interpreter, their state of mind, the extent and limitation of their reading, their spiritual integrity, their knowledge of the audience whom they address, and many more factors.[1] Mark Baker's book, *Proclaiming the Scandal of the Cross*, gives eighteen different cultural metaphors for articulating the atonement, each for a specific context. These metaphors and their subsequent interpretations of the atonement range from biblical imagery, from Romans 5, to Christian writing, such as *The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe*, to contemporary images such as "Sin as a Virus."[2] These interpretations are merely the beginning of the possibility inherent within the kaleidoscopic approach to the atonement. Only the number of contexts and audiences to which the gospel message of the atonement is to be shared limits the number of reflections.

Kaleidoscope theory is a missionally driven approach to understanding the atonement. This is due to the multiplicity of contexts in which God desires the testimony

---

[1] Stevenson and Wright, *Preaching the Atonement*, xiv.

[2] See Hayes, Richard. "Made New by One Man's Obedience: Romans 5:12–19." In *Proclaiming the Scandal of the Cross*, 96–102. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006. Lewis, C.S. "Deeper Magic Conquers Death and the Powers of Evil." In *Proclaiming the Scandal of the Cross*, 37–41. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006. And Chang, Curtis. "He Shared Our Aches." In *Proclaiming the Scandal of the Cross*, 172–83. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006.

of Jesus to be proclaimed.[3] God's mission is the revelation of himself and his work to all contexts. This mission drives the necessity to reconstruct constantly metaphors of the atonement in such a way that all native audiences will hear and understand the life and work of Christ. As proclaimed by Paul, the goal of the believer and by extension the goal of the church is to interpret the work of Christ in meaningful ways for new audiences and contexts. This use of metaphor produces new possibilities of imagination and vision.[4] As stated earlier in this thesis, the creation of metaphor is not void of a tangible reality of the saving power of the atonement.

The missional impulse of Christ's words at the ascension drives the gospel into different contexts. Jesus instructs his disciples and the church to bear witness to the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus into ever-expanding contexts. The church took on this apostolic mission recontextualizing the story of the cross as they went. The meaning of Christ's life, death, and resurrection was interpreted variously throughout the known world using metaphors particular to each missionary context.[5] This contextualization is the experience of the New Testament community and remains the experience of the church in the present. Each of the gospel writers articulated the life, death, and resurrection for different audiences and utilized different themes to interpret the events.[6] The missional impulse of the atonement is the fundamental base for the authentic proclamation of atonement metaphors in context. This contextualization produces faith in Christ that understands His work and lives it out in the present culture in a real and

---

[3] Green, "Kaleidoscopic View," 167.
[4] McKnight, *A Community Called Atonement*, 37.
[5] Driver, *Understanding the Atonement for the Mission of the Church*, 246.
[6] Green, "Kaleidoscopic View," 166.

vibrant manner.[7] This faith not only identifies the atonement within the current culture but also then seeks to change the culture, calling it into alignment with the message and ministry of Christ. Therefore, this missional impulse of the atonement both speaks to a particular context and acts as a catalyst within that context.

The missional impulse of the atonement, to speak into different contexts is exemplified in the biblical description of sin. While sin is pervasive and present in every context, the biblical narrative presents a multifaceted description of sin. The biblical narrative uses a wide range of descriptors to express the reality of the human predicament. The atonement speaks to individuals, people groups, and social structures at the point of their particular problems. The nature of sin is described as shame, lostness, alienation, domination by evil powers, slavery to sin, allegiance to other gods, enmity, rootlessness, or guilt.[8] Taking our cue from the missionary experience of the apostles and the apostolic community, the church uses the atonement to speak to a specific problem within a particular context. The Bible provides a holistic view of salvation depicted as a wholeness and restoration in every sphere of life. This contextualization of salvation includes a preservation from danger, national deliverance, relief from slavery, recovery after illness, healing disease, release from prison, protection from danger, rescue from troubles, rescue from the wicked, protection from evil, protection from death both physical and spiritual, protection from divine judgment, and more.[9]

The recognition of the individual nature of the human condition in a particular context frees the church to respond to people and situations rather than needing to lead people to acknowledge an unknown human predicament. Historically, the church's

---

[7] Driver, *Understanding the Atonement for the Mission of the Church*, 247.
[8] Driver, *Understanding the Atonement for the Mission of the Church*, 248.
[9] Harris, "Salvation," 762.

missionary impulse has been to lead seekers to recognize their guilt and shame in order that they identify with the justification metaphor in which their sins may be expiated. The unique identification of sin in each situation allows for such questions such as, "How can I become one of you?", "How can I be freed from my bondage?", "Who will help me?", or "Who am I?" These questions are just as legitimate to the Protestant tradition as the traditional approach of "How can I get rid of my feelings of guilt?"[10] The atonement speaks to different individuals differently because the depravity of sin is present differently in each particular context. Atonement theory begins with one's view of sin and the way we define the problem shapes the way we define the solution.[11]

The perceived solution for the human predicament within a context speaks to the reality of the atonement. If the church is heading toward its ultimate fulfillment of Christ's design for humanity in the eschatological community of eternity, then the atonement must point us in the direction of that eternity. As Scot McKnight emphasizes, if eternity is like *x*, then life on earth ought to be lived in tune with *x*. In fact, if eternity is like *x*, the atonement will prepare humans for *x*.[12] The missional impulse of kaleidoscope theory in the church seeks to identify the problem of sin and Christ's salvation in a particular context through the use metaphors. For example, in the context of Latin America in the 1950's and 1960s, the atonement spoke into the context using the metaphor of *christus victor*. Liberation theology identified the human predicament as the oppression and suffering of the people and recognized the work of the atonement as providing deliverance and hope to the context.[13] Only within such a context of oppression

---

[10] Driver, *Understanding the Atonement for the Mission of the Church*, 247–8.
[11] McKnight, *A Community Called Atonement, 22.*
[12] McKnight, *A Community Called Atonement*, 25.
[13] Schmiechen, *Saving Power*, 353.

can the metaphor of Christ's victory over the corrupt systems of the world speak freedom and hope to the audience.

The variety of metaphors that kaleidoscope theory utilizes to speak the atonement into a diverse number of contexts establishes that no metaphor is more valuable than another is. The kaleidoscopic church regards no interpretation as the only authentic or definitive one for all time because there is no definitive context that speaks to all people.[14] The limited context and missional aim of any native interpretation of the atonement limits its ability to speak into foreign contexts. The interpretation is tied to the original context in which the atonement was formulated. Though the atonement was first revealed and interpreted in a first century Jewish context, Paul does not continue to declare this Jewish interpretation of the gospel as binding for all contexts. Paul establishes the necessity of reaching every context by tailoring the message to the particulars of that context. This is evident in Paul's preaching in Athens in Acts 17. Paul utilizes the religious context to proclaim the character and work of the Jewish God. The example and instruction of Paul follows God's own revelation of himself. God's revelation of his own person takes place throughout the biblical narrative in a dynamic interaction with events and people. The character traits revealed in these interactions are most often shaped by the context in which God reveals himself.[15] Any particular revelation is not more or less true, but represents the self-disclosure of the multiplicity of aspects of God's character. Thus, all revelations of God and interpretations of the atonement reveal varying aspects of God and his work that all reveal a part of the whole.

---

[14] Green, "Kaleidoscopic View," 170.
[15] Goldingay, "Biblical Narrative and Systematic Theology," 131.

The church of kaleidoscope theory must learn to utilize all metaphors of the atonement in order to gain a full understanding of Christ's work. The church's tendency has been to overemphasis one particular metaphor over another. Proponents of *christus victor*, penal substitution, moral influence, and other theories of the atonement have asserted that a particular metaphor is more influential than others are. At best, they have viewed the other metaphors as supporting their particular view, and at worst, they have totally disregarded the other metaphors as erroneous. A church that maintains the missional impulse of kaleidoscope theory holds all of the metaphors in tension. Certainly, there are those metaphors and views of the life, death, and resurrection of Christ that fall outside of Orthodox Christianity and the church must remove these interpretations from the conversation. However, the conversation in a kaleidoscopic church continues as nuanced discussion that appreciates all of the metaphors for what they bring to the table. The work of Baker and Green has fallen short in this regard. While Baker and Green encourage a diversity of metaphors and an appreciation for their contribution towards the church's understanding of the atonement, they spend a substantial part of their work critiquing penal substitution.[16] Baker acknowledges that their critique is against the common understanding of the atonement in the pew of the western church today.[17] Baker also admits that more positive views of penal substitution exist by writers, such as Kevin Vanhoozer, who construct a view of penal substitution that contributes to a kaleidoscope view of the atonement. In a kaleidoscope view of the atonement, the church must engage in a positive construction of the atonement. Rather, that spending time debating who is on

[16]In their book, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross*, Green and Baker deal directly with penal substitution theory in a short section of 21 pages, 170–91. However, the entire book contains a consistent interpretation of the atonement that is shown to be contradictory to the popular view of the atonement (as understood and articulated in penal substitution).

[17] Baker, "Contextualizing the Scandal of the Cross," 29.

the outside of a proper understanding of the atonement, the church must build a positive view of the atonement that utilizes all the metaphors of the biblical narrative to instruct the church in understanding the life, death, and resurrection of Christ.

The western church's interactions with the atonement metaphors present within its own context have been one of two extremes. The church has been unable to walk the middle road of appreciating the metaphors appropriate for its own context and holding them in tension with the other metaphors of other contexts. The first extreme within the western church is to interpret the atonement using metaphors present within their own context and pushing those understandings into other contexts. This obtrusive supplanting of western metaphors into other contexts is the motivating factor behind the work of Green and Baker. N.T. Wright acknowledges that the western church teaches its understanding of Christ. The non-western world has and continues to accept this teaching worldwide as the proper view.[18] The second extreme of the western church is to assume that the western understanding of the atonement is invalid because of its creation within a prosperous setting. As McKnight stresses, the church views the Caucasian male suburban teenager kid experiencing the benefits of western life as having an invalid perspective on the atonement. His understanding of the presence and depravity of sin is different than in the life of a disadvantaged female immigrant worker. McKnight rightly reminds us that the church's tendency is to ignore the suburban teenager and speak to the atonement realized in the life of the disadvantaged. The Bible asserts that the depravity of sin is complex and significant enough to affect all contexts and that the atonement is able to

[18] In his book, *Simply Jesus*, Wright spends an entire chapter dispelling two myths of Jesus arising from the western Church. These myths have influenced theological formulations in many other contexts. Wright, *Simply Jesus*, 13–25.

reverse the effects of sin in every way.[19] The atonement conversation of the kaleidoscopic church allows believers to hear both the testimony of the male western teenager and the female immigrant worker. Both perspectives speak to different aspects of the life, death, and resurrection of Christ and how his saving power has created a disciple that changes into a Christ follower. The church needs both perspectives in the conversation, for the atonement affects all people in all contexts.

The Need for Context

The kaleidoscope church does not remove the context of the audience, but rather seeks to identify the context of the audience and utilize it in the formulation and articulation of the atonement. This section will argue for the kaleidoscope church's need for context as it interprets the atonement. This contextualization of the atonement has attracted the objections of other writers. These objections center on the assertion that in contextualizing the atonement, kaleidoscope theory manipulates the atonement message. Opponents of kaleidoscope theory consider it a relativist approach to the atonement. However, the diversity of the kaleidoscopic church is a necessary defense to relativism. This section will argue the necessity for the kaleidoscope church to contextualize as a diverse community. First, this section will examine the necessity of context in interpreting the atonement. Kaleidoscope theory asserts that it is impossible for an individual to remove his or her context as he or she articulates the atonement. Lastly, this section will examine kaleidoscope theory's defence against the abuses of relativism. Kaleidoscope theory utilizes the non-negotiable points of scripture and the input of a diverse Christian community to ward off the abuses of relativism.

---

[19] McKnight, *A Community Called Atonement*, 49.

The contextualization of the atonement is a necessary part of the missiology of kaleidoscope theory. Opponents have argued that this contextualization strips the atonement of its power, as the atonement becomes a relative perspective with no definitive voice or authority.[20] The atonement becomes nothing more than a personal extrapolation from humanity's perspective carrying no cosmic significance. However, kaleidoscope theory maintains its faith in the biblical account of God's cosmic work. Yet the articulation of those cosmic events is undeniably subjective. Joel Green asserts that contextualization happens every time one engages the biblical text regardless of one's theological perspective:

> The fundamental failure of scientific interpretation is the reality that no neutral ledge exists on which we might stand to engage seriously and dispassionately the biblical materials. We inevitable bring with us to the task of reading scripture our own interests and commitments. Although a variety of interests are possible and perhaps defensible, a reading of the Bible as Christian scripture can never be satisfied with anything less than interpretive dispositions and practices oriented toward shaping and nurturing the faith and life of God's people.[21]

The readers are unable to free themselves from their presuppositions regardless of how well they are trained to do so. The very acts of reading and cognitive thought formation have been ingrained into individuals in their development at the youngest of ages. However, kaleidoscope theory is not naïve of the reality of misreading the scripture. Kaleidoscope theory does not allow for all interpretations of the atonement. As discussed earlier in this thesis the kaleidoscope theory only promotes interpretations and metaphors of the atonement that are faithful to the non-negotiable points of the biblical narrative.

---

[20] In response to Joel Green's entry, "Kaleidoscopic View," in *The Nature of the Atonement*, both Gregory Boyd, in "Christus Victor Response," and Thomas Schreiner, in "Penal Substitution Response," argue that Green's attempt to tie the atonement to its cultural foundation adds up to nothing more than relativism. Both authors insist that the atonement must have a unifying anchor that speaks to all cultures and all times.

[21] Green, "The (Re-)Turn to Narrative," 24.

