CARL R. TRUEMAN GRANT R. OSBORNE
JOHN S. HAMMETT

EDITED BY ANDREW DAVID NASELLI AND MARK A. SNOEBERGER

PERSPECTIVES

ON THE EXTENT OF THE ATONEMENT

3 VIEWS

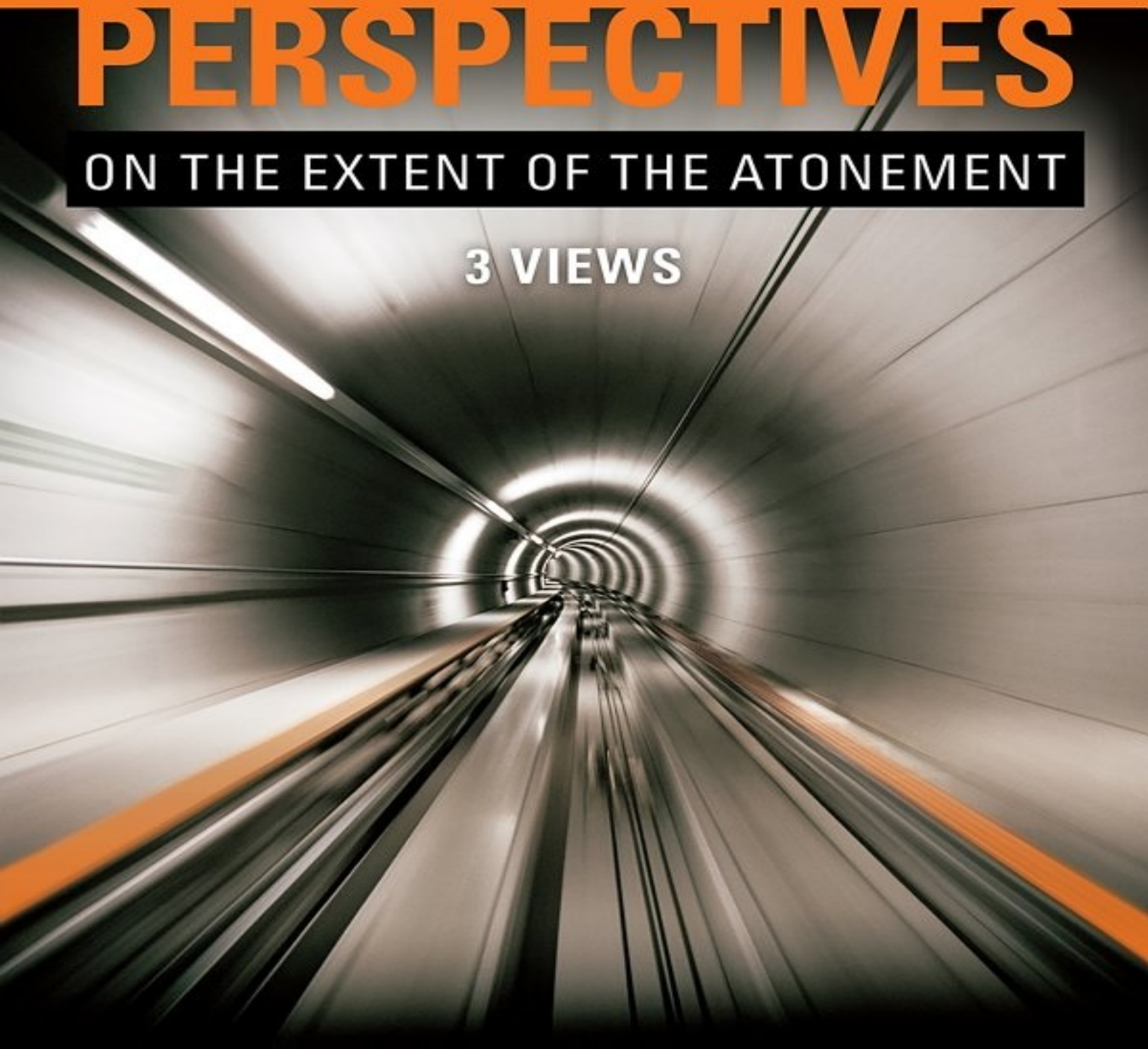


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B&H ACADEMIC
NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE

"At one theological institution where I studied, we spoke of a certain style of debate: thesis, followed by antithesis, followed by personal abuse. This book does not adopt that style. The first obligation in serious theological polemics must be understanding both your own position and your opponents' positions as thoroughly as possible, the more so if the topic is sensitive. That is the first strength of this book. The second is that it shows how, in debates over the extent (or intent!) of the atonement, the principal options are not two, but three, and how this third position, often connected with Amyraut, turns on the difficult notion of God having more than one will. In one sense this book breaks no new ground; it does not intend to. But I know no book that handles this subject with more scrupulous attention to fairness and accuracy in debate."

—D. A. Carson, research professor of New Testament, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School; president, The Gospel Coalition

"The extent of the atonement has been debated by Christian theologians from the early Reformation through contemporary evangelical theology. This volume offers compelling presentations by outstanding representatives of three leading views—definite atonement, general atonement, and multi-intentions views of the atonement. The multiviews format of this book allows readers to come to a more well-informed understanding of their own perspective."

—Steve W. Lemke, provost, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary

"Here is a first-order discussion of a second-order doctrine. The contributors to this volume agree that the question of the extent of the atonement falls short of being placed in the top tier of doctrines central and non-negotiable to the Christian faith, yet they also rightly see the importance of this doctrine for faith and practice. Hence, the discussion here is spirited yet charitable, firm yet gracious. The quality of the discussion throughout is simply superb, as exegetical, historical, and theological considerations are put forth with clarity and scholarly acuteness. I strongly recommend a careful reading of this book, in light of the continued controversy surrounding this doctrine, and for the sake of our souls, as we seek to understand better the glory of Christ's atonement for sinners."

—Bruce A. Ware, T. Rupert and Lucille Coleman Professor of Christian

Theology, Chairman of the Department of Christian Theology, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

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Perspectives Series Abbreviations List

AB Anchor Bible

ABD Anchor Bible Dictionary, ed. D. N. Freedman. New York: Doubleday, 1992

AJT Asia Journal of Theology

ANF The Ante-Nicene Fathers

ARG Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte

AUSS Andrews University Seminary Studies

BA Biblical Archaeologist

BDAG Bauer, W., F. W. Danker, W. F. Arndt, and F. W. Gingrich, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. 3rd ed.

BDB Brown, F., S. R. Driver, and C. A. Briggs. *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*

BECNT Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament

BSac Bibliotheca sacra

CBQ Catholic Biblical Quarterly

CHR Catholic Historical Review

CTM Concordia Theological Monthly

EvQ Evangelical Quarterly

HALOT Koehler, L., W. Baumgartner, and J. J. Stamm, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, trans. M. E. J. Richardson

HBT Horizons in Biblical Theology

HTR Harvard Theological Review

ICC International Critical Commentary

IDB Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, ed. G. A. Buttrick et al. New York: Abingdon, 1962

Int Interpretation

JBL Journal of Biblical Literature

JE Jewish Encyclopedia

JETS Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society

JSNT Journal for the Study of the New Testament

JSNTSup Journal for the Study of the New Testament: Supplement Series

JTS Journal of Theological Studies

LCC Library of Christian Classics. Philadelphia, 1953–

LCL Loeb Classical Library

LQ The Lutheran Quarterly

LXX Septuagint

NAC New American Commentary

NIB The New Interpreter's Bible

NICNT New International Commentary on the New Testament

NICOT New International Commentary on the Old Testament

NIDOTTE New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis

NIGTC New International Greek Testament Commentary

NIVAC New International Version Application Commentary

NovT Novum Testamentum

NovTSup Supplements to Novum Testamentum

NPNF1 Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, Series 1

NPNF2 A Select Library of the *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, Series 2*

NTS New Testament Studies

OTL Old Testament Library

PNTC Pillar New Testament Commentary

ResQ Restoration Quarterly

SJT Scottish Journal of Theology

Str-B Strack, H. L., and P. Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch*, 6 vols. Munich, 1922–61

TDNT Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, ed. G. Kittel and G. Friedrich, trans. G. W. Bromiley. 10 vols. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964–74

TDOT Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament

TNTC Tyndale New Testament Commentaries

TOTC Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries

TrinJ Trinity Journal

TynB Tyndale Bulletin

VC Vigiliae christianae

VE Vox evangelica

WBC Word Biblical Commentary

WCF Westminster Confession of Faith

WLC Westminster Larger Catechism

WSC Westminster Shorter Catechism

WTJ Westminster Theological Journal

ZNW Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche

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Foreword

One can scarcely think of a question that Christians debate more passionately than the one our little book addresses. Some of our readers can even now reflect on some acerbic quarrel about the extent of Christ's atonement that lacked Christian love. So when we proposed a project that deliberately convened participants with conflicting perspectives on this topic, we wondered fleetingly whether the project might be a dreadful one. Our fears proved unwarranted as grace prevailed. The project proved a delightful one.

Our original band of three essayists morphed a bit over the course of time and ended finally as a band of four. *Carl Trueman*, Paul Woolley Professor of Church History at Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, brings his sprightly voice to the debate as champion of a definite atonement. *Grant Osborne*, long-time professor of New Testament at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, contributes an initial essay in defense of a general atonement, and because of some serious health difficulties, he handed the baton to his colleague at TEDS, *Tom McCall*, associate professor of biblical and systematic theology, who capably responds to the other two positions. *John Hammett*, professor of systematic theology at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, rounds out the group with an apology for the multiple-intentions view of Christ's atonement.

And so we offer to you a lively and robust yet irenic exchange of ideas on this important issue: for whom did Jesus make atonement, and how does God apply Jesus' atonement?

Andy Naselli and Mark Snoeberger
May 22, 2014

Introduction

Mark A. Snoeberger

College and seminary instructors regularly caution their students against exaggerating the importance of their research topics. Undoubtedly "most important" and "most controversial" topics of theology must exist somewhere, but few studies that make such claims about their subject matter live up to their billing. With that reality in view, let me begin this study rather anticlimactically by affirming that the question of the extent of the atonement is not the most important question of systematic theology. In fact, the authors of this volume agree that the importance of the question is frequently overstated. Still, the topic continues to be—if judged by the vitriol with which some members of the theological community defend and promote their respective views—quite controversial.

The reasons for this state of affairs are manifold, but a few basic concerns come to the fore. On the one hand are those who worry that the authority of Scripture and the mission of the church might be compromised by a limited atonement. After all, the Bible clearly states that Jesus loved the *whole world*, died for *all*, and commissioned the church to evangelize *everyone*. On the other hand are those who fear the theological implications of a universal atonement: intra-Trinitarian conflict, universalism, injustice, and errant views of the nature of atonement. Practically, one side is concerned about a sort of evangelism that underperforms, the other about a sort of evangelism that overpromises.

Happily the dire predictions of what lies at the bottom of the slippery slopes situated on either side of this debate are rarely realized. Still the question of the extent of the atonement offers a wonderful laboratory for learning how to navigate the rough terrain that often exists at the intersection of exegesis and systematic theology—or as Cornelius Van Til put it in his *Survey of Christian Epistemology*, the harmonization of *correspondence* and *coherence*.[1]

Va n Til argues that truth must be characterized first of all by correspondence with reality—and not just any reality but God's reality. In the quest for truth, one is always constrained by the reality God has created. Truth-seekers are not free to fabricate their own alternate realities. Truth, in

its simplest definition, is what God *would* say about a given issue; it is known best through what God *has* said about that issue. Because of this, the Christian Scriptures are the *norma normans non normata* in theological debate: not merely a weighty contributor but the final arbiter in all that they address.[2] While one might build a coherent reality different from God's reality, in the final analysis it matters little if this is really possible: no alternative reality can ever be called true if it conflicts with the reality God created.

Van Til cautions, however, that correspondence, while critically important in the discovery of truth, does not exclude logical coherence from theological debate. In discerning God's truth system there must also be an absolute commitment to coherence. Theologians may never use biblical correspondence as an excuse for illogic or internal contradiction in their theological systems. They must continuously refine and harmonize each detail with the whole so that the system is self-consistent. This means, at times, that Christian truth-seekers must seriously consider the possibility that their best efforts to construct theological systems that correspond exegetically to biblical truth may be stymied not only by logical errors but also by interpretive errors. To address this concern (by turning a phrase popularized by one of the contributors to this book), they must invoke a "hermeneutical spiral" in which they not only check their theology (coherence) with exegesis (correspondence) but also the reverse.[3]

The debate on the extent of the atonement of Jesus Christ has long been expressed as a debate between correspondence (exegesis) and coherence (theology). On the one hand, many texts suggest a general atonement, announcing, apparently, that Christ has borne in common the sins of the whole human population (Isa 53:6; John 1:29; 3:16; 12:32; 2 Cor 5:14–15, 19; 1 Tim 2:4–6; 4:10; Titus 2:11; Heb 2:9; 10:29; 2 Pet 2:1; 3:9; 1 John 2:2; 4:14; etc.). Too often those who hold to particular redemption dismiss such texts or respond with exegesis that smacks of special pleading.[4] On the other hand, those promoting universal theories of atonement sometimes dismiss the theological tensions that their positions raise: the nature of substitution, the problem of double jeopardy, and the specter of universalism. All too often justification for this dismissal comes in the form of the trump card of biblical correspondence: the Bible says Christ died for all people, so whether or not this makes sense, it must be true—absolutely clear statements are not threatened by the theologian's inability to coherently harmonize them with the systematic whole. Rather, such theological antinomies stand as

monuments to the mysterious character of the Creator, whose thoughts and ways far exceed those of his creatures.

This does not mean that those adhering to a definite atonement have no supporting texts or that those adhering to a general atonement have no theological concerns. They do.[5] However, as a rule, adherents of a general atonement seem to vigorously wave the flag of correspondence (exegesis), while adherents of a definite atonement wave the flag of coherence (theology). As a result, the two groups regrettably tend to talk past each other, dismissing any disparate objections raised.

It is my pleasure to be working with a team of contributors who do not fall prey to the stereotypes just described. Each one is committed to the twin concerns of (1) fidelity to the Word of God as the *norma normans non normata* and also (2) theological consistency. Each grapples carefully with the objections of the others without dismissive sniping or flippancy. Naturally, they cannot all be right, and readers of this book will likely side with one essayist over the others (or dismiss all of them). This is to be expected. But we hope each author's biblical commitments, sincere desire to understand other views, and cordial spirit will prove helpful.[6]

Survey of the Three Views

In a sense the debate about the extent of the atonement is binary: one either believes Christ died for all or Christ died only for the elect; therefore, a reader might reasonably conclude that Carl Trueman is pitted unfairly against two opponents. Others have crafted this debate according to John Owen's "treble option": Christ died for either (1) "all the sins of all men" (universalism), (2) "all the sins of some men" (particularism), or (3) "some sins of all men" (Romanism/Arminianism).[7] But why stop with three? Protestantism is littered with variations of (and arguably exceptions to) Owen's taxonomy. About a century ago B. B. Warfield acknowledged eleven variations,[8] and we could probably double that number today.

As editors, we considered whether this book should include more than three views:

- On the particularist pole we could have added at least two views: (1) the so-called "commercial view," a minority variation of particularism that denies the atonement's infinite value and excludes common grace from the atonement,[9] and (2) the "eternal application"

model that sees the accomplishment and application of atonement as simultaneous—either in eternity past or on the cross.[10]

- On the opposite pole we could have included at least four distinct views associated with a general atonement position: (1) that Christ's death secures the expiation of all sins and with it prevenient grace so that all may either accept or reject that expiation;[11] (2) that Christ's death simply provides for the expiation of all sins except unbelief, which is a separate category;[12] (3) that Christ's death merely satisfies God's wrath without properly substituting for each sinner;[13] and (4) that Christ's death expiates all sins so that all humans will ultimately be saved (i.e., universalism).[14]
- In the middle we could have isolated models such as Amyraldism, English hypothetical universalism,[15] and the recently defended "classical position"[16] as alternatives to the "multiple intentions" view we ultimately selected.[17]

And besides all of these, there remain, of course, broad swaths of scholarship that advocate nonsubstitutionary views of atonement.[18]

In the interests of a manageable project, however, we decided to narrow the discussion to three basic options (which are not, to the relief of some readers, John Owen's three options). We began by narrowing our focus to Protestant views and, further, to those views that affirm penal substitutionary atonement. The primary question, thus, that this book addresses is not, For whose benefit did Christ die? but more specifically, For whom was Christ a substitute?[19] Finally, we agreed that too much noise between similar but only mildly divergent views would create more confusion than clarity. In the end we narrowed our focus to three representative views that are sufficiently distinct for the point-counterpoint format:[20]

1. A Definite Atonement
2. A Universally Sufficient Atonement
3. A Multiple-Intention View of the Atonement

The contributors to this volume are conscious of the various nuanced alternatives to the positions being argued, but in the end each is not defending a cluster of positions but one—his own. So with apologies to readers who have

their own twist on this issue (as most of us do), the following summarizes the three views.

Definite Atonement

Carl Trueman champions *definite atonement* (also known as *limited atonement* or *particular redemption*), which argues that Christ's atonement is particular in intention and efficacious in character.[21] By his atoning work, Christ intended to effectively secure the salvation of only the elect. The "limitation" on Christ's atonement reflects neither a deficiency for God in himself nor any external restraint;[22] rather the limitation is God's own, prior elective decree.[23] Enormous debate surrounds the question of the modern origins of definite atonement. The long-standing view that John Calvin himself taught the doctrine has been challenged over the last half-century by a substantial group of scholars who sharply distinguish between Calvin and "the Calvinists" (i.e., his Reformed scholastic successors).[24] If this latter theory is correct, then the clear teaching of definite atonement should be relegated to the post-Reformation era. Many, however, deny the substance or, at the very least, the scale of this theory.[25] At first blush the scuffle to identity the rightful heirs of Calvin's mantle appears unworthy of all the fuss. For many particularists, however, more is at stake than mere theological provenance. For these a definite atonement is no less essential a piece of the Reformed system than, say, justification by faith or any of the other four "points" of Calvinism. The question of Calvin's explicit position on the extent of the atonement is a matter of debate that will continue for decades to come, but the answer is not particularly relevant to this discussion. What is relevant, particularists argue, is the necessity of particular redemption as a corollary of Calvin's system. It is no coincidence that "the Calvinists" by and large advocated particularism, these argue, because particularism is a necessary consequence of what Calvin taught—not a contradiction. Denying particular redemption, proponents claim, logically destabilizes the whole Reformation principle. For these, all "five points" rise and fall together in refuting Romanism. As noted above, proponents of definite atonement offer a number of key texts in support of their position. Their most substantive arguments, however, come in the form of theological constructs developed from implications of those texts. While others are included, the following major concerns dominate:[26]

Penal Substitution

First and foremost, particularists argue that anything other than a definite atonement thwarts the idea of penal substitution. Since the days of Anselm, the Roman Catholic Church has taught that Christ satisfactorily provided for sin by amassing a vast quantity of supererogatory grace that was contingently available to all sinners (i.e., based on something they did to earn it). Christ's provision could be accepted or rejected, but it was offered to all. Reformation theology, particularists argue, demands more than *satisfactory provision for sinners' collective benefit*; it demands *penal substitution for sinners' individual culpability*.[27] Sinners have capital guilt that mere supererogatory grace cannot satisfy; they need a personal substitution of life.

Divine Justice

The foregoing moves naturally to a second concern, namely, divine justice. While it would certainly have been possible for Christ, as infinite God, to satisfy his Father's accumulated wrath against all the sins of each sinner, expiate a person's sins, pay his blood-ransom price, and reconcile him to God, a populated hell proves that Christ did not do this. If he had, then there would no longer be any outstanding sin and, consequently, no possibility of additional divine wrath. To suggest otherwise, many particularists argue, would be unethical and unjust—a kind of "double jeopardy" foreign to the divine order. Logically, then, anyone consigned to the punitive horrors of hell must not have been one of those for whom Christ made penal substitution.[28]

The Language of Efficacy

Closing a possible loophole to the previous argument is the use of the language of efficacy in biblical discussions of the atonement. John Murray identifies the four biblical "categories" of atonement described above—propitiation, expiation, redemption, and reconciliation—categories widely accepted even outside Murray's immediate circle of influence. But unlike those who hold to a general atonement, particularists see these categories as carrying intrinsically efficacious meaning. Nowhere does Scripture say Christ merely made provision to expiate sin, propitiate wrath, or reconcile people to God. Rather, he actually took away sins (John 1:29), bore God's wrath (1 John 2:2; 4:10), redeemed us (Gal 3:13–14), and reconciled us to God (Rom 5:10–11; 2 Cor 5:18–19). For this reason, then, the title of Murray's little book is not *Redemption: Provided and Applied*, but *Redemption: Accomplished and Applied*.[29]

The Unity of God's Purpose

Finally, proponents argue that a definite atonement is necessary to the unity of the divine purpose in salvation. The Father elected a people before the foundation of the earth, Christ subsequently died for these people, and the Spirit regenerates these people. The proposed suggestion that Christ deliberately (and with self-conscious ineffectiveness) expanded the divine intention when he died, it is argued, wrecks not only God's unity but also his immutability and sovereignty.[30]

General Atonement

Grant Osborne argues the position of *general atonement* (also known as *universal* or *unlimited atonement*), which argues that Christ's atonement is universal in intention and provisional in character. By his cross-work, Christ intended to provide atonement for all people without exception, and he perfectly accomplished what he intended.[31] But Christ did *not* intend to *apply* atonement to all people without exception: application is instead the purview of faith. Culpability for limiting the atonement rests with people who do not embrace the atonement that Christ freely supplied.[32]

The Protestant origins of universal atonement are also debated. Particularists suggest that general atonement does not completely abandon Romanist theories and drinks too heavily from the well of continental humanism. Proponents of a general atonement themselves, however, suggest that their view flows directly from the plain reading of Scripture and that most of the early Reformers embraced it. Thus, they argue, it was not the Remonstrants that departed from early Reformation orthodoxy; instead, it was scholastic particularists that polluted Reformed theology with logic-laced confessions that rivaled Scripture as canons of the faith.[33] The Remonstrants did not object in principle to confessional systems of theology, but they objected to the virtually canonical status these confessions sometimes possessed.

