

Editor's mailbox

Dear Editor

ACT Now is a very well produced magazine offering a wide range of relevant materials for Christian educationalists.

However, I was very concerned about the article entitled 'The lost message of Jesus' (*ACT Now*, Autumn 2008) based on Steve Chalke's book of the same title. This book created widespread debate throughout the evangelical world when it denied the penal substitutionary work of Christ. This denial essentially takes away the very heart of the Gospel.

Wayne A Grudem, Research Professor of Bible and Theology at Phoenix Seminary, Arizona, distils the significance of the penal substitution theory of the atonement: 'It means that there is an eternal, unchangeable requirement in the holiness and justice of God that sin be paid for. Furthermore, before the atonement ever could have an effect on our subjective consciousness, it first had an effect on God and his relation to the sinners he planned to redeem. Apart from this central truth, the death of Christ really cannot be adequately understood.'

The Association of Christian Teachers is firmly based on an evangelical statement of faith that includes clear reference to the saving work of Christ. This means that we understand that, on the cross, Christ died in our place, bearing the penalty for our sin. This is an act of pure grace. It costs us nothing. Anyone wishing to join ACT as a full (voting) member has to agree with the following declaration: 'I believe in Jesus Christ as Risen Saviour, Lord and God, and in His atoning sacrifice as the only and all-sufficient ground of salvation. I endeavour to be ruled in thought, word and action by the Bible as the inspired Word of God and to live by the power of the Holy Spirit.'

Furthermore, anyone serving on ACT's Board of Directors must indicate their agreement with the Association's full, doctrinal 'Statement of Faith' which articulates the long-held orthodox truths of Christianity:

- The unity of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit in the Godhead.
- The sovereignty of God in creation, providence, revelation, redemption and final judgement.
- The divine inspiration and entire trustworthiness of Holy Scripture and its supreme authority in all matters of faith and conduct.
- The sinfulness and guilt of all people since the Fall, rendering them subject to God's wrath and condemnation.
- Redemption from the guilt, penalty and power of sin solely through the sacrificial death as our representative and substitute, of the Lord Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God.
- The bodily resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ from the dead, and His ascension to the right hand of God the Father.
- The necessity of the work of the Holy Spirit to make the death of Christ effective to the individual sinner, granting repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.
- The justification of the sinner by the grace of God through faith in Christ alone.
- The indwelling and work of the Holy Spirit in the believer.
- The one holy, universal Church which is the Body of Christ, and to which all true believers belong.
- The expectation of the personal return of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Point 5 is unambiguous: we are saved by 'the sacrificial death' of Christ Jesus 'as our representative and substitute'. I believe that all articles that appear in *ACT Now* should always reflect the truths articulated in ACT's 'Statement of Faith' and should be written by contributors who readily ascribe to these beliefs. In all honesty I do not believe that Steve Chalke could now readily assent to ACT's doctrinal position.

Graham Pickhaver

Editor's reply

In the first instance I would like to take this opportunity to reassure *ACT Now* readers that I am a full member of ACT and gladly and wholeheartedly concur with the Association's full, doctrinal 'Statement of Faith'.

As a matter of editorial policy *ACT Now* welcomes articles that appeal to Christians working in education and stimulate thought, reflection, prayer and discussion. Whilst we would not include an article at odds with ACT's evangelical doctrinal position (eg denying the divinity of Christ or questioning His physical resurrection) we reserve the right to include articles written by contributors who do not, themselves, subscribe to ACT's full, doctrinal 'Statement of Faith'. That said, some

of our liveliest debates are those between sincere evangelical Christian educators who, although united in Christ and in blissful accord when it comes to ACT's 'Statement of Faith', are poles apart when it comes to specific topics and particular issues. Appropriately enough, *ACT Now* welcomes debate that is vigorous, respectful and God-honouring.

Finally, it is worth noting that the following disclaimer is included on page three of every edition of the magazine: 'All views expressed are those of the individual authors and are not necessarily those of the Editor or the Association.'

Rupert Kaye, Editor