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Evangelicals and the imitation of the cross: Peter Bolt on Mark 13 as a test case

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One of the more notable trends in late twentieth and early twenty-first century evangelical theological literature is the veritable firestorm of literary output on the cross. Atonement theories, exegetical studies, and ecclesial controversies have inspired both traditionalists and revisionists. Scholarly and popular output continues to fill journals and bookshelves alike. It is certainly appropriate that the cross receives widespread attention. The current debates are yielding positive fruit as scholars reaffirm and clarify crucial doctrines. Despite the quantity and depth of attention, one vital area of the New Testament's teaching on the cross has been sorely neglected in the recent whirlwind of literature produced by evangelical scholars and pastors. The imitation of Jesus and his cross has been almost entirely left behind.

In the present article I wish to illustrate the negative effects of overlooking the New Testament's teaching on the imitation of the cross. For my primary conversation partner I take Peter Bolt and his work on Mark's Gospel, in part because he is the author of several well-argued articles and a book on the cross, all of which deserve wider hearing and which in large measure are correct in what they affirm and deny. Bolt and I also share reformed and evangelical theological leanings, as well as an interest in combining traditional exegesis with redemptive historical and narrative critical approaches to Scripture. Such affinities and appreciations notwithstanding, Bolt's work illustrates the diminution of this teaching common among evangelicals and shows the unfortunate consequences of failing to attend to the imitative aspects of the New Testament's teaching on the cross.

In order to focus the discussion, I will not attempt a full analysis of Bolt's work on the cross, but will counter a single proposal which he has presented in several places.¹ Referring to previous observations on connections between Jesus' passion and Mark 13 which have been noticed by scholars since at least Lightfoot, Bolt argues that the primary referent of the Olivet Discourse in Mark 13 is the passion and resurrection of Jesus in Mark 14-15.² Bolt's argument relies on

1 P. Bolt, *The Cross from a Distance: Atonement in Mark's Gospel* (NSBT 19; Downers Grove: IVP, 2004), which builds particularly on his 'Feeling the Cross: Mark's Message of Atonement', *Reformed Theological Review* 60 (2001), 1-17; and 'Mark 13: An Apocalyptic Precursor to the Passion Narrative', *Reformed Theological Review* 54 (1995), 10-32.

2 Bolt, 'Mark 13: An Apocalyptic Precursor'.

a number of intriguing literary connections, such as verbal and thematic repetition, between the Olivet Discourse and the passion of Jesus in the following chapters. His bold and insightful redemptive historical analysis in some respects accurately identifies the fact that there is indeed a relationship between the two sections, a relationship often neglected by scholars attempting to interpret the cross in Mark.

However, it is my contention that Bolt fails to account for other vital aspects of Mark and the cross in the New Testament as a whole, aspects which shed considerable doubt on his interpretation of Mark 13-15 of such a connection. In a footnote in his most recent publication on the topic, he notes an almost complete lack of scholarly interaction with his thesis.³ Bolt's work indeed deserves a full analysis with apposite critique and appreciation. Regrettably, there is no space in this presentation to address the many exegetical observations on offer in Bolt's book and articles. I intend merely to illustrate two crucial literary patterns embedded in Mark's narrative and a third redemptive historical pattern, all of which are overlooked by Bolt. Together these three patterns serve as clues to unlocking Mark's reason for correlating Mark 13 and the passion and resurrection of Jesus.

These patterns will be addressed below, but first the thesis may be summarized and the range of investigation limited. I suggest that Mark desires his readers to view their own 'trials' or 'crosses' for the sake of Jesus and the kingdom in the light of Jesus' trial and cross. As the objective of this paper is limited, I leave to one side the question of whether Mark 13 *also* addresses matters beyond 70 AD, as posited by France, who sees a temporal distinction between the referents of 13:32-37 and the verses preceding;⁴ or whether Wright is correct in subsuming the entirety of the Olivet Discourse to the great turmoil before and during 70 A.D.⁵ The belief that Mark's interest lies primarily with first century as opposed to later events must be assumed rather than argued.