Interpretations of the atonement necessitate contextualization. If atonement begins with humans as generic entities, then the atonement can only be articulated on a generic level.[22] The church is unable to speak of a "one-size-fits-all" atonement theory for all of humanity. The creation narrative describes the essence of humanity as the image of God. We were created in the image of God and placed in special relationship with the world. The image of God serves as the essence of humanity but is a far cry from a generic commonality. In the writings of Paul, the image of God is fully revealed in the life of Christ (2 Cor 4:4). Accordingly, the atonement is the work of Christ transforming the believer into the image of God (2 Cor 3:18).[23] Through the work of the atonement, the believer receives a common element of existence in Christ. While it is possible to speak of a common core in the life of the believer and potentially even human nature itself, that common core cannot be expressed in anything other than a carefully contextualized form.[24] Though all were made in the image of God, there is still male, female, western, eastern, southern, and northern. Hearers of the gospel are African, Asian, white suburban, white rural, European, and Middle Eastern. Believers are moms, dads, husbands, wives, neighbours, strangers, aliens, and citizens. Some are average, above average, and others below average. Some have moms who are healthy and considerate and others have moms who are unhealthy, drug addicts even through both are made in the image of God. The image of God includes dads who were there when their children were growing up and dads who were absent.[25] There is no generic atonement that speaks to all contexts. While on the verge of proclaiming the gospel in the new context of the Gentiles, Peter proclaims

---

[22] McKnight, *A Community Called Atonement*, 49.
[23] Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, 176.
[24] McKnight, *Community Called Atonement*, 45.
[25] McKnight, *Community Called Atonement*, 45.

that God is for all people and speaks to everyone the message that originated with the Jews.

In the follow up to his book, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross*, Mark Baker supports the contextualizing work of the present church. Baker supports the church's contextualizing of the gospel message, in his work *Proclaiming the Scandal of the Cross*, giving examples of individuals in "concrete settings using images and stories to communicate the saving significance of the cross and resurrection."[26] The work of the early church to explain the significance of Christ in foreign contexts continues on in the present church.[27] In Green's view, different individuals and groups will, at different times, find some metaphors to be more significant and paradigmatic than others, depending on what issues they are confronting in their particular historical circumstances. Boyd expresses the opposition to this understanding of kaleidoscope theory. Boyd's concern with this approach is that the overall significance of Jesus' incarnation, life, death, and resurrection is left to the fickle historical circumstance.[28] The meaning the individual or group finds in the rich variety considered as a whole inevitably affects the meaning an individual or group finds in any particular metaphor (or set of metaphors) within the New Testament's variety. In addition, the metaphor (or set of metaphors) an individual or group takes to be paradigmatic affects, if not determines, the meaning an individual or group assigns to the rich variety as a whole. In response to Green's work, Thomas Schreiner asserts that the kaleidoscope has an anchoring color (penal substitution) that brings coherence to all the dimensions of the atonement.[29] The root

[26] Baker, "Contextualizing the Scandal of the Cross," 14.
[27] Baker, "Contextualizing the Scandal of the Cross," 24–27.
[28] Boyd, "Christus Victor Response," 187–8.
[29] Schreiner, "Penal Substitution Response," 193.

problem of the human condition is human sin, and penal substitution grounds our redemption, illumination, freedom, forgiveness, victory over demonic powers, moral life, and so forth. However, Green asserts that if any interpretation of the atonement is advocated as *the* one correct explanation of the atonement, then aspects of God's saving action through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus are at best downplayed and at worst ignored.[30]

Engaging a Community of Diversity

Kaleidoscope theory encourages the church to engage in a diverse community of scripture readers and interpreters. This is a necessary and unavoidable component of the missiology of the atonement. Every interpretation of the atonement that is in agreement with the biblical narrative is useful in describing the kaleidoscope of God's work in all contexts. Only through the kaleidoscope church's essential diversity does the individual come into contact with the message of the width and breadth of God's work of the atonement. This section will examine two historical pitfalls of the western church for approaching the diversity of reflections on the atonement. First, this section will establish that the western church must not push its own interpretation of the atonement onto other cultures. If God is at work in every culture overcoming the consequences of sin, then each culture's reflection upon the atonement must be characterized by God's work in that context. Kaleidoscope theory asserts that the church must articulate the atonement in a culturally sensitive manner. Lastly, this chapter will examine the reactionary position to the first pitfall of the western church. The western church must not ignore its own interaction with the work of God for the interpretations of the more persecuted and disadvantaged. The western church must recognize that it still has a voice in articulating

[30] Baker, "Contextualizing the Scandal of the Cross," 24.

the atonement. The western church must understand how its interaction with God's ongoing work adds to the kaleidoscope of the atonement.

Kaleidoscope theory identifies two-pitfalls of the western church's applications of the interpretation of the atonement. As discussed earlier in this thesis, there are parameters for proper interpretation of the atonement. Green and Baker's work criticizes a penal substitution interpretation of the atonement because, according to them, penal substitution is a misrepresentation of the purpose of God and his work in the biblical narrative.[31] However, all proponents of kaleidoscope theory do not universally accept this view.[32] Baker himself opens the door for the inclusion of penal substitution in his later works, stating that certain understandings of penal substitution do not contain the negative views of the cross.[33] Other proponents of kaleidoscope theory, such as Scot McKnight and Peter Schmiechen, work for the inclusion of penal substitution in the understanding of the atonement. These positive constructions of kaleidoscope theory identify the western church's tendency to apply its message of the atonement improperly in other contexts. While, debate remains over penal substitution's connection to western culture, all proponents of kaleidoscope theory assert that the western church must not push its own interpretation of the atonement upon other contexts and cultures. However, the western church must not downplay its own contribution to the kaleidoscope as it retells its own experience with the atoning work of Christ.

While proponents of kaleidoscope theory may disagree regarding the legitimacy of particular western interpretation of the atonement, all proponents are in agreement

---

[31] Green and Baker, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross*, 146–50.

[32] Both Scot McKnight and Peter Schmeichen include penal substitution as one facet of the kaleidoscope.

[33] Baker, "Contextualizing the Scandal of the Cross," 29–30.

about the pitfalls of the western church's approach to other cultures and contexts. The first pitfall kaleidoscope theory identifies is the western evangelical church's tendency to push its theological interpretation of the atonement onto the rest of the world as the only true and legitimate interpretation. Brian Blount in his book, *Then the Whisper Put on Flesh* highlights the western church's desire to contextualize according to its own view of the atonement. While addressing New Testament ethics in an African American context, Blount asserts,

> That status of recognition belongs to the conglomeration of Euro-American scholars, ministers, and layfolk who have, over the centuries, used their economic, academic, religious, and political dominance, to create the illusion that the Bible, read through their experience, is the Bible read correctly. ... The whisper [of God's voice] took on a white flesh.[34]

The offense, however, is not that the western church reads in its own context, but that it reads in its own context irrespective of the rest of the world and then attempts to subject the rest of the worldwide church to its convictions.

The second pitfall of the western church's missiology of the atonement is a reaction to the previous application. Scot McKnight highlights the reactionary pitfall in his description of the interpretation of the atonement by a white suburban male teenager and an oppressed third-world woman. The church often dismisses the privileged position of the white suburban male teenager and encourages the interpretation of the oppressed context teaching it as credible and genuine.[35] The reaction to the western church's overextension of its interpretation of the atonement onto other cultures is to disregard the western church's interpretation of the atonement altogether. There is no doubt that the western church has experienced an overwhelming criticism of its representation of the

[34] Blount, *The Whisper Put on Flesh*, 15.
[35] McKnight, *A Community Called Atonement*, 49.

Christian gospel. However, the western church must recognize its contribution to the kaleidoscope of interpretations about the atonement. The western church must contribute to this picture without falling into either pitfall. The overextension of a particular interpretation and the dismissal of the western church's own context are two ditches on either side of the roadway of interpretation. The diversity of the interpreting community aids the western church on its journey of interpretation.

Kaleidoscope theory offers a unique perspective, because it allows the biblical reader to engage personally the scripture, yet safeguards against contextualization indefinitely. If the believer reads his or her context into his or her interpretation of the atonement, then applying this interpretation in all contexts is not possible. However, the ditch on the other side of the road is to attempt to create a context free environment to develop a text for all. The danger being, if theological reflections begin with humans as generic entities, then the atonement only develops at a generic level. Kaleidoscope theory attempts to navigate the middle of the road, allowing for contextual readings, but promoting diversity amongst those readings. Communities of diversity become the primary defense against false readings and applications in the kaleidoscope model. Rather than attempting the impossible task of removing context, the believer engages in a diverse community of readers that may support or challenge his or her reading. Thus, diversity becomes a needed safety measure. This includes the engagement of other cultures, time periods, and genders. However, the believer does not read scripture to apply it to everyone else. The believer reads scripture to form themselves with it personally. He or she reads scripture in order that God may address him or her and form

him or her by God's Word in accountability to the diverse perspectives surrounding him or her.[36]

The biblical narrative proclaims the diversity of the kingdom of God. The picture of heaven is a gathering of believers of every tribe, tongue, people, and nation (Rev 5:9; 7:9–10). This expanding nature of the people of God starts from the covenant God makes with Abraham and is concluded in Peter's eschatological vision of heaven. The essential diversity of the church comes to a pinnacle in the writings of Paul. 1 Corinthians 12–14 proclaims the unity and diversity of believers in God's formation and worship of the church. The church was created with a diversity of gifts and perspectives that are necessary. Not everyone can be of the same perspective. There is a need for diversity. The church lives out this diversity as it worships together. As the church comes together each individual brings a unique perspective of a song, sermon, or exhortation. Paul even instructs the church to share the stage in worship in a manner that highlights every perspective in an attempt for all parts of the body to bring their perspective. James encourages this essential diversity instructing his readers to protect against partiality in the church. James asserts that to show favouritism to an individual is a transgression of the royal law of scripture, "Love your neighbour as yourself" (Mark 12:31). This diversity is necessary in the life of the church and maintaining the tensions inherent within the kaleidoscope atonement is part of the ongoing work of the kaleidoscope church. The ability of the church to maintain the tensions of kaleidoscope theory is the task addressed in the following chapter.

---

[36] Green, "The (Re-)Turn to Narrative," 24.

Homogenous Unit Principle

The need for diversity in preaching the gospel reignites the conversation surrounding the homogeneous unit principle. The homogeneous unit principle states that men and women like to become Christians without crossing racial, linguistic, or class barriers.[37] First, this section will establish that kaleidoscope theory promotes the same missional impulse as the homogenous unit principle. The missional impulse to contextualize the gospel message for every context is in keeping with the assertions of Donald McGavran. Second, this section will establish that kaleidoscope theory inspires the church to disciple believers towards brotherhood in Christ. Unlike the homogeneous unit principle, the discipleship towards brotherhood is more intentional. This section will establish kaleidoscope theory's reliance upon discipleship that leads towards a unity of diversity. Lastly, the contextualization of the gospel to a variety of contexts must move beyond the false dichotomy of diversity versus brotherhood presented by McGavran. Kaleidoscope theory inspires the church to contextualize the gospel in cultural sensitive manners that are not to the detriment of the larger body of Christ.

McGavran's book, *Understanding Church Growth*, is considered the foundational work to the church growth movement. Published in 1970, McGavran drew upon his interaction with the missionary contexts of Africa, Asia, and Latin America. In this publication, he asserts that church growth must recognize the reality of a kaleidoscopic world.[38] The gospel must reach a world affected by divisions, hatred, and wars. Similar to the work of Green and Baker, McGavran establishes that context in a particular culture must orient all of the church's missional efforts. He even asserts the contextual nature of

[37] McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 223.
[38] McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 23.

his own publication, encouraging other writers to establish publications of other contexts on the same subject. McGavran's directs his book specifically towards an English audience of highly educated nationals or missionaries from Europe and America. McGavran asserts that the churches of Asia, Africa, and Latin America are in need of their own reflections on church growth.[39]

The primary assertion of *Understanding Church Growth* is the sociological reality that men and women like to become Christians without crossing racial, linguistic, or class barriers. McGavran addresses the reality that humanity builds barriers around themselves and their own societies. Humans love to differentiate based on societal norms, including speech, dress, work, necessities, and many other factors.[40] These differences both bring together and separate humanity based on the categorization of social factors. Humankind is a mosaic and each piece has a separate identity that needs to receive the gospel in its native context. These foreign contexts are often hostile towards the uncontextualized message of the gospel. The kaleidoscope church establishes to reach these hostile contexts by re-envisioning the message of the gospel to speak to the current contexts. In the same way as the homogeneous unit principle, kaleidoscope theory utilizes evangelistic approaches tempered by ethnicity, age, cultural norms, etc.

Kaleidoscope theory must live out the tension between contextualizing the message of the atonement for new audiences and the discipleship of believers into the family of God. From a church growth perspective, McGavran asserts that the contextualization of the gospel message for new people will involve planting homogeneous churches for these new groups. Kaleidoscope theory does not necessarily

---

[39] McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, x.
[40] McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 223.

lead to the same conclusion. A kaleidoscopic church will walk the tension between reaching new people through contextualizing the message of the atonement and discipling individuals into the family of God. This includes avoiding the pitfall of uniformity in the name of the kingdom and hostility and jealousy present in the segregation of people groups.

The western church has resisted the homogenous principle because of its conflict with the revelation of heaven's multinational choir. Debate remains whether the rejection of the homogenous principle in theory is also carried out in practice.[41] However, a full treatment of the church's practice of diversity is a much larger subject. This section will examine the western church's rejection of the theory of the homogeneous unit principle. This rejection of the homogenous principle is termed by McGavran as the "great battle for brotherhood."[42] The battle for unity is the goal of many churches in North America who view the unification of the body of Christ as God's defining plan. These churches appose segregation in any form. These churches doubt the validity of any principle that would promote the organization of church that push Christians into fellowship as only one class or race.[43] McGavran sympathizes with the aspirations of these North American churches, recognizing their actions as an appropriate response to historical atrocities of slavery, apartheid, and oppression of ethnic minorities in North America and around the world.[44] Segregation brings an array of painful memories surrounding the suffering of individuals in oppressive systems. However, church leaders cannot use this dark period in

---

[41] Williams, *Church Diversity*, 121. Scott Williams articulates a sustained argument in his book in which he claims that Sunday church gatherings are the most segregated activity in American culture. Workplaces, politics, and corporate marketing contain more diversity than the majority of churches in America.