With respect to the extent of the atonement, the Remonstrants argued that the clear statements of Scripture (in this case John 3:16 and 1 John 2:2) disagree with scholastic confessional conclusions so they dismissed the latter:

> Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world, died for all and for every individual, so that he has obtained for all, by his death on the cross, reconciliation and remission of sins; yet so that no one is partaker of this remission except the believers, according to the word of the Gospel of

> John 3.16: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life." And in the first letter of John, chapter 2, verse 2: "He is the expiation of our sins; and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world."[34]

Representative concerns raised by proponents of a general atonement include the following.[35]

Exegetical Concerns

The first concern usually raised by universal atonement advocates is exegetical. While the Scriptures admittedly speak, at times, of Christ's dying for "us," "the many," "the sheep," and "the church," such language does not logically exclude everyone else. Instead, exegesis should focus on the plethora of texts that clearly describe Christ's death as for "the world" or for "all." Pride of place belongs especially to passages that speak explicitly of Christ dying "not only" for believers but for everyone (e.g., 1 John 2:2) or that unequivocally state that Christ died for unbelievers (e.g., Heb 10:29; 2 Pet 2:1).[36] Such texts, advocates claim, are sure evidence that the Scripture writers taught a universal atonement.

Theological Concerns

The exegetical concerns agree with three key theological factors. First, since God's love is infinite, its expression cannot possibly be limited. It would be unconscionable for God to send Christ to pay for the sins of only some people (see esp. 1 John 4:8–10).[37] Second, since faith is a necessary catalyst between the historical cross-event and the believer's actual union with Christ, people are ultimately condemned "not just for their sins but also for not putting faith in Christ."[38] It follows that Christ's death does not in itself save anyone; instead, his death makes salvation *possible* for those who actualize it by faith. The reality that not all are saved is not, therefore, due to some deficiency on the part of Christ's cross-work but to the sinner's own failure to exercise faith.[39] Third, since humans are free and since God invites all people to embrace Christ, the availability of Christ's atoning work must be universally available. If Christ did not die to provide atonement for the sins of all people and if God did not grant to people the freedom to accept that atonement, then it is illogical and in fact unethical for God to invite all people to believe. Since God *does* issue such a sincere invitation (e.g., Matt 28:18–20; Acts 1:8), it follows that all people can exercise faith and that Christ died for everyone without exception.

Evangelistic Concerns

If the foregoing is true, anything other than a universal atonement stifles evangelism. Unless one can sincerely say, "Christ died for *you*," universal atonement advocates argue, calls to faith become insincere,[40] awkward,[41] and/or rare.[42]

A Multiple-Intention View of the Atonement

John Hammett defends a *multiple-intention view of atonement*, which argues that Christ's atonement has both universal *and* particular purposes and has elements that are alternately provisional *and* efficacious in character. The multiple-intention view is not precisely that of *Amyraldism* or *hypothetical universalism*, but it bears enough resemblance to these models to conflate them all under one heading. With specific regard to Christ's redemptive purpose, these views collectively maintain that Christ intended (1) to pay the penalty for the sins of all humans without exception, thus making possible both the salvation of all and the free offer of the gospel to all, but (2) to secure the salvation of the elect alone.[43] As such, these views attempt to embrace the strengths of the definite atonement view while simultaneously addressing the objections of the general atonement view. To borrow the words of William G. T. Shedd, an early precursor to Hammett's view, Christ died to make simultaneously both a "universal atonement" *and* a "limited redemption."[44]

Historically, this centrist view finds its greatest early Protestant endorsement in the school of Saumur and its greatest early champions in John Cameron and especially Moïses Amyraut.[45] Amyraldism, which is properly a minority variation of Calvinism, early on adopted Peter Lombard's understanding that Christ's death was "offered . . . for all with regard to the sufficiency of the price, but only for the elect with regard to its efficacy, because he brought about salvation only for the predestined."[46] The connotative elasticity of the phrase "sufficient for all but efficient for the elect" proved useful as a vehicle of mediation at Dordt, where in 1618–19 a mixed body of both "high" Calvinists and Amyraldians crafted a united response to the threat of the Arminian Remonstrance—the famed Canons of Dordt, from which the well-known "five points" derive. The hypothetical universal position continued through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as a persistent minority position in Reformed circles;[47] it probably reached its greatest acceptance in late-nineteenth-century American Presbyterianism.[48] New variations of hypothetical universalism, among which are located the multiple-

intention view defended in this volume, are again making advances in the evangelical church.[49]

The theological concerns of the multiple-intention model are extracted from those of the other two positions. Indeed, the great attraction of the multiple-intention position is that it allows proponents to follow Dabney's sage advice, "*In mediis tutissime ibis*" (lit., "the prudent place is in the middle")[50] or to use Ware's more popular axiom, it offers the "best of both sides."[51]

Like their particularist brothers and sisters, advocates of the multiple-intention model (1) adhere firmly to a particular and thus an incontestably substitutionary redemption, (2) affirm the absolute success of an immutable divine decree, and (3) embrace at face value the efficacious language of Scripture respecting the various categories of atonement.

However, like their general atonement brothers and sisters, they (1) connect the universal language of Scripture with the provision for and offer of salvation, (2) categorically affirm the infinite nature of God's provision and the necessity of saving faith, and (3) announce to the whole world, without any nagging twinges of conscience, that "Jesus died for you." The multiple-intention model also boasts the most comprehensive ethical explanation of the theological realities of divine providence, common grace, and the promised cosmic restoration.

Conclusion

We invite you to read carefully, reflect upon, and weigh these three views. Following the Bereans' example in Acts 17, compare the contributors' arguments with the Scriptures to see if these things correspond to the biblical witness and, further, whether these things cohere within the whole testimony of God (the *analogia fidei*). And once you have settled on what you feel is the correct view, please remember that the other views are also held by genuine believers. The question of God's intent in sending Christ to die is an important one to answer, but its importance is not so great that we must deny Christian recognition to those who answer differently.

It is with pleasure that we commend to you the following discussion. May its contents enrich not only you, but also the church for whom Christ died, to the glory of God the Father.

---

[1] Cornelius Van Til, *A Survey of Christian Epistemology*, vol. 2 of *In Defense of the Faith* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, n.d.), 1–3.

[2] Lit., the "norming norm that cannot be normed." The Scriptures cannot be subjected to a higher authority because they are the words of God.

[3] Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral*, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006).

[4] For instance, the *world* is sometimes qualified as the *world of the elect*, often without any exegetical defense of this narrower reading. Or the seemingly arbitrary decision is made to qualify *all* into something less than *all*, even when there is no exegetical reason forthcoming for making this qualification.

[5] Those who hold to a definite atonement appeal to such texts as John 6:37–40; 10:11 (cf. vv. 15, 26); 17:6–10; Mark 10:45; Acts 20:28; Rom 8:29–32; Eph 5:25; and to some of the same texts referenced by general atonement advocates (e.g., Isa 53:11–12; 2 Cor 5:14–15; 1 Tim 4:10). Those who hold to a general atonement suggest that a definite atonement (1) renders the free offer of the gospel both illogical and unjust; (2) places limits on the infinite love of God; and (3) discounts human freedom by denying the believer any faith-participation in his own salvation.

[6] In the interest of perpetuating this irenic exchange, I commend Andrew David Naselli's "ten practical suggestions to believers for avoiding unhealthy schism over the extent of the atonement," in "John Owen's Argument for Definite Atonement in *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ*: A Summary and Evaluation," *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 14.4 (2010): 74–76, 81–82.

[7] John Owen, *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ*, in *The Works of John Owen*, ed. William H. Goold (repr., Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1967), 10:173–74.

[8] Warfield sees three variations of the "particularistic" model, three variations of the "universalistic" model, three variations of the "sacerdotal" model, and two variations of the "naturalistic" model (*The Plan of Salvation* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1935], 23).

[9] Thomas J. Nettles argues for this less common particularist understanding (though without using the commercial label) over and against Andrew Fuller's more widely held historical expression of particularism (*By His Grace and for His Glory: A Historical, Theological, and Practical Study of the Doctrines of Grace in Baptist Life*, rev. and exp. 20th anniversary ed. [Cape Coral, FL: Founders Press, 2006], 335–59).

[10] Once a rare view even among hyper-Calvinists (see, e.g., John Brine, *A Defence of the Doctrine of Eternal Justification from Some Exceptions Made to It by Mr. Bragge, and Others* [London: A. Ward and H. Whitridge, 1732]), this view has few if any modern proponents.

[11] This view is common among professing Arminians who reject the governmental view of atonement. Grant Osborne ably defends this view in this book.

[12] Robert P. Lightner, *The Death Christ Died: A Biblical Case for Unlimited Atonement* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1998), 101; David L. Allen, "The Atonement: Limited or Universal," in *Whosoever Will: A Biblical-Theological Critique of Five-Point Calvinism*, ed. David L. Allen and Steve W. Lemke (Nashville: B&H, 2010), 88.

[13] Anselm's satisfaction view, which still dominates in Roman Catholic circles, arguably fits this description.

[14] *Universalism* means all people without exception will be finally saved. *Universal atonement* means Christ provided the means of salvation for all people without exception. All universalists hold to universal atonement, but most who hold to universal atonement are not universalists.

[15] Jonathan D. Moore, *English Hypothetical Universalism: John Preston and the Softening of Reformed Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007).

[16] E.g., P. L. Rouwendal, "Calvin's Forgotten Classical Position on the Extent of the Atonement: About Sufficiency, Efficiency, and Anachronism," *WTJ* 70, no. 2 (Fall 2008): 317–35.

[17] E.g., Bruce A. Ware, "The Extent of the Atonement: Select Support for and Benefits of a 'Multiple Intentions' Understanding," outline presented at the 62nd Annual Meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society (November 18, 2010). See also a thesis prepared by Gary Shultz under Ware's tutelage: "A Biblical and Theological Defense of a Multi-Intentioned View of the Atonement" (PhD diss., Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2008).

[18] Cf. James Beilby and Paul R. Eddy, eds., *The Nature of the Atonement: Four Views* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006).

[19] John Hammett requested and was granted permission to exceed this question to deal with other intentions of the atonement, but the narrower question of substitution remains his central concern.

[20] We considered using historical labels for these (e.g., Calvinist, Arminian, and Amyraldian, respectively), but in light of vigorous debates about the precise positions of Arminius, Amyraut, and Calvin, we decided the theological labels would be more useful.

[21] The label "limited atonement" is used more by opponents than by proponents of this view, and opponents often use it pejoratively. This label, further, is not especially accurate because all three views in this book "limit" the atonement, whether in intention, sufficiency, or application.

[22] That is, limiting the expression of God's practical love (his love *ad extra*) does not limit his intrinsic love (his love *in se*), nor does any force external to him limit his ability to save more than he does.

[23] The order of the decrees (esp. the priority of God's decree to elect vis-à-vis his decree to send Christ to make atonement) is sometimes invoked as critical to this discussion (e.g., Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 8 vols. [Dallas: Dallas Seminary Press, 1948], 3:178–82). If the decree to make atonement precedes the decree to elect, it is argued, then atonement is unlimited; but if the decree to elect precedes the decree to make atonement, then atonement is limited to the elect. Most particularists find this question irrelevant. What they *do* find relevant, however, is that when Christ actually died in history, the pool of God's elect was, by God's eternal decree, fixed and known to Christ. And with that information in mind, the particularist argues, it would have been illogical for Christ to die (with assured ineffectiveness) for anyone else.

[24] This understanding, birthed on the Continent, penetrated the English-speaking world with Basil Hall's "Calvin Against the Calvinists," in *John Calvin*, ed. G. E. Duffield (Appleford, England: Sutton Courtenay, 1966). Shortly thereafter it became the subject of Brian Armstrong's dissertation, "The Calvinism of Moïse Amyraut: The Warfare of Protestant Scholasticism and French Humanism" (ThD diss., Princeton University, 1967), available in a more popular format as *Calvinism and the Amyraut Heresy: Protestant Scholasticism and Humanism in Seventeenth-Century France* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969). This view gained considerable popularity in 1979 with the publication of R. T. Kendall's dissertation, *Calvin and English Calvinism to 1649* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979). Among other works sympathetic to this thesis, two stand out as key sequels to these earlier treatments: Alan C. Clifford, *Atonement and Justification: English Evangelical Theology 1640–1790—An Evaluation* (London: Oxford University Press, 1990); and G. Michael Thomas's *The Extent of the Atonement: A Dilemma for Reformed Theology from Calvin to the Consensus* (Carlisle, England: Paternoster, 2002). Most recently, Kevin D. Kennedy has furthered this theory by condensing salient portions of an earlier Peter Lang publication as "Was Calvin a Calvinist? John Calvin on the Extent of the Atonement," in Allen and Lemke, *Whosoever Will*, 191–212.

[25] Among others, see Roger Nicole, "Moyse Amyraut (1596–1664) and the Controversy of Universal Grace" (PhD diss., Harvard University, 1966); Paul Helm, "Calvin, English Calvinism, and the Logic of Doctrinal Development" *SJT* 34 (1981): 179–85; idem, *Calvin and the Calvinists* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1982); Jonathan H. Rainbow, *The Will of God and the Cross: A Historical and Theological Study of John Calvin's Doctrine of Limited Redemption* (Allison Park, PA: Pickwick, 1990); and Richard D. Muller, "Calvin and the 'Calvinists': Assessing Continuities and Discontinuities Between the Reformation and Orthodoxy," 2 parts, *Calvin Theological Journal* 30, no. 2 (1995): 345–75; 31, no. 1 (1996): 125–60. Muller, especially, has made the relationship of Reformation and post-Reformation theology the subject of his life's work.

[26] Among recent works see esp. David Gibson and Jonathan Gibson, eds., *From Heaven He Came and Sought Her: Definite Atonement in Historical, Biblical Theological, and Pastoral Perspective* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2013); also Lee Gatiss, *For Us and for Our Salvation: 'Limited Atonement' in the Bible, Doctrine, History, and Ministry* (London: Latimer Trust, 2012) and Jarvis J. Williams, *For Whom Did Christ Die? The Extent of the Atonement in Paul's Theology* (Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 2012).

Other leading treatments include John Murray, *Redemption: Accomplished and Applied* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955), 59–75; J. I. Packer, "The Love of God: Universal and Particular," in *Still Sovereign: Contemporary Perspectives on Election, Foreknowledge, and Grace*, ed. Thomas R. Schreiner and Bruce A. Ware (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), 277–91; Roger Nicole, "The Case for Definite Atonement," *Bulletin of the Evangelical Theological Society* 10, no. 4 (1967): 199–207; idem, "Particular Redemption," in *Our Savior God: Studies on Man, Christ, and the Atonement*, ed. James M. Boice (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980), 165–78; and most esp. Owen's *Death of Death*.

[27] Many today who hold to a general atonement also teach a substitutionary view of atonement (a marked advance on the governmental and moral influence views that were formerly more common in Arminian circles). Particularists, however, see this claim as inconsistent: while advocates of general atonement may hold to an atonement that involves penal *satisfaction*, it is not accurate to call this a penal *substitution*, except in some potential sense.

[28] See Owen, *Death of Death*, 246–49, 273.

[29] Drawing a metaphor from a human legal system, we would find it ethically appropriate for a judge to extend punitive wrath against a person who rejected the *offer* of payment for his crimes. But this is not the parallel offered in Scripture, particularists maintain. Rather, Scripture indicates that Christ tendered the payment and the Father received it, thus diffusing his wrath and effecting reconciliation. At this point God is ethically self-obligated to extend all the benefits of salvation to each recipient of atonement. The "golden chain" of soteriology has commenced and cannot be interrupted (Rom 8:32). See also Owen, *Death of Death*, 211–14, 232–36, 259.

[30] Owen, *Death of Death*, 163–79 *et passim*.

[31] This parries the particularist claim that universal atonement reflects an impotent God who does not accomplish what he intended. For advocates of universal atonement, God *did* accomplish all that he intended. But God did not intend to *effectually redeem* anyone; he simply intended to *provide redemption* for everyone. And in this, they claim, God was perfectly successful.

[32] The precise relationship of faith to atonement is a matter of debate among advocates of universal atonement. All agree, however, that faith delimits the application of Christ's atonement.

[33] See the sources cited in n. 24, above.

[34] *Remonstrance* (1610), art. 2, in *Creeds and Confessions of Faith in the Christian Tradition*, vol. 2, *Reformation Era*, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan and Valerie Hotchkiss (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 2:549.

[35] See Robert E. Picirilli, *Grace, Faith, Freewill: Contrasting Views of Salvation: Calvinism and Arminianism* (Nashville: Randall House, 2002), 103–22; Terry L. Miethe, "The Universal Power of Atonement," in *The Grace of God, the Will of Man: A Case for Arminianism*, ed. Clark H. Pinnock (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1989), 71–96; Robert P. Lightner, *The Death Christ Died*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1998); and David L. Allen, "The Atonement: Limited or Universal?" 78–107. I have borrowed Allen's three categories in the material that follows.

[36] See esp. Picirilli, *Grace, Faith, Freewill*, 123–37; Allen, "The Atonement: Limited or Universal?" 78–83; Lightner, *Death Christ Died*, 55–91.

[37] For a fuller statement of this argument, see Fritz Guy, "The Universality of God's Love," in *The Grace of God, the Will of Man*, ed. Clark H. Pinnock (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1989), 31–49.

[38] Picirilli, *Grace, Faith, Freewill*, 118. Lightner further argues that unbelief is no ordinary sin but a decisive sin that derives its true significance only *after* the cross event: "The sin of unbelief is always associated with the completed work of Christ and thus assumes a specific quality and is treated in a particular way in Scripture" (*Death Christ Died*, 101); so also Allen, "Atonement: Limited or Universal," 88.

[39] Details about the source of this faith vary between advocates of general atonement. Some suggest that all people possess the native capacity to believe (Pelagianism), others that faith is made available as a manifestation of prevenient grace (Picirilli and most Arminians), and still others see faith as connected

with an efficacious call (Lightner and many "four-point" Calvinists). In any case it is the sinner's failure to believe that limits the application of atonement.

[40] Particularists, for instance, might evangelize to obey God, but they do so, it is argued, despite their theology, not because of it (e.g., Allen, "Atonement: Limited or Universal?" 96–97).

[41] Because particularists cannot say, for instance, "Jesus died for you," they are obliged to use evasive and sterile statements such as "Jesus died for sinners"—statements unworthy of the warmth of the Christian gospel (ibid., 96–100).

[42] Allen, for instance, notes that the evasiveness and insincerity intrinsic to particularist gospel presentations have not only curtailed the use of altar calls but have even led some to denounce altar calls as unbiblical (ibid., 101).

[43] Some identify more than these two intentions. Ware lists five ("'Multiple Intentions' Understanding," 3–4), as does Robert L. Dabney (*Syllabus and Notes of the Course of Systematic and Polemic Theology Taught in Union Theological Seminary, Virginia*, 6th ed. [repr.; Richmond: Presbyterian Committee of Publication, 1927], 528–29). Of particular note are God's intentions to supply the ethical basis for providence and common grace (e.g., Col 1:17–18) and to effect the restoration of all things (e.g., Rom 8:19–23; 1 Cor 15:24–28; Col 1:19–20).

As an aside it should be noted that particularists, especially those in Dutch Calvinist circles, have sparred over these concerns for years. One side, represented prominently in decades past by Herman Hoeksema and today by John Engelsma, rejects these "intentions" of the atonement because they cannot be understood as *substitutionary* in nature. The benefits of providence, so-called common grace (a term this group rejects), and global restoration are simply spillover benefits of God's particular redemptive impulse—nothing more. The other side, represented in decades past by proponents like John Murray and today by Richard Mouw, sees these benefits as independent and *bona fide* benefits of atonement. It should be noted that this latter group has *not*, however, abandoned their particularist stance.

[44] William G. T. Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology*, 2nd ed., 2 vols. (New York: Scribners, 1889), 2:469. See also the similar wording in one of Shedd's contemporaries, Robert L. Dabney, who advocated "unlimited expiation" and a "limited redemption" (*Systematic and Polemic Theology*, 528).

[45] See Thomas, *Extent of the Atonement*.

[46] Peter Lombard, *The Sentences* 3.20.5 (Canada: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 2008), 86.

[47] For a window into the evolution of hypothetical universalism in seventeenth-century England, see esp. Moore, *English Hypothetical Universalism*.

[48] Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology*, 2:464–89; Dabney, *Systematic and Polemic Theology*, 513–45.

[49] E.g., Ware, "'Multiple Intentions' Understanding"; Rouwendal, "Calvin's Forgotten Classical Position"; Shultz, "Multi-Intentioned View of the Atonement"; Alan C. Clifford, *Calvinus: Authentic Calvinism: A Clarification* (Charenton: Reformed Publishing, 1996).

[50] Dabney, *Systematic and Polemic Theology*, 527.

[51] This is the first of four "key theological arguments" to which Ware appeals for support in his "'Multiple Intentions' Understanding," 3.

Chapter 1

Definite Atonement View

Carl R. Trueman

The doctrine of definite atonement is one of those doctrines that might appear at first glance both counterintuitive and something of an imposition upon Scripture that distorts its plain meaning. Is it not obvious that God loves everybody? Should that not be reflected in the extent of the atonement? It seems basic that, in the words of John 3:16, God loves the world and that therefore a universal aspect to that love should surely lie at the heart of Christ's most significant action as Savior: his death on the cross. To talk of limitation in such context would seem to undercut biblical teaching and to attenuate the love of God.[1]

Of course, other, far less controversial church teachings are susceptible to the criticism that, on the surface, Scripture does not at first glance seem to teach them, at least if one focuses on only certain biblical passages. For example, the coequality of the Father and Son would seem to contradict Jesus' statements in the Gospels about the Father being greater than he. Every Christian knows—or should know—that such texts need to be set within the context of the overall teaching of Scripture and also within the history of the church's reflection on the nature of the Father and Son. Only then can one truly understand why Trinitarian theology affirms that the persons in the Godhead are equal. Thus it is with definite atonement: it is important that we do not dismiss the doctrine out of hand because it seems to stand at odds with the "plain meaning" of verses such as John 3:16. In order to do this, we need to understand exactly what questions the church asked that led to the formulation as we have it.