I. Literary patterns and the cross in Mark

In a recent article Bolt describes the way in which Mark's discourse in advance of the passion narrative prepares the reader for the meaning of the cross. His review of the way in which such preparation occurs is ultimately aimed only at a defense of penal substitutionary atonement: "The rhetoric makes them "feel" the cross. Through Mark's narrative art the reader is drawn into the crucifixion

3 Bolt, *The Cross from a Distance*, 85-6 n. 2.

4 Most recently in *The Gospel of Mark* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), esp. 497-506; cf. his *Jesus and the Old Testament: His Application of Old Testament Passages to Himself and His Mission* (London: Tyndale, 1971), 73-80, 139-48 and 227-39; and, responding to critics, *Divine Government; God's Kingship in the Gospel of Mark* (London: SPCK, 1990), 121 n. 20. In regards to his similar interpretation of Matthew's version of the Olivet Discourse, France notes that no major exegetical challenge to his influential interpretation has been published (*Matthew* [NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007], 891-2 n.4).

account in such a way as to feel the key elements of Mark's atonement theology: Jesus dies because of our sin; the one for the many; a ransom in our place.⁶ Such an observation is correct, but further analysis shows that Bolt fails to take into account the way in which Mark's literary structure prepares readers for another response – not a response that competes with or is opposed to atonement, but one that addresses the appropriate response of a Jesus-follower to the atonement.

The cross of Jesus and imitation

Mark's teaching on the significance of the death of Jesus begins long before the cross actually appears, such that scholars are apt to refer to this gospel as a passion narrative with an extended introduction.⁷ As is well-known, the three passion predictions are particularly important, serving to heighten the reader-hearer's awareness of the approaching cross of Christ. Less well-observed, however, is the way in which Mark builds an interpretation into his presentation of the cross of Christ by tying a reference to the Christ-like sacrifice required of Jesus' disciples to the end of each passion prediction.⁸ France describes a threefold pattern of passion prediction, resurrection, and disciple's misunderstanding accompanied by Jesus' teaching about 'reversal of natural expectations', but it seems best simply to label this last element 'imitation' in order to catch the thrust of Mark's literary pattern.⁹ Mark's presentation of the correspondence between Jesus' cross and the imitative crosses of his disciples may be outlined as follows.

Jesus predicts his own cross and sacrifice:	8:31-8:33	9:30-32	10:32-34
Jesus teaches the cross and sacrifice of believers:	8:34-38	9:32-35	10:35-45

As Hare notes, there is 'little consensus' on the outline of Mark.¹⁰ But one element of Mark's structure on which the majority of scholars agree is the way in which 8:22, 8:27, or 8:31 begins a section leading to 10:57, such that the three passion predictions – and the accompanying calls to cross-bearing or service – share one major section or subsection. The majority of outlines on offer favor seeing the section containing the three predictions as the structural heart of a

5 N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God (Christian Origins and the Question of God, vol. 2; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996)*.

6 'Feeling the Cross', 10.

7 M. Kähler, *The So-Called Historical Jesus and the Historic Biblical Christ* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1964 [German original, 1892]), 80 n. 11.

8 W. Wessel, 'Mark', in F. Gaebelin (ed.), *Expositor's Bible Commentary Vol. 8* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 601-793 [719] notes a parallel between 10:35-45 and 9:30-37, but limits the connection to 'discussions about true greatness [that] both follow a passion prediction'. Cf. W. Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 378, for a similar, limited focus on the relationship between 10:35-45 and 9:30-9:37.

9 France, *Mark*, 336, 370, 414. See the explicit mention of 'imitation' and a helpful chart in D. A. Carson and D. J. Moo, *Introduction to the New Testament* 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 171.