[42] McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 238.

[43] McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 238.

[44] McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 238.

our history as motivation for not recognizing the uniqueness and diversity of the human population and the church's need to speak to the individual contexts of different peoples.

Kaleidoscope theory causes the church to focus on the conversion of new audiences as the primary impulse of the atonement. Kaleidoscope theory identifies the missional impulse from God's purpose and propels the church into the task of evangelism. McGavran argues that the western church is more interested in discipling the believer than reaching the lost.[45] This is represented in the western church's fixation on the question "What should Christians do?" rather than "How do non-Christian populations accept Christ?" McGavran charges the western church with fixating on discipling the known elect, rather than reaching the lost. The church is particularly critical of allowing any one kind of people to form congregations of its own. McGavran's argument in this perspective compares the best results of his methodology versus the worst of western Christianity. McGavran claims that the western church promotes an ecclesiology that prefers a slow-growing or non-growing church that is multinational rather than a rapidly growing one-people Church. In the eyes of the western church, this non-growing multinational church is the only truly Christian community.[46] However, this argument for a homogenous unit is lacking nuance and a strong evaluation of the other camps convictions and motivations.

McGavran is not naïve to the realities of the writer of Revelation's oracle of heaven. McGavran asserts that after the evangelization of a large segment of a particular people, discipleship will lead to a unity of fellowship.[47] The work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the church results in recognition of the unity amongst the family of God.

---

[45] McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 238.
[46] McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 238.
[47] McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 242.

However, the recognition of the unity within diversity of humanity is a result of believing in Christ and is not a prerequisite for becoming a believer. McGavran qualifies his book with the instruction to apply his principles of the homogenous unit with common sense. It is clear from the biblical narrative that salvation and mission motivated by selfishness rather than the purpose of God is a great injustice. The work of the church should never be centered on only reaching and discipling one's kin.[48] The atonement and biblical narrative should never enhance animosities or the arrogance that is so common to all human associations. Kaleidoscope theory motivates a church in which men and women of one class, tribe, or society come to Christ in their own context. However, the power of the atonement does not stop there but seeks to act as a catalyst in changing the ethnocentrism of humanity. For it is obvious that the biblical narrative teaches the western church that persons from all segments of society are also God's children.[49]

Globalized and multiethnic contexts greatly diminish the need for a homogeneous unit. With the continued globalization of the world, the diversity of different societies has become less and less. The spread of globalization has acted as a melting pot causing clans, classes, and castes to disappear. While great disparity remains between some people groups, the message of the atonement provides a unified family in which differences are recognized and appreciated.[50] McGavran points to the example of the Brazilian church. In the melting pot of urban Brazil, the church provided a fellowship which migrant workers to the area were unable to find among members of their own subculture or homogenous unit. The receptive nature of the church in multiethnic

[48] McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 242–3
[49] McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 242–3
[50] McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 243.

situations mirrors the first century context of the early church in the Roman Empire.[51] While some small pockets of Canada and America remain segregated, the majority of both countries have a multicultural heritage and openness to growing their cultural awareness. In this context, discipling towards unity may be second nature. However, it should not detract from the need to contextualize the atonement for all contexts including the plethora of contexts available in the church of North America.

Church Practice and Diversity

The final area of diversity that is present in the kaleidoscope church is diversity in church practice. As presented earlier in this thesis, kaleidoscope theory requires a variety of voices to contextualize the atonement in many different contexts. This choir of voices directly affects the manner in which most churches deliver Christian teaching. This section will argue that a true kaleidoscope church creates opportunities for all voices in the congregation to contribute to the ongoing atonement conversation. First, kaleidoscope theory inherently rejects the culture of celebrity that exists in many North American churches. In the western church, pastors have been the primary interpreters and proclaimers of the atonement. Kaleidoscope theory encourages the church to allow all members opportunity to interpret and proclaim the atonement. Lastly, the need for all members of the body to contribute leads the church to call its members into participation with the atonement. Communal participation is not unique to a kaleidoscope perspective on the atonement. Nonetheless, worship in the kaleidoscope church encourages participation of believers in a worship service, as believers are discipled through participation.

---

[51] McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 243.

The kaleidoscope church rejects a culture of celebrity. The culture of celebrity captivates western culture. This culture of celebrity has unfortunately made its way in the worship and practice of the North American church. D.A. Carson highlights this shameful reality in his work, *The Cross and Christian Ministry*. Carson questions the constant parade of Christian athletes, media personalities, and pop singers in popular church culture. Carson asks, "Why should [Christian leaders'] opinions and experiences of grace be viewed as any more significant that those of any other believer?"[52] The secular culture of triumph and celebrity has deeply infected modern western Evangelicalism. The culture of celebrity destroys humility, minimizes grace, and offers far too much homage to money and its influence.[53] While Carson's assertions against the western church seem harsh, the reality remains that pastors and the success of their ministries characterize most prominent churches, especially mega-churches, in the western world.

The work of Paul amongst the Corinthians supports the kaleidoscope church's quest for a church that does not define itself by the testimony of one person but expresses the diversity amongst the congregation. Paul states to the Corinthians, "And when I came to you, brethren, I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God." (1 Cor 2:1) Carson asserts that it is entirely improper to infer from this passage that Paul was an incompetent speaker or a bad communicator. Rather, Paul is warning the Corinthians against any approach to the church practice that leads the believer to remark, "What a marvelous teacher!" instead of "What a marvelous

---

[52] Carson, *The Cross and Christian Ministry*, 29.
[53] Carson, *The Cross and Christian Ministry*, 29.

Saviour!"[54] The message of the atonement demolishes pride and idolatry. The ministry of the church should reject our endless self-promotion, our love of more professionalism, and our addiction to well-defined methods.[55] The ministry of the kaleidoscope church demonstrates the outreach of the cross. Carson charges the western church with the reality that this New Testament description of the preacher by Paul must convict the church. The culture of celebrity has infiltrated the church. The church must confess that they have turned to idols and must repent of sin. The cross has been treated like a creed, but it is the standard of ministry.[56]

The culture of celebrity has infected the way we approach pastoral ministry. Churches thrive and deteriorate based on the ministry of the pastor alone. When a western church believer tells his or her friend about the church he or she attends, does he or she speak about the amazing pastor and how well he or she preaches, ministers, or oversees? Alternatively, does he or she talk about the despised and lowly that have accepted Christ and the testimony of Christ's love amongst the community? Too often believers attempt to market the ministry of the pastor as the work of the church. The tragedy of such an approach is the knowledge, gifting, and experience of only one member of the body limits the entire service.[57]

Through the use of the western church's structure and liturgy, the church perpetuates the centrality of the pastor and the passivity of the congregation. The western church models the evangelical protestant construction of the church after the auditoriums and tents that housed much of the American revival. This structure draws attention to the

---

[54] Carson, *The Cross and Christian Ministry*, 34–35.
[55] Carson, *The Cross and Christian Ministry*, 40.
[56] Carson, *The Cross and Christian Ministry*, 40.
[57] Viola and Barna, *Pagan Christianity?*, 76.

gospel message of the preacher. The stage implicitly suggests that the choir, worship team, and pastor perform for the congregation to stimulate their worship or even worse entertain them.[58] Frank Viola and George Barna assert that the arrangement and mood of the building conditions the congregation toward passivity. The pulpit platform acts like a stage, and the congregation occupies the theater. The separation of the clergy from the congregation has been emphasized in Christian architecture since it was born in the fourth century.[59]

The kaleidoscope church will have to re-examine the very basics of its church buildings to express the priesthood of all believers. Every building elicits a response from its occupants. The church by its interior and exterior explicitly shows us what the church is and how it functions.[60] This is known as the architectural principle of form and function. As Viola and Barna assert, if the western church assumes that where they gather is simply a matter of convenience, the church is tragically mistaken.[61] The location and arrangement of the church influences the character of the church and its practices. The church arranges the chairs or pews towards the stage. The altar is behind the rood screen. The pastor delivers the central element of the service from an architectural monument, the pulpit. All of these elements encourage the promotion of a single perspective on the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

A kaleidoscope church must promote a liturgy of mutual participation amongst its members. The order of worship amongst most Protestants and Catholics represses the mutual participation and the growth of Christian community. The liturgy of the majority

---

[58] Viola and Barna, *Pagan Christianity?*, 36.
[59] Viola and Barna, *Pagan Christianity?*, 37.
[60] Viola and Barna, *Pagan Christianity?*, 37.
[61] Viola and Barna, *Pagan Christianity?*, 37.

of churches places the emphasis on the actions and message of the clergy. Whether through the administration of the sacraments or through the delivery of the gospel message, the clergy bring the grace of the atonement to the people. This liturgy puts a chokehold on the laity of the church, silencing its members from meaningful participation in the service.[62] There is absolutely no room for anyone to give a word of exhortation, share an insight, start or introduce a song, or spontaneously lead a prayer. Such a reality is very different from words of Paul to the Corinthians, "When you assemble, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification." (1 Cor 14:26) The majority of western churches do not display the priesthood of all believers that Paul seems to have in mind. The liturgy of the majority of western churches prevents the testimony of other members of the body from enriching the church as a whole.

Discipleship is created through participation and functioning in one's gifts, not by passively watching and listening. Viola and Barna accuse the western church of encouraging passivity, limiting the function of its members, and implying that putting in one hour a week is the key to the victorious Christian life.[63] While this accusation is probably too aggressive, it highlights the reality that individuals grow by functioning and not by passively watching and listening.[64] Kaleidoscope theory demands the engagement of all members of the church to reflect upon the atonement in their own lives. The western church may find help in the Jewish practice of *chavruta*. *Chavruta* is the communal study of the scripture in pairs and in groups. Such a practice was present in the

---

[62] Viola and Barna, *Pagan Christianity?*, 75.
[63] Viola and Barna, *Pagan Christianity*, 77.
[64] Viola and Barna, *Pagan Christianity*, 77.

Second Temple Period Rabbinic tradition for the purpose of Talmud study.[65] Later Rabbis encouraged *chavruta* amongst their followers so that they might arrive at a more balanced and correct understandings of scripture.[66] The kaleidoscope church must be able to engage the scriptures as a community in a manner that highlights the diversity of contexts and perspectives to which the atonement speaks.

Conclusion

Every interpretation of the atonement speaks to the diverse work of God in the atonement. Kaleidoscope theory cultivates a church in which a diversity of interpretations is encouraged. This diversity of readers helps believers avoid misreading and misusing the atonement. The diversity of kaleidoscope theory encourages church leadership to allow all members of the church to interpret the atonement. Pastors and biblical scholars become coaches to encourage the members of the church to identify and articulate the work of God present in their own contexts. However, the diversity of interpretations may inspire church practices that work in contradictory ways. The next chapter will examine the church's ability to live in the diversity of atonement interpretations. The diversity of kaleidoscope theory inspires the church to interpret the atonement as a community.

---

[65] Steinmetz, *Dictionary of Jewish Usage*, 26–27.
[66] Hezser, *The Social Structure of the Rabbinic Movement in Roman Palestine*, 351.

Chapter 5: Living in the Tensions of Different Atonement Interpretations

The diversity of the kaleidoscopic image of the atonement requires a church that practices living in the tensions of competing interpretations. This chapter will examine the kaleidoscopic church's practice of living in the tensions of multiple interpretations. First, this chapter will examine the western church's current approach to systemization. The kaleidoscopic church rejects propositionalism's propensity to divide the biblical narrative into categories and reject opposing perspectives. This chapter will examine the kaleidoscopic church's recognition of the multiplicity of the atonement metaphors and attempts to embrace each perspective. The kaleidoscopic church disciples believers beyond being single-issue Christians. Second, this chapter will examine the western church's examination of doctrine to create unity in the essentials and liberty in the non-essentials. The kaleidoscopic church rejects this practice of the church to adhere only to the essentials because it does not account for the contextual factors that shape self-identity. Lastly, the kaleidoscopic church must live within the tensions of competing interpretations of the atonement. The purpose of God for humanity and creation is realized in the cosmic shaping event of the life, death, and resurrection of Christ and the future realization of the new heaven and new earth.

The Current State of Western Systematization

Kaleidoscope theory inspires a church that recognizes the multiplicity of atonement metaphors and openly seeks to embrace their differences. This section will examine the western church's inclination towards both systemization and propositionalism. Both of these approaches identify distinctives and categorize accordingly. While not necessary, both approaches have been used in the western church

to alienate other perspective and approaches to the work of Christ. The kaleidoscope church will seek to live in the tensions of distinctives. First, this section will examine the current use of propositionalism in the western church and theology. Propositionalism in the western church alienates as it assimilates the data in agreement with its perspective and rejects the data that does not support its perspective. Second, kaleidoscope theory rejects the monolithic and decontextualizing nature of propositionalism. Kaleidoscope theory maintains the necessity for interpretations of the atonement to speak to a variety of contexts in culturally specific language. Lastly, kaleidoscope theory inspires a reading community that draws strength from each theory and utilizes the metaphors as equal forms of communication. The church must be able to uphold the diversity of atonement interpretations and the church practices that they inspire.