The term *definite atonement* actually covers a variety of views of the atonement. Some of those who hold to definite atonement, for example, are comfortable with the medieval formula that declares Christ's death is sufficient for all but efficient only for the elect; others have little or no use for the phrase. Yet all fit into the range of theories of atonement that can be considered "limited" based on their understandings of its extent. I raise this point because I want to establish at the start that my purpose is to outline the doctrine in terms of the broader confessional consensus and not in any

narrow, intra-confessional manner. Thus, issues that might differentiate those within one confessional community, such as the nature and utility of the "sufficient for all, efficient only for the elect" distinction, will not be points of major discussion.[2]

I should also note at the outset that to pose the question in terms of the atonement's extent is not the most appropriate way to approach the topic. Couched in such a loaded form, it immediately generates obvious questions: How can the atonement be preached other than to those who know (by some mystical experience?) that they are already elect? Does it not thereby kill evangelism? In fact, it is better to think of the question of the atonement's extent as an inference drawn from its nature and efficacy. This, as I will argue, casts the kerygmatic problems in a somewhat different light: does the preacher proclaim a finished, efficacious work of Christ on the cross, or does he preach a work that merely lays the groundwork for salvation?

Historically, treatments of this issue have often carefully discussed the value of Christ's sacrifice relative to classic christological formulations, with debates about whether this means that Christ's death, as God-man, has infinite value.[3] The Anselmic theory of atonement helped establish much of the framework for this type of discussion. Such debates often connected to the medieval distinction between Christ's death as sufficient for all but efficient only for some. In general I will not be adopting this kind of framework for my argument. Most, if not all, Christian theologians would have no problem with the idea that Christ's death could have sufficed for the sins of the whole world if that was in fact God's intention. Arminians and hypothetical universalists agree with five-point Calvinists on that issue.[4] My approach will be rather to look at the biblical nature of Christ's mediation, specifically as it relates to the unity of intention that undergirds his priestly work of sacrifice and intercession. The question of the atonement's extent is thus not merely a logical deduction of the kind that simply places the atonement under the umbrella of the decree of election; it is intimately connected to a number of aspects of the atonement. One cannot deal with the question of extent isolated from the doctrinal matrix in which the atonement is to be understood. Thus, the question of the atonement's extent is a part—or perhaps better, a necessary inference—of the atonement's nature.

I need to stress one final preliminary point: the mere presence of universal language in a biblical text does not require that we read it in an unequivocally universal way. Context and intention always determine sense. One obvious

example is John 12:19: "So the Pharisees said to one another, 'You see that you are gaining nothing. Look, the world has gone after him.'"[5] It is obvious from this context that the word "world" does not mean every single human has gone after Jesus but simply that a significant number of them have done so. It is also clear that the speaker is not using "world" in the same way John uses it in John 1:9–10, where it clearly means something different. This really needs no elaborate explanation: we are all familiar with the ordinary use of language that uses such universal terms for a somewhat more limited number. Anyone who has ever stopped their teenage child from doing something or going somewhere will have heard the response, "But everyone else will be there," and know that we are talking here of only a subset of the child's social circle. We might also speak of someone who is well liked as being popular "with everyone" yet automatically understand that "everyone" cannot here mean the whole of the human race. Thus, we must understand verses of Scripture with an apparent universal reference in context—both the immediate context and that of the Bible's teaching as a whole—rather than assume they can simply function as unanswerable proof texts.[6]

The case for particular redemption, like that for the Trinity, does not depend on the understanding of any single text, nor does any single text explicitly teach it. Instead, it is the result of the cumulative force and implications of a series of strands of biblical teaching. We can summarize these as (1) the particularity of intention in Christ's saving mission and (2) the objective efficacy of Christ's work. These two should then be set against the background of general biblical teaching on intention, efficacy, and atonement in the Bible. Once this is done, it is possible to address those texts that seem on the surface to militate against definite atonement.

The Particularity of Intention in Christ's Saving Mission

For anti-Pelagian views of predestination, the focus of Christ's mission as it relates to the decree is inevitably going to be understood in a focused, particular way. However, this particularity does not rest solely on a theological construct; it finds numerous resonances within the text of Scripture.

Texts

Matthew 1:21; 20:28; 26:28. When the angel visits Joseph, he declares that Christ "will save his people from their sins" (Matt 1:21), a sentiment Zechariah echoes in Luke 1:68. Later, in Matt 20:28 and 26:28, Christ specifically speaks

of his work as intended for the salvation of many, not everyone. Thus, these texts support the notion that the origin of Christ's mission lies in a saving intention that has particular and limited reference.

John 6:37–40. John's Gospel is an even more fruitful place for such references. John 6:37–40 strikingly places the Son's mission under the will of the Father but in such a way that the Son is willing to do what the Father has prescribed and promised. Even though certain people have seen Jesus but have not believed, this does not indicate that his mission has failed or been frustrated in any way (v. 37). He is clear: all whom the Father has given to him will come to him. D. A. Carson persuasively argues that the second half of verse 37 strongly underscores this, to be understood as "I will certainly keep in."[7] The passage then proceeds to indicate the foundation on which this is built: Christ has come to do the will of the Father (v. 38). Christ then defines his Father's will as losing none whom the Father has given him but rather raising them up on the last day (v. 39). The particular and predestinarian thrust of this is clear: Christ has come to do his Father's will, meaning he will bring home to glory those whom the Father has given him.

John 10. John 10 is also important. Presenting himself as fulfilling the Old Testament ideal of the shepherd (cf. Ezekiel 34), Christ speaks about knowing his sheep and them knowing him (v. 14), which he parallels with the knowledge that the Father and the Son have of each other (v. 15). These are the same sheep for whom he has come to lay down his life (vv. 10–11, 15). The reference to other sheep (v. 16) is not to an indiscriminate group but rather to those outside of ethnic Israel. Verses 26–29 confirm this: those who do not hear are not part of the flock for whom Christ has come to lay down his life.

John 17. Most important, of course, given the reality of Christ's death as part of his high priesthood, is what is known as the high priestly prayer of John 17. Christ explicitly restricts his prayer by saying he is not praying for the world but for those whom the Father has given him (v. 9). The intention behind the saving action at this point is limited by the restricted nature of what the Father has given to the Son.

The climactic passage in John's Gospel, which connects both Christ's mission and its particular intention, is the high priestly prayer in John 17. Verses 6–10 are clear in their particularism: Jesus manifests God's name to those the Father has given him out of the world (v. 6); he does not pray for the world but for those the Father has given him (v. 9); and there is shared identity between those who belong to the Father and those who belong to the Son (v.

10). This is the same kind of teaching as in John 6 and 10, where the will of the Father is decisive for those who will come to the Son and for whom the Son prays. Jesus' mission is not an indiscriminate mission to the entire world but to those in the world whom the Father has given to the Son.[8]

The high priestly prayer is central not only to our understanding of Christ's mission but also to our thinking about God as Trinity; thus, these two aspects of Christology are connected in significant ways. The Johannine emphasis on the unity of Father and Son is a foundational part of the church's understanding of Father and Son as sharing in the same substance. This was the purpose of the creedal term *homoousian*. The term, which was so central to the development of Nicene orthodoxy in the years between Nicaea (AD 325) and Constantinople (AD 381), is doctrinally important for a number of reasons. Most obviously it protects the notion that Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are all equally God and that there can therefore be no strictly ontological subordination among the subsistences of the Godhead. This also has important implications for understanding the relationship of the three in their actions relative to creation and redemption, not least in the area of Christ's atoning work.

Significantly, the *homoousian* means the interaction between Father and Son cannot be construed in any terms that would imply even the most mildly adversarial relationship. In the work of salvation, the Father's will and the Son's will both have the same intention.[9] Popular presentations of Christ's priestly work, particularly as it relates to penal substitution, can seem to make the case that God the Father is angry with fallen humanity and that the Son has therefore come before him to plead his death as a basis for persuading a reluctant Father to look with mercy upon humanity. Such is clearly counter to the straightforward teaching of Scripture in connection with the Father-Son relationship, and the *homoousian* is the theological safeguard that reinforces this. If Father and Son are of the same substance, are both one God and therefore united in will, then any attempt to make the atonement and intercession of Christ a matter of cajoling the Father into kindness clearly tends toward tritheism. Thus, in John 17, when Christ speaks of praying for those whom the Father has given him, we are pointed back to the heart of the Trinitarian God in terms of his saving intentions: the Father and Son are one in their salvific intention not for all of humanity but for those whom God has appointed to life.

Acts 20:28. This particularity of intention manifests itself elsewhere in the New Testament. The death of Christ and the salvation of the church are directly connected in a number of passages. Paul declares that the church was obtained by the blood of Christ (Acts 20:28), which has strong commercial implications.[10] A transaction has taken place. The currency of this transaction is Christ's blood. What was purchased is a particular body of people.

Ephesians 5:25–27. Paul draws an important parallel between human marriage and the work of Christ: husbands are to love their wives "as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish" (Eph 5:25–27). This implies that Christ intended to do certain things for his church. If the parallel were set up differently, say, that husbands should love their wives as Christ loved the world in general, then the ethical teaching on marriage would itself be fundamentally transformed. The point is that husbands are to have particular, special, effective love for their wives that they do not have for others. Self-sacrifice for that particular person is to be one mark of this relationship. Thus it is also with Christ and the church.

Titus 2:14. Titus 2:14 is also a significant text, speaking as it does about Christ acting to "purify for himself a people for his own possession [Gk. *laon periousion*]." The phrase *laon periousion* occurs also in the Septuagint in Deut 7:6; 14:2; 26:18, set within the context of God's electing love for ancient Israel. The biblical connotations of the Titus passage, therefore, seem to press the matter of particularity and divine intention. Christ is purifying a special people, not simply making purification generally available to any who will come.

Objections

God's universal desire to save all (Ezekiel 18:23). One response to arguments based on the particular intention of Christ's mission is to point to texts such as Ezek 18:23: "Have I any pleasure in the death of the wicked, declares the Lord GOD, and not rather that he should turn from his way and live?" This text appears to teach God's universal desire for the salvation of all, and this text in particular has been central to many debates in church history on the issue of predestination, most famously perhaps in the clash between Erasmus and Luther in 1525. On the surface, at least, it seems to contradict

any notion of a prior decree of particular election (and thus challenges nonuniversalist anti-Pelagians of all stripes, not simply those who adhere to particular redemption).

Nevertheless, before addressing the kind of issues this text raises, it is useful to remember that such statements in Scripture connect to the general problem of evil that impacts all theologies. If the anti-Pelagian has to wrestle with how a sovereign God can be acquitted of the charge of direct responsibility for sin, the Arminian must wrestle with why God chose to realize a world where evil exists.[11]

Luther's way of handling this text was simply to posit an apparent conflict between God's revelation and his hiddenness, whereby God says and does many things according to the former that he does not actually do in terms of the latter.[12] Augustine also makes this kind of distinction by wrestling with the providential mystery of why some children make it safely to the baptismal font and others do not.[13] The problem with Luther's approach is that it seems to jeopardize the reliability of God's revelation. This point has not been lost on later generations: Karl Barth saw this undermining of revelation as the inevitable result of holding to a decree of predestination in the classical, Augustinian sense and thus worked toward reconstructing predestination focused on Christ.[14]

Many Arminians might well think the passage presents no problem for them: the discriminating factor in salvation is the free human will, after all, not God's decree. It is not so obvious, however, that that is the case. Classical Arminianism has typically understood the economy of salvation in terms of middle knowledge. This is the notion whereby God knows how humans will freely act in all possible worlds; on the basis of this knowledge, he chooses to actualize that world that consists of the actions and results he most desires. The concept appears to balance the needs of divine sovereignty and human freedom, though the problem of the closed nature of the future remains, given that God decides which possible world to realize. This means the problem posed by Ezekiel 18 for anti-Pelagians manifests itself in a slightly different form for Arminian theologians. The question, then, for the classical Arminian regarding Ezekiel 18 and similar passages is this: Why does God not realize that possible world where everyone is saved? Given God's knowledge of an infinite number of possible worlds, combined with an anthropology that allows each person the ability to turn and be saved, there must be such a possible

(logically conceivable) world. Why not realize it if Ezek 18:23 unconditionally states God's desire for universal salvation?

More important for understanding the narrower category of redemption, however, is the role this particular passage played in the development of Amyraldianism in the seventeenth century. Amyraut claimed that John Calvin's exegesis of this passage taught two wills within God: with one will, God wished to save all; with the other, more restrictive will, he determined to save the elect. This theological distinction provided the basis for the Amyraldian construction of the atonement.

Richard Muller has soundly debunked Amyraut's reading of Calvin here, and in the process he has helpfully contributed to understanding Calvin on this text.[15] For Amyraut the text is evidence of two wills in God: God's will that none should perish and God's will to give to the elect the condition (faith) by which he will grant them eternal life. This undergirds his understanding of redemption: a universal will to save, a universal redemption in Christ, and a limited application of that redemption through granting the conditions of salvation to the elect alone. Structurally this is close to Aquinas's view of God's antecedent and consequent wills.

Calvin's view, however, is more akin to that of Luther yet more careful in its manner of expression. While he sees the verse as providing an encouragement for the universal proclamation of the gospel, he does not see it as providing evidence of two wills in God or of any genuine internal desire of God that all humans, as now constituted as sinful, should ultimately be saved. If Calvin is arguably clearer about what the verse does not mean, it is certainly the case that he does not make any attempt to connect it to the kind of debates that later surrounded the issue of definite atonement.[16]

The Arminian and hypothetical universalist objections both ultimately require two real and contradictory wills within God. For the classical Arminian the problem manifests itself in terms of middle knowledge. If God does not will the death of a sinner, then why does he choose in eternity to realize a possible world where not all sinners are saved? His knowledge of all possible worlds where people respond freely to the gospel means he knows a world where all people do repent and believe. God could have willed to realize that world, but he chose not to do so. The Arminian response, that humans still freely choose in this world to reject Christ, will not help at this point: if God has already chosen to realize a world where they make this choice, one wonders how "free"

those humans are to make a different choice. God wills not the death of a sinner, but he wills to realize a world where sinners die.

For the hypothetical universalist, the problem is twofold. First, there is the theological problem of positing two contradictory wills in God: does this not pit God against himself in some way? If God is one substance, then the conflict cannot be set up as an interpersonal issue. The Father and the Son both will the same thing. Second, there is the logical problem: What does it mean to say that God wills not the death of a sinner when he does in fact do so, or at least does not exercise his power in order to affect that particular desire?

The standard distinction in Protestant anti-Pelagian theology between God's revealed (or preceptive) will and his hidden (or decretive) will is not without its problems, but it does at least avoid the kind of difficulties associated with the alternative solutions. It posits no internal contradiction in God, and it does not require him to desire something he has no intention of making into a reality. The issue becomes one of the extent and nature of God's revelation, not a problem of God's own ontology.[17]

Provision vs. application. Kevin Bauder offers a recent objection to the notion that particular, exclusive intention lies behind the death of Christ.[18] While not offering a biblical critique of particular redemption, Bauder logically critiques it, based on a distinction between *provision* and *application*. The distinction appears similar to that between sufficiency and efficiency, with the crucial difference that *provision* requires an element of divine intention absent from the classical understanding of sufficiency. On this account, he asserts that arguments for definite atonement (he uses the term 'limited atonement') ultimately fail because they cannot provide specific biblical evidence that there are specific people for whom Christ did not die: "The strongest case for Limited Atonement would be made if its proponents could offer specific biblical texts that named particular individuals or groups for whom Christ did *not* die to provide salvation."[19]

This statement is problematic. First, Bauder has seized upon the notion of *limitation* of the atonement as the key idea. It is possible there are five-point Calvinists for whom this is the way of approaching the subject. In this essay, however, I argue that it is better to see the matter in terms of particularity. I also argue that this particularity directly results from seeing the New Testament teaching on Christ's atonement as antitype to the Old Testament typical sacrifices. I also argue that Christ's sacrifice is objectively efficacious for salvation, as a number of New Testament texts clearly teach. I have also

demonstrated that particularity is an inference from the biblical teaching that Christ's mission has the specific intention of saving his specific, particular people (thus making a particular—or, if you really must, "limited"—provision of salvation).

One might also respond that knowing a particular intention does not typically require explicitly denying other intentions. If I leave my house to go to the shops, I do not need to tell my wife that I am not going to the zoo or the restaurant or the theater. That is not how language ordinarily works. One could imagine a scenario, for example, where there are two people, David and Michael, drowning in a pool. I dive in to save David; that my action had a limited provision/intention does not require that I make explicit in any account I give of my act that I did not dive in to save Michael. By saying that I dived in to save David, I am implicitly indicating that I did not dive in to save Michael.

Second, if one must answer Bauder's question—where is the text that tells us for whom Christ did not die?—one might point to the high priestly prayer of John 17. There Christ not only specifically excludes Judas from his prayer so Scripture might be fulfilled (John 17:12), but he generally states that he does not pray for those whom the Father has not given to him (John 17:9). Given the unity of Christ's mediatorial high priestly action, this text seems to meet Bauder's criterion.

Passages that seem to teach universal atonement. There are, of course, passages in the New Testament which would seem to press against the kind of prior particularity of intention for which I have argued. First Timothy provides a couple of examples.

1 Timothy 2:4–6. "Who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time."

At first glance this text appears to argue against any notion of particular redemption, given the apparent universal reference to God's saving desire. Yet evidence in the passage itself points away from this.

First, in 1 Tim 2:1–2, Paul qualifies his call for prayer for all people by his reference to "kings and all who are in high positions" within society in order that the church might enjoy a peaceful existence. This suggests that the universal call refers to all ranks of society rather than a universal collection of individuals. In the overall context of 1 Timothy, Paul is writing to highlight

the problem of false teaching within the church and to propose means for dealing with this. It seems possible, therefore, that the "all" in this section is directed toward the false teaching, which, while undefined, may have had elitist or inappropriately exclusivist aspects.[20]

Second, the subsequent verses connect to the theological basis for shattering the wall between Jew and Gentile. References to the existence of one God and one mediator (v. 5) and to Paul's appointment as apostle to the Gentiles (v. 7) frame the key universal verse. This strengthens the notion that "all" refers to categories of people. Indeed, Paul provides something of a parallel in Rom 3:28–30, where he is explicitly discussing the relationship between Jews and Gentiles relative to the gospel, and the power of the argument is again rooted in emphasizing that there is only one God.[21]

Given this, it is reasonable to read 1 Tim 2:1 as talking about the need to pray for everyone, regardless of rank or status within society. Thus, the statement above provides a theological justification for this (that God is no respecter of rank and that salvation is not restricted to one class or category of people); it is not a statement about the universal scope of the atonement in terms of particular individuals. Paul's target is the elitism of the false teachers in Ephesus.

In light of this, it then seems reasonable to understand the "all" in verse 4 as part of the same basic argument against some form of elitism or categorical exclusivism that was part of the false teaching then being propagated within the Ephesian church. I. Howard Marshall, however, objects to reducing this text to meaning, in effect, all kinds or ranks of people since it requires too sharp a distinction between categories of people and individuals.[22] Such an objection does not carry significant weight, however: categories of people are in reality inevitably made up of individuals; the person who believes in particular redemption, for example, and who prays for kings, presumably prays not only for kings in general but also for specific individual kings; and belief in particular redemption has not typically been understood by its advocates to require prayer only for the elect. The argument that taking "all" here as referring to categories does not require the exclusion of individuals or the limitation of prayer to the elect.

1 Timothy 4:10. Later in the same letter, the theme emerges once again. In 1 Tim 4:10 Paul speaks of "the living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially [Gk. *malista*] of those who believe." This is a difficult passage, and Reformed commentators differ on how to interpret it. For a start, it would

appear that the term "Savior" is here used rather of God the Father, or at least more generally, than specifically of the Son. As such, it does not speak directly to issues of atonement.[23]

Further, there is debate about how to translate the key word *malista*. It could be rendered as "namely," thus qualifying the apparent universalism of the earlier clause.[24] Vern Poythress has, however, marshaled sufficient evidence to render this reading implausible.[25] Thus, it would appear that "especially" is indeed the best translation.

Given this, the verse cannot argue for hard universalist understandings of salvation since Paul is discriminating between the living God as Savior for all (however understood) and those who actually believe. Thus, the problem becomes what exactly Paul means by "Savior" in this context.

Steven Baugh has argued that "Savior" here refers not to spiritual salvation but rather the various benefits to humanity that accrue in general as a result of Christ's atonement. These are what Reformed theologians would typically regard as aspects of common grace. Again, this would solve the problem that the text apparently presents to advocates of particular redemption.[26] The reading is possible, although elsewhere in the Pastorals, Paul uses "Savior" and its cognates exclusively for spiritual salvation. That Paul would use the word to mean something different here would therefore be possible but not necessary.

Thomas Schreiner sees the passage against the backdrop of earlier exegetical decisions regarding 1 Tim 2:6–10. He affirms the idea that Paul is using "Savior" here in a manner consistent with other uses in the Pastorals but parallels the verse with 2:3–4 so that "to come to the knowledge of the truth" mirrors "especially of those who believe." Thus, "all" in 4:10 refers once more to all kinds of people and to God's love that is universal in the sense that he does not restrict it to any particular social categories. Thus, God is certainly available as Savior to all manner of people because there is only one God and one mediator; but this is true as a reality only for those who actually believe. Such a reading does not require that one affirm a universal salvific intention behind the atonement, merely the belief (common to most adherents of particular redemption) that Christ's death is certainly sufficient as a propitiation for the sins of all.[27] Whether Baugh or Schreiner is correct here, this passage is far from a proof text for a universal will of God to save all individuals.

Titus 2:11–14. One final passage in the Pastorals is Titus 2:11–14, which speaks of salvation "for all people." Once again, the statement comes at the end

of a section in which various types of people have been mentioned (older men, older women, young women, husbands, children, younger men, slaves, masters). The overall thrust of the passage is the gospel's transforming power for all. From verse 11 onwards, Paul uses the first person plural, indicating that he is talking here about the saints; and in this context the apostle makes a clear statement, using a *hina* clause, to express Christ's intention that his atonement be effective. Paul is not speaking about a universal intention of the atonement.

2 Peter 2:1. "But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction."

Some consider 2 Pet 2:1 to be so straightforward in its implication of universal redemption that they make no attempt to engage alternative particularist positions.[28] For an Arminian, the text appears clear: Christ has died for these people, but they have fallen away from the faith. For a hypothetical universalist, the text is perhaps more problematic, though not so much for its apparent universal hypothetical redemption but because it seems to point toward a rejection of the doctrine of perseverance.