10 D. Hare, *Mark* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1996), 7.

unit preceding Jesus' conflict and passion in Jerusalem. Bolt notes that the three predictions 'serve to structure the plot of the forthcoming passion narrative' and shape the readers' expectations; yet he misses the equally compelling structural implications of the cross-imitation passages which follow.¹¹ In his extensive discussion of the passion predictions and their contexts, Bolt fails to supply a single mention of the imitation of the cross.¹²

The predictions are exclusively (if the section begins at 8:27 or 8:31) or inclusively (if beginning at 8:22) framed by Jesus' healing of the blind. 'The blind men symbolize for Mark the spiritual blindness of the disciples that can be removed only by a miracle, the miracle of the resurrection.'¹³ Clearly, metaphorical blindness is not limited to Jesus' destiny, but includes blindness to the duty to serve after the pattern he has established (10:35-45), and blindness to the way in which Jesus' destiny is linked to any who would follow him (8:31-38; cf. Acts 9:16).¹⁴ The cross is Jesus' destiny; for Mark, it is also the destiny, the pattern, and the expectation for all who would follow him.

The cross of Jesus and recapitulation

The cruciform pattern extends to all facets of the Christian life, as the various applications in Mark 8-10 suggest. Yet cross imitation is surely in the first instance willingness to undergo the forfeiture of one's life for the sake of Jesus.¹⁵ This can best be seen in the second literary pattern, a threefold repetition or recapitulation.

John preaches and is delivered up	1:7, 14
Jesus preaches and is delivered up	1:14, 9:3, 10:33
Christians preach and are delivered up	3:14, 13:9-13

The connection among these passages can be missed easily in translation, but the Greek is clear: forms of *kerusso* and *paradidomi* appear in each sequence. Additionally, in each case such a fate 'is written' ahead of time, as Mark 9:12-13 and 14:49 make clear. We should perhaps not be surprised to see the fate of Jesus' disciples similarly 'written' ahead of time, this time in Mark 13:9-13 (cf. 8:34-38).¹⁶ Bolt notes the parallels drawn 'between John's death and [Jesus'] own' and

11 'Feeling the Cross', 3. Cf. L. Hurtado, *Mark* (NIBC; Peabody: Hendriksen, 1989), 12, who labels 8:31-10:52 'Jesus' ministry and discipleship'.

12 *Cross from a Distance*, 48-58.

13 Hare, *Mark*, 7.

14 Bolt, *The Cross from a Distance*, 75, describes Bartimaeus following Jesus as following him on 'the way to the kingdom, *through* the cross' which is excellent yet incomplete: we also follow Jesus *to* a cross (emphasis added).

15 France stresses the primacy of this point viz. other forms of self-sacrifice.

16 Bolt deems Mark's use of *dei* important (*The Cross from a Distance*, 49 and n. 4, citing one R. H. Smith to the effect that '*dei* is equivalent to "according to the Scriptures"'). If this is so, the word, used but five times, may provide an additional link between John (9:11-13), Jesus (8:31) and the disciples: the final three uses are in chapter 13, including the preaching of the good news by Jesus' followers to all nations (13:10).

the placement of ‘the suffering of John, the Son of Man, and the coming kingdom in divinely appointed eschatological sequence’.¹⁷ Yet he does not relate the *ongoing* parallel between John and Jesus on the one hand, and the the preaching and death of Jesus’ followers on the other. Just as Jesus’ ministry begins with the ‘handing over’ of John the Baptist (Mark 1:14), so, too, the ‘handing over’ of Jesus will launch the ministry of his disciples, a ministry leading in many instances to their own deaths. Thus the ‘divinely appointed eschatological sequence’ does not await Jesus’ death alone, as Bolt maintains.¹⁸

Jesus’ cross is not an escape from suffering – save eternal judgment, as Bolt rightly notes – but an invitation to the same. In light of such recapitulation, it is worth noting the presence of a possible fourth passion prediction at 9:9-12. Here again, however, Mark does not treat Jesus’ death ‘in splendid isolation’,¹⁹ but correlates it to the treatment of John the Baptist. No doubt for Mark the greatest of the three in the above outline is the preaching and death of Jesus. As the disastrous end of John’s life leads to Jesus’ ministry, it is no surprise that Mark portrays the ministry and death of Jesus’ followers as proceeding beyond Jesus’ betrayal and death.