Traditional creeds and denominational statements of faith have moved away from the multiplicity of interpretations found in the biblical narrative. Most teaching and writing has a tendency to reduce the biblical vision to an essential core. This is a direct result of the influence of propositionalism upon modern thought. Propositionalism is a system of logic in which the theologian analyzes the biblical data of Scripture to articulate what is true and what is false.[1] For instance, in Stanley Grenz's work, *Theology for the Community of God*, the community of God becomes the judging criteria. The scriptural material that falls into the category of God's community is emphasized and that which does not fit is reinterpreted so that it may fit or it is not included.[2] The kaleidoscope church stands in opposition to the pressure to systemize the imagery of the

[1] Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine*, 267.

[2] In Grenz's treatment of sin, he defines sin as the destruction of community. He continually emphasizes the corporate reality of sin present in the world and spends very little time dealing with the place of the individual before God as a result of his or her own sin. Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, 181–212.

New Testament. A pluralism of images is essential for communicating the meaning of the work of Christ in its fullness.[3] Propositionalism takes the texts captive with intent to conform and categorize. Through its categorization, propositionalism establishes a norm for reading any text as either in agreement or in disagreement leaving no room for any middle ground. All texts that are in agreement are then absorbed into the framework of the ultimate theory.[4] The end result of a propositionalist interpretation is a church that desires to reconcile oppositions and differences through a movement towards a single comprehensive vision.[5]

As Kevin Vanhoozer asserts in his publication, *The Drama of Doctrine*, propositionalism characterizes many theological publications and schools today.[6] While there is nothing to gain by caricatures or demonizing this group of theologians, their methodology warrants a re-evaluation. The methodology of propositionalism is an instinct to preserve the truth of the gospel message. This motivation is undeniably justifiable and admirable. However, even the underlying presumption of a scientific or propositionalist interpretation of the atonement is coloured by context. [7] Every interpretation of the biblical narrative and any construct of theology built upon such an interpretation is coloured by the assumptions of the time. The interpretation of the atonement by Anselm was created in the context of the feudal system, while the interpretation of Aberlard was created in the context of romanticism. These assumptions, while understandable to a kaleidoscopic perspective, work at cross-purpose to a propositionalist approach.

---

[3] Driver, *Understanding the Atonement for the Mission of the Church*, 247.
[4] Vanhoozer, *Drama of Doctrine*, 269.
[5] Vanhoozer, *Drama of Doctrine*, 269.
[6] Vanhoozer, *Drama of Doctrine*, 267.
[7] Vanhoozer, *Drama of Doctrine*, 267.

Kaleidoscope theory is rooted in the recognition of scripture as narrative, and therefore rejects modern theologies attempts to remove propositions from their narrative context. Modern theology as a whole, both conservative and liberal, has engaged in a long series of debates over which set of concepts best names and characterizes God. These concepts are reordered into theological constructs. Vanhoozer laments the current state of theology in which the only legitimate forms of theology are "a set of abstract propositions arrived at through rational argument."[8] These constructs are de-dramatized propositions that pull metaphor and imagery out of its context of divine communicative action. Modern theology enacts violence upon the biblical narrative when it attempts to take the kingdom of God by force of human theological systems.[9] Modern theology follows the general trend of western culture in which propositionalism reduces all truth and dialogue to its essential propositional content. In the current state of theology, it does not matter where metaphors originate or to what context they speak. All that matters is their propositional core.[10] Kaleidoscope theory rejects this notion as the context in which a story, metaphor, or image takes shape dictates its meaning and emphasis.

Kaleidoscope theory is not the only system of theology to reject propositionalism.[11] However, the rejection of propositionalism is a major foundational block in kaleidoscope theory. Kaleidoscope theory asserts that theology is more than a summary of exegetical data or statements about extractable propositions.[12] The kaleidoscope church enacts the assertions of kaleidoscope theory. Propositionalism

---

[8] Vanhoozer, *Drama of Doctrine*, 269.
[9] Vanhoozer, *Drama of Doctrine*, 269.
[10] Vanhoozer, *Drama of Doctrine*, 269–70.
[11] Kevin Vanhoozer, a proponent of penal substitution, also rejects propositionalism in his book, *Drama of Doctrine.*
[12] Vanhoozer, *Drama of Doctrine*, 271.

mistakenly assumes that language is essentially a matter of depicting the ideal reality. Whether these realities are physical, historical, or psychological is of secondary importance.[13] The teachings and practices of the church must recognize the context of metaphors and continue to teach and enact them in culturally appropriate methods. The ability of the kaleidoscopic church to live in the tensions of the atonement will involve teaching and practising the atonement with recognition of the cultures and contexts in which they arose.

The current state of theology forces the reading community to examine its own language and approaches to the text. Kaleidoscope theory asserts that in the use of the image, interpretations announce the specific thematic criteria used for contextualizing the atonement. This inherently creates a division amongst the text as some material falls into such criteria and some material falls outside of that criteria.[14] In a penal substitution interpretation of the atonement, the writing to the Hebrews of Christ's sacrificial death are easily incorporated, while Jesus' proclamation in Nazareth regarding his liberating work must be placed within the larger framework of substitutionary atonement. Gregory Boyd attacks this perceived contradiction in kaleidoscope. When examining Green's use of a multiplicity of metaphors, Boyd asserts, "It is therefore logically impossible for them to be equally right on these points. Both may be wrong, but both cannot be right."[15] However, by announcing a theme and excluding nonrelated material, it does not negate that material. Rather, that image simply excludes such material for the sake of continuity and ease of communication in a present context. The manner in which atonement images set themselves apart from other images should not view the diversity as conflict, but as

[13] Vanhoozer, *Drama of Doctrine*, 271.
[14] Schmiechen, *Saving Power*, 317.
[15] Boyd, "Christus Victor Response," 188–9.

multiple vantage points beneficial for a more well-rounded understanding of the atonement. The conflict between images is not valid if the community of readers recognizes, "typology as that which inherently seeks to identify and isolate that which differentiates the members of a class, even though they share many things in common."[16]

The reading community strives to draw the strengths from each theory and utilize the metaphors as equal forms of communication and not points of differentiating. The fullness of the gospel message holds all of the New Testament motifs together. The kaleidoscopic church takes its cues from the New Testament as it attempts to hold all the biblical motifs and imagery together. The kaleidoscopic church utilizes the context of all imagery in its teaching and practice. As Peter Schmiechen asserts in his book, *Saving Power*, the use of an image by the church provides a rich background of context to draw upon.[17] The kaleidoscopic church is able to recognize that every image announces the practice, language, and logic associated with that image. This will inherently isolate some audiences and draw other audiences into an encounter with the atonement. Because of the use of multiple images in communicating the atonement, the isolation of particular audiences from particular images of the atonement is not a problem but an opportunity. Rather, the diverse images in the biblical narrative provide a rich background to which all audiences may find some correlation.

Rather than trying to force all biblical imagery and metaphors into a rational theory, the kaleidoscopic church allows all the metaphors and images to make their particular contribution to the church's understanding of the atonement. The primary disagreement between competing theories has been the differing ways competing views

---

[16] Schmiechen, *Saving Power*, 357.
[17] Schmiechen, *Saving Power*, 317–8.

arrange the variety of metaphors that comprise the biblical data, that is, the logical relationship each view believes exists amidst this data, which metaphors they consider foundational for an understanding of others, and so forth.[18] However, one must examine how much of this tension arises from within the biblical text or if it is a result of the scientific agenda imposing its methodology upon the biblical narrative. Kaleidoscope theory, as mentioned at the outset of this paper, asserts that the diversity of images in the biblical narrative is not an accident or a result of varied authorship. Rather, the diversity of images is a result of metaphoric language and intentional. The Old and New Testaments make no effort to present these metaphors logically within a larger framework.[19] In keeping with the biblical narrative, the kaleidoscope church also asserts that the diversity of images within the biblical narrative is not accidental.

The diversity of atonement teaching and practice provided by such metaphors enable the church to teach and enact the atonement in a variety of contexts. It would be naïve of pastors and lay leaders promoting the diversity and multiplicity of imagery to assume that this will result in a monolithic view of the atonement. Kaleidoscope theory recognizes this multiplicity and openly attempts to embrace it. A community that is formed from kaleidoscope theory must practice the discipline of the peace of Christ as it attempts to maintain a multiplicity of views even when faced with what may appear to be contradictory statements.[20] The kaleidoscopic church must make every effort to maintain the multiplicity of imagery of the atonement in its discipleship and worship. Including a multiplicity of images into the kaleidoscopic church requires the acknowledgement from church leadership that each member will practice the atonement in accordance with the

[18] Boyd, "Christus Victor Response," 188.
[19] Driver, *Understanding the Atonement for the Mission of the Church*, 31.
[20] Schmiechen, *Saving Power*, 344.

particulars of his or her context. However, the missional aim to teach and practice the atonement to bring about God's purpose in individual contexts unites the kaleidoscopic church.

The kaleidoscopic church must disciple its members in accordance with the diversity of atonement metaphors and the biblical practices that they inspire. As the believer encounters the atonement, his or her metaphors and experiences inform his or her view of God's character and subsequently his or her theology. The experiences, and resulting theological orientation, of believers determine their preference of metaphor(s) to describe the atonement. Utilizing one's preferred metaphor to describe the work of the atonement is natural. However, as John Driver asserts, the western church has often been tempted into choosing their preferred metaphor and in the interests of clarity or rationality have insisted on its use as the primary lens for interpreting belief and practice. This reality has impoverished the church's understanding of the atonement throughout history.[21] While recognizing the preferences and experience of individuals, the kaleidoscopic church must disciple its members towards recognition of the diversity of metaphors. Failure to recognize the diversity of metaphors for describing the atonement is detrimental to the core convictions and motivations of the kaleidoscopic church.

The kaleidoscopic church rejects the present state of polarization within the western church. The ability of the kaleidoscopic church to live within the tension of contrasting atonement metaphors is in clear contrast to the western church's surrounding context and practice. D.A. Carson examines the current state of the western church and laments many Christians have adapted to the surrounding political context. Many Christians today in the western church identify themselves and their church practice with

[21] Driver, *Understanding the Atonement for the Mission of the Church*, 31.

a single issue, which is a concept adopted from the current state of American politics.[22] This single issue is unfortunately neither the cross nor the gospel. These Christians do not deny the cross or gospel and would emphatically endorse both if pressed to defend their belief system. However, their actions in the church body today speak to a different reality. In the construction of humanity's perspective of God, believers reflect upon a God that resembles them. They construct a view of a god who is a little bigger, little better, little stronger, and a little wiser than the believer. The result is a God who is a supersized version of themselves.[23] For these Christians the point of self-identification is on a single belief or practice. All of their energy is invested in upholding their interest. This single issue may be a style of worship, the abortion issue, home schooling, homosexuality, the gift of tongues, pop culture, etc. The life, death, and resurrection of Christ influence these particular beliefs and practices. Furthermore, the beliefs and practices of these individuals influence the life of the church. However, the kaleidoscope church must promote the cross and gospel to the center of church life. The centrality of the cross and the multiplicity of atonement images inspire the kaleidoscope church to hold competing beliefs and practices in tension.

Unity in the Essentials and Liberty in the Non-Essentials

The kaleidoscopic church recognizes the contexts from which atonement theories and churches arise and includes these factors within the open discussion of the church. This section will establish the church's need to open up dialogue in which the variety of atonement metaphors and the church practices they inspire may be discussed and evaluated. The western church has attempted to maintain the unity of the church through

---

[22] Carson, *The Cross and Christian Ministry*, 63.
[23] Batterson, "God is Incomparable," 33.

the evaluation and adherence to commonality. First, this section will show that the kaleidoscopic church's approach to the tensions inherent within kaleidoscope theory must be dealt with in a more comprehensive practice than highlighting commonality. Second, the kaleidoscope of metaphors for the atonement does not propel the church into unity on their own. Rather, the surrounding context in which interpretations of the atonement and churches are established informs church practice. Lastly, the kaleidoscopic church must engage the practice of open dialogue surrounding the tensions inherent within the perspectives of the atonement and the church practices that they inspire.