Does this verse necessarily overturn a doctrine of particular redemption? It does not seem so. One argument is that the term "bought" can be understood in a nonsoteriological sense, though there is then the issue of exactly what *agorasanta* does mean. Unfortunately for this reading, every other New Testament occurrence of this word and its cognates, when used in the context of Christ's death, has a soteriological meaning (e.g., 1 Cor 6:10). That makes a nonsoteriological sense here somewhat unlikely. The alternative is to understand the term in a phenomenological sense whereby the reference is really to those who *claimed* to have been bought with Christ's blood. Appearance of true faith is not an alien concept in the New Testament. It is present in the parable of the Sower (Mark 4:1–20) and also in the Pastoral Epistles (e.g., 2 Tim 2:16–19). Here in 2 Peter, their ultimate return to their former ways indicates that they were never really changed (2:22). In everyday linguistic use, for example, it is not uncommon for those who believe strongly in perseverance still to speak about friends who were Christians and who now repudiate the faith as having fallen away. The reference is to appearance, not to spiritual reality. The same phenomenon is described in Heb 10:29.

Wayne Grudem offers an alternative to this phenomenological understanding of the language by pointing to the connection between the reference to being bought by the Master here and similar language in the Old Testament where the Lord scolds Israelites for rebellion since the Lord had bought them, that is, he brought them out of Egypt in the exodus. The passage thus alludes to the false Jewish prophets of the Old Testament in the context of warning against false Jewish teachers who have infiltrated the church.[29]

Each of these readings seems at least possible and, given the thrust of biblical teaching on particularity and efficacy outlined thus far, it seems that it is clearly unnecessary to understand this verse as a straightforward, unanswerable proof of unlimited redemption.

Hebrews 2:9. Another verse that appears on the surface at least to be problematic for particular redemption is Heb 2:9, specifically the last clause: "so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone."

First, remember what we have said concerning the teaching in Hebrews regarding Christ's priesthood: it is effective; it is a unity in which sacrifice and intercession cannot be separated; and these things clearly point to particularity.

Second, note the overall flow of the passage within which this text appears. In verse 10, the writer describes the result of Christ's death as bringing "many sons to glory." He then calls those whom he has saved "brothers" in verse 11. In verse 13, he quotes Isa 8:18 (cf. John 17:6, 9), which is deeply marked by particularity. He then reinforces this by the reference to Abraham's offspring in verse 16. If the theme in the passage is a universalist one, we expect the reference here to be to the offspring of Adam, not the offspring of the one the Lord elected to be the father of all the faithful. The basic structure of the argument is particular, not universal, and it behooves us to read verse 9 within this overall context. In short, "everyone" in verse 9 most naturally refers to "every one of the children of Abraham," not indiscriminately and universally to every one of the offspring of Adam.

1 John 2:2. Another difficult passage is 1 John 2:2. Interestingly enough, even with all of the debate that rages around the question of whether Calvin believed in "limited atonement," Calvin clearly rejects the universalist interpretation of this verse. Indeed, he even goes so far as to deny that the sufficient/efficient distinction can be used here as a way of explaining the intent of the passage.[30] The meaning of the verse is not clear, even to those sympathetic to hypothetical universalist approaches. Thus, Colin Kruse makes

the point that it is easier to say what the verse does not mean than what it does and then tentatively suggests that the traditional sufficient-for-all and efficient-for-believers distinction might be as good as anything.[31]

While sympathizing with Kruse on the obscurity of the passage's positive meaning, I do not believe this solution is particularly satisfactory. First, it is impossible to reconcile with the indicative statements elsewhere about the work of Christ that clearly show his priestly action is not simply making a state of affairs possible but actual. Second, there is the question of how one construes "sufficiency" and whether such language is at all meaningful. Given God's particularist intention in salvation, the question is this: What does it mean to say that the sacrifice is sufficient for all? If it is only intended to have a particular scope, how is it sufficient for those outside of this scope? Is it in any sense a "sacrifice" for those for whom it was not intended to be effective, any more than the sacrifices of Lev 16 were sacrifices for those outside of Israel?

If the passage is indeed obscure, it seems better to interpret it in the light of clearer passages and teaching of Scripture, such as the representative particularity of the Levitical priesthood, the high priestly prayer of John 17, and the indicative statements about Christ's sacrifice, than to suggest positive meanings that seem to stand in tension with these. Thus, while the meaning of 1 John 2:2 is difficult to discern, it is clearly insufficient for building a hypothetical universalist view of the atonement in opposition to a more particularist one. Nevertheless, this does not mean there are not wider benefits entailed by Christ's death—the sort of thing Reformed theology has typically spoken of as elements of common grace. Thus, Robert Yarbrough, while upholding a clear particularist view of the atonement in this passage, is comfortable speaking of such and cites C. H. Spurgeon in support.[32]

Summary. Numerous biblical passages at least on the surface seem to present significant challenges to the notion of particular redemption. When placed within the overall context of the Bible's teaching, however, these passages can be understood in a manner consistent with definite atonement. Because the Bible overridingly emphasizes both the particularity of divine intention that lies behind Christ's role as mediator and the atonement's objective efficacy, we should understand such passages against this basic theological framework.

The Objective Efficacy of Christ's Work

Tit-for-tat proof texting is an unfortunate but well-established approach to the issue of the extent and efficacy of the atonement. A more pertinent and constructive approach, however, is to understand the atonement within the biblical context of the objective efficacy of Christ's work as mediator. Thus, in a deservedly well-known essay, "What Did the Cross Achieve? The Logic of Penal Substitution," J. I. Packer makes a powerful case for seeing the notion of penal substitution as entailing the atonement's particularity—indeed, for seeing them as two sides of the same soteriological coin.[33] His main argument is that the Bible's teaching on the atonement's efficacy demands the atonement's particularity.

Central to this point is Packer's view that those who wish to deny the efficacy of the atonement, or to attenuate it somewhat, must of necessity therefore redefine what substitution means. I cannot put this better than Packer did:

> Any who take this position [of denying the atonement's efficacy] must redefine substitution in imprecise terms, if indeed they do not drop the term altogether, for they are committing themselves to deny that Christ's vicarious sacrifice ensures anyone's salvation. . . . [I]f we are going to affirm penal substitution for all without exception we must either infer universal salvation or else, to evade this inference, deny the saving efficacy of the substitution for anyone; and if we are going to affirm penal substitution as an effective saving act of God we must either infer universal salvation or else, to evade this inference, restrict the scope of the substitution, making it a substitution for some, not all.[34]

The same kind of argument surely applies to our understanding of exactly what God punished on the cross. If the sins God punished there are indeed the sins of everyone indiscriminately, from Hitler to Buddha to Packer himself, what does it actually mean to say that Christ bore anyone's sins on the cross when, unless one is a universalist, God punishes those same sins in one's own person in hell if one dies outside of Christ?

Perhaps this is imposing rationalistic logic on the nature of the atonement, but there is actually a biblical point at stake here: if the New Testament presents the atonement as efficacious, it seems that the only options for substitutionary atonement are intentional universalism or intentional particularism. There is no third way. That is not rationalism; rather, it is

taking seriously the Bible's definitive statements about the objectively efficacious nature of Christ's sacrifice.

This understanding of the objective efficacy of the atonement is deeply rooted in the Bible, both in the Old Testament typological and prophetic background and in the fulfillment of this in the work of Christ in the New.[35]

Intention, Efficacy, and Atonement in the Bible

Leviticus 16 and Hebrews 9–10

The most extensive treatment of Christ's atonement as the central act of his role as priest is found in Heb 9–10. Here the writer is describing the work of Christ as finished and thus as opening the way into God's presence for his people. The confidence he expresses in Heb 10:19 is incomprehensible if the work is not complete. It is only because "our hearts [are] sprinkled clean" that we can draw near "with a true heart in full assurance of faith" (v. 22). Again, there is no hypothetical here whereby our hearts might be sprinkled clean if we fulfill some condition and thus gain access to the hypothetically universal scope of Christ's work. The writer is simply describing in indicative terms a state of affairs that now applies because Christ has entered the heavenly sanctuary and has performed the act of purification.

The background to this passage is Leviticus 16, which deals with the Day of Atonement. Central to the drama of this passage are the slaughter of the goat that is the sin offering, the subsequent sprinkling of its blood over and around the mercy seat, and the various rituals surrounding the sending of the scapegoat into the wilderness.

The central term here is the Hebrew word *kipper*, which the ESV translates as "make atonement." The word carries four possible meanings: forgiveness, cleansing, ransom, and the averting of God's wrath.[36] Numbers 25:10–13 establishes the last meaning, most important in the context of debates about penal substitution: Phinehas both turns God's wrath away from the Israelites and makes atonement for them.

What is significant in the discussion over the issue of the limitation, or particularity, of the atonement is the nature of that for which the sacrifices atone:

> Then he shall kill the goat of the sin offering that is for the people and bring its blood inside the veil and do with its blood as he did with the blood of the bull, sprinkling it over the mercy seat and in front of the

> mercy seat. Thus he shall make atonement for the Holy Place, because of the uncleannesses of the people of Israel and because of their transgressions, all their sins. And so he shall do for the tent of meeting, which dwells with them in the midst of their uncleannesses. No one may be in the tent of meeting from the time he enters to make atonement in the Holy Place until he comes out and has made atonement for himself and for his house and for all the assembly of Israel. (Lev 16:15–17)

What is remarkable about this passage is the particularity of the action. The goat is sacrificed specifically and only for the sins of the people of Israel. This is not a sacrifice performed by the priesthood in the context of the worship of Israel for the sins of the wider world. Whether one reads *kipper* as forgiveness, cleansing, ransom, the averting of God's wrath, or as carrying connotations of all four, the scope of the action is restricted to God's people, the people of Israel. It is not aimed at others, and this particularity is closely linked to its efficacy.

Exactly the same applies to the scapegoat, though this time in even more explicit terms:

> And Aaron shall lay both his hands on the head of the live goat, and confess over it all the iniquities of the people of Israel, and all their transgressions, all their sins. And he shall put them on the head of the goat and send it away into the wilderness by the hand of a man who is in readiness. The goat shall bear all their iniquities on itself to a remote area, and he shall let the goat go free in the wilderness. (Lev 16:21–22)

Aaron actually confesses the sins of the people over the goat and "places" them on its head before it is sent off into the wilderness—symbolically excluded from the camp and from the presence of God. The particularity of the action could not be more explicit. These are not the sins of the Egyptians or the Midianites or the rest of the world; the sins placed onto the head of the goat then driven out into the wilderness are only the sins of the people of Israel. Again the intimate connection between particularity and efficacy is obvious.[37]

The other aspect of the atoning work of the Old Testament priests is the unity that exists between the act of sacrifice and the sprinkling of the blood that flows from the sacrifice. The priest slays the goat as an offering for the people of Israel, and then he enters behind the veil and sprinkles the blood for precisely the same people. It is not that the animal is sacrificed for everyone indiscriminately and then offered for the Israelites in particular. The slaughter

and the sprinkling (the sacrifice and the cleansing attached to it) are two sides of the same coin, covering the sins of the same group of people. The same applies to the scapegoat: the same sins placed on his head are carried from the presence of God and into the wilderness. There is no narrowing scope between the two actions. Indeed, one might say that with both goats there is in each case only one overall act of atonement that involves several actions.

Leviticus 16 provides the background to part of the extended discussion of Christ's priesthood in the book of Hebrews. Hebrews 9 makes clear that the shedding and sprinkling of blood are integral to Old Testament ritual: "Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins" (Heb 9:22). The writer then goes on to draw an analogy between Christ and the activities of the high priest as he enters the holy places: Christ has purified the heavenly things (of which the earthly things were but copies) with better sacrifices than those available to the priests (Heb 9:23).

This is a strange verse, for it is not immediately obvious why the holy places in heaven would need to be purified. Peter O'Brien outlines three ways people have understood it. First, it inaugurates the heavenly sanctuary, so it refers more to consecration than purification in the strict sense of the word. Second, heaven itself needed purification because of its association with a sinful people. As sin affects all of creation, thus its dirtiness and impurity extends even to the heavenly realms, which also need to be washed and purified as part of Christ's atoning work. Third, it refers to purifying God's people. O'Brien cites F. F. Bruce to the effect that God's people are also his dwelling place and thus need to be not only cleansed of sin in order to approach God but also purified so that they might be a fit dwelling place for him.[38]

O'Brien prefers the third option, and this certainly seems consistent with Lev 16:16–19, where Moses indicates that they cleanse the sanctuary because the people themselves are unclean and have sinned.[39] Once again, note the particularism and the efficacy of what is going on: the purification appears to be a complete and efficacious act. As a result of it, the heavenly places *are* purified and that with specific reference not to humanity in general but to the people of God—the people, we might say, for whom Christ is priest and thus for whom he died.

The following verses in Hebrews are significant too, particularly with regard to the kind of position R. T. Kendall articulates.[40] Kendall posits a narrowing of focus between a universally oriented death and the particularism of Christ's intercession: Christ died for all, but he intercedes only for the elect. We shall

see below that this does not achieve the kerygmatic/pastoral advantages for which Kendall hopes; here it is useful to note that it is not a sound exegetical position either.

In Heb 9:24 and following, the writer continues to build his Christological reflections against the background of Leviticus 16 and the actions of the high priest: the earthly high priest entered an earthly sanctuary; Christ, however, comes into the presence of God (Heb 9:24). As the earthly high priest entered the earthly sanctuary on behalf of the people, so Christ now appears in the presence of God on our behalf. Quoting in part Harold W. Attridge, O'Brien comments:

> Of particular significance is the parallelism presented here between Christ's sacrifice of himself and the earthly high priest's entry into the Most Holy Place. His sacrificial death is "not an act distinct from his entry into God's presence." The typological fulfillment of the high priest's annual sprinkling of blood in the Holy of Holies was Christ's death on the cross.[41]

The writer actually gives little detail in Hebrews 9 concerning what exactly is involved in this heavenly sprinkling, but elsewhere in Hebrews it seems clear that the content of this sprinkling is the intercession of Christ (Heb 2:18; 4:15; 7:25). This should also be connected to Christ's words in John 17:9, a verse that binds together the particularity of the Father's saving intention and the Son's intercession. If the Father's intention and the Son's intercession are focused on the same group of people, and if the blood of Christ constitutes part of that intercession, then the death of Christ on the cross and his intercession are bound together like two sides of the same coin. This is perhaps one of the most critical elements of the case for particular redemption.

If one rejects the particularity of the atonement, it would seem that one must approach the teaching of Hebrews on Christ's death and intercession in one of a number of ways.

First, one could adopt Kendall's approach and separate the death from the intercession of Christ. This, however, requires that one must divide the death of Christ from the entrance into the heavenly places and the sprinkling of the heavenly realities. That would seem to contradict the consensus on Hebrews 9 and, indeed, require a rather forced reading of the text itself.

Second, one could divide the universality of Christ's priesthood from the limited effect it has. This would seem to require one of two options:

1. One could argue that the Father's will to save only some trumps the Son's will to save all. This has multiple fatal flaws. It creates an adversarial relationship between Father and Son that is incompatible with biblical Trinitarianism, particularly as the *homoousian* phrase summarizes this (as I note above). Father and Son cannot have adversarial wills, for that would require them to be different gods; nor can the Father simply overrule the Son against his will, for that would require a situation where the Son is clearly subordinate to the Father—a species of Arianism. It also undermines the confidence believers can have in Christ's intercession on their behalf. The key to Christian assurance is surely that the Son reveals the Father and that the Father loves the Son and delights to grant what the Son asks. An adversarial relationship between the two truly cuts the believer off from knowing who God the Father is. Of what use then would be the teaching elsewhere in Hebrews concerning the Son's sympathetic intercession on our behalf?

2. One could opt for the element of human decision being the decisive element in the efficacy of the atonement. This, of course, raises a whole host of theological issues that go well beyond any narrow consideration of the atonement and its particularity and that we cannot address here with any adequacy. Nevertheless, it is worth raising the question: What exactly does Christ intend to achieve by his intercession if human will is the decisive element in the effect of Christ's priestly action? Why does Christ intercede with the Father? What does that mean theologically? How is it of any pastoral use or significance? I ask these not as rhetorical questions but because the answers do not seem to be at all obvious.

Isaiah 53 and 1 Peter 2:22–25

Another significant Old Testament passage for understanding the particular intention behind and the objective efficacy of the atonement is Isaiah 53, which speaks of the suffering of the Lord's Servant. The passage is clearly the basis for 1 Pet 2:22–25 and thus provides important insights into the death of Christ.

Numerous aspects of the passage are of interest. First, the Servant suffers willingly. Verse 4 starts with the active voice: "He has borne our griefs / and carried our sorrows" and then switches to the passive. The point seems to be that while the Servant suffers passively at the hands of his oppressors, the whole action is yet grounded in an act of his will whereby he himself willingly takes the role. This finds its obvious New Testament echo in 1 Pet 2:24: "He

himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed." Active intention thus lies at the heart of the Servant's sufferings and thus connects to what I said above relative to the intention of Christ's death.

Second, the Servant suffers for others:

> But he was pierced for our transgression;
> he was crushed for our iniquities;
> upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace,
> and with his wounds we are healed. (Isa 53:5)

Some have argued that this means he suffers as a result of the sin of other people and not as a substitute for them.[42] Such a reading fails for two reasons. First, it seems to require a significant weakening of the whole notion of active willingness, which I note above. Second, it does not allow us to make sense of the second half of the verse. It is not simply the case that human sin has created a situation where another now feels the consequences of that sin. In Isa 53:5 the suffering actually brings peace and healing. This is not a case of someone either identifying with others in their suffering or receiving such suffering because others transgressed; there is a clear substitutionary aspect to what is happening. First Peter 2:22–25 confirms this by describing Christ as bearing our sins in his body that we might live.

We should also note the identity of those for whom the Servant suffers. The "we" in Isaiah 53 are those who once saw no beauty in the Servant and nothing to attract them (v. 2) and who did not esteem him (v. 4). Indeed, they were also those who had all gone astray (v. 6). Now, however, these same people are speaking of his work and have profound insights into the nature of what he accomplished (vv. 4–9).[43]

Seen in this way, the passage assumes the personal conversion of the speaker. What is interesting is that this is not rooted in the passage in any response of the speaker to the events but rather seems to be the direct result of the work of the Servant. This is the third point of the passage: the suffering of the Servant in itself brings effective benefits to those for whom the Servant suffered. Surely verses 4–6 are among the most obviously particularistic in the Bible: the wounding for *our* transgressions and the crushing for *our* iniquities are the content of the chastisement that brought *us* peace and healing. The thrust is intentionally particular and objectively effective.

This effectual nature of the Servant's work points forward to the description offered in Isaiah 54–56 of the promised deliverance of the people of God. Those suffering in exile are to be brought home, back into the presence of God, precisely through the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53. Again, 1 Pet 2:25 picks up this point: the people of God are straying like sheep but have now returned to their great soul shepherd.

Fourth, placing the sin upon the Servant is the action of the Lord (Isa 53:6). This connects both Father and Son as united agents in the act of atonement. This is important both for understanding the nature of the sacrifice and its effects: Christ's "soul" (v. 10) is a recompense offering that is the basis (v. 11) for making many to be accounted righteous because he bore their iniquities. Verse 12 reinforces this: he despoils the many and gains the prize because he has poured out his soul, identified with the transgressors, borne their sin, and made intercession. In short, his death is what has both gained the effects of redemption and applied them to those whom the Lord has given him.

Thus, in summary, one can make several observations based on Isaiah 53. First, the Servant is substituting for the sin of many. There is no suggestion that it is the sin of all. Isaiah is specific: he bore *our* griefs, carried *our* sorrows, was wounded for *our* transgressions, was crushed for *our* iniquities; his chastisement brought *us* peace, with his stripes *we* are healed. Though verse 6 might seem at first glance to give a universal reference ("us all"), the "all" is qualified by being one of "us"; and later in the passage, when Isaiah moves from using the first person, he refers to the Servant bearing the sins "of many," not "of all" (v. 12). There is a clear particularity to the work of the Servant that is of a piece with any notion of substitution and indeed of atonement as penal. This also ties in with the fact that both the Servant and the Lord are intentional and willing participants in the exercise. A notion of atonement that does not see it as being particular is also problematic from a Trinitarian perspective, given that it would then seem to set up a conflict between the will of the Father and the will of the Servant.

Second, the atonement of the Servant is effective in that it actually achieves real results for other people, those for whom he is acting, those whose sins he is bearing. The Servant is not acting to make salvation a mere possibility, to provide the foundation for the human response to God; the suffering of the Servant actually effects results. The subsequent chapters in Isaiah (where the return from exile flows directly as a result of the Servant's work) and Peter in the New Testament (who clearly sees the return to the great shepherd by the

wandering sheep to be the result of the work of Christ) further confirm this. Peter's words in 1 Pet 2:24–25 are indicative: this is a vicarious action, performed by Christ, which is complete in and of itself.[44]

Romans 5: Adam and Christ

Romans 5 has always been crucial in discussions of the work of Christ. We can summarize the division between Augustine and the Pelagians in how they understand the chapter. If Adam is the first priest and king who fails, then Christ is the last priest and king who succeeds. Paul describes the relationship between these two in verses 12–21. The basic elements are clear: through the trespass of Adam, sin entered the world and, along with it, death; through the obedience of Christ, this was reversed. He brought grace, righteousness, and life.

The key verses for this essay are 18–19:

> Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous. (Rom 5:18–19)

The Adam-Christ parallel clearly imputes an effectiveness to the work of Christ. At first glance they seem to argue for a universal salvation: as Adam's sin led to death for all, so Christ's obedience leads to life for all. The protasis of v. 18 is clearly universal in scope, and thus it seems natural to take the apodosis as coextensive.

Several points militate against this. First, such an interpretation would place Paul's teaching here in conflict with what he says elsewhere. If not all are ultimately saved in Christ in the way that all did in fact fall in Adam, then the passage needs to be carefully parsed. Thus, in 2 Thess 1:8–9, Paul speaks of the punishment of eternal destruction for those who do not know God or obey the gospel. If the parallel between Adam and Christ were to hold in all details, there would clearly be a universal salvation that would render the 2 Thessalonians passage incoherent.

Second, the underlying purpose of the passage is not so much to emphasize the coextensive nature of the works of Adam and Christ respectively but rather to stress the key structural parallels between the two. This is why in verses 15 and 19, Paul uses the term "many" instead of "all." The switch back and forth between "all" and "many" would surely be most odd if his primary concern is

to make a point about the precise parallel between Adam and Christ in terms of their universal representation of humanity.