Conclusion

Mark’s literary artistry underscores the importance of self-sacrificial cross imitation as the primary response of disciples to the unique self-sacrificial death of Jesus. Even if one wishes to object that Mark does not state the case as straightforwardly as, say, Paul (1 Cor. 11:1, 2 Cor. 8:9, Eph. 5:1-2, Phil. 2:5-11 and elsewhere), the fact remains that Mark only uses *stauro-* words once outside chapter fifteen, and it is not in reference to the cross of Jesus (Mark 8:34). A third pattern, not unrelated to the first and second, lies in the sphere of redemptive history.

II. The cross and redemptive history

Bolt performs important work by casting light on the way in which redemptive history informs interpretation of the cross, particularly in defense of penal substitution. But on occasion this interest in Jesus’ unique work of substitution leads him to torture the text. In discussing 10:38-39, he disregards the surface meaning of the text, opining that there is no ‘baptism’ of suffering for Jesus’ disciples, since he serves ‘as their substitute so that they do not need to suffer’.²⁰ The remainder of Bolt’s analysis describes the cup and baptism in substitutionary

17 Bolt, ‘Feeling the Cross’, 3.

18 ‘Feeling the Cross’, 3-4.

19 S. Holmes, ‘Of Babies and Bathwater? Recent Evangelical Critiques of Penal Substitution in the Light of Early Modern Debates Concerning Justification’, *European Journal of Theology* 16 (2007), 93-105, especially 101 (cited), cautions supporters and critics alike against treating doctrines such as penal substitution and justification by faith ‘in splendid isolation’ from their ethical and pastoral effects.

20 Bolt, *The Cross from a Distance*, 66-70 (citing 70).

terms, forcing Jesus' comments to revolve around the significance of Jesus' own death. The resulting interpretation does not square well with Mark's apparent intent, nor with Acts 12:2, where a member of Jesus' audience in Mark 10:38-39 does in fact experience precisely such a baptism of death for Jesus' sake. Bolt's claim that James and John 'were not going to be involved in Jesus' death by any deed they themselves performed, whether suffering or martyrdom or anything else' rings false.²¹

Similarly, in an effort to celebrate the uniqueness of Jesus' sacrifice, Bolt emphasizes Jesus' death as the key to the birth of the kingdom. He states that Jesus' 'sufferings are the only thing remaining in the cosmic timetable before the resurrection day' and the only thing required for the coming of the kingdom.²² Now this statement is correct in regards to Jesus' own resurrection, and Jesus' exaltation through his death and resurrection do establish the kingdom and procure victory. But without an emphasis on cross imitation or sharing in the cross, such language is at odds with the pattern of redemptive history presented in the rest of Scripture. Such language fails to properly balance the 'already' and the 'not yet' of the presence of the kingdom. Paul notes that 'many tribulations are necessary if we are to enter the kingdom of God' (Acts 14:22), and that sharing in inheritance and glory carries a prerequisite of sharing in suffering (Rom. 8:17). Remarkably, he sees his own sufferings as necessary given the insufficiency of Christ's sufferings – not that there was an insufficiency in the original work of redemption, but an insufficiency in the realization of redemption which consequently requires physical, missional suffering for the sake of the church (Col. 1:24).²³ Jesus died for the church; Paul died for the church. The response to the martyrs in Rev. 6:10-11 likewise presents the suffering of believers as an essential chapter of redemptive history.

The cross as a great cosmic event teaches readers of Mark no less than the rest of the New Testament to see their own missional suffering as an integral, even *necessary* part of God's great redemptive plan. Tidball identifies the call to suffer after the model of Jesus in Mark with the great kingdom-birthing, kingdom-expanding tribulation which was part and parcel early Jewish eschatological expectation: 'The suffering of the disciples continues the unfolding of the

21 *The Cross from a Distance*, 70-1.