As this thesis has asserted above, a lack of confidence in the life and work of Christ results in a lack of confidence in the church's beliefs and practices. The attempts of the reading community to avoid subjugating the atonement to consequences of human thought are not sufficient. Not only must communities learn to avoid despising what is different, but they must also learn to identify what they can hold up with certainty. This attempt has historically been spoken of as, "Unity in essentials, and liberty in nonessentials."[24] However, this reality is contrary to the practices of the western world. As Bruce Hindmarsh recounts, from the foundation of Evangelicalism and into the present, evangelical ecclesiology has always struggled to enact the catholicity of the church. Paradoxically, it has always upheld the doctrine of spiritual unity with those whom have been "born again," yet often separated from one another in practice.[25] The western world and church is less interested in living in tension and more interested in maintaining polarized groups that affirm their own convictions. Paul's words to the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians must be applied to the North American church. Paul

[24] Schmiechen, *Saving Power*, 335.
[25] Hindmarsh, "Is Evangelical Ecclesiology an Oxymoron?" 15.

compels us to leave behind petty arguments about whose teachings we follow and make Christ the only essential. This is the governing concept for kaleidoscope theory and therefore the reading community. All theories must recognize the central focus on Jesus historically working to fulfill the purpose of God. Even those outside of kaleidoscope theory are forced to recognize this reality.[26]

Problematic for the western church is that the essentials of Christianity do not unite the church by themselves. The mantra of the church for interdenominational work has been unity in essentials. The western church has attempted to deal with the diversity of church belief and church practice in one of two ways. The first methodology is to define the church from the perspective of only one tradition. The second methodology for creating church unity is to define the church by a small set of theological affirmations, which all Christians have in common. The first approach is a retreat into denominationalism. The result is unity amongst a specific group of people but exclusion of different perspectives. The second approach excludes from discussion so much of the faith and practice of the church. This approach leaves the church with a watered down gospel that does not represent their cultural traditions. The conviction of the kaleidoscopic church is that the definition of the church includes the contextual issues of church life and tradition because they inform the self-identity of the church. The contextual issues are what separates and causes the church great difficulty within and between traditions.[27]

To further illustrate this point, varieties of churches affirm the historical creeds, yet the church practice that flows from their traditions is extremely divergent. In different

---

[26] Reichenbach, "Healing Response," 197.
[27] Schmiechen, *Defining the Church for Our Time*, 16–17.

denominations such as the Catholics, Lutherans, Baptists, and Mennonites, a common essence of faith in God and the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ exists. Certainly, leaders within these traditions would affirm the Nicene and Chalcedon statements on Christology. However, they would not relegate every other aspect of their tradition and church life to the status of the non-essential. Affirmations about the atonement and the church practices they inspire develop within each tradition in very distinctive ways. Who Jesus Christ is to a particular believer or church is not fully comprehended simply by looking at the Nicene Creed.[28] Schmiechen highlights the polarity within the church in his assertion that after listening to how each tradition speaks of themselves as Christians; the listener would think all others were outside of Christian orthodoxy. While each one shares some commonality between their affirmations of Jesus Christ, the affirmations still bear the distinct marks of each person's tradition. The essentials cannot be defined in isolation from the life of the community.[29]

The common affirmation for unity is also deficient for the kaleidoscopic church because the western church is divided over issues that are considered non-essentials. Returning to the example above, the Catholic, Lutheran, Baptist, and Mennonite churches and traditions are decisively different in their origins, social and canonical practices, methodologies, theological and scriptural convictions, and future orientations. Their differences cannot be ignored or put asides as secondary matters, as these differences constitute key elements in their self-identity. Christians are divided over issues that most denominations and churches consider non-essentials because these issues constitute the heart of Christian practice. The so-called non-essentials take form in the order and

---

[28] Schmiechen, *Defining the Church for Our Time*, 8.
[29] Schmiechen, *Defining the Church for Our Time*, 5–6.

practices of the community, just as the community's life begins to shape the non-essentials. The issues of doctrine often seem ethereal and of unimportance in our daily life. While the moral choices, the order of worship, the teaching tradition, the worship style, and church dress influence our life in community on a daily basis and glare us in the face.

The western church fights over secondary practices because the motivation for their actions is tied to the primary essentials. Moreover, the core values of a particular tradition always interact with daily life. The so-called essentials take form in the order and practices of the community, just as the community's life begins to shape the essentials. The division between primary and secondary matters (essentials and non-essentials) is an unreal division. As stated previously in this thesis, articulations of the life and work of Christ must include propulsion towards the community of Christ, which he founded to complete his incarnated work. Many general needs of the community require attention. Many things along the journey are essential to the life of the church.[30] Essentials and non-essentials cannot be easily divided. In the actual life of the community, the core values interact and merge with daily life on an ongoing basis.

The kaleidoscopic church must engage in discussion that elevates the atonement to central stage in the teachings and practice of the church. Peter Schmiechen recalls his attendance at a regional gathering of pastors, church leaders, and other delegates. This meeting was called to affirm common essentials in the denomination. The group was asked to affirm the Trinity, the Incarnation, the Virgin Birth, and a ban on homosexuality. Schmiechen laments this gathering, especially since it represents the reality of the

---

[30] Schmiechen, *Defining the Church for Our Time*, 5.

majority of western churches.[31] The common essence of this particular group includes the affirmation of three aspects of the historical creeds and a single political/social issue. While, this may be understandable in the case of sexual immorality, including other social issues in doctrinal statements is not beneficial. Other social issues such as women in leadership, political allegiance and involvement, pacifism, or approaches to abortion and divorce are not as clear. The kaleidoscopic church must discuss the social and political influences of traditions. However, the church should not elevate contextual social and political elements into the core of Christian faith. Such an approach is obtrusive to the biblical narrative. The kaleidoscopic church recognizes that the biblical narrative contains within it social and political issues of the first century context. The kaleidoscopic church attempts to contextualize the biblical narrative for new contexts. The contextualizing of the atonement by the kaleidoscopic church will include difficult conversations regarding what aspects of the church's beliefs and practices are contextual, and which ones are essential.

The evaluation of the church's beliefs and practices must be in keeping with the biblical narrative's assertion of the primary role of God's purpose. If the church's practices, social justice, or political commitments become the essential element of the spiritual life, then the scriptural imperative towards serving God's purpose has been lost. Just as the biblical narrative demonstrates, individuals are called according to God's purpose. This calling will most definitely result in a worldview that engages a particular context through a lens of church practice, political agendas, and/or social commitments. However, the purpose of God always calls people to a new revelation, which necessitates a new lens. God's calling is never represented as static set of church belief and practice

[31] Schmiechen, *Defining the Church for Our Time*, 4.

for all time. If the church or its practices become the center of the church's spiritual life rather than Christ, spiritual decay has begun. A doctrine of the church that does not centre on Christ is self-defeating and false. As established earlier in this thesis, the mission of God establishes the church. To ignore his purpose in his interaction with humanity is to deny his lordship.

The kaleidoscopic church defines the church through recognition of the church's origin in the biblical narrative. The recognition of the contextual nature of the biblical narrative defines the church through a recognition of how the most basic things are embodied in particular forms and how differences are indeed connected to what we have traditionally called essentials.[32] The re-evaluation of tradition and essentials within the church does not constitute a review of the church's faith with an attempt to return to purity of doctrine. Such an approach would be ineffective because it does not engage the community in authentic discussion about the diversity of contexts. As Schmiechen elaborates, the American churches are so divided internally that a call to return to a particular creedal platform would only further divide.[33] In the western church today, everything has become an essential. Social issues are given the same importance as the Trinity, Incarnation, and Virgin Birth.[34]

The kaleidoscopic church breaks from the propositionalist approach in its assertion that context plays a pivotal role in defining the beliefs and practices of the church. The kaleidoscopic church's rejection of propositionalism maintains its ability to uphold the variety of non-essentials within the church. The propositionalist view asserts that a definition of the church consists of a logical essence. The historical particulars of

---

[32] Schmiechen, *Defining the Church for Our Time*, 7.
[33] Schmiechen, *Christ: The Reconciler*, 3.
[34] Schmiechen, *Defining the Church for Our Time*, 4.

imagery and metaphor are considered to be of secondary importance or even accidental. The real essence of the church's definition is what the particulars have in common. While this methodology may serve the reconstructive aims of systematic theology, it does not recognize the realities contextualization. While humanity shares common anatomical, physiological, emotional, and spiritual elements, there is no such thing as a generic human being. There are only specific human beings, contextualized in the variety of races, ethnicities, genders, classes, and other factors.[35]

While many scriptural interpretations of Paul's letter to the Corinthians highlight Paul's affirmation of unity, the kaleidoscopic church recognizes Paul's rationale towards diversity. The kaleidoscopic church recognizes that the church includes many different parts. Paul's argument in 1 Corinthians allows the church to affirm their diversity and to argue that the whole church is not represented unless all the parts are put together like a 2000-piece puzzle. The affirmation of Paul and the kaleidoscopic church is that each individual member has a special gift or perspective.[36] The kaleidoscopic church recognizes the variety of interpretations for Christ, the ultimate essential. The variety of differences does not relate to only non-essentials. The early church recognized that belief and practice throughout the spread of Christianity differed greatly. Even the accounts of interactions with Jesus and the subsequent interpretation for the meanings of his life, death, and resurrection differed greatly. However, Christ unites all parts of his body and all of the metaphors and their original contexts are essentials in promoting the kaleidoscope of God's atonement.[37]

---

[35] Schmiechen, *Defining the Church for Our Time*, 6.
[36] Schmiechen, *Defining the Church for Our Time*, 18
[37] Schmiechen, *Defining the Church for Our Time*, 18.

The kaleidoscopic church must inspire its members into conversation characterized by God's love. In the western church, the desire to keep unity on the essentials has been through stifling discourse involving disagreement. Church leaders have continually shied away from discussions surrounding controversial and disharmonious aspects of church belief and practice. Often, church leadership keeps disagreement silent by squelching all debates valid or not. There is a refusal to speak to, or of, any disagreements that exist within the community.[38] However, withdrawing from the tensions within the biblical narrative is obtrusive to the breadth of Christian belief. The modern church is delusional to assume that the tensions in belief and practice of the early church would not also exist within the church today. The evangelical commitment to scripture should recognize the tensions present within the biblical text. Not only does the biblical narrative recognize tensions, it recounts the early church's practice in dealing with these tensions (Acts 17). Resolving the tensions of biblical narrative is a large part of the internal ministry of the church.

Conversations about the practical matters of church will involve wrestling through where the church must focus its efforts. The ability of the church to wrestle through differences is the demonstration of love. The entire letter of Paul to the Corinthians is a variety of practical issues that stem from the assertion that knowledge should always be tempered by love. Squelching all discussion surrounding the tensions of the biblical narrative is not demonstrating God's love. The church enacts God's love when believers wrestle through the tensions of the biblical narrative amongst the diversity of God's people. The kaleidoscopic church forms its self-identity in the midst of the tension between defining the church in a way that is inclusive of all Christians and that

[38] Schmiechen, *Defining the Church for Our Time*, 4.

recognizes the range of differences between traditions and contexts. With love as the foundational characteristic of the church, believers are not invited into a wild and disharmonious shouting match of conflicting ideas. Rather, the kaleidoscopic church affirms that within the community of new life, all parties unite through the headship and love of Christ. While Christians differ on small and big social and political issues, interpretations of the atonement metaphors, and practice a Christ filled life in different way, Christ is still Lord of all and unites all his children in the family of God.[39]

Church leaders must heed the words of Paul to make God's love the primary characteristic of the church. Paul addresses the deep divisiveness contained within the first century church. It should be no surprise then that the modern church struggles with the same divisiveness as the original Christians. The western church must recognize the fundamental equality of all Christians. This recognition stems from the humility of the believer when compared against the holy and perfect standards of God's character. The kaleidoscopic church recognizes that all theological constructs are work of fallible humanity. Paul supports the kaleidoscopic church's foundation in unity amongst tension. Paul calls all Christians to make every effort to maintain unity in Christ. Paul calls the church to total dedication to the unity of God himself.[40] The continued reaffirmation of unity in the midst of diversity must shape the core convictions of the kaleidoscopic church.

The kaleidoscopic church stands as a sign of the grace and peace of God amongst the warring factions of a disordered world. It is only through unity in Christ that the church can draw into the new community the formerly broken, selfish, and alienated

---

[39] Schmiechen, *Defining the Church for Our Time*, 17–18.
[40] Clowney, *The Church*, 79.

groups of people. This new community of Christ delivers a message of hope to a broken world.[41] As Edmund Clowney asserts, Evangelicals are driven to consider not only what the Lord calls us to do together, but also what he calls us to be together.[42] This unity would mark a decisive act in the practices of the church.

> My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one, I in them and you in me, so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. (John 17:20–23, TNIV)

The self-disclosure of God in the Trinity forms the basis for the unity of the church. Jesus' heart for the unity of the church will drastically shape the church's practice of engaging the community in open discussions about the atonement. Such a practice was exemplified in the latest attempts of Craig Groeschel and his church, Life Church. Groeschel challenged his own church leaders and those connected to imagine what would happen if the church could partner together in unity for just one month. His challenge to unity included prayer, fasting, serving the community, and generously giving to plant new churches.[43] More pointedly to the topic of this thesis, Groeschel called churches across denominational lines to reflect on the character and nature of God. The result of this interdenominational unity and reflections was the book, *What Is God Really Like?* Groeschel's challenge was accepted by more than two thousand churches.[44] This type of reflection upon the diversity of God's character and nature, while maintaining the unity

---

[41] Clowney, *The Church*, 16.
[42] Clowney, *The Church*, 78–79.
[43] Groschel, *What is God Really Like?*, 8–9.
[44] Groschel, *What is God Really Like?*, 9.

of the church in Christ, is a shining example to the western church of diversity among the tensions.

The Tension of "Already, But Not Yet"

The kaleidoscopic church finds its purpose and identity in the purpose of God to restore humanity and creation. The action of God in the world is ongoing, as the kingdom of God is not yet fully established. The action of God continues to move forward towards the establishment of the new heaven and new earth. Until eternity, the believer lives in tension. As Colossians 3 states, the believer has been saved and focuses on the eternal, while at the same time remains living in this world. The believer belongs to Christ's kingdom, which has been inaugurated, but which will not reach its fulfillment until the eschaton.[45] This section will examine and evaluate the tensions within competing atonement metaphors. While this section does not provide an extensive list of the tensions within the biblical narrative, it highlights three specific tensions within the church's interpretation of salvation, discipleship, and church practice. First, this section will examine the tension of Christ's message of salvation. Jesus proclaims an inclusive message of grace that excludes those who do not believe. Second, this section will examine the tension between justification and sanctification. Kaleidoscope theory has challenged the church to expand its view of discipleship. Lastly, the church must navigate the tension between accepting the current circumstance or rebelling against the contextual norms. The tension within the biblical narrative and the kaleidoscopic church is a direct result of the present, yet not fully realized nature of the kingdom of God. This reality has historically been termed "already, but not yet."

---

[45] Harper and Metzger, *Exploring Ecclesiology*, 35.

Jesus' life and ministry show the great tension between the inclusive and exclusive reality of salvation. Jesus announces the arrival of a new way and the New Testament repeatedly provides instances of radical inclusivity. His ministry included the poor, common working people, public sinners, Samaritans, women, and children. The apostles identified this inclusive character and continue it in opening up the faith to the Gentiles without the hindrances of Jewish customs. However, Jesus also spoke severely against the Pharisees and those unwilling to receive the inclusive message. The church must wrestle with the tension of the grace of salvation. As Schmiechen asks, "Can a community of grace exclude those who are ungracious?"[46] Christ's message of grace stood in opposition to the ordered life of rules and regulations of the Pharisees. Jesus' actions of entertaining the marginalized, despised, and unclean lay the foundation for a community that claims to have an exclusive salvation, inclusively available to all. This presents itself in an ever-expanding community that finds its foundation in the participation in the purpose of God.[47] Christian community is comprised of those that have experienced an exclusive grace, but actively offer it in every situation inclusively.