In fact, as Douglas Moo comments, Paul is here concerned to make this basic point: "Christ affects those who are his just as certainly as Adam does those who are his."[45] In other words, the key New Testament passage that elaborates on Christ as priest and king in terms of his typological relationship to Adam does not teach that his representative role is as coextensive as that of the first man, for example, the gift being specifically described as not like the trespass (v. 15). Rather, the limitation of representation that we have noted above in the roles of the kings and priests in ancient Israel is continued in Christ. He does not act for everyone as the last Adam; he acts only for those who will ultimately be found to be in him.[46]

This view is consistent with understanding Christ as priest as we trace the line of priestly action from the Old Testament to its fulfillment in the New. With Christ, of course, we do not see the direct extension of the Levitical priesthood; he is of the line of Judah, not Levi. Instead, we see the fulfillment of the priestly functions through him being appointed a priest according to the order of Melchizedek (Ps 110:4; Hebrews 7). Thus, his priesthood will be eternal and effective in a way the Levitical priesthood never was. Yet the particularism of the Levitical priesthood finds its parallel in the particularity of Christ as the last Adam. As we noted above, the Old Testament priests did not sacrifice and make general intercession for all people everywhere; they had a specific role relative to ancient Israel, the covenant people of God. They sacrificed and offered those same sacrifices to God on behalf of his people alone. Thus it is with Christ: he is not priest for all but only for those whom the Father has given to him, as indicated not only by Romans 5 but also by the restrictive nature of his high priestly prayer (John 17:9).

Hebrews 2:14–18, one of the most important passages for understanding Christ's work, also confirms the particularity of his mediation. It emphasizes the need for Christ to be human in order that he might partake of death and thus destroy both it and the Devil, who has power over death. For this reason he became human in order to be a high priest and to fulfill the priestly function of making propitiation on behalf of the people.

This action is specifically defined as not being for angels but for the children of Abraham. Had the writer intended a universal reference, he would presumably have cited Adam in Heb 2:16; but by citing Abraham he focuses particularly on the covenant people as those for whom Christ acts as high

priest and thus restricts his actions as mediator to that community. Further, as Peter O'Brien remarks, the whole passage is full of resonance with the story of the exodus and also similar language in the book of Isaiah. The story being told here is rooted in the account of God's deliverance of his people from Egypt.[47]

It would seem that neither Arminian nor hypothetical universalist constructions of Christ's work as mediator can do justice to the indicative nature of these passages. If the mediation merely makes these things possible, then how can Paul or the writer to the Hebrews talk in such terms? Their language would have to be conditional because the objective state of affairs Christ's work achieved would fall far short of the indicative statements these writers make. For Arminian and anti-Pelagian hypothetical universalists, an action is required on the part of the individual before the state of affairs described in the passages can be seen as holding. That in itself would shatter the logic of the passages, where the indicative is the basis of subsequent imperative statements and not vice versa. In Romans 5–6, it is because Christ has decisively and completely fulfilled the role of the last Adam that we should flee sin; we should not flee sin in order to make Christ's work complete. In Hebrews 2–3, Christ has broken the power of death, and therefore we are to consider him and to hold fast our confidence; we are not to hold fast our confidence in order to make his triumph over death effective.

Precisely because representation is both particular and effective, the New Testament can speak in such terms about Christ. Just as the Old Testament kings acted on behalf of the whole nation (and when they fell, the nation was immediately and effectively plunged into crisis), so Christ acts on behalf of his people; his success is credited unconditionally to their account. The same is true of the priesthood: in the Old Testament the priests had a narrow representative responsibility, standing before God on behalf of the people of Israel; their work on Israel's behalf was effective but only for the people of Israel. Thus, in the New Testament, Christ, the great King and Priest, stands as heir of this Old Testament particularity and can therefore act effectively for his people. And that effectiveness, inextricably connected to its representative particularity, requires that we understand that the New Testament holds to a doctrine of particular redemption—or definite atonement.

Some Concluding Thoughts on Definite Atonement and Preaching

Does Definite Atonement Harm Preaching?

When we move from the realm of theology to practical church life, one of the common objections to definite atonement is that it negatively impacts preaching in a number of ways, most notably evangelism and the closely connected issue of assurance.

Attenuating the love of God? One of the reasons definite atonement seems at first glance to be particularly obnoxious is how it seems to attenuate the love of God. If Christ died for only a limited number of humanity, then to what extent can one talk meaningfully about God's love for humanity in general?

Restricting evangelism? On the issue of evangelism, the argument against particular atonement typically points, exegetically, to the difficulty of preaching passages that seem to have a universal scope and, theologically, to the restricted nature of God's love that definite atonement seems to embody. To put it in the manner of James B. Torrance in his classroom lectures at the University of Aberdeen, my *alma mater*, limited atonement (to use his preferred term for definite atonement) makes God's justice essential and his love arbitrary. One cannot preach that such a God is indeed love.[48]

Undermining assurance? Then, on the issue of assurance, theologians such as R. T. Kendall and Michael Eaton have argued that definite atonement undercuts the Reformation—and biblical emphasis upon assurance—by preventing the pastor from pointing those struggling with assurance to the cross. If somebody doubts their salvation, so the argument goes, the pastor who believes in definite atonement cannot direct the one struggling to the cross and say, "Look, Jesus died for you." For Kendall this theology lies in the background of Puritan notions of temporary faith and, by encouraging introspection, functionally pushed Reformed theology in practical terms toward the Arminianism it ostensibly repudiated.[49] Torrance makes a similar point, seeing "limited atonement" as turning the sacramental means of grace into mere badges of election—an election discerned not by looking to Christ but by looking to see if there was any fruit of the Spirit in one's life.[50]

Response

The Bible presents an effective atonement. First, there is the truism, so ably articulated by Luther in his response to Erasmus on the will, that the task of the preacher is to preach God's Word, not to second-guess what the practical problems such causes may be. Thus, the pragmatic objections to definite atonement based on how it affects preaching are on this level insubstantial.

This is one area where it is vital that we do not allow the rhetoric of "limited atonement" to shape our preaching: the Bible does not present the atonement as limited; it presents it as effective, from which limitation is an inference. So if effective atonement is what the Bible teaches, then we should preach it and leave the rest to God.

All who reject universal salvation attenuate the love of God in some sense. Second, on the issue of the attenuation of God's love, we might note that neither hypothetical universalist nor Arminian approaches really fare any better on this question. In each case the love of God is attenuated; it is simply a matter of exactly where the problem of the attenuation of God's love manifests itself.[51] Thus, the Amyraldian can argue that God exhibits universal love by appointing Christ as mediator for all but must then address the issue of the narrowing of this mediation in the logically subsequent decree of election. This puts the question of God's love at a different stage in the soteriological economy but puts it in no less an acute form. That God desires all to be saved at one logical point but at some moment logically subsequent to that loves only the elect makes the whole notion of universalism no less problematic from a preaching perspective than a consistently particularist view of Christ's mediation. The hypothetical universalist faces the same kind of problem by holding that there are in effect, and not simply in appearance, two wills in God: one whereby he wills the salvation of all and one whereby he wills the salvation of only some.

The problems for the Arminian are somewhat different in that there is no need to attenuate the love of God relative to its objects, humans considered as an undifferentiated group (with the possible exception of Judas). Nevertheless, the notion that God desires all to be saved, but in a way that means that no particular individual is certainly going to be saved, would seem another form of limiting the love of God. It also fails to do justice to the indicative nature of biblical statements about the atonement and Christ's priesthood. In short, none of the alternatives are free of serious complications with reference to discussions of the love of God and its limitations.[52]

Every system has problems. Third, it is not immediately obvious that the hypothetical universalist objections to definite atonement really serve to create a significantly better foundation for preaching or pastoral work. R. T. Kendall's position clearly distinguishes between the sacrifice of Christ on the cross and the intercession of Christ at the right of the Father. If, for the sake of argument, we allow that this is a sound position to hold, then we also need to

acknowledge that the kind of questions being asked by the unbeliever or by the person struggling with lack of assurance will themselves emerge from a different pastoral-theological matrix and thus be distinctly different in significant ways. For the one struggling with assurance in the context of Kendall's theology, the question will surely not be, Did Christ die for me? for he actually died for everyone indiscriminately, from the apostle Paul to the devout Muslim to Adolf Hitler and Joseph Stalin. The question becomes rather, Is Christ now interceding for me? When that question is posed, the pastor who follows Kendall is surely faced with exactly the same problem as that facing his five-point Calvinist colleagues. His theology has simply shifted the objective Christological locus of assurance from Calvary to the heavenly throne room.

The hypothetical universalist position fares little better. Some say we must believe in predestination, reject the idea of universal salvation, and also hold that Christ died for all indiscriminately; and if we have difficulty connecting these matters in a harmonious way, we should not worry but simply carry on preaching regardless. Often this view is linked to an appropriate concern to let the biblical text speak and not be altered to fit the Procrustean bed of an assumed dogmatic system.

This is a real concern, and the history of the church has on occasion witnessed preachers for whom system was more important than exegesis. My suspicion, however, is that reports of such have in general been greatly exaggerated. If John Owen is the poster boy for particular redemption, few if any of his critics can boast that they have spent the time on biblical exegesis that is evident in his massive seven-volume commentary on Hebrews. His exegesis may not be correct, but one cannot accuse him of not doing it or simply engaging in crude proof texting. We might also note that there are some aspects of systematic theological formulation where modesty in the face of unfathomable mystery is indeed not simply the appropriate but also the only response. This is why the great creedal formula of Chalcedon is couched in negative terms, telling us where we cannot go in our discussion of Christ. It guards the mystery.

Having said that, we must realize as preachers that our listeners—particularly our non-Christian listeners—will ask systematic questions and will not be put off with too easy a retreat to mystery or references to paradox or antinomies. You might well preach that Christ died for all, but if the astute and inquiring non-Christian then asks what your view of predestination is, you are going to find that all the emphasis on the universality of love shown forth

in the atonement is not enough to prevent embarrassment on this point. The same listener might also ask what it means to say that Christ died for all, if not all are saved. Again, that is a question which, like it or not, will demand a systematic answer of some kind, lest one appear to be simply playing games with words.

The problematic issue for anti-Pelagian approaches to the atonement, whether hypothetical universalist, Amyraldian, or limited, is surely the commitment to Augustinian constructions of predestination. Once one allows that salvation is not universal and that the ultimate discriminating factor in the matter of who is saved and who is not is the will of God, not merely the response of humans, then the problem of particularity will inevitably exist. The issue is not whether there is a problem; it is simply in which part of the system the problem manifests itself. As Herman Bavinck comments that the ultimate significance of double predestination is not really altered by whether one places it at the start or at the end of one's system, so the same is true for any particularist construction of anti-Pelagian predestinarianism.[53] The question of why one should preach if God has chosen his people in eternity is a pressing one for all Protestant Augustinians and not simply those who see the cross as itself part of the limited, particular redemption of humanity.

Thus, the non-Christian will surely want to know exactly what it means to say that Christ has died for him or her when the eternal will of God has been to elect some and not others. In this context at least, I am prepared to concede that the Arminian theologian has at first glance a more cogent answer than the four-point Calvinist.[54] The preacher needs an answer in such a context, and "mystery" is unlikely to carry significant force. We may fear systematic categories, but sometimes we do not have the privilege of determining which questions can and cannot be asked.

Christ's effective atonement is both the content of and basis for preaching. Fourth, as I note above, the language of substitution seems to be rather equivocal, even meaningless, when the substitution is both universal and not, in itself, effective. What does it mean to say to someone, "Christ died for you," if that fact, in and of itself, makes no difference? "I paid your mortgage, but the bank is still going to foreclose on your loan and repossess your house" seems a rather nonsensical situation, but it has clear parallels with this matter. You can be certain a non-Christian will make some similar connections and demand an answer. That answer is surely John 3:16, not "Christ did and did not die for you, depending on what you mean." Whether one is an Arminian or

a five-pointer, there is an assumption that the existential reality of God's love in salvation for the individual assumes that the individual will fulfill a condition (whether that condition is fulfilled autonomously by the individual or is part of God's sovereign, particular salvation). Thus, I have no problem in telling somebody, "Christ died for you sins," if I have made it clear how that statement connects to the overall biblical teaching on salvation.[55]

In fact, particular redemption, like predestination, actually strengthens the preacher's hand. This is not so much because of its immediate impact on the content of each and every message but because of the confidence it gives the preacher that God has acted in his Son to save. When I preach, I declare that Christ is the historical manifestation and instrument of God's plan to save. I tell people that in the incarnation the Word of God performs his part of the Trinitarian drama of salvation in such a way that his atonement is effective, in the way that his incarnation, his resurrection, and his current intercession are also effective: different parts of his one office of mediator. When I preach Christ and him crucified, I preach the effective action of God to reach out and to save what was lost, not merely God's establishing the right conditions whereby somebody can be saved if they so wish.

This is what gives me confidence: God's actions in Christ are effective and not simply some kind of foundation that God puts into place for individuals to act toward as they choose. I know that my preaching will have an effect because Christ's death is in itself effective and that the declaration thereof will be the same. Christ's atonement is both the *content of* and the *basis for* my preaching, and as I preach its effectiveness, I also rejoice in knowing that it guarantees my effectiveness. The work of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in the one economy of salvation is a definite, particular, sound, guaranteed arrangement. That is why the New Testament speaks in indicative terms of the nature of the atonement; and in my work as a preacher of the gospel, I too follow the Bible's paradigm and declare Christ's work as fulfilled on the cross, continuing now at the right hand of the Father, and definite in terms of its results.

In this context it is perhaps returning once again to a point I made at the start: the term "limited atonement" is unfortunate because it focuses the mind on the limitation. In fact, the concern that formulations of limited atonement are intended to protect is not the limitation of the atonement but its indicative nature, its glorious, powerful efficacy in dealing once and for all with the sins of God's people and guaranteeing their salvation. That is a message we can

preach, and it is also why we should prefer the language of definite atonement to that which speaks of limitation. Indeed, I might go as far as to say that the message of a definite atonement is the only message worth preaching.

Conclusion

Even though there is more to say, I trust that I have managed to give a plausible account of why many Christians are convinced of definite atonement. The point is not, or should not be, the limitation; that is rather an inference from the Old Testament types and their New Testament fulfillment in Christ indicating that the atonement is efficacious. It is not laying the foundations for a merely potential salvation; it actually accomplishes that salvation.

My responses to the other authors in this volume will no doubt give me an opportunity to express further appreciation for them, but the concerns of both Arminian and four-point Calvinists are legitimate: they desire to do justice to the love of God and also provide a solid foundation for preaching and evangelism. There is no distance between us in terms of those desires. For myself, however, it appears that only particular (limited) atonement is able to safeguard such concerns while also doing justice to the Bible's indicative statements concerning the work of Christ as Redeemer.

Response by Thomas H. McCall with Grant R. Osborne

Definite Atonement and Theological Method: Some Observations

Carl R. Trueman gives us a well-informed and well-reasoned articulation and defense of the doctrine of "definite" (or "limited") atonement. He both addresses objections to his view that are drawn from biblical and systematic theology and makes a strong positive case for his account. I shall look more closely both at the strategies employed in playing defense against arguments for universal atonement and at Trueman's own arguments in favor of definite atonement, but first a few observations about theological method may be in order.

First, a recurring locution is both odd and potentially misleading. Trueman repeatedly refers to his position as "the anti-Pelagian" view. This is odd for several reasons. It is not (at least so far as I know) a label or phrase that enjoys great currency in the tradition, and for that reason it is not immediately descriptive of a distinct theological party or perspective. It is also a bit

confusing, since the debate over the extent of the atonement was hardly *the* defining feature of the Pelagian (or even "Semi-Pelagian") controversy. Moreover, it is entirely negative; it does not say much about what the position holds positively but rather serves merely to distinguish it from a heretical rival. Or does it?

Perhaps it serves a sharper rhetorical purpose—maybe it works to associate "general atonement" with pro-Pelagian theology. Trueman does, after all, repeatedly juxtapose "the anti-Pelagian" view against "the Arminian" perspective. This is where such labels can be not only confusing but also at least potentially misleading. Consider a parallel case where, say, an open theist (or classical Arminian) consistently refers to her own view as "the antifatalist" view and furthermore juxtaposes it against "the Calvinist view." Surely Reformed theologians would protest that this is misleading and even unfair. Surely they would be quick to point out that one does not have to be an open theist (or classical Arminian) to be a nonfatalist and even an antifatalist. They would—with justification—point out that a great many Christians would resist fatalism as a dangerously mistaken and even sub-Christian doctrine. They would—with justification—make a case that many Roman Catholic, Orthodox, and Lutheran theologians (among others) do not really count as "Arminian"; yet they oppose fatalism. They would—again with some justification—argue that historic *Reformed* theology is also diametrically opposed to fatalism.[56]

But just as the Arminian does not have the "antifatalist" market cornered, neither does the defender of definite atonement have a monopoly on the "anti-Pelagian" market. Many Roman Catholic, Orthodox, and Lutheran theologians (among others) do not count as either "Arminian" or "Reformed," yet they oppose the doctrine Trueman defends. To take a few examples from Lutheran theology, Luther insists that Christ "bears all the sins of all the world from its inception; this implies that he also bears yours, and offers you grace."[57] Johann Andreas Quenstadt is convinced that Christ "suffered and died for all . . . he truly wills the salvation of each soul, even of those who fail of salvation."[58] And Johann Gerhard says, "[I]f the reprobate are condemned because they do not believe in the Son of God, it follows that to them also the passion and death of Christ pertain. For otherwise, they could not be condemned for that which, according to the divine decree, does not obtain to them."[59] Such statements don't seem at all easy to square with the doctrine of particular redemption. So are these Lutheran theologians not also "anti-Pelagian"? Surely they are. And so are classical Arminians.[60] Perhaps Trueman is convinced that it's possible to

escape Pelagianism if—and only if—one embraces his doctrine. If that is the case, then he should make an argument for such a conclusion. If not, then it would be better for him to avoid such unhelpful locutions and misleading juxtapositions.

Second, turning to broader issues of theological method, I find it interesting that Trueman admits that no single text explicitly teaches the doctrine (p. 23). Not to worry, says Trueman, for the doctrine "does not depend upon the understanding of any single text" but instead is akin to the doctrine of the Trinity. Just as the doctrine of the Trinity does not rely on a single proof text but instead is built on a wide and deep biblical basis (that includes [a] clear witness to the distinction of the persons; [b] manifold witness to the equality and divinity of the persons; and [c] a deep and unwavering commitment to monotheism), so also, Trueman avers, the doctrine of definite atonement is built on a broad biblical basis. In other words, Trueman sees nothing in Scripture that truly counts against the doctrine of definite atonement, and although there is no single passage that definitively teaches it, still it makes the best sense of the biblical account as a whole.

I am not opposed to this sort of theological methodology; indeed, I am sympathetic to it: *so long as the doctrinal formulation really does make sense of the overall biblical message*, I think it is a mature and careful way of doing theology. But does the doctrine of definite atonement really make the best sense of the biblical account as a whole? It certainly *is not* like the doctrine of the Trinity in some important ways. For while the various doctrinal elements of Trinitarian theology (the distinctions of the persons in mutual relations, the divinity and equality of the persons, and the bedrock commitment to monotheism) really *are* well grounded in Scripture, even Trueman does not make a case that the doctrine of definite atonement has a basis so broad and deep. Nor is this doctrine parallel to the doctrine of the Trinity in another crucial sense: while the doctrine of the Trinity has received creedal formulation and ecumenical support, the same cannot be said of Trueman's doctrine. On traditional grounds perhaps the best thing that can be said of the doctrine before the Reformation is that it is "a minority position and is frequently ambiguous," while after the Reformation it remains hotly contested even in Reformed circles.[61] If anything, the case for definite atonement is more closely akin to the case for prevenient grace, for defenders of the doctrine of prevenient grace also claim that it makes sense of several important strands of biblical teaching (the depravity and inability of humanity, the responsibility of

sinners, and God's unblemished good desire for all humanity) taken together.[62] Nonetheless, while Trueman would have a stronger case if some discrete passage(s) actually taught the doctrine explicitly, I agree with him that the lack of such does not mean the doctrine itself is mistaken.

So *does* Trueman's doctrine do justice to biblical teaching as a whole on this point? He argues that (a) while there is no explicit biblical passage that undercuts or defeats the doctrine, Scripture does show (b) particularity of intention and (c) objective efficacy, and he concludes that this can be seen in a properly typological reading of Scripture. To these claims we now turn.

Trueman's Case for "Definite Atonement"

On "Particularity of Intention"

Let us look first at Trueman's case for definite atonement. He argues that there is a "particularity of intention in Christ's saving mission." So far, so good; nothing in the phrase itself eliminates other views. No one denies that Christ has a particular intention. Instead, the debate concerns the nature of that intention. But it soon becomes clear that what Trueman means is this: the particular intention is to provide for the salvation of some sinners while excluding others. He argues from several texts. Reflecting on Matt 1:21 ("he will save his people from their sins")[63] and such texts as Matt 20:28 and 26:28, he notes that Christ has come to give his life as a ransom for "many." He continues by arguing from John 6:37–40 (which doesn't actually even mention the extent of the atonement) and John 10. I agree with Trueman these texts may be consistent with the doctrine of definite atonement, but at least from the brief attention he devotes to the discussion, I fail to see how these texts demonstrate the truth of the doctrine.

Trueman argues more extensively from the high priestly prayer of Jesus in John 17. Here he makes some helpful observations about the importance of a properly *theological* (that is, Trinitarian and Christological) interpretation of this passage, and he rightly insists that the doctrine of the Trinity entails that there can be no division in intention or labor between the divine persons. From this passage he concludes, "The Father and Son are at one in their salvific intention not for all of humanity but for those whom God has appointed to life." However, it is difficult to see how this conclusion follows from this text. Trueman may be correct to point out that *in John 17* Jesus prays only for those whom the Father has given to him rather than "the world."[64] But this in no way implies that the Triune God does not desire the

salvation of all humanity, nor does it mean Jesus failed to offer broader prayers elsewhere. In point of fact, presumably he does just this, for (as Hammett points out) on the cross he prays, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34), and he clearly laments over the rebellious city of Jerusalem (Luke 13:34).