22 Cf. *The Cross from a Distance*, 65 and n. 43; 79, 99.

23 Colossians 1:24 is correlated with the messianic woes by P. T. O'Brien, *Colossians and Philemon* (WBC 44; Waco: Word, 1982), 75-80 and 100; J. D. G. Dunn, *Colossians and Philemon* (NIGTC; Carlisle: Paternoster, 1996), 115; M. J. Harris, *Colossians and Philemon* (Exegetical Guide to the Greek NT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 65-6; and M. M. Thompson, *Colossians and Philemon* (Two Horizons NT Commentary; 2007), 207 note the connection between Paul's suffering and the woes. Thompson argues that the woes do not extend to Paul's audience – not a helpful conclusion in light of what Paul himself says about his sufferings elsewhere (e.g., 1 Cor. 4:8-17; 11:1).

messianic woes that will finally usher in the complete reign of God.²⁴ Similarly, Geddert holds that ‘Marks’ theology of the advancing kingdom is... like a relay race in which persecution for the sake of the Gospel is the baton passed on from each runner to the next... or (to stick closer to Mark’s imagery), it is the cross passed on from shoulder to shoulder as new recruits travel the “way” from Galilee to Jerusalem.²⁵

In sharp contrast, Bolt’s view of the cross and redemptive history only in *The Cross from a Distance* actually mitigates cross-imitation and discipleship, thanks in part to his interest in establishing the cross as the work of penal substitutionary atonement. Bolt goes beyond oversight of such teaching almost to the point of *arguing against* the imitation or recapitulation of the cross, as noted above on his interpretation of Mark 10:38. Elsewhere he states that, for the reader following Mark’s gospel, Jesus’ cross is ‘no mere paradigm of discipleship.’²⁶ If with such statements he intends to push readers well-heeled in cross imitation to acceptance of penal substitution, his point would be well taken. But this half-acknowledgement is but one of three sparse references I have found in his works to cross-imitation in Mark. The other two observations are a few sentences focused upon finding ‘security and identity in following [Jesus]’, and a reference to Mark 8:34 in a footnote.²⁷ One wonders if the commitment, seen especially in the first chapter of *The Cross at a Distance*, to portraying Christianity as ‘faith’ pitted against ‘religion’ abets Bolt’s failure to appreciate the links between the cross and discipleship in Mark’s Gospel.²⁸ In contrast to Bolt’s claim that ‘the only response to this new vision [the abolition of religion] is faith,’ Mark in fact calls us both to faith and to self-denying, cross-bearing service that is in fact quite religious.²⁹ Such is our part to play in redemptive history, a history which will not culminate apart from our sacrifices.

24 *The Message of the Cross*, 149; Stott, *The Cross of Christ*, 313. Application of the messianic woes to the cruciform suffering of Jesus’ followers deserves more scholarly attention; see limited comments in Gorman, *Cruciformity*, 310-11; and the literature in the preceding footnote, particularly O’Brien, *Colossians and Philemon*, 75-80, and the literature cited therein.

25 T. J. Geddert, *Watchwords: Mark 13 in Markan Eschatology* (JSNTSS 26; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989), 150, cited by D. Garland, *Mark* (NIVAC; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 510.

26 P. Bolt, ‘Feeling the Cross’, 9.

27 *The Cross from a Distance*, 35 and 109 n. 65, respectively.

28 To the trenchant critiques of this facet of the book in M. E. Bird’s otherwise glowing review of *The Cross from a Distance* in *JETS* 48 (2005), 646, one might add Bolt’s perplexing use of Rodney Stark in *The Cross from a Distance*, 45-47. The acute problems solved by Christianity which Stark notes are precisely those wrought by cross imitation as required by biblical commands (John 13:13-17; 15:12-13; Romans 8:17; 1 Corinthians 10:32-11:1; 2 Corinthians 8:9; Ephesians 5:1-2; Hebrews 12:1-3; 1 Peter 2:19-21; 1 John 3:16-19). It was not less religion but *better* religion that Jesus required (cf. Mark 10:1-12) and that contributed to the herculean changes Christianity wrought in the first centuries C.E.