The church must uphold the scriptural imperative that in Christ's death the substitution has been made and therefore there is no hindrance to salvation. However, scripture also states that God will not condemn and cut off the unbelievers until his final judgement. The biblical narrative, especially the gospel of John, is adamant that the ministry of Christ on earth was not that of judgement. Through his ministry, salvation is made possible. However, the biblical narrative stands firm in a final showdown between good and evil. The saviour of the world will certainly be victorious over the wickedness

---

[46] Schmiechen, *Saving Power*, 336–7.
[47] Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, 351.

of this earth. The kaleidoscope church must enact the tension of the atonement. The atonement is an inclusive message that excludes. The atonement is a message of grace available to all, yet in its proclamation it excludes that which is not of God's purpose for humanity and creation. The kaleidoscope church must conduct its practices so that all may come in freely to experience the grace, while protecting against the gracelessness of this fallen world.

The kaleidoscopic church must navigate the tensions of discipleship. The writings of Green and Baker were meant to inspire the church to a more encompassing view of discipleship. The current saturation of the western church with the penal substitution view displaces Christ's own call to Christ-likeness. Discipleship has been downplayed because of penal substitution's emphasis on the past action of Christ's substitution and the promise of the heavenly glory it provides. Penal substitution emphasises the past and the future, but all emphasis on the present reality of the church is lost. The church becomes those faithful to the past awaiting the future. A kaleidoscopic view of the atonement motivates the believer to recognize the mission of Christ life to which the biblical narrative calls the believer to replicate. The kaleidoscopic church must include both approaches in its self-identity. The church is saved by past events, active in the present ministry of God, and waiting for the ultimate realization of God's kingdom. The discipleship of the believer to become like Christ takes place in the present, yet awaits the full realization of Christ-likeness to come in the future.

Justification and sanctification entitle two significant chapters in the majority of systematic works of the modern church. The majority of these writers affirm the unity of the two in the life of the Christian. However, the historical teachings and practices of the

church have shown that traditions gravitate toward one or the other.[48] The result is a church form concerned about the status of the world or a church concerned about the state of the world. The church that gravitates toward justification innately concerns itself with the salvific status of the world. There is a desire to reach out, to bring people into the kingdom through a conversion experience, and to affirm, regardless of the circumstances in which they find themselves, that they are unequivocally saved. By contrast, the church that gravitates toward sanctification concerns itself with the development of the world. Unsatisfied with the affirmation of many that the world is broken and we know it, the sanctifying church works to repair the state of the church through engaging it. Such a church commits itself to the betterment of this world. This change is not simply external, but it is also an internal engagement. Through an invitation to the Holy Spirit, Christians commit to being refined and developed into a community striving for the realization of the kingdom of God amongst them. The church built upon kaleidoscope theory must be willing to navigate both these streams, uniting them in practice and not just systematic knowledge. The atonement is both justifying and sanctifying, and so the community of scripture readers must be also.

The kaleidoscopic church must also live in the tension of accepting the circumstance with their context and rebelling against contextual norms. In response to the saving power of the atonement, the context confronts the church with the choice of reconciliation or liberation.[49] In the case of reconciliation, the church submits in peace to the face of hostility. Through the church's pacifism, it submits to the example of Christ, who willingly let himself be victimized for the sake of reconciliation. This present choice

[48] Schmiechen, *Saving Power*, 341.
[49] Schmiechen, *Saving Power*, 342.

to submit and follow the example of Jesus, in contrast to our past patterns of disobedience, speaks to our dramatic response to the salvation message. However, in the case of liberation, the church actively works for the oppressed to liberate them and enact the justice of God. Most prevalent in traditions of liberation theology, the reconciliation of the world by God calls for the church's action. This also marks a dramatic response to the salvation message because through the message of grace, the atonement releases the believer from fear. The tension between solidarity with Christ and the liberating victory of Christ was observed in the struggle of the Latin and African American church in liberation theology.[50] The biblical narrative named the oppression of their contexts. However, the church was left to struggle with the call to either remain in solidarity with Christ within the oppression or to enact the victory of the cross and rebel against the oppression.

The kaleidoscopic church must live within the tensions of church practice. The question at the center of the tension is what comprises the better strategy for success against the evils of this world. Once again, our vision of Jesus is contradictory in its nature, for it is only through his death and scorn that the believer realises reconciliation in the life and resurrection of our Savior. Just as Paul proclaimed, it is through the Christian's weakness that God is made strong. The church must live out the mandated tension of active pacifism. Jesus' life included both a solidarity with the downtrodden and outcast, while also rebelling against the oppressive systems of the moneychangers in the temple and religious rules of the Pharisees. The life of Christ inspires church practices that examine the context of the church, identify with the broken, and actively bringing restoration in the name of God's purpose for humanity and creation.

---

[50] Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, 251.

Conclusion

Kaleidoscope theory inspires the church to live in the tensions of the kaleidoscope of interpretations for God's work. The church must move beyond the divisiveness and polarization that exists in specifically the modern western church. Believers must be informed by the context, which includes their church tradition, but still recognize for the whole body of Christ. The diversity of interpretations for the work of God inspires the church in diversity of church practice. The church must recognize this diversity and name the tensions it creates. However, their response to tension is not to explain it away or choose a particular vantage point. Rather, kaleidoscope theory inspires a church that recognizes the work of God, both past and present, and proclaims the diversity of the atonement in its messages and practices.

Chapter 6: The Pastoral Nature of the Multiplicity of Atonement Metaphors

The motivation for Green and Baker's work in cultivating a kaleidoscopic understanding of the atonement was primarily pastoral.[1] The pastoral nature of kaleidoscope theory influences the teaching and practice of the church. First, this chapter will highlight the pastoral motivations of a kaleidoscopic church in aligning people in an open conversation about their interaction with the atonement. This includes the pastoral imperative to engage Christians in open communication amongst believers and churches, to open up scripture to the congregation, and to push Christians into deeper and wider understandings of the atonement. Second, this chapter examines principles for forming a kaleidoscope church in particular contexts. This includes recognition of the formal definition of the church and sensitivity towards other factors in church definition and practice. Lastly, kaleidoscope theory motivates a church that takes up the atonement as the central source for church teaching and practice. The kaleidoscope church is an atonement filled church.

The Pastoral Imperative

Kaleidoscope theory was developed by Green and Baker as a pastoral work for the western church.[2] A kaleidoscopic church built upon Green and Baker's understanding of the atonement will encourage its congregation in open dialogue about all areas of theology including soteriology. First, this section will examine a kaleidoscopic church's motivation to create open dialogue amongst its members and between itself and other churches. Second, this section will assert that the open dialogue of the kaleidoscopic church will include opening up the scriptures to its members. Kaleidoscope theory

[1] Baker, *Proclaiming the Scandal of the Cross*, 15–16, 26–27.
[2] Baker, *Proclaiming the Scandal of the Cross*, 15–16, 26–27.

inspires the believer to allow their contexts and histories to inspire their interpretations of the atonement. Lastly, the pastoral work of the kaleidoscopic church will involve discipling Christians towards recognition of the diversity of interpretation for the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ in the biblical narrative and in present contexts. In a kaleidoscopic church, the leaders of the church, both clergy and lay leaders, must take responsibility for stimulating open dialogue about the atonement and its implications for the teaching and practice of the church.

After an examination of kaleidoscope theory and the multiplicity of metaphors to describe the atonement, the apparent difference between the different interpretations of the atonement seems insurmountable. As a result, it is difficult to imagine any community of faith in which all these perspectives may exist in harmony. Today's pastor and lay leaders are left with the uneasy question, "Is this even possible?" Kevin Vanhoozer asserts that pastors must partner with individual believers to help people engage and act out the biblical script by teaching proper doctrine in the church.[3] However, the situation within the western church calls for an approach that goes beyond a quest for doctrinal purity. The reality of today's culture is not that of embrace, but that of criticism and fortification. People are already coming to the text with their convictions and these convictions dictate an unwillingness to listen. The North American church has witnessed an increasing fragmentation and a polarization amongst itself and between itself and the popular culture. Leaders may quickly find a community full of tensions, with no definitive model, and no authoritative governing technique to be a volatile cocktail for burnout and hurt.

---

[3] Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine*, 402.

The kaleidoscopic church provides a mode for communication without judgement or the necessity to disprove other perspectives. Gregory Boyd, in his reply to Green's "Kaleidoscopic View" in *The Nature of the Atonement*, asserts that competing metaphors of the atonement are not able to be equally right. They both may be equally wrong, but they cannot be equally right.[4] Boyd represents a perspective among many Christians in the western church that has led to the fragmentation and deep polarization with the church. Many Christians believe that if their perspective is the correct interpretation, then all other interpretations must be incorrect. Furthermore, because of the influence of propositionalism, Christians feel the need to defend their own interpretations of the scriptural narrative by disproving all other perspectives by pointing out their errors and misinterpretations. The kaleidoscopic church must conduct itself in a manner that recognizes the diversity of interpretations and seeks honest discussion surround the nature of those interpretations. The kaleidoscope church must avoid the two pitfalls of becoming too relativistic so that the church accepts all interpretations without examination and/or becoming too dogmatic insisting that all interpretations of the atonement must test, scrutinize, and tow the party line.

The kaleidoscope church facilitates its self-discovery through open communication and dialogue surrounding the nature of the atonement. As Peter Schmiechen observes, through discussion of how one tradition is like and unlike other traditions Schmiechen discovered who he is. The journey of self-understanding is an important element in discipleship. A kaleidoscopic church must recognize that there is a wide variety of options on most topics. The believer must be able to learn how to acknowledge the variety of Christian traditions while at the same time expressing

[4] Boyd, "Christus Victor Response," 188.

preferences for certain theological ideas and church practices.[5] As argued previously, the examination of scripture and the atonement leads to community. 1 John 1 establishes that living according to Christ involves taking part in the fellowship of the church. The creation of human community in which God's peace prevails is not coincidental, nor is it a secondary by-product of the saving work of Christ.[6] As the writer of 1 John states, it is from the believer's testimony of his or her interaction with the atonement that fellowship stems.

Kaleidoscope theory recognizes the value in understanding and teaching the metaphors of the first-century. This results in a multiplicity of descriptions of Christ's work. The contextualizing of the atonement in the native context of the audience is the organic progression as established in the missional motivations of the New Testament writers. The New Testament authors sought to describe the atonement in a manner that would be understood by the audience, but would go beyond intellectual understanding and begin to shape the context of the audience.[7] If adherents to kaleidoscope theory are in keeping with the missional motivations of the biblical authors then adherents to kaleidoscope theory will establish metaphors of the atonement that both resound with the present contexts and attempt to shape them. For example, the New Testament was read into a context of oppression and a yearning for liberation, and the result was a liberation theology that named the sufferings of the people and gave the hope of Christ's atonement to this new context.[8] The open dialogue of the kaleidoscopic church includes opening up

[5] Schmiechen, *Defining the Church for Our Time*, 11.
[6] Driver, *Understanding the Atonement for the Mission of the Church*, 228.
[7] Baker, "Contextualizing the Scandal of the Cross," 18.
[8] Schmiechen, *Saving Power*, 353.

the scriptures to its members for their contexts and histories to taint their interpretations of the atonement.

The kaleidoscopic church encourages its members into more diverse understandings of the atonement. Green and Baker's work was constructed towards a variety of audiences within the western church. In his work, Baker address a diverse audience, such as those who view penal substitution as the only legitimate interpretation of the atonement to those who reject penal substitution and are looking for help contextualizing the atonement in present contexts.[9] The kaleidoscopic church must conduct itself with a pastoral concern towards encouraging its members along the journey of recognizing the diversity of the atonement. The church must oppose the trend to isolate itself from those who do not share their value system. The kaleidoscopic church must engage both those who reject penal substitution and those who cling to it in an open and honest discussion about the experiences and applications of each perspective.

Green and Baker establish that kaleidoscope theory speaks to no less than five distinct audiences engaged in interpreting the atonement.[10] The first audience is those whom are dissatisfied with the manner in which the atonement has been represented in the western church. To this audience the open communication of the kaleidoscopic church opens their eyes to the variety of experiences of the atonement within the church and gives them metaphors to express their own experiences. The second audience is those whom are looking for alternatives to penal substitution but are unaware of any other alternative and have therefore shied away from any direct teaching on the atonement. The kaleidoscopic church inspires these individuals to once again make the atonement an

[9] Baker, "Contextualizing the Scandal of the Cross," 26–28.
[10] Baker, "Contextualizing the Scandal of the Cross," 26–28.

integral part of their discipleship. While opening their eyes to the possibility of interpretations much like the first group, the kaleidoscopic church's primary action is inspiring the desire to interpret the atonement once again. The third audience is those whom embrace kaleidoscope theory and are seeking help contextualizing the atonement. To this audience, the kaleidoscopic church proclaims and enacts the atonement in a variety of contexts. The fourth audience is those looking for alternatives in addition to one perspective of the atonement. Similar to the interpretation of Vanhoozer, this audience is committed to one perspective on the atonement but still recognizes that any interpretation on the atonement is unable to capture the totality of Christ's life, death, and resurrection. The kaleidoscopic church allows these individuals to maintain their commitment to their own interpretations while still allowing the open discussion within the church to compliment their own experience. The last audience is those whom believe that a particular interpretation is the only viable option for understanding the atonement. This audience provides the greatest challenge to the kaleidoscopic church. However, the kaleidoscopic church must incorporate all people into conversation. The hope of the kaleidoscopic church is that this audience, when incorporated into the discussion, will move towards a more open understanding of the atonement and, at the very least, move towards identification with the fourth audience.