Turning to Pauline theology, Trueman says Paul's declaration that the church was obtained by Christ's blood (Acts 20:28) shows that "what was purchased is a particular body of people." Trueman's statement itself is ambiguous, and in itself and as such it could be found agreeable by proponents of general atonement as well (after all, they generally do not deny that the church is made up of a particular body of people). Trueman likely means "this particular body *to the exclusion of all others*," but one has to read that into the text. For merely to say, "I love you" or "I purchased a gift for you" to a particular person or group does not by itself imply that "I love *you and only you*" or "I purchased a gift for *you and no one else*." Given the context of such an utterance as "I love you," it may reasonably be taken as or perhaps even imply "you and no one else," but it is not obvious in the locution itself. Is it obvious here in the context of Paul's departing exhortation to the Ephesian elders? Not at all, for here Paul is warning them about dangers *to the church* and urging the leaders of the church to be on guard. He is not talking about the extent of God's broader salvific purposes for the world; he is talking about dangers to God's church in a specific contextual setting. He is calling these elders to be shepherds and guardians of this flock, and when he reminds them that this flock was purchased with Christ's blood, surely he is not telling them that the atoning work of Christ was intended *only* for the Ephesian church.[65]

A stronger case for Trueman's position can be made from Paul's letter to the Ephesians. Here Paul likens the church to a bride (5:25–27). Trueman says, "The point is that husbands are to have particular, special, effective love for their wives that they do not have for others. Self-sacrifice for that particular person is to be one mark of this relationship. Thus it is also with Christ and the church." I am not convinced that the extent of the atonement is *the* point of the passage (which seems to be focused primarily on Christ's atoning work for the sanctification of his church); nonetheless, this is an important dimension. However, we must remember that *on just any tolerable reading* of this text, Reformed or otherwise, we should conclude that Christ gave himself for a corporate body composed of many members (some of whom are already included and others of whom are potentially but not [yet] actually included).[66]

Once we realize this, the argument loses much of its rhetorical force. The issue at stake is *who* may be part of this many-membered body and corporate bride (either actually or potentially). Christ gave himself to cleanse her; on this we can agree. But did he give himself to cleanse some sinners in such a way as to intentionally exclude other sinners from the possibility that they might also be included? The text does not say this. Nor does it, strictly speaking, imply it.[67] In other words, while it is clear from the text that Christ gave himself to sanctify the justified believers who compose the church, the text doesn't tell us that Christ gave himself so that only a limited number might possibly be part of that community of justified believers.

On "Efficacy"

Trueman makes much of the "objective efficacy" of Christ's atoning work. He echoes the argument of John Owen (and J. I. Packer) to the conclusion that "the only options for substitutionary atonement are intentional universalism or intentional particularism," for "there is no third way." I see Trueman's point, and I think the argument is weighty and indeed may be decisive against "four-point Calvinism" and other forms of theological determinism. For if one is a determinist (or even an indeterminist who holds to unconditional election), then Trueman may finally be correct that these are the only consistent options. But I fail to see how this argument might work for Christian theologians who are not committed to determinism.[68]

By "objective," I take it that Trueman affirms that this is something that happens apart from our subjective apprehension of it. By "efficacy," I understand Trueman to mean that whatever happens is powerful and effective. So far I see nothing objectionable: we should all agree that the atoning work of Christ happens apart from our permission or appropriation, and we should agree further that this work is successively effective in making possible the salvation of sinners. Trueman might wish to say that it also makes such salvation "actual." But without careful nuance, such a statement could be misleading—and perhaps just flat-out mistaken. For on no tolerably Trinitarian—and indeed biblical—account of the *ordo salutis* are sinners saved apart from the work of the Holy Spirit in applying the benefits of Christ's atoning work. In other words, no matter how much Reformed theologians or others might say "Christ alone," they do not mean that anyone actually is saved apart from the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit. For whatever "objective" and "efficacious" mean, theologically they do not mean that the

process of salvation is complete before a sinner comes to faith or that it is "actual" apart from the work of the Spirit in the life of the believer. So on fairly straightforward meanings of such terms, proponents of both definite and general atonement can—and should—agree. A defender of Trueman's view might wish to say that it makes salvation actual *rather than* possible. But this would be an unfortunate confusion, since the actual is a subset of the possible. Thus, such terms can hardly be used to mount an argument against general atonement. Perhaps Trueman has another, more precise, and non-question-begging sense in mind. If so, then it would be helpful to know what that is.

Typology and Theological Interpretation of Scripture

Trueman appeals to a typological reading of Scripture to support his case. Notably, he argues from the use of Leviticus 16 in Hebrews 9–10.[69] After rehearsing the provisions for the sin offering and scapegoat in the Day of Atonement, he exclaims:

> What is remarkable about this passage is the particularity of the action. The goat is sacrificed specifically and only for the sins of the people of Israel. This is not a sacrifice performed by the priesthood in the context of the worship of Israel for the sins of the wider world. Whether one reads *kipper* as forgiveness, cleansing, ransom, the averting of God's wrath, or as carrying connotations of all four, the scope of the action is restricted to God's people, the people of Israel. It is not aimed at others, and this particularity is closely linked to its efficacy . . . the particularity of this action could not be more explicit. These are not the sins of the Egyptians or the Midianites or the rest of the world; the sins placed on the head of the goat . . . are only the sins of the people of Israel (pp. 43–44).

And since Hebrews draws on this understanding to explain the work of Christ, Trueman concludes that his work is also limited.

This sounds impressive, but there are reasons to doubt that this really supports the doctrine of limited atonement. First, while Trueman is correct to point out that Leviticus 16 speaks directly to the sins of *Israel*, it should be noted as well that the text does not say anything to exclude those who are not of Israel. I'm not making a counterargument from silence, but I am urging us not to overread the text. More important, however, is the fact that elsewhere in the Pentateuch the sacrificial system indeed *is* said to be open to those who are

not elect as Israel. Numbers 15 also prescribes the sin offering, but this passage makes explicit the fact that it is available to both Israelite and non-Israelite. Whether the sin offering is for the entire community (15:25–26) or for individuals (15:27–28), the same sacrifices apply to both Israelites and non-Israelites, and the same forgiveness is offered to both Israelites and non-Israelites among them. In fact, the text is explicit: "One and the same law applies to everyone . . . whether a native-born Israelite or a foreigner residing among you" (15:29 NIV). Furthermore, this passage makes plain that the same guilt and penalty await those who sin "high-handedly," for they have blasphemed the Lord and "must be cut off" as their "guilt remains on them" (15:30–31 NIV). So what we learn from the sin offering is this: the same atoning sacrifices are available to Israelite (= "elect") and non-Israelite (= nonelect but perhaps not always antielect), while being part of the covenant community for whom atonement was made was no guarantee of proper relationship to God.[70] So, far from demonstrating definite atonement, a close reading of the Old Testament witness to the sin offering actually might lend support to a doctrine of general atonement.

Trueman's Treatment of the Evidence for General Atonement

To this point we have looked at several key features of Trueman's arguments for (b) particularity of intention and (c) objective efficacy. But what of his remonstration that (a) there are no solid biblical evidences or theological arguments against his view (thus favoring general atonement)?

When considering biblical evidence that God desires all to be saved (e.g., Ezek 18:23; cf. 2 Pet 3:9), he recognizes that there is at least the appearance of a problem for his view here. He alleges that "Arminians" as well as "non-universalist anti-Pelagians of all stripes" face the same problem. I cannot see how this is not an instance of the *tu quoque* ("you too") fallacy. But is it the case that Arminians (and, presumably, Lutherans and others who are indeterminist advocates of general atonement) have this problem? With respect to "Arminians," he asks why God does not "realize" the possible world where everything works out well and all are saved: if God really does want everyone to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth, then why are some not saved? I think the most charitable conclusion one might draw here is that Trueman simply does not understand the "free will defense," for he does not show awareness, for instance, of such dimensions of the discussion as the distinction between possible and feasible worlds or the importance of

transworld depravity (and, for that matter, the possibility of transworld damnation).[71] Trueman's own approach, on the other hand, is simply to appeal to the mystery of the relation of God's "revealed (or preceptive) will and his hidden (or decretive) will." To his credit Trueman realizes that his view is "not without its problems." Unfortunately, however, he neither spells out the nature of those problems nor works to mitigate them. Trueman makes the assertion that his view does not entail contradictory wills of God, but he does not demonstrate how "*he is not willing that any should perish*" does not contradict *he wills to not provide the possibility of escape for some and thus wills that some should perish*.

Trueman also deals briefly with several texts that are often marshaled in support of general atonement. With respect to 1 Tim 4:10, he notes that Steven Baugh and Thomas R. Schreiner offer interpretations of the text that might fit with his doctrine of definite atonement. Interestingly, Schreiner criticizes and rejects Baugh's interpretation; as he points out, the notion that "Savior" here has a merely temporal and mundane (rather than spiritual and eternal) meaning fails on both lexical and contextual grounds.[72] More importantly—and more disappointingly—Trueman offers us no reason to think that either Schreiner or Baugh is correct. He merely says that "whether Baugh or Schreiner is correct here," there is no problem for his view. Whether *either* is correct, however, is left unaddressed by Trueman. I cannot see how this move might convince anyone who is not already a partisan defender of definite atonement.

Or consider what Trueman says about 1 John 2:2. He recognizes that John's statement that Jesus "is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for our sins but also for the sins of the whole world" (NIV) does present a challenge to his view. To his credit he rejects convenient but exegetically implausible interpretations. He responds by saying that the "obscurity" of the text renders it "clearly insufficient for building a hypothetical universalist view of the atonement." Perhaps so; maybe it is insufficient ("clearly" or otherwise) for hypothetical universalism (and "Four Point Calvinism"). Such an admission would say nothing, however, against more basic views of general atonement (e.g., Lutheran or Arminian).

However, I wonder what, exactly, is so obscure about "not ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world?" The most plausibly plain meaning just *cannot* be right, on Trueman's theology, so there must be some other exegetically tenable meaning available. What remains obscure is what another such

interpretation might be. But we do not have one. At some point this should raise the question: rather than appealing to "obscurity" as a defense of the system, why not question the system of thought that obscures the text in the first place?

Conclusion

Trueman has argued that while (a) there is no biblical and theological evidence against the doctrine of definite atonement, there are good reasons to conclude that (b) the particularity of intention and (c) the objective efficacy of Christ's work do support that doctrine. I have raised doubts in all areas; I have argued that while his case for the doctrine is not decisive, his defense of it against objections is unable to do more than appeal to "mystery" and "obscurity" at key points.

I have pointed to reasons to think that Trueman's advocacy of definite atonement is less than successful. I think these are good reasons. I do not think Trueman's lack of success in any way counts against his abilities as a scholar. To the contrary: when a scholar with abilities as impressive as those of Trueman cannot mount a successful defense of the doctrine, perhaps we should conclude that the doctrine itself is extraordinarily difficult to maintain and defend. By my lights it is simply indefensible.[73]

Response by John S. Hammet

Of my two fellow contributors to this book, I have much more theologically in common with Carl Trueman than with Grant Osborne. All three of us are evangelicals and inerrantists, which covers a lot of ground theologically. But Trueman and I are Reformed, and Osborne is Arminian. In reading his essay, I found myself resonating with much that Trueman says. My most common internal response was, *Yes, but I would not say it like that*, or *Yes, but I would add this*. Thus, if I seem to focus more in this response on the areas in which Trueman and I differ, it should not obscure the great deal we hold in common.

Early on, Trueman raises the question of whether extent is "the most appropriate way to approach the topic" (p. 21). He suggests that extent is "an inference drawn from its [the atonement's] nature and efficacy" (p. 21). I want to suggest a both-and here. I think extent is addressed fairly explicitly in a number of biblical texts that support a universal intention, but I would also include inferences from the nature and efficacy of the cross. He focuses especially on inferences from the nature of Christ's "priestly work of sacrifice

and intercession," in which he sees a "unity of intention" (p. 22). As one arguing for multiple intentions in the atonement, that phrase caught my eye. We will come back to the issue of Christ's priesthood, as Trueman develops it at length in his essay, but I have a concern to register early on. I do not want to let inferences from the nature of Christ's priesthood override fairly clear texts that may point to an additional intention.

Perhaps anticipating questions raised by some of the texts I have in mind, Trueman next adds a "final preliminary point" (p. 22) concerning the presence of universal language in biblical texts. He is right to note the importance of context for interpretation. Words like "all" or "the world" have a semantic range. They can mean "all without exception" or "all without distinction" (i.e., all types). Of course, which meaning they carry in the related biblical texts is the key question.

With this caveat he goes into the case for particular redemption. He does not claim that any single text explicitly teaches it but sees it as "the result of the cumulative force and implications of a series of strands of biblical teaching"; to be specific, "(1) the particularity of intention in Christ's saving mission and (2) the objective efficacy of Christ's work" (p. 23). These two may make a strong case for particular redemption, but I think additional strands need to be incorporated that are not inconsistent with the first two—strands that add a universal intention alongside the particular intention.

Trueman builds the case for the particular intention in Christ's saving mission from texts that are familiar to all who are familiar with the ongoing debate, texts that affirm that Christ will save "his people" (Matt 1:21), his sheep (John 10), his church (Eph 5:25–27). I agree with him that these texts support a particular intention, but the response from advocates of universal atonement has always been that the texts do not say *only* his people, or sheep, or church. Here a more careful look at the nature of what Christ will do for his people is instructive. He will not only die for his people; he will save them (Matt 1:21). He will not only lay down his life for the church; he will make her holy and present her to himself as a radiant church (Eph 5:25–27). By their nature, saving people, making them holy, and presenting them to himself are things that are particular, so I think there is a good case for a particular intention in these verses.

Somewhat surprisingly, Trueman then spends three times as long responding to objections as he did in making his case. He considers three objections, the first being "God's universal desire to save all," reflected in texts

like Ezek 18:23 (p. 27). How can we say God desires to save all if he acts to save only some? Trueman resolves this tension by what he sees as the traditional distinction between the revealed (or preceptive) will of God and the hidden (or decretive) will of God, though he admits that this solution "is not without its problems" (p. 30). Still he sees other solutions as even more problematic, positing an internal contradiction in God's nature. But plunging into the distinctions in God's will is a dark area indeed; perhaps the best we can do is accept a realm of mystery until the "light of glory" illuminates it.[74]

The second objection he labels "provision vs. application" (p. 31). He deals with it in a rather summary manner, responding to the objection as stated by Kevin Bauder, which asks defenders of definite atonement to produce texts that explicitly name some "for whom Christ did *not* die to provide salvation" (p. 31). I would state the objection in another manner. I see no inconsistency in describing the provision of atonement in terms of one intention (a universal one) and the application of atonement in terms of another intention (a particular one). I do so by dividing salvation into two aspects: one has to do with the divine side, satisfying the righteous wrath of God. The other has to do with the human side, ending our enmity with God and causing us to come to him, rather than run from him. I call the first aspect objective provision and the second subjective application. I think Trueman may mean both by objective, but he addresses objective efficacy specifically, so we will return to this discussion at that point.

His third objection is from passages that seem to teach universal atonement. He considers six of the texts that advocates of universal atonement appeal to most often, including 1 Tim 4:10, 2 Pet 2:1, and 1 John 2:2.[75] He offers alternate interpretations of the passages, showing that they "can be understood in a manner consistent with definite atonement" (p. 39). But I think he has a good bit further to go to show they *should* be understood in such a manner. Many passages are subject to a variety of possible interpretations. But should we not opt for the likeliest interpretation? He thinks the teaching on particularity of divine intention and objective efficacy justify opting for what are intrinsically less likely interpretations. I think there are ways of allowing these texts their likeliest interpretations without surrendering a particular intention or objective efficacy.

He turns next to the second main strand of his argument for particular redemption, the objective efficacy of Christ's work. He sees objective efficacy, when combined with substitutionary atonement, as requiring either

"intentional universalism or intentional particularism. There is no third way" (p. 41). Here is where our paths diverge.

I think it is possible to separate two intentions because there are two moments or aspects involved in salvation. For example, Christ died a substitutionary death for those who would become Christians in Ephesus. At the moment he said "it is finished" (John 19:30), the objective achievement of atonement was complete. But before the Ephesian Christians came to faith, Paul describes them as dead in their sins and under God's wrath (Eph 2:1–3). How could that be if Christ's death provided salvation with objective efficacy? Similarly, God was reconciled to the Corinthians by the death of Christ, yet Paul implores them to be reconciled to God (2 Cor 5:20). I think it is possible to separate what I call the objective provision, by which the wrath of God is satisfied and he can welcome the penitent sinner into his presence, from the subjective application, by which the sinner's heart is changed so the sinner now comes to God rather than fleeing from God. I see both the objective provision and the subjective application as effected by the cross-work of Christ, but they are separated chronologically. Moreover, I see no reason the objective provision cannot be universal while the subjective application is particular. Since salvation requires both the objective provision and the subjective application, such a view does not lead to universal salvation. But that is the view I argue in my chapter, and to also present my points here is not the purpose of this response.

Trueman goes on to ground the objective efficacy of the atonement in the priestly work of Christ, a priestly work that is particular. I am not sure I follow his argument here as clearly as I need to, but I think he would say that, in my terms, both the objective provision and the subjective application are particular; thus, my separation of universal provision and particular application does not fit the teaching on Christ as priest. But Hebrews 9–10 is not an exhaustive teaching on the atonement, and if there are clear texts elsewhere grounding a universal provision, they should be allowed to supplement the teaching in Hebrews.

I would say the same thing about the next section on Isaiah 53 and 1 Pet 2:22–25. I think Trueman is probably right in seeing a particular reference here, but again, I do not see this as inconsistent with teaching elsewhere of a universal intention to make provision for all. Every verse does not have to teach every truth, and the teaching of the different texts need not be contradictory but complementary or supplementary. We need not force some

verses to fit the pattern suggested by others. In the same way, I agree with most of his section on Romans 5 and Adam and Christ; I concur with his conclusion that the New Testament "holds to a doctrine of particular redemption—or definite atonement" (p. 54). But I would add that other texts justify seeing a universal intention also being served in the cross.

Trueman's final main section deals with three questions that charge the doctrine of definite atonement with harming preaching. Does this doctrine attenuate the love of God? Does it restrict evangelism? Does it undermine assurance of salvation? His response to the first question is that every system, perhaps with the exception of universal salvation, attenuates the love of God in some way. I agree, but I do think the multiple-intention view has a slight advantage over traditional definite atonement in that at least provision has been made for all. Some choose not to come, but had they come, they would have found provision had been made for them as well.

Trueman also devotes attention to "the hypothetical universalist objections to definite atonement" (p. 57) on the grounds that the former gives a better foundation for preaching and pastoral work than the latter. He cites no sources here, so I am not sure whose objections he has in mind or how "every system has problems" (p. 57) is much of an answer. On the one hand, I agree that every system does have problems, that there are places where "modesty in the face of unfathomable mystery" (p. 58) is the only appropriate response. I agree that people will demand and deserve a systematic answer of some kind, but I think a multiple-intention view gives as cogent a view as definite atonement, but I may be missing his point here.

I think I do understand the last point of his response. Some are troubled that a strict construction of definite atonement might prevent a preacher from saying to an audience, "Christ died for your sins," and thus in some way hinder evangelism. Trueman cites Wayne Grudem, who himself affirms definite atonement, yet encourages Reformed people not to rush to criticize an evangelist who tells an audience of unbelievers, "Christ died for your sins." Such a statement is acceptable if it is understood to mean "Christ died to offer you forgiveness for your sins" or "Christ died to make available forgiveness for your sins."[76] I was somewhat surprised to read Trueman affirming that he could say to someone, "Christ died for your sins," if he had "made it clear how that statement connects to the overall biblical teaching on salvation" (p. 59). We may be closer to each other than we think. I also agree that the efficacy of

Christ's atonement should give us confidence in preaching, as he is the One who effects the subjective application of the cross to the heart.

I rejoice to affirm with Trueman the efficacy of the cross, that it actually accomplishes salvation. My concern in differentiating my view from definite atonement is not doing more justice to the love of God or providing a sound foundation for preaching. It is doing justice to the texts that seem to point to a universal intention alongside the particular intention. I think both are taught and can be seen as complementary, rather than contradictory. I look forward to continuing the conversation.[77]

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[1] The classic statement of limited atonement is by John Owen: *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ* (1647). This is available in volume 10 of the modern reprint of the nineteenth-century edition of his works (London: Banner of Truth, 1967). It is also published by Banner of Truth as a separate volume with an introduction by J. I. Packer, which (given Packer's lucid prose and Owen's highly convoluted style) has probably proved more influential in modern evangelical circles than the text it introduces. On the history of limited atonement, see Richard A. Muller, *Christ and the Decree: Christology and Predestination from Calvin to Perkins* (Durham: Labyrinth, 1986); Carl R. Trueman, *The Claims of Truth: John Owen's Trinitarian Theology* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1998); Jonathan D. Moore, *English Hypothetical Universalism: John Preston and the Softening of Reformed Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007). For a recent defense of the doctrine, see Lee Gatiss, *For Us and for Our Salvation: "Limited Atonement" in the Bible, Doctrine, History, and Ministry* (London: Latimer Trust, 2012).

[2] The formula contrasting sufficiency and efficiency received its most influential expression in Peter Lombard's *Four Books of Sentences*, the standard theological textbook in the Middle Ages: see his *IV Libri Sententiarum* 3.5.3; also Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* 3a.2.5. This is essentially the position articulated in the Second Head of Doctrine of the Canons of Dordt. For further discussion of the history of the phrase, see W. Robert Godfrey, "Reformed Thought on the Extent of the Atonement to 1618," *WTJ* 37 (1975): 133–71, esp. 136, 142, 149, 159, 164–69; Trueman, *Claims of Truth*, 199–206; Raymond A. Blacketer, "Definite Atonement in Historical Perspective," in *The Glory of the Atonement: Biblical, Historical, and Practical Perspectives: Essays in Honor of Roger Nicole*, ed. Charles E. Hill and Frank A. James III (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2004), 311.

[3] This is essentially the argument of the Canons of Dordt II.4.

[4] On terminology, I use the terms "hypothetical universalism," "Arminianism" and "Amyraldianism" (along with their cognates) to describe three nonparticularist approaches to the atonement. Hypothetical universalism refers to those positions which argue for a potentially general, unlimited, or universal atonement. It should be noted, however, that in this essay the term does not imply eschatological universalism or universal salvation. Arminianism refers to those schools of Christian thought that see the atonement as universal and the decisive factor in the atonement's individual efficacy as lying in the individual's noncoerced act of faith. Amyraldianism has become a trendy term for those who regard themselves as Calvinist or Reformed but who reject the traditional notion of limited atonement. In fact, Amyraldianism, technically speaking, is a specific form of covenant theology that places the decree to appoint Christ as mediator logically prior to the decree of election; thus, Christ is appointed mediator for all, even though not all will benefit from it. The contemporary use of Amyraldian is thus in general a rather sloppy and inaccurate appropriation of the term. Most modern "Amyraldians" are more likely hypothetical universalists: they believe simply that Christ died for all, even though God's election is restrictive and particular. In other words, they are often more anti-systematic ("just preach and teach the Bible") in their approach, which is ironic given the strongly systematic nature of Amyraldus's own

theology. What follows typically distinguishes the three categories but occasionally embraces all three under the general term "hypothetical universalists." The usage should be clear in each context.