29 Bolt, *Cross from a Distance*, 31.

III. Mark 13 revisited

On the basis of these characteristics in Mark's presentation of Jesus and his passion, Bolt's observation may be revisited. The literary and thematic correspondence between Mark 13 and the Markan passion is of a piece with Mark's passion predictions. Just as the suffering of Jesus foreshadows the suffering of his followers in Mark 8-10 and recalls his predecessor in 9:9-12, so Mark 13 prepares the reader to participate in trial, just as Jesus himself engages his God-given trials in Mark 14-15. Green, whose comments go unaddressed by Bolt, rightly notes the connections between the 'way of the cross' for Jesus' disciples and the tribulation in Mark 13. He observes that the motif of cross-imitation in Mark 8-10 is '*continued and deepened in the relationship between the suffering of the community (Mark 13) and the suffering of the Messiah (Mark 14-15)*'. Green then goes on to cite many of the same linguistic and thematic parallels between the Olivet Discourse and the passion narrative adduced by Bolt.³⁰ Thus parallels between Mark 13 and the Markan passion accumulated by Bolt should be regarded as significant insights. But such connections are simply one more way in which Mark has juxtaposed the passion of Jesus on the one hand with the travails and 'crosses' of his followers on the other, underscoring for his readers that the one unique cross of Jesus must always lead to the crosses (literal or metaphorical) of his followers.

IV. Bolting our crosses? Evangelicals and cross imitation

Bolt's attempt to lay virtually the full weight of the Olivet Discourse on the events of Jesus' passion and resurrection in Mark falls flat precisely because he fails to account for the way in which the suffering and tribulation of Jesus in Mark is not merely vicarious. We can contrast the observation of Tidball: 'No account of the death of Jesus in the gospel of Mark is complete without a consideration of it as a model for believers.'³¹ Crucifixion is not merely Jesus' task. It is also the responsibility of the believing community, sometimes in a martyr's death, always in the crucifixion of self in the life of a servant. John Stott's remarks are trenchant:

The place of suffering in service and of passion [in the sense used in this paper] in mission is hardly ever taught today. But the greatest single secret of evangelistic or missionary effectiveness is the willingness to suffer and die. It may be a death to popularity (by faithfully preaching the unpopular biblical gospel), or to pride (by the use of modest methods in reliance on the Holy Spirit), or to racial or national prejudice (by identification with another culture), or to material comfort (by adopting a simple lifestyle). But the servant must suffer if he is to bring light to the nations, and the

30 J. B. Green, 'The Death of Jesus', in J. B. Green, S. McKnight and I. H. Marshall (eds.), *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* (Leicester and Downers Grove: IVP, 1992), 146-163 [citing 158], emphasis added.

31 D. Tidball, *The Message of the Cross*, 148-9 (citing 148).

seed must die if it is to multiply.³²

Bolt's particular failure is not unique; it is mirrored in a good deal of recent evangelical literature on the cross, focussed as it is on the atonement in 'splendid isolation' from the implications of the cross as taught in Scripture. Of the many recent texts on the cross in the New Testament by evangelicals, only Tidball and Stott produced works addressing cross imitation in any significant way.³³ One looks in vain for references to cross imitation in recent works by Sproul, Mahaney, and Wells.³⁴ Those who do mention cross imitation often limit the discussion to little more than off-hand references.³⁵ No doubt this stems in large measure from a concern to defend penal substitutionary atonement, which has been under perpetual attack, all the more so since the turn of the millennium.³⁶ In this regard, it is worth noting that the valuable and influential (three editions in the middle of the last century, remaining in print today) text by L. Morris, *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross*,³⁷ failed to make any mention of cross imitation. This text remains important in contemporary discussions of the atonement; it is still in print and has gone through three editions. Morris's tome anticipates many more recent texts, however, in its simultaneous presentation of a valuable defense of penal substitution combined with a sad neglect of the way in which the cross is often presented (e.g., Phil. 2:3-11). Morris's later work *The Cross in the New Testament*³⁸ is slightly better in its treatment of cross imitation but less well known than its forerunner. Frequently, when Morris does reference cross-imitation passages, it is not in keeping with their original intent, that is, as a source of exhortation, but in order to abstract data for soteriological purposes.³⁹ Similarly, Wells mentions Matt. 16:24-27, but only to insist that cross-bearing is 'the confession of Christ's atoning death.'⁴⁰