The kaleidoscopic church recognizes that despite the efforts of the church to enlarge the congregation's perspective on the atonement, some members will continue to hold onto their own perspectives regardless. However, the stubbornness of individuals should not derail the church from openly discussing the atonement and its implications for the life of the believer. To utilize the metaphor of Scott McKnight, kaleidoscope

theory is a golf bag of clubs and each metaphor is a particular club created to solve a different problem on the golf course.[11] However, drawing upon McKnight's image, those in the established church may find it more useful to embrace the reality that people will forever continue to tee off the hole with the same driver. The pastor's job is then to teach people how to use the other clubs to finish the work the believer's driver has already started. The kaleidoscopic church continues to long for the day when the church will stop focusing solely on the distance of the tee shot and begin to recognize that the manner in which the believer, and the church as a whole, plays every part of the course is what matters. The kaleidoscopic church brings an appreciation for the journey of conversation, rather than the club with the longest drive.

Defining the Kaleidoscopic Church

The kaleidoscopic church recognizes that church serves the contextualization of the atonement and thus establishes itself in diverse ways according to its particular context. First, this section will utilize Peter Schmiechen's methodology of formal and descriptive definitions of the church. Kaleidoscope theory is the foundation for both the formal definition of the church, which establishes the distinctives of ecclesiology, and the descriptive definitions of the church, which defines a particular church in a time and context. Second, the kaleidoscope church recognizes that many different factors influence the formation of a particular church. Just as any interpretation of the atonement must be grounded in a particular context, so all formations of a particular church must be rooted in a particular context. It is within a particular context that the church proclaims and enacts the atonement to name the brokenness of humanity and bring about restoration. Lastly, in continuity with kaleidoscope theory's use of metaphor to describe the

[11] McKnight, *A Community Called Atonement*, 35.

atonement, the kaleidoscopic church utilizes metaphor in its definition of the church. The kaleidoscopic church recognizes the metaphorical imagery in the scriptural narrative that serve as the New Testament's definition of God's community.

The definition of a kaleidoscope church in this thesis is a definition in formal or generic terms. Peter Schmiechen establishes the differences between a formal and descriptive definition of the church.[12] The formal definition of the church establishes a logical structure in order to distinguish the church from other kinds of communities. It establishes the answer to the question of what makes a church a church. This thesis offers a formal definition of why and how the atonement inspires the practice of the church. Once the form of the church is established, church leaders can then examine how their particular churches embody this formal structure. The formal analysis alone does not complete the definition of the church. Rather, it establishes the internal motivations and structures of churches, but is not a particular church in time and space.[13] Kaleidoscope theory establishes that the particulars of the context are the important emphasis.

The kaleidoscopic church calls for individual churches to recognize the particulars of its own context in the establishment of community. While the formal definition establishes the structure for the church, the descriptive definition applies these ideals within a particular context and accounts for the numerous other factors. [14] The kaleidoscopic church understands this cultural sensitivity in the particulars of individual churches as the distinction between the universal and local church. The New Testament uses the word church in both the local and the universal sense.[15] The early church's

---

[12] Schmiechen, *Defining the Church for Our Time*, 9.
[13] Schmiechen, *Defining the Church for Our Time*, 9.
[14] Schmiechen, *Defining the Church for Our Time*, 10–11.
[15] Snyder, "The Marks of Evangelical Ecclesiology," 86.

practice of adapting to local customs of food and dress underscores their desire to contextualize the local church. The New Testament stresses both the local character of the church and its universality. Howard Snyder establishes in his work, "Marks of Evangelical Ecclesiology," that the church must exist both as the worldwide body of Christ and as very diverse, particular local communities, each with its own flavor, style, and culture.[16] A kaleidoscopic perspective on the atonement gives motivation to the local church to understand both its catholicity and its cultural uniqueness.

A kaleidoscopic church acknowledges cultural variety. Contrary to a dogmatic or propositionalist perspective, a kaleidoscopic church maintains the differences of churches within the definition of what is means to be a church. The formal elements of the definition find expression in a great variety of symbols, structures, and practices. Not only do different churches represent the essential elements of church life differently based upon their context, but also even with a single congregation multiple components of the kaleidoscope atonement are at work. The kaleidoscopic approach rejects the notion of defining the church in terms of norms and components of one tradition. Here the kaleidoscope church will face a difficult balancing act. As Snyder observes, often as denominations grow, they tend to bureaucratize. Most denominational leadership values uniformity as local congregations are encouraged to doing things in accordance with the values, beliefs, and practices of the overarching organization. However, in local contexts, churches tend to adapt to local realities and take on local character. This is certainly understandable as the congregants who make up specific local churches contain those same local realities and characteristics.[17] As discussed earlier, this tension is most often

[16] Snyder, "The Marks of Evangelical Ecclesiology," 86.
[17] Snyder, "The Marks of Evangelical Ecclesiology," 86–87.

resolved through an appeal to unity in the essentials and freedom in the non-essentials. However, as discussed earlier, this is a dichotomy that is much more easily proclaimed than practiced.

Without a conscious attempt to sort out the multiplicity of interpretations of the atonement, it is difficult to come to any agreement on the proper work of the church. The high degree of conflict surrounding the nature of the atonement speaks to the reality of the high level of confusion, disagreement, and at times, outright warfare between and within denominations over the work of the church.[18] The work of the church arises from the work of Christ and it is clear that there is no singular interpretation of the atonement. The practices of the church that each metaphor inspires may in fact work towards contradicting purposes and create a great deal of tension amongst the church. However, we must not rush into a simple causal relationship between the atonement and ecclesiology. Certainly, other factors are at play, as different traditions express the atonement in a variety of ways utilizing the same metaphor. For example, one could hear penal substitution preached in Roman Catholic, Presbyterian, Southern Baptist, and Mennonite congregations.[19] While in the same tradition the shape, life, and work of the church can be different. This reality suggests that there are obviously other factors affecting the formation of the church.

The kaleidoscopic church asserts that the atonement provides the formal definition for the church. Schmiechen recognizes the tension between the formal and descriptive definitions in his book, *Saving Power*. In this publication, Schmiechen proposes four theses for testing,

---

[18] Schmiechen, *Saving Power*, 354.
[19] Schmiechen, *Saving Power*, 353.

> (1) An atonement theory includes both an interpretation of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection as well as some indication of how the saving power of Christ is transmitted to believers across time and space. (2) In general, it is the mode of transmission that is determinative for the life and structure of the church.[20] (3) Interpretations of Jesus may be connected to more than one mode of transmission. (4) The connection between interpretations of Jesus and modes of transmission is variable, depending on the selection of key ideas and the context of communities of faith.[21]

Schmiechen shows with these theses that ecclesial patterns are natural and inevitable outgrowths of interpretations of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. The liberation theology of Latin America inspired anticlericalism in its church practice.[22] Not only does ecclesiology flow naturally from the atonement, but also the atonement contains the motivation for the forms of the church. These motivating transmissions of the atonement can be viewed as directional signals for the corporate life and work of the believer.[23] However, a number of other factors influence the formation of individual churches. It is clear from an examination of the variety of testimonies about the atonement that interpretations of the atonement are dependent on and intertwined with a number of other biblical and theological concepts. Themes such as sin, judgement, mercy, justice, salvation, and others intertwine with understandings of the life, death, and resurrection of Christ.[24]

The kaleidoscopic church recognizes that the biblical narrative describes the church using a variety of metaphorical images. Just as the biblical descriptions of the atonement are a kaleidoscope of metaphorical imagery, so too the biblical narrative uses a variety of metaphors to describe the formation and mission of the church. Rather than

---

[20] Schmiechen, *Saving Power*, 354–5.
[21] Schmiechen, *Saving Power*, 359.
[22] McManners, *The Oxford Illustrated History of Christianity*, 421.
[23] Schmiechen, *Saving Power*, 355.
[24] Baker, "Contextualizing the Scandal of the Cross," 35.

defining the church by means of dogmatic statements, the New Testament describes the church through the use of a series of complementary images. These images, when placed together, reflect the nature and mission of the church.[25] In the same way that metaphors for the atonement speak of a larger reality in a manner that all humanity can understand, the metaphors that the New Testament authors use to define the church speak to a reality larger than any individual church.[26] The biblical authors use non-figurative images such as circumcision and the temple to describe God's purpose in the formation and mission of the church.

The variety of images for the church in the biblical narrative establishes a diversity of churches sensitive to their individual contexts. In John Driver's 1997 publication, *Images of the Church in Mission*, he identifies twelve metaphorical images of the church in the biblical narrative. These metaphors include images such as sojourners, kingdom, family, sheep, salt, light and the body of Christ. These images are not a definitive list but merely a sampling of the variety of images present in the biblical narrative. Schmiechen summarizes these images into eight categories in his book, *Christ the Reconciler*. The number of categories in a given construct of the church is not the imperative as categories can be expanded and contracted to one's liking. Critical to the establishment of a particular community is the images and metaphors that resonate within that particular context. Kaleidoscope theory asserts that an interpretation of the atonement for a particular context must identify with the specifics of the environment and still challenge the norms of the context that do not align with God's purpose for his people. As agents of God's purpose, the kaleidoscope church must identify with a particular

---

[25] Driver, *Understanding the Atonement for the Mission of the Church*, 15–16
[26] Driver, *Understanding the Atonement for the Mission of the Church*, 16.

context in a manner that allows for identification with context and seeks to change those areas of the context that are not in alignment with God's purpose for humanity. The kaleidoscope church must navigate the tensions of identification with a culture and serving as a catalyst for cultural change.

Atonement Filled Churches

Kaleidoscope theory inspires an atonement-filled church. The life, death, and resurrection of Christ motivate the teaching and practice of the church. First, this section will examine Green and Baker's assessment of the western church's teaching on the atonement. Kaleidoscope theory was motivated by disillusionment in pulpits and pews over the nature of the atonement. The kaleidoscopic church recognizes the importance of the atonement and does not shy away from the tensions surrounding its proclamation. Kaleidoscope theory's identification of God's purpose in bringing about the atonement, and subsequent proclamation of the atonement, is the foundation for its preaching and practice. Lastly, this section will establish that the kaleidoscopic church continues the work of Christ established in the purpose of God. The diversity of metaphors to articulate the work of Christ motivates a diversity of interpretations for the practices of the church. The kaleidoscopic church identifies numerous avenues in which the church can partner with the work of God in bringing about the atonement in its particular context. The kaleidoscopic church works to encourage a diversity of practices of the atonement and a movement toward the incorporation of new avenues in which to bring the atonement to new contexts.

The atonement serves as the primary focus of the kaleidoscope church. As stated previously, the way we interpret the atonement is dependent upon a number of other

themes. To state this principle a different way, numerous biblical themes and values converge in the life, death, and resurrection of Christ. However, many church leaders and scholars have recognized a growing discomfort with the western church's representation of the atonement. Historically, penal substitution has been the foundation of much of evangelical theology with respect to salvation in the past five decades. The growing discomfort with penal substitution has led to atonementless Christianity. D. A. Carson, Peter Schmiechen, Joel Green, and Mark Baker have all recognized this atonement-less Christianity within the western church.[27] Most of these evaluations of the present state of the church acknowledge that the avoidance of the atonement in the church is not purposeful. In the kaleidoscopic church, church leaders must inspire intentional teaching and preaching of the atonement.

In the kaleidoscopic church, leaders must engage their communities in a manner that keeps the atonement central in its teachings. The danger of religious activity is the possibility for the church to adopt specific practices based upon its interpretation of the atonement indefinitely. The danger is that these practices often become traditions and the experiences and teachings that inspired them fade into the background. D. A. Carson recounts his interaction with a group of Mennonite leaders in his book, *The Cross and Christian Ministry*. These Mennonite leaders lamented their congregants' adherence to their traditions without the knowledge of its origins and motivating beliefs. The first generation of Mennonites cherished the gospel and applied its teachings with specific social and political commitments. The next generation assumes the gospel and emphasizes the social and political commitments to which they committed themselves under the first generation. The present generation identifies itself with the social and

[27] Baker, "Contextualizing the Scandal of the Cross," 26–27.

political commitments of their tradition, but the gospel is unknown, confused, or at worst disowned. The commitment of the first generation to the gospel as the motivation for their belief system is completely lost.[28] D. A. Carson laments that evangelical leaders are already at the point where they simply assume the message of the cross, but no longer lay much emphasis on it.[29]

The kaleidoscope church keeps the teaching of the atonement central in the life of the church as it contributes powerfully to the self-understanding of God's people. As argued previously, the images used in the New Testament to understand and communicate the life, death, and resurrection of Christ are the foundation for the church's sense of identity.[30] The church is the liberated, forgiven, redeemed, reconciled, justified, and adopted community of God. These images are rooted in the experience of believers throughout history. The leaders of the kaleidoscope church must keep the teaching and practices of the church tied to their original experiences and circumstances. When authentic experience fades, the images lose their meaning. Leaders in the kaleidoscope church must facilitate open conversation and teaching as a means of recalling God's people to their roots in God's purpose established in the life, death, and resurrection of Christ.

The kaleidoscopic church inspires the crucial link between atonement, discipleship, and the mission of the church. Baker asserts, in his paper "Contextualizing the Scandal of the Cross," that Green and his work identify the multiplicity of images of atonement, which inspire the believer to recognize the relationship between the work of

---

[28] Carson, *The Cross and Christian Ministry*, 63.
[29] Carson, *The Cross and Christian Ministry*, 63.
[30] Driver, *Understanding the Atonement for the Mission of the Church*, 18.