[5] Unless otherwise noted, Scripture quotations are from the Holy Bible, English Standard Version, copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

[6] John Murray's comment is apposite: "Universal terms are frequently used in connection with the death of Christ, as also in connection with the categories which define its import (*cf.* 2 Cor. 5:14, 15, 19; I Tim. 2:6; Heb. 2:9; I John 2:2). It is surprising that students of Scripture should with such ease appeal to these texts as if they determined the question in favor of universal atonement. The Scripture frequently uses universal terms when, obviously, they are not to be understood of all men inclusively and distributively or of all things inclusively. When we read in Genesis 6:13, 'The end of all flesh is come before me,' it is plain that this is not to be understood absolutely or inclusively. Not *all* flesh was destroyed. Or when Paul says that the trespass of Israel was the riches of the world (Rom. 11:12), he cannot be using the word 'world' of all men distributively. Israel is not included, and not all Gentiles were partakers of the riches intended. When Paul says, 'all things are lawful for me' (I Cor. 6:12; *cf.* 10:23), he did not mean that he was at liberty to do anything and everything. Examples could be multiplied and every person should readily perceive the implied restriction. An expression must always be interpreted in terms of the universe of discourse. Thus in Hebrew[s] 2:9 the *everyone* on whose behalf Christ tasted death must be understood as referring to every one of whom the writer is speaking, namely, every one of the sons to be brought to glory, of the sanctified, of the children whom God has given to Christ and of whom He is not ashamed (vss. 10, 11, 12, 13). And it must not be overlooked that in II Corinthians 5:14, 15 the 'all' for whom Christ died do not embrace any more than those who died in Him 'one died for all: therefore all died.' In Paul's teaching to die with Christ is to die to sin (*cf.* Rom. 6:2–10)" (*The Atonement* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1962], 29–30).

[7] D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, PNTC (Leicester: Apollos, 1991), 290.

[8] Carson, *John*, 560–61.

[9] Matthew 26:39 is a mysterious verse, where the incarnate Son submits his will to that of the Father; but it does not teach an opposition between the wills of Father and Son. Rather, it underscores the reality of what Christ is undergoing and, if anything, indicates that both wills are ultimately entirely consistent with each other.

[10] David G. Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 570.

[11] At least the classical Arminian must do so. Open theism, by redefining and (in my opinion) limiting the knowledge and power of God, does not need to justify God in this way but generates significant exegetical and theological problems on many other issues.

[12] Martin Luther, *The Bondage of the Will in Luther's Works* 33, ed. Philip Watson and Helmut Lehman (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1972), 139–40.

[13] Augustine, "Epistle 217," 19.

[14] See Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* 2.2, ed. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1957), 308–11.

[15] "A Tale of Two Wills? Calvin, Amyraut, and Du Moulin on Ezekiel 18:23," in Richard A. Muller, *Calvin and the Reformed Tradition: Studies on the Work of Christ and the Order of Salvation* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2012), 107–25.

[16] John Calvin, *Commentaries on the First Twenty Chapters of the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel*, vol. 2, trans. Thomas Myers (Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1850), 247–48; also *Calvin's Calvinism: Treatises on the Eternal Predestination and the Secret Providence of God*, trans. Henry Cole (London: Wertheim and Macintosh, 1856), 99.

[17] For concise definitions of the various distinctions in God's will according to orthodox Protestant theology, see Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (London: Banner of Truth, 1959), 77–78. John Piper has recently built on this classic systematic heritage via Jonathan Edwards to argue that God's stated will

for all people to be saved is genuine but restrained by his commitment to demonstrating the full range of his glory through both his mercy and his wrath: see "Are There Two Wills in God?" in *Still Sovereign: Contemporary Perspectives on Election, Foreknowledge, and Grace*, ed. Thomas R. Schreiner and Bruce A. Ware (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004). While Piper's arguments are certainly interesting, I find the traditional (Augustine/Luther/Calvin/traditional Reformed) solution more persuasive whereby the problem with reconciling universalist and particularist texts is ultimately seen as one of the limitation of finite (and sinful) human knowledge.

[18] Kevin T. Bauder, "The Logic of Limited Atonement," *In the Nick of Time*, (February 4, 2005); accessed February 21, 2012 at http://seminary.wcts1030.com/publications/20050204Print.pdf.

[19] Ibid., 5.

[20] See I. Howard Marshall, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999), 425.

[21] I am grateful to Thomas Schreiner for this connection: see his "'Problematic Texts' for Definite Atonement in the Pastoral and General Epistles," in *From Heaven He Came and Sought Her: Definite Atonement in Historical, Biblical, Theological, and Pastoral Perspective*, ed. David Gibson and Jonathan Gibson (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 375–97.

[22] Marshall, *Pastoral Epistles*, 427.

[23] Calvin makes the following comment: "*Who is the Saviour*. This is the second consolation, though it depends on the former; for the deliverance of which he speaks may be viewed as the fruit of hope. To make this more clear, it ought to be understood that this is an argument drawn from the less to the greater; for the word *sōtēr* is here a general term, and denotes one who defends and preserves. He means that the kindness of God extends to all men. And if there is no man who does not feel the goodness of God towards him, and who is not a partaker of it, how much more shall it be experienced by the godly, who hope in him? Will he not take peculiar care in them? Will he not more freely pour out his bounty on them? In a word, will he not, in every respect, keep them safe to the end?" J. Calvin and W. Pringle, *Commentaries on the Epistles to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2010), 111–12.

[24] T. C. Skeat, "'Especially the Parchments': A Note on 2 Timothy iv. 13," *JTS* 30 (1979): 173–77, esp. 174. This reading is adopted by George W. Knight III, *The Pastoral Epistles*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 203–4.

[25] Vern Sheridan Poythress, "The Meaning of *malista* in 2 Tim 4:13 and Related Verses," *JTS* 53 (2002): 523–32.

[26] Steven M. Baugh, "'Savior of All People': 1 Tim 4:10 in Context," *WTJ* 54 (1992): 331–40.

[27] See Schreiner, "Problematic Texts," 380–86. Both Towner and Knight see this verse as part of Paul's polemic against the apparent ascetic excesses of the false teachers in Ephesus rather than as a verse dealing with the matter of atonement in terms of its universal or particular nature (Philip H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, NICNT [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006], 311–12; Knight, *Pastoral Epistles*, 203–4). In their recent introduction to theology, Mark Driscoll and Gerry Breshears cite both 1 Tim 4:10 and 2 Pet 2:1 as teaching a universal atonement consistent with four-point Calvinism and in contradistinction to the five-point variety. They do not, however, interact with the variety of commentary on these passages or engage the linguistic and theological issues their reading raises (*Doctrine* [Wheaton: Crossway, 2010], 269–70).

[28] E.g., Peter H. Davids, *The Letters of 2 Peter and Jude*, PNTC (Leicester: Apollos, 2006), 221.

[29] Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Leicester: InterVarsity, 1994), 600.

[30] Calvin's comment is worth quoting at length: "[H]ere the question may be asked as to how the sins of the whole world have been expiated. I pass over the dreams of the fanatics, who make this a reason to extend salvation to all the reprobate and even to Satan himself. Such a monstrous idea is not worth refuting. Those who want to avoid this absurdity have said that Christ suffered sufficiently for the whole

world but effectively only for the elect. This solution has commonly prevailed in the schools. Although I allow the truth of this, I deny that it fits this passage. For John's purpose was only to make this blessing common to the whole Church. Therefore, under the word 'all' he does not include the reprobate, but refers to all who would believe and those who were scattered through the various regions of the earth. For as is meet, the grace of Christ is really made clear when it is declared to be the only salvation of the world" (*The Gospel According to St. John 11–21 and the First Epistle of John*, trans. T. H. L. Parker [Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1961], 244).

[31] "While we can say what Jesus Christ being the atoning sacrifice 'for the sins of the whole world' does not mean, it is more difficult to say what it does mean, for the author gives us no clues. We might suggest that Jesus Christ is the atoning sacrifice for the sins of the whole world because his death was sufficient to deal with sins of the whole world, but that his sacrifice does not become effective until people believe in him" (Colin G. Kruse, *The Letters of John*, PNTC [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000], 75).

[32] Robert W. Yarbrough, *1–3 John*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 80–81.

[33] Packer originally delivered the essay as the Tyndale Biblical Theology Lecture at Tyndale House, Cambridge, in 1973. It is reprinted in *Celebrating the Saving Work of God: The Collected Shorter Writings of J. I. Packer* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1998), 1:85–123.

[34] Packer, "What Did the Cross Achieve?" 116.

[35] A full treatment of this issue is not possible here, but a thorough exposition of New Testament teaching on the intention and efficacy of the atonement is offered by Jarvis J. Williams, *For Whom Did Christ Die? Atonement in Paul's Theology* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2012). For example, he addresses Eph 1:7 and Col 1:14: "Redemption through Jesus' blood in Ephesians 1:7 and in Colossians 1:14 (cf. Col. 1:20; 2:13) confirms that Jesus died for a specific purpose and that this purpose was effected in the lives of those who believe, for his death actually (not hypothetically) wiped away sins and even canceled out the transgressions of those who violated God's specific commands. But his comments about redemption in Eph. 1:7 are especially helpful [to proving the connection between election and atonement]. . . . Thus one can infer that those who receive redemption and forgiveness of sins through Jesus' blood . . . are those whom God has chosen and predestined to be in Christ before the foundation of the world" (214).

[36] Here I am indebted to the work of David G. Peterson, "Atonement in the Old Testament," in *Where Wrath and Mercy Meet: Proclaiming the Atonement Today*, ed. David G. Peterson (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2001), 1–25; also Steve Jeffery, Michael Ovey, and Andrew Sach, *Pierced for Our Transgressions: Rediscovering the Glory of Penal Substitution* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2007), 44–48.

[37] Clearly, a key part of one's understanding of the relationship between the Old Testament sacrifices and that of Christ is one's understanding of the relationship between Old Testament Israel and the New Testament church. On an initial reading of Leviticus16, one might perhaps object that some of the covenant community whose sins were placed on the scapegoat's head were not ultimately saved. If we understand Leviticus 16 as a type of Christ's sacrifice, however, and the people of Israel as a type of the church, then surely the New Testament, with its teaching on the objective efficacy of Christ's sacrifice, becomes decisive for such objections.

[38] Peter T. O'Brien, *The Letter to the Hebrews*, PNTC (Leicester: Apollos, 2010), 336–37.

[39] Ibid., 337–38. Cf. George H. Guthrie: "[I]n the case of the new-covenant offering of Christ, the heavenly tabernacle had to be cleansed because of the sins of the people who would be brought into the covenant. The heavenly tabernacle is cleansed in conjunction with the cleansing of God's people" ("Hebrews," in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. Gregory K. Beale and D. A. Carson [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007], 975).

[40] R. T. Kendall, *Calvin and English Calvinism to 1649* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979).

[41] O'Brien, *Letter to the Hebrews*, 339, quoting H. W. Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989), 264. In the relevant footnote O'Brien also cites the support of B. F. Westcott, O. Michel, and William L. Lane.

[42] See R. N. Whybray, *Thanksgiving for a Liberated Prophet: An Interpretation of Isaiah 53* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1978); for a careful refutation of Whybray, see J. Alan Groves, "Atonement in Isaiah 53," in

Hill and James, *The Glory of the Atonement*, 61–89.

[43] Millard Erickson comments: "Two additional passages are to be noted as being especially significant. The first is the prophetic passage in Isaiah 53:6: 'We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.' This passage is especially powerful from a logical standpoint. It is clear that the extent of sin is universal; it is specified that *every one* of us has sinned. It should also be noticed that the extent of what will be laid on the suffering servant exactly parallels the extent of sin. It is difficult to read this passage and not conclude that just as everyone sins, everyone is also atoned for" (*Christian Theology,* 2nd ed. [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998], 847). The argument holds only if the "we" here means all people indiscriminately. That "all we" have sinned is not, in itself, sufficient to make such an identification. Further, the immediate context prior to chapter 53 is the Lord addressing his particular people; the "we" in chapter 53 is thus read most naturally as the voice of the people of Israel, not humanity in general.

[44] As Garry Williams expresses, "[I]t is clear that the Servant is punished, that his punishment is substitutionary since it is the result of the sin of others, and that his punishment is atoning, since it brings them wholeness, healing and righteousness" ("The Cross and Punishment for Sin," in Peterson, *Where Wrath and Mercy Meet*, 81).

[45] Douglas Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 343. Cf. John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 203.

[46] See Grant R. Osborne, *Romans*, IVP New Testament Commentary (Leicester: InterVarsity, 2004), 144, quoting Moo.

[47] See O'Brien, *The Letter to the Hebrews*, 116–18.

[48] See his "The Incarnation and 'Limited Atonement,'" *Evangelical Quarterly* 55 (1982): 83–94.

[49] See Kendall, *Calvin and English Calvinism to 1649*; Michael Eaton, *No Condemnation: A New Theology of Assurance* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1997).

[50] See his "Strengths and Weaknesses of the Westminster Theology," in *The Westminster Confession in the Church Today*, ed. A. I. C. Heron (Edinburgh: St. Andrew Press), 40–54.

[51] See Arminian theologian I. Howard Marshall's comments on 1 Tim 2:4: "To avoid all misconceptions it should be made clear at the outset that the fact that God wishes or wills that all people should be saved does not necessarily imply that all will respond to the gospel and be saved. We must certainly distinguish between what God would like to see happen and what he actually does will to happen, and both of these things can be spoken of as God's will" ("Universal Grace and Atonement in the Pastoral Epistles," in *The Grace of God, the Will of Man: A Case for Arminianism*, ed. Clark H. Pinnock [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1989], 56).

[52] D. A. Carson highlights the complexities surrounding this issue in *The Difficult Doctrine of the Love of God* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2000), 73–79.

[53] Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4 vols., ed. John Bolt (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003–08), 2:360–61.

[54] The problem for the classical Arminian will be somewhat different: if God knows the future and knows that I will repent and put my trust in Christ at a certain date and time, then to what extent am I free to choose whether to believe or not?

[55] Grudem (who defends definite atonement), *Systematic Theology*, 602 states, "It really seems to be only nit-picking that creates controversies and useless disputes when Reformed people insist on being such purists in their speech that they object any time someone says that 'Christ died for all people.' There are certainly ways of understanding that sentence that are consistent with the speech of the scriptural authors."

"Similarly, I do not think we should rush to criticize an evangelist who tells an audience of unbelievers, 'Christ died for your sins,' if it is made clear in the context that it is necessary to trust in Christ before one can receive the benefits of the gospel offer. In that sense the sentence is simply understood to mean 'Christ died to offer you forgiveness for your sins' or 'Christ died to make available forgiveness for your

sins.' The important point here is that sinners realize that salvation is available for everyone and that payment of sins is available for everyone."

[56] E.g., The Westminster Confession of Faith (1647), IX. Issues related to human freedom in post-Reformation scholasticism are the subject of vigorous debate in contemporary historical theology, e.g., Willem J. Asselt, J. Martin Bac, and Roelf T. De Velde, eds., *Reformed Theology on Freedom: The Concept of Free Choice in Early Modern Reformed Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010) and Paul Helm, "*Reformed Thought on Freedom:* Some Further Thoughts," *Journal of Reformed Theology* (2010): 185–207.

[57] Martin Luther, *Luther's Works*, 22:169. My thanks to Douglas A. Sweeney for his insights and help with these references.

[58] In Heinrich Schmid, ed., *The Doctrinal Theology of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, 3rd ed. (Augsburg, 1899), 363.

[59] Ibid.

[60] On some of the important historical issues, see Thomas H. McCall, "'But a Heathen Still': The Doctrine of Original Sin in Wesleyan Theology," in *Adam, the Fall, and Original Sin*, ed. Hans Madueme and Michael Reeves (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014), 265–99.

[61] Raymond A. Blacketer, "Definite Atonement in Historical Perspective," in *The Glory of the Atonement: Biblical, Theological, and Practical Perspectives*, ed. Charles E. Hill and Frank James III (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 313.

[62] The crucial difference here, of course, is that the doctrine of prevenient grace enjoys a historical basis the doctrine of definite atonement cannot claim, for in some version or other, the doctrine of prevenient grace can be traced from post-Reformation scholasticism right back through medieval theology and into Latin patristic theology. I have a bit more to say in defense of this claim in my response to John S. Hammett.

[63] Unless otherwise noted, Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®, copyright © 2011 by Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

[64] I say "may be" because I am not convinced of Trueman's exegesis of the text. For while Jesus first prays strictly for the original disciples (v. 9), he then broadens it to all who will believe through them (v. 20), and he then broadens it further so that "the world" may believe (v. 21). But for the sake of argument, I grant this much.

[65] In Gal 2:20, Paul exults, "I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." If we were to adopt as a hermeneutical rule for the theological interpretation of Scripture, the notion that *we should always interpret texts in the most particularist sense possible*, then we should be led to conclude that the atonement was *very* definite and *very* limited—when Paul says that the Son "gave himself for me," what he really means is "for me and me only."

[66] Perhaps there are overlooked ecclesiological issues at stake; maybe things change if we adopt, say, four-dimensionalist metaphysics for a doctrine of the church. On four- dimensionalist metaphysics, see Michael C. Rea, "Four-Dimensionalism," in *The Oxford Handbook of Metaphysics*, ed. Michael J. Loux and Dean W. Zimmerman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 246–80.

[67] If A really *implies* (rather than, say, merely suggests) B, then B *must* be true if A is true; if A is true, then B cannot fail to be true.

[68] See the important essay of Oliver D. Crisp, "The Double Payment Objection to Universal Atonement," *International Journal of Systematic Theology*, forthcoming.

[69] Trueman also appeals to Isaiah 53 and 1 Pet 2:22–25 as well as Romans 5. Since I take the Leviticus 16 and Hebrews 9–10 discussion to be Trueman's strongest, I shall focus attention here.

[70] See Joel S. Kaminsky, *Yet I Loved Jacob: Reclaiming the Biblical Concept of Election* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2007).

[71] On transworld identity and transworld depravity, see Alvin Plantinga, *The Nature of Necessity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974), especially pp. 88–120, 184–89.

[72] See Thomas R. Schreiner, "'Problematic Texts' for Definite Atonement in the Pastoral and General Epistles," in *From Heaven He Came and Sought Her: Definite Atonement in Historical, Biblical, Theological, and Pastoral Perspective*, ed. David Gibson and Jonathan Gibson (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2014), 385.

[73] Thanks to Gary Cockerill, E. Jerome Van Kuiken, and Steve Blakemore for their observations on an earlier draft of this essay.

[74] I refer to Luther's reference to three lights in "The Bondage of the Will." Some things we understand by the light of nature and some by the light of grace. But mysteries like why God wills to save some and not others Luther sees as current mysteries that will only one day be resolved by the light of glory. Until then we live by faith. See Martin Luther, "On the Bondage of the Will," in *Luther and Erasmus: Free Will and Salvation*, ed. E. Gordon Rupp and Philip Watson, Library of Christian Classics, Ichthus ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1969), 331–32.

[75] I am somewhat surprised that Trueman does not deal with some of the texts from the Gospel of John, as they are among the texts usually seen as seeming to teach universal atonement.

[76] Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 602.

[77] Such future discussions need to include the fine book *From Heaven He Came and Sought Her: Definite Atonement in Historical, Biblical, Theological, and Pastoral Perspective*, edited by David Gibson and Jonathan Gibson (Wheaton: Crossway, 2013), which includes a contribution by Carl Trueman. Unfortunately, the book reached me too late to include in my chapter.

Chapter 2

General Atonement View

Grant R. Osborne

Atonement in its biblical sense means "the covering or forgiving of sins effected by the sacrificial death of Christ on the cross for mankind." The concept stems from Hebrew *kōper*, to "cover" or "wipe out," thus to "expiate" what has rendered one unacceptable to God; *kappōret* was the "place of atonement," the "mercy seat" or "cover" over the ark. This signified the covering of sins as they were placed under the ark and forgiven by God. The atonement is effected by a "ransom" payment, which can be money (Exod 30:11–16) or blood sacrifice (Lev 17:11).[1]

Moving into the NT, atonement refers to the mercy of God in forgiving sin, including both propitiation (appeasing God's wrath) and expiation (the forgiveness the sinner experiences) (cf. Rom 3:25; Heb 8:12; 9:5). The question for this essay is not the meaning of atonement,[2] but the issue of the extent of the atonement: Has Christ died for all humankind or for only the elect? If the former is true, does this necessarily imply universalism? I argue that Christ has died sufficiently for all but efficiently for those who find faith in his atoning death and hold that this does not entail universalism.

There is general agreement on all sides on the effect of the atonement: Christ appeased God's wrath, and his atoning death has affected the salvation of the lost. But this is where the sides part. Has the death of Christ made salvation possible for those who respond to the Spirit's universal convicting presence, or has it secured salvation only for those whom God has predestined to salvation? This is the issue of this symposium. Louis Berkhof well presents the position of Reformed theology: "The Calvinist teaches that the atonement meritoriously secured the application of the work of redemption to those for whom it was intended and thus rendered their complete salvation certain."[3] What is secured is the forgiveness of their sins, their new status as the children of God, their "mystical union with Christ through regeneration and sanctification," and their "final bliss" in eternal communion with God and Christ.[4] Some call this theological concept "limited atonement"; others call it "particular redemption."[5] It means God intended Christ's salvific work

particularly for the elect. It is not that God has no compassion for the lost but that he has a higher will, a greater purpose for the atoning work of Christ. John Piper says, "God wills not to save all, because there is something else that he wills more, which would be lost if he exerted his sovereign power to save all," namely, "the manifestation of the full range of God's glory in wrath and mercy (Rom 9:22–23) and the humbling of man so that he enjoys giving all credit to God for his salvation (1 Cor 1:29)."[6] The question is whether the purpose of Jesus' death was to make atonement in an actual or a possible sense. Reformed scholars argue that the latter becomes a conditional grace based merely on divine foreknowledge[7] and that it impugns God's true sovereignty.

The Wesleyan Arminian[8] obviously challenges this narrowing of the divine intention for atonement. First, most Arminian theologians accept the doctrine of total depravity: whenever a sinner makes a choice with respect to Christ, they reject him. The question for both sides is how anyone can ever find salvation. For the Calvinist that is the doctrine of election: God on the basis of his mysterious will has reached and plucked those "elect" individuals he has chosen to rescue from the fire via his irresistible grace. The problem with this is that "grace is the offer of a gift, not the imposition of another's will; and it is in the nature of a gift that it can be rejected."[9] So the Arminian takes another tack: the universal convicting presence of the Holy Spirit (prevenient grace) makes the difference. In the midst of their absolute depravity, the Spirit convicts every person (he does not prove their guilt merely to the nonelect[10]) and makes it possible for them to overcome the binding power of their depravity and make a choice. This choice is the result of a faith made possible by God and not a work (Eph 2:8–9). Arminianism is not semi-Pelagian by definition. Faith and choice are gifts from God, and they are made possible for all humanity. J. I. Packer states a common misunderstanding: "For Arminianism salvation rests neither on God's election nor on Christ's cross, but on each person's own cooperation with grace, which is something that God cannot guarantee."[11] Faith does not replace the cross in this system; Arminianism has not replicated the Galatian heresy. The cross is the only basis for salvation, and faith is a surrender to the Holy Spirit, who produces salvation in the believer. I agree with Packer that "we do not become Christians without creative prevenient grace"[12] but define this grace as the universal convicting presence of the Holy Spirit rather than as divine election.

Within this framework of the universal convicting work of God, the Arminian sees two stages in election: foreknowledge (God was aware before creation of every choice made with respect to the Spirit's convicting presence) and election (based on his foreknowledge, God "elected" those who would respond and find faith in Christ's atoning work). Therefore, foreknowledge is not synonymous with predestination. For God to know is not to predetermine. Calvin and his followers believe that God "foresees" only what he has already "decreed" to take place, so his "determination and bidding" control future events and choices.[13] Arminians counter that while God knows contingent events and the actions that result from free choice, he does not control them; thus, there are levels of divine knowledge. He knows everything, but within this universal knowledge God has chosen to give his created beings free will. God foresees such actions but does not predetermine them.[14]

So the *ordo salutis* for Arminians begins with divine intentionality and then moves to God's foreknowledge. He created angels and humans as an act of love for the purpose of fellowship. Both in terms of the angels and mankind, love demanded choice: Satan and a third of the heavenly host *chose* to rebel against God (Rev 12:4), and Adam and Eve along with all who descended from them chose to sin (Rom 5:12). Sin enslaved humanity, but God in his merciful loving-kindness sent his Son to die in the place of mankind and provide atonement. Now his Spirit is actively "convicting" the world of sin and drawing people to repentance. Those who respond and "believe" are then regenerated and justified, becoming the "chosen" or "elect" people of God. The Spirit makes belief possible and performs the act of regeneration. Still, those who choose Christ become the "chosen" of God.

Within this framework, does the atoning sacrifice of Christ on the cross focus on the possible salvation of all humankind or on the effective salvation of the elect? Is atonement universal or particular in its purpose? In the middle ground both sides agree that the death of Christ is sufficient for all but efficient only for some. The difference is the focus and meaning of the statement and its connection with the doctrine of election. We will now look at the passages each position uses to prove its points.

Here we must separate the Arminian position from that of the four-point Calvinist (denying limited atonement). Both accept that Christ died sufficiently for all but efficiently only for the believer. So at first glance the two seem to be the same. But here the similarities end. The four-point Calvinist approaches the issue from the perspective of election: God chooses some from

fallen humanity to experience that atonement meant potentially for all, and only the elect truly experience it. The Arminian centers on faith-decision: Christ died as the substitute for all humankind, but only those who respond to the Spirit's conviction actually experience atonement. The end point is similar, but the starting point is radically different.

Texts That Favor Particular Redemption

"The Reformed position is that Christ died for the purpose of actually and certainly saving the elect, and the elect only."[15] For God to be sovereign, his intentions must always prove efficacious, and if his divine designs were for Christ to die for the salvation of all people, then universalism would have to result. If Christ on the cross paid for the sins of every person, God would have to accept every person, and evangelism would be unnecessary. Since all humanity is not saved and since many remain in unbelief, God could not have intended Christ's death for all but only for those predestined to salvation. Election could not be based on God's foreknowledge of the faith of some, nor could it result from human choice. It is unconditional and based only on God's mysterious will. Moreover, this is a Trinitarian act. "What God the Father purposed, God the Son and the Holy Spirit agreed to and surely carried out."[16]

Let me quote John Owen's famous statement of the issue:

> God imposed his wrath due unto, and Christ underwent the pains of hell for, either
>
> [1] all the sins of all men, or
>
> [2] all the sins of some men, or
>
> [3] some sins of all men.
>
> [3] If the last, some sins of all men, then have all men some sins to answer for, and so shall no man be saved. . . .
>
> [2] If the second, that is it which we affirm, that Christ in their stead and room suffered for all the sins of all the elect in the world.
>
> [1] If the first, why, then, are not all freed from the punishment of all their sins? You will say, "Because of their unbelief; they will not believe." But this unbelief, is it a sin, or not? If not, why should they be punished for it? If it be, then Christ underwent the punishment due to it, or not. If so, then why must that hinder them more than their other sins for which he

died from partaking of the fruit of his death? If he did not, then did he not die for all their sins.[17]

Christ Died Exclusively for His People

Several passages seem to limit the purpose of Christ's death explicitly to the elect, the people of God. This is designated in several ways:

His people. Matthew 1:21 says Jesus' incarnation was to take place to "save his people [Gk. *laos*] from their sins."[18] *Laos* is a semitechnical term in the Gospels indicating the people of God, and here it refers to those who would respond to the salvation Jesus was bringing. Christ would provide the means by which God could forgive sins (Matt 3:6; 9:9–13; 11:19; 20:28; 26:28).

His sheep. Several passages in John 10, centering on Jesus' *mashal* (parable) on the Good Shepherd, designate God's "sheep" as the focus of Jesus' sacrificial death. The OT metaphor of God as the "Shepherd" of his flock provides the background (Gen 48:15; Pss 23:1; 28:9; 80:1; Isa 40:11; Jer 31:10), especially Ezek 34:1–6, where the leaders of Israel were false shepherds who failed and scattered the sheep.[19] In contrast Jesus is the Good Shepherd who "lays down his life for the sheep" (John 10:11, 15) and does so voluntarily (vv. 17–18). The result of this sacrifice is that Christ gives his sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish because the Father has given them to Jesus and they are doubly secure in Jesus' and the Father's hands (vv. 27–30). This is one of the best-known passages on the security of the believer, but it also has implications for particular redemption since it says that Christ would die specifically for "his sheep." This is an important passage because it shows Jesus was aware that he would die as an atoning sacrifice "for the sheep" (John 1:29; 6:51; 11:50–52; 18:14).

His friends. John 15:13 has only implicit value for this topic, but still Jesus is certainly using his coming death (just fifteen hours away) as the model for his disciples when he challenges them, "Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends." Jesus' surrender of his life for his friends is an extension of God's love demonstrated above all in Jesus' crucifixion (Rom 5:8; 1 John 3:16). Jesus' Farewell Discourse (John 13:31–17:26), shows Jesus had especially his "friends" (the disciples) in mind as he went to the cross. Still, we do not want to take this too far, as if he died *only* for them; that will be a key matter to which we will return shortly.

The church. Two passages imply that Jesus died explicitly for his messianic community. Acts 20:28 is part of Paul's farewell speech to the Ephesian elders

in Acts 20:17–35 and is part of his pastoral call to them, exhorting them, "Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood." The serious responsibility of the leaders to God's community is anchored in Christ's payment for them. "That Jesus purchased the church with his blood underscores the cost that God incurred to establish" it, having "as its basis a substitution of God's own for those God would bring to eternal life."[20] Clearly a purpose of Jesus' atoning act is establishing the church.

The second passage is Eph 5:25–27, where Paul uses the relationship between Christ and the church as a model for husbands and wives. The central part is the command to "love" (present imperative as the foreground and ongoing feature of marriage), grounded in the fact of the extent of Christ's "love" for the church and expressed in the fact that he "gave himself up for her." This expands 5:2, where Paul establishes the internal love that must characterize the church in the reality that Christ "loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice for God." As in John 15:13 above, ultimate proof of the depth of God's love (and the ultimate model for us) is Christ's sacrificial offering in our place. O'Brien calls this a "conformity pattern" in which the "costly, sacrificial love" of Christ demonstrated in the cross becomes the model for the love of the church (5:2) and of husbands in particular (5:25).[21] Stott notes the progression of verbs in vv. 25–27 from "love" to "gave himself" to "sanctify" (ESV) to "cleansed" to "present," commenting that Paul here traces the movement of Christ's salvific work from past to future reality, from Christ's self-sacrifice to the eternal glory awaiting God's people.[22] Clearly the church was the primary goal of Christ's atoning sacrifice. Again the question we will be addressing is whether it is the *sole* purpose of the cross.

Us. Two passages state that Christ died for "us" (the saints) in particular. Romans 8:32, which is part of a passage that teaches nothing can separate us from the love of Christ (8:35) and "the love of God" (8:39), anchors it all in the salvific reality that God "did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all." Clearly believers are in Paul's mind, and he combines Gen 22:12, 16 (the "handing over" of Isaac) with Isa 53:6, 12 (the vicarious "giving over" of the Suffering Servant) to stress that Jesus' sacrificial death expiates the sins of believers and to prove that the love of the Godhead is absolute and never failing. The question is the implications of "for us all." Moo notes that the emphasis is on the gift for "all believers," but he then adds, "Note, however,

that the text does not say '*only* for all you believers.'"[23] This is a critical question for the issue of particular redemption.

The second "us" passage is Eph 1:4–7, a primary passage on election that says God "chose us in him before the creation of the world . . . predestined us for adoption to sonship. . . . In him we have redemption through his blood." This passage contains the basic themes of Paul's epistle (1:3–14) centering on the fact that the saints ("us") are chosen (vv. 4–5, 11) and thus given redemption and forgiveness (v. 7) by Jesus' death. The emphasis on God's choice "before the creation of the world" appears often (2 Tim 1:9; 1 Pet 1:20; Rev 13:8) to emphasize God's sovereign freedom and grace in electing "us." It emphasizes "the graciousness of God's choice: it happened before believers could do anything to effect it, and therefore it came as an absolutely free gift."[24]

This section certainly proves that the primary purpose of Christ's death was to effect the salvation of the saints (cf. also Titus 2:13–14).[25] The variety of terms used (his people, his sheep, his friends, the church, us) makes this the central theme regarding the purpose of the atonement. A strong case has been made that the extent of the atonement may be narrowed down to the people of God, yet we have not proven this beyond a doubt. Let us look at more evidence.

Christ Died to Effect *Atonement, Not Just to Make It Possible*

This of course is the major issue. Packer considers it a question of the nature of the atonement: "If it was offered to save some who will finally perish, then it cannot have been a transaction securing the actual salvation of all for whom it was designed."[26] In other words, if Christ's death produces only *possible* conversion dependent on human choice, the atonement loses its God-given purpose, that is, to bring salvation to those chosen by God. "So far from magnifying the love and grace of God, this claim (that Christ died for all) dishonors both it and him, for it reduces God's love to an impotent wish and turns the whole economy of 'saving' grace . . . into a monumental failure."[27] Therefore it is critical to hold that "the atonement meritoriously secured the application of the work of redemption to those for whom it was intended and thus rendered their complete salvation certain."[28] Scripture passages seem to point to this supposition.

Luke 19:10. Luke 19:10 states that Christ came "to seek and to save the lost," taken to mean that those "lost" who are made the object of Christ's redeeming

work are effectively "sought" (irresistible grace) and "saved" (complete redemption). God's loving grace will always secure his intended result. The question is whether this passage actually teaches that much. It occurs at the end of the Zaccheus story (19:1–10) and is normally taken to stress "Jesus' initiative to seek the lost and to proclaim salvation for those who respond with faith."[29] The thrust is the ministry of Jesus to the lost and his acceptance of those who come to him in faith, the rich (Zaccheus) and the poor (most others in Luke's Gospel). Luke 19:10 does not state the efficacious result.

Romans 5:10. Another passage frequently noted is Rom 5:10: even while we were "enemies" (meaning both that we were enemies of God and that we were under God's enmity), the death of Christ brought both reconciliation (the righting of the relationship whereby we became friends of God) and salvation (which v. 9 defines as justification, the forensic act of being declared "right" with God on the basis of Christ's atoning death). The question is the implication of this for the extent of the atonement. In the parallel 2 Cor 5:19 (where Paul is discussing our "ministry of reconciliation"), Paul states, "God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ," a passage that emphasizes a universal ministry of reconciliation in and through Christ to the world of humanity.[30] Does Rom 5:10 have a narrower focus, centering only on the elect for whom final salvation is secured, or a wider focus, looking at the believer as saved out of the world of humanity?[31] The section on Christ as the Second Adam overturning the effects of the fall begins, and in v. 12 where sin enters the world. This fits the emphasis in vv. 8 and 10 on the enmity that formerly characterized the believer, so the second focus (saved out of the world) is more likely. In this sense it is difficult to make Rom 5:10 a passage supporting particular redemption.

2 Corinthians 5:21; Galatians 3:13. A similar point is made with regard to 2 Cor 5:21: "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." The point again is that this divine action was accomplished only for those chosen to salvation and that their "righteousness" was absolutely secured by Christ's act. A similar passage is Gal 3:13, stating that Christ was made a curse for us. The reasoning is that Christ would not be made sin or a curse for those who are accursed and who will die in their sin. The vicarious work of Christ did not result in a merely *possible* redemption dependent on a further volitional choice; it had to have been effectual, producing the intended result in the elect.[32] This is the basis of the well-known "double jeopardy" argument: if Christ actually became a curse

and bore the sin of all mankind, how could God then declare anyone guilty and send them to eternal punishment? God would be punishing their sins twice, first in the death of Christ and second in their own eternal condemnation. Or did Christ only "potentially" become a curse for the sins of the world? This is a critical question, and I will respond to it at the end of this essay.

Yet does the language of either text teach this, or is this conclusion read into these texts by the logic of a system? There is no question that Paul's emphasis is on Christ's vicarious assumption of our sin on himself on the cross resulting in the judicial act of God's declaring us "right" before him. It is also viable to see the "we" here as the elect, but that would not be Paul's emphasis but rather our own interpretation dependent on other passages identifying believers as the elect. This passage can be taken either way, for the emphasis is on Jesus' atoning act and its results, not on the guaranteed efficacy of those results. In other words, this is not a passage that must support the doctrine of limited atonement.

Galatians 1:4, 15. Two further passages in Galatians are seen as supporting effective atonement: Gal 1:4 and 15. The first is part of Paul's greetings to the Galatians and describes Christ as the One "who gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father." This is a strong passage for our topic because it anchors our salvation both in the atoning and vicarious sacrifice on the cross and in the will of God. The doctrine of election can easily be seen here as linked to the efficacious nature of that call (note the emphasis on "*our* sins," fitting the "us" passages above). The God who has defeated the cosmic evil powers once for all time will indeed "rescue" those he has chosen by his will. Still one must question whether Paul is speaking of the guaranteed results of salvation. The effects of the cross are paramount, but the absolute efficacy of the atoning work of Christ is not necessarily a part of Paul's teaching here.

Galatians 1:15 describes Paul's calling and conversion, as God "set me apart from my mother's womb and called me by his grace." This is another verse that appears to combine the doctrines of election, effective atonement, and irresistible grace. God had predestined Paul from before his birth and "called" him on the Damascus Road. As Schreiner says, "The word 'calling' here clearly means a call that is effective, a call that convinces the one who is summoned."[33] However, the question is the thrust of the verse. It lies in a context (1:11–24) where Paul is defending his apostolic office; thus, it is more likely that "set apart" and "called" describe Paul's apostolic authority rather

than his conversion, with background in the call of OT prophets to service for Yahweh (e.g., Jer 1:5; Isa 49:1).[34] Schreiner elsewhere links this with verses (Rom 9:7, 24–26; 1 Cor 1:9; Gal 1:6; 5:8; Eph 4:1, 4; 1 Thess 2:12, 4:7; 5:24; 2 Thess 2:14; 1 Tim 6:12; 2 Tim 1:9) where "calling" "is most often associated with a call to salvation."[35] However, this is not one of them and centers on Paul's call to apostolic ministry.

Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:14; 2:14. The final passages in this section (Eph 1:7; Col 1:14; 2:14) are described as places where "the atonement thus appears as an effective propitiatory transaction that actually redeemed—that is, provided redemption for—those particular persons for whom Jesus on the cross became the God-appointed substitute."[36] The first is part of the "us" passage discussed above (Eph 1:4–7) and proclaims, "In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins," which Paul repeats in the sister passage Col 1:14. In both places the blood of Christ becomes the ransom payment that frees people from the bondage of sin and secures their forgiveness. This passage is framed by glory given to God for the riches of his incredible grace (Eph 1:6–7): "Those who praise God for his glorious grace freely given in Christ can rejoice in a deliverance from their trespasses through his sacrificial death on the cross."[37]

The efficacy of Christ's atoning sacrifice continues in Col 2:14, which defines *divine forgiveness* as "having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness . . . he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross." The argument once more is on the actualization of salvation, not its mere possibility: there is no "maybe" based on human choice; rather, there is definite cancellation of sin. Paul here speaks of sin as a debt owed to God that could be paid only by eternal punishment. This charge of indebtedness was nailed to the cross by Christ in his sacrificial death and has thereby been "canceled" and the penalties rescinded. The forgiveness of sin and its legal removal by divine decree based on the cross is central here. All three passages clearly teach the efficacy of God's salvation in Christ. Whether or not these should be linked with the further doctrines of election and limited atonement can and will be debated.

The Atonement Is Always Efficacious

This is the natural outgrowth of the previous section. If Christ's death was never meant to provide merely possible salvation, it follows that it was always the divine intention that it prove effective in saving the elect. R. B. Kuiper speaks of the "sure efficacy of the divine purposes,"[38] and adherents of this

position believe the absolute sovereignty of God demands that he completely control the effects of the atonement. Berkhof adds: "There are no conditions of which the fulfillment is simply dependent on the will of man. The atonement also secures the fulfillment of the conditions that must be met in order to obtain salvation."[39] The point is that such conditions could never be based on the vagaries of human choice, lest salvation be robbed of its power and no one be saved. If Christ died just to make God reconcilable and mankind savable, then the "human ingredient" differentiates between the saved and the lost, and Christ on the cross in the end saves no one.[40]

Galatians 3:13–14. Galatians 3:13–14 (a passage we noted briefly a couple of pages ago) says, "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us . . . redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus." Proponents of particular redemption see this promise as absolute and guaranteed. Christ has provided vicarious atonement ("for us"), bought "us" (the elect) with his blood ("redeemed"), and secured final salvation. These two verses conclude a larger section against the Judaizers in 3:6–14, moving from the true children of Abraham as characterized by faith (3:6–9, using Gen 15:6) to the claim that the works of the law produce a curse that can be removed only by Christ, who took our curse on himself at the cross (Gal 3:10–14). There are two central issues: the "faith" that alone (apart from works) can obtain salvation and the substitutionary work of Christ "for [Gk. *hyper*] us."[41] Through Christ's substitutionary atoning work, Abraham's blessing has been extended to the Gentiles (v. 14), and the recipients of this blessing are not just the "elect" but the "Gentiles" as a class.

Ephesians 1:3–4. Ephesians 1:3–4 forms the opening *berakah* (blessing) of the majestic sentence (1:3–14) Paul creates to sum up the issues of his epistle: election (vv. 4–6), redemption (vv. 7–8), revelation (vv. 9–10), inheritance (vv. 11–12), and salvation (vv. 13–14). In vv. 3–4, Paul thanks God for the spiritual blessings received in the heavenlies (i.e., "'the spiritual dimension' or 'the unseen world of spiritual reality'"[42]). The first (and primary) blessing Paul enumerates is election: "chose us in him before the creation of the world" (see earlier discussion). Packer says that in this "God rules in the world and his will is the final cause of all things," especially in "the salvation of God's people."[43] Moreover, since the elect choice is made before creation, "God's election antedates faith," as the moment of salvation takes place "in the pretemporal, which is to say, eternal, counsel of God" (cf. also 2 Tim 1:9; Rom 9:11; Rev

13:8; 17:8).[44] Thus, since predestination is based on God's eternal choice, by definition it must always be efficacious. This is an important argument, one of the keys to the whole issue. I agree entirely that choice is always of a *person* rather than of a concept (I respect proponents of corporate salvation,[45] but I do not move in that direction); nevertheless, I still believe foreknowledge makes the difference (see further below). God elects those he knows (before the creation of the world) will respond to the Spirit's conviction (as stated in the introduction to this essay).

Ephesians 2:8. Ephesians 2:8–9 is that famous summation of soteriology that states we are saved by the grace of God as his "gift" and "not by works." Since our salvation is entirely an act of a gracious sovereign God, it must be efficacious.[46]

Two points must be made. First, Paul is saying that God's grace is the ground of salvation and faith is the means by which it is appropriated. Second, both salvation and appropriating faith are "gifts" from God, not based on any human merit or work.[47] What are the implications of this? Contrary to many the Arminian view on faith-decision does not constitute a work, and it is not contrary to this passage. Clinton Arnold labels faith here a "heart response to hearing" the gospel, namely, "an accepting response to God's revelation" and "an acceptance of the kerygma."[48] In other words, this famous passage can fit either system and does not predispose us to either.

Philippians 1:29. Philippians 1:29 supports the Reformed doctrine of election: "It has been granted to you on behalf of Christ . . . to believe in him." This repeats Eph 2:8–9 that faith in Christ is entirely a "gracious gift" (Gk. *echaristhē*, "granted" = a grace-gift) of God. It is not something people do of their own will. God alone can enable faith-decision. Moreover, the verse is entirely Christological; both the belief and the suffering of v. 29 are done "on behalf of Christ" (Gk. *hyper christou*), with *hyper* providing the reason for the privilege of faith and suffering.[49] Our faith in Christ and the privilege of experiencing "the fellowship of His suffering" (Phil 3:10 HCSB) are made possible only in Christ. As with Eph 2:8–9, this verse fits both the Calvinist and Arminian views.

2 Timothy 1:9–10. Second Timothy 1:9–10 is another of the great passages describing the reality of salvation in Christ: "He has saved us and called us to a holy life . . . because of his own purpose and grace . . . given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time." This is part of a section (1:6–12) in which Paul is challenging Timothy to find the power of the Spirit to be bold and willing to

suffer for the gospel. Then Paul, in a strongly liturgical passage, provides a series of parallel statements describing the