Moreover, Bolt is not alone in shunning 'religion' and elevating the uniqueness of Christ's death, to the detriment of cross imitation. A recent collaboration between J. M. Boice and P. G. Ryken on the cross contains one short chapter (the

32 J. Stott, *The Cross of Christ* 20th Anniversary Ed. (Leicester and Downers Grove: IVP, 2006), 313.

33 Stott, 267-342; Tidball, 148-50; 242-6; 285-93.

34 R. C. Sproul, *The Truth of the Cross* (Orlando: Reformation Trust, 2007); C. J. Mahaney, *Living the Cross-Centered Life* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 2006), a text derived from two earlier texts on the cross similarly lacking; and P. Wells, *Cross Words: The Biblical Doctrine of Atonement* (Fearn: Christian Focus, 2006).

35 Demarest has five pages which mention cross imitation or implications (182, 197-8; 428-9) of 516 in *The Cross and Salvation: the Doctrine of Salvation* (Foundations of Evangelical Theology; Wheaton: Crossway, 1997 [2006]).

36 J. B. Green and M. D. Baker, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross: Atonement in New Testament and Contemporary Contexts* (Leicester and Downers Grove: IVP, 2000).

37 London: Tyndale, 1955.

38 Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965.

39 Cf. on Eph. 5:2 in *The Cross in the New Testament*, 236, 257.

40 *Cross Words*, 23.

last of twenty-one) on following the way of the cross.⁴¹ Even here there are errors, perhaps wrought by lack of familiarity with the concept: Boice claims that 'Jesus is our only possible model for self-denial.'⁴² We must contrast this claim with Paul's message to the Corinthians in 1 Cor. 11:1 and elsewhere, recognizing that our own self-denial and cross-bearing in imitation of Jesus and the apostles can and should function as a model, just as Paul's did for his churches.

Certainly, evangelicals must articulate and celebrate the uniqueness of Jesus' death.⁴³ And it is the present writer's opinion that penal substitution is crucial and worth defending, and one can be glad of Bolt's contribution to this end. But as Tidball notes in the citation above, it is in fact precisely Jesus' unique death that unerringly brings our own crosses.⁴⁴ Sadly, authors teaching the church about the cross frequently fail to address the crucial⁴⁵ biblical implications of Jesus' unique death for the Christian life. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the trickle-down effect from scholars and leading preachers to the bulk of evangelical pulpits has ensured that the individual believer is rarely if ever confronted by the call to imitate the cross of Jesus. The quest to defend the biblical doctrine of the atonement achieved at the cross must not result in the neglect of the biblical application of the cross in the call to imitate Jesus.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the literary juxtaposition of Mark 13 and the passion which Bolt rightly observes is of a piece with the presentation of the cross throughout Mark. Disciples are encouraged to boldly bear their own crosses, regardless of the cost. Thus the events described in Mark 13 are best understood not as the travails of Jesus' passion, but as (whole or part) the travails leading up to and cumulating in the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple in 70 AD, as Jesus' followers bore their own crosses. In contrast Bolt's approach to the cross in Mark departs from Mark's intent by keeping the cross at a distance, relegating its significance in Mark wholly to soteriology and separating it from discipleship. This wrongly contributes to his conclusion that the primary referent of Mark 13 is Jesus' passion. Evangelical teachers and leaders must not be content to see and display 'the cross from a distance'. In their written work no less than in their lifestyles, they must instead close the distance from a life lived for self to a life lived – and perhaps even lost – in imitation of the crucified Messiah.

41 *The Heart of the Cross* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2005 [1999]).

42 *Heart of the Cross*, 154.

43 Noted by Bolt, *The Cross from a Distance*, 103 and 115 and elsewhere – but without granting the point Bolt seeks to prove, that the 'unparalleled suffering' described in Mark 13 necessarily refers to Jesus' death.

44 Cf. Garland, *Mark*, 321.

45 I intend this word to be taken both metaphorically and literally.