Christ and discipleship more easily than by only utilizing the lens of penal satisfaction.[31] To church workers and members, studies of the atonement often appear to belong to some ethereal, far-off world of the academic theologian. The danger in such a perception is that the atonement is interesting as an intellectual exercise, but has nothing to do with the everyday life of the Christian believer.[32] However, such a perception overlooks the aims of the biblical narrative. For example, the writings of Paul, though unmistakably important in our theological constructions, are not theological papers, but rather attempt to disciple various communities of faith. Paul encouraged Christians to change their behavior and worldview as a direct result of the atonement of Christ.

In the kaleidoscopic church, the work of the church must account for the wide variety of atonement images present in the life, death, and resurrection. As established previously in this thesis, the work of the church is the work of Christ. The work of Christ is depicted in a variety images. Each image contains within it a mode of transmission for the atonement into the lives of the believer, the church, the surrounding community, and the world. Peter Schmiechen categorizes the transmitters of the atonement into six categories. These six transmitters are (1) sacramental participation in Christ, (2) faith in response to the grace of God, (3) rebirth in the spirit, (4) participation in new community, (5) acts of love and justice, and (6) solidarity with Christ. These categories could certainly be expanded or contracted based on the criteria for identifying distinctives. However, the point remains that the kaleidoscope church must work towards the realization of the atonement through a variety of methods. The kaleidoscope church must disciple its members towards recognition of the transmitters of the atonement most

[31] Baker, "Contextualizing the Scandal of the Cross," 36.
[32] Morris, *The Atonement*, 205.

appropriate for their contexts. In the diverse contexts of the church around the world, the kaleidoscopic church must take up the challenge of parsing the context of particular cultures. The brokenness to which the atonement speaks will also identify the transmitter of the atonement that is influential in the discipleship and practice of the church. The kaleidoscopic church will enact the atonement in culturally sensitive church practices. The application of the atonement in particular contexts is the foundation for the work of the kaleidoscopic church.

Conclusion

The writings of Green and Baker, which inspired the current articulation of kaleidoscope theory, were written out of a pastoral concern for the western church. Kaleidoscope theory was motivated by inaccurate and incomplete interpretations of the atonement. Kaleidoscope theory inspires the church to realize the rich tapestry for articulating and practicing the atonement. In the articulation of the kaleidoscope of atonement metaphors, Green and Baker combated the disillusionment of some traditions in the western church with the current articulation of the atonement. For these churches, kaleidoscope theory inspires atonement-filled teaching and practices. The church must place the atonement at the center of its teaching and practice. For the work of Christ must become the message and work of the body of Christ.

Conclusion

The church follows in the example of the biblical authors as it interprets the atonement with a kaleidoscope of cultural metaphors. The atonement is God's work on behalf of humanity to remove the barriers and consequences of sin. Kaleidoscope theory maintains the priority of Scripture in articulating the atonement. While Scripture can be plotted to articulate the work of God in a variety of ways, a proper interpretation of the atonement must maintain three non-negotiable points within Scripture. First, an articulation must recognize God's ultimate desire for humanity and creation. Second, an articulation must place Jesus' death within the context of his life and mission, which must be in agreement with God's creative purpose. Lastly, an articulation of the atonement must provide a prolusion towards community. While the church must articulate the atonement in a variety of interpretations, all interpretations must remain faithful to Scripture.

The kaleidoscope church recognizes that this diversity in articulations of the atonement is not an excuse for disunity in the body of Christ. The atonement inspires community. All articulations of the atonement must recognize that the believer is God's, which transforms his or her identity. As D. A. Carson articulates, if believers truly understand that they are God's, then there is no tyrannies left among them.[1] The atonement promises the realization of all God has for the believer, if not in the present, then in the future eschaton. The church must never reduce a God-sized cosmic reality to what only one Christian teacher or leader can articulate. The church must practice unity in its collective articulation of the atonement. Scripture and the atonement inspire the church beyond factionalism. As D. A. Carson asserts, factionalism not only hurts the

[1] Carson, *The Cross and Christian Ministry*, 88.

church, but it impoverishes all those who embrace it. Such short sightedness cuts off the believer from the wealth of the heritage that rightly belongs to all the children of God.[2]

The articulation of the atonement in the kaleidoscope church requires a collective unity of all members. The atonement calls leaders of the western church to re-examine its church practices and approach to ministry. The tradition of the pastor in the western evangelical church has limited participation of the membership. The pastor has served as the primary articulator of the atonement. The collective approach of articulating the atonement in the body of Christ inspires a reordering of church practices in which all members of the body can articulate the work of God present in their lives. While this may be an easy modification to adapt in a smaller church, it provides significant difficulty in larger settings. The growth of the evangelical "mega-church" of the United States raises particular challenges to the articulation of the atonement by all members. Such a church consists of thousands or even hundreds of thousands of members under the strong leadership of one senior pastor.[3] Much more work must be done in these larger church settings to facilitate church practices in which the atonement may be articulated in the lives of every believer.

Atonement inspires the church to practice the atonement by partnering with God's work in particular contexts. God is a missionary God and he is always at work. Scripture is clear that God is not distant. He is intimately involved in the lives of his believers, his church, and his creation. God created in perfection and he works towards perfection. While God's creative purpose will not be fully realized until the creation of the new heaven and new earth, the church is called to partner with the work of God in the present.

---

[2] Carson, *The Cross and Christian Ministry*, 88.
[3] Clowney, *The Church*, 23–24.

Scripture identifies the righteous and holy as those who reflect the character and nature of God. Those whose identities mirror God will participate in the work of God in the present. Just as Jesus revealed God to the world, the believer reveals God's desire as he or she participates in God's ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor 5). The church is called to partner with the atonement in both its beliefs and its practices. Therefore, the church is on a mission. The church has been commissioned by Christ to bring the atonement to every context and reflect God's character and work in all its practices.

> Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." (Matt 28:18–20, TNIV)

The church's articulation of the atonement is a rich tapestry available to every believer. It allows the believer to experience the atonement through the testimony and reflection of other members in the body of Christ. Kaleidoscope theory allows the believer to move beyond individual reflection upon the atonement and experience the cosmic scale of God's work. The atonement articulates God's work on behalf of humanity. "But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." (Rom 5:8, TNIV) The fallible cannot articulate the infallible reality of God's love and his work on our behalf. The believer must never allow the limitations of his or her experience to limit his or her view of God and his work. The kaleidoscope church allows the believer to maintain their experience of God's atonement in his or context. Yet, they may move beyond the limitations of self and experience an atonement that changes every culture, class, and context. God was at work in the life, death, and resurrection of Christ and he is at work in the lives of individuals in the church today.

The church must facilitate the atonement's transformation of the believer's identity and works so that the kingdom of God may be established.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Baker, Mark D. "Contextualizing the Scandal of the Cross." In *Proclaiming the Scandal of the Cross*, 13–36. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006.

Batterson, Mark. "God is Incomparable." In *What is God Really Like?* Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010.

Blocher, Henri. "Biblical Metaphors and the Doctrine of the Atonement." *JETS* 47/4 (December 2004) 629–45.

Blount, Brian K. *The Whisper Put on Flesh: New Testament Ethics in an African American Context*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2001.

Boersma, Hans. *Violence, Hospitality, and the Cross: Reappropriating the Atonement Tradition*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004.

Boyd, Gregory A. "Kaleidoscopic View: Christus Victor Response." In *Four Views: The Nature of the Atonement*, edited by James Beilby and Paul R. Eddy, 186–91. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2006.

———. "Christus Victor View." In *The Nature of the Atonement: Four Views*, 23–49. Illinois: IVP Academic, 2006.

Campolo, Tony. "Com(passion)." Sermon. 30 October 2011. The Meeting House. Mississauga, ON.

Carson, D. A. *The Cross and Christian Ministry*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1993.

Chang, Curtis. "He Shared Our Aches." In *Proclaiming the Scandal of the Cross*, 172–83. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006.

Clowney, Edmund P. *The Church*. Contours of Christian Theology. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1995.

Crisp, Oliver. "The Logic of Penal Substitution Revisited." In *The Atonement Debate*, 208–27. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008.

Dearborn, Kerry. "Recovering a Trinitarian and Sacramental Ecclesiology." In *Evangelical Ecclesiology*, 39–73. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003.

Driver, John. *Understanding the Atonement for the Mission of the Church*. Kitchener: Herald Press, 1986.

Gathercole, Simon. "The Cross and Substitutionary Atonement." *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 11 (Summer 2007): 64–73.

Goldingay, John. "Biblical Narrative and Systematic Theology." In *Between Two Horizons: Spanning New Testament Studies & Systematic Theology*, edited by Joel B. Green and Max Turner, 123–41. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000.

Green, Joel B. and Mark D. Baker. *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross: Atonement in New Testament & Contemporary Contexts*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000.

———. *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross: Atonement in New Testament & Contemporary Contexts*. 2nd ed. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2011.

Green, Joel. "Kaleidoscopic View." In *Four Views: The Nature of the Atonement*, edited by James Beilby and Paul R. Eddy, 157–85. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2006.

———. "Christus Victor: Kaleidoscopic Response," In *Four Views: The Nature of the Atonement* edited by James Beilby and Paul R. Eddy, 61–66. Illinois: IVP Academic, 2006.

———. "Penal Substitution: Kaleidoscopic Response," In *Four Views: The Nature of the Atonement* edited by James Beilby and Paul R. Eddy, 110–16. Illinois: IVP Academic, 2006.

———. "Must We Imagine the Atonement in Penal Substitutionary Terms?" In *The Atonement Debate: Papers from the London Symposium on the Theology of Atonement*, edited by Derek Tidball, et al., 153–71.Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008.

———. "Practicing the Gospel in a Post-Critical World: The Promise of Theological Exegesis." *JETS* 47/3 (September 2004) 387–97.

———. "Reading the Gospels and Acts as Narrative." In *Narrative Reading, Narrative Preaching*, 37–66. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003.

———. "The (Re-)Turn to Narrative." In *Narrative Reading, Narrative Preaching*, 11–36. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003.

———. *Salvation*. Understanding Biblical Themes. St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2003.

Grenz, Stanley. *Theology for the Community of God*. Grand Rapids: Williams B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1994.

Groschel, Craig. *What is God Really Like?*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010.

Guder, Darrell. "The Church as Missional Community." In *The Community of the Word: Toward an Evangelical Ecclesiology*, 114–28. Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2005.

Gunton, Colin E. *The Actuality of Atonement: A Study of Metaphor, Rationality and the Christian Tradition*. New York: T&T Clark, 1998.

Harper, Brad and Paul Louis Metzger. *Exploring Ecclesiology: An Evangelical and Ecumenical Introduction*. Grand Rapids: BrazosPress, 2009.

Harris, Murray J. "Salvation." In *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, 762–7. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000.

Hart, D. G. "The Church in Evangelical Theologies, Past and Future." In *The Community of the Word: Toward an Evangelical Ecclesiology*, 23–40. Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2005.

Hayes, Richard. "Made New by One Man's Obedience: Romans 5:12–19." In *Proclaiming the Scandal of the Cross*, 96–102. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006.

Hezser, Catherine. *The Social Structure of the Rabbinic Movement in Roman Palestine*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997.

Hilborn, David. "Atonement, Evangelicalism and the Evangelical Alliance." In *The Atonement Debate: Papers from the London Symposium on the Theology of Atonement*, edited by Derek Tidball, et al., 15–33.Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008.

Hindmarsh, Bruce. "Is Evangelical Ecclesoilogy an Oxymoron? A Historical Perspective." In *Evangelical Ecclesiology*, 15–38. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003.

Jinkins, Michael. "The 'Gift' of the Church." In *Evangelical Ecclesiology*, 179–212. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003.

Lewis, C.S. "Deeper Magic Conquers Death and the Powers of Evil." In *Proclaiming the Scandal of the Cross*, 37–41. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006.

McGavran, Donald A. *Understanding Church Growth: Fully Revised*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1980.

McKnight, Scot. *A Community Called Atonement*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2007.

McManners, John. *The Oxford Illustrated History of Christianity*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2001.

Millard, Erickson. *Christian Theology* 2nd Ed. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1998.

Morris, Leon. *The Atonement: Its Meaning & Significance*. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 1983.

Reichenbach, Bruce R. "Kaleidoscopic View: Healing Response." In *Four Views: The Nature of the Atonement*, edited by James Beilby and Paul R. Eddy, 196–201. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2006.

Schmiechen, Peter. *Christ the Reconciler: A Theology for Opposites, Differences, and Enemies*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996.

———. *Defining the Church for Our Time: Origin and Structure, Variety and Viability*. Eugene, Cascade Books, 2012.

———. *Saving Power: Theories of Atonement and Forms of the Church*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2005.

Schreiner, Thomas R. "Kaleidoscopic View: Penal Substitution Response." In *Four Views: The Nature of the Atonement*, edited by James Beilby and Paul R. Eddy, 192–5. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2006.

Snyder, Howard. "The Marks of Evangelical Ecclesiology." In *Evangelical Ecclesiology*, 77–104. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003.

Steinmetz, Sol. *Dictionary of Jewish Usage: A Guide to the Use of Jewish Terms*. Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2005.

Stevenson, Peter K. and Stephen I. Wright. *Preaching the Atonement*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009.

Thiselton, Anthony C. *New Horizons in Hermeneutics: The Theory and Practice of Transforming Biblical Reading*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992.

Vanhoozer, Kevin J. *The Drama of Doctrine: A Canonical Linguistic Approach to Christian Theology*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005.

Viola, Frank and George Barna. *Pagan Christianity?: Exploring the Roots of Our Church Practices*. Carol Stream: Tyndale House Publishers, 2008.

Williams, Garry. "Penal Substitution: A Response to Recent Criticisms." *JETS* 50/1 (March 2007) 71–86.

Williams, Scott. *Church Diversity: Sunday the Most Segregated Day of the Week*. Green Forest: New Leaf Press, 2011.

Wilson, Jonathan. "Practicing Church." In *The Community of the Word: Toward an Evangelical Ecclesiology*, 63–74. Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2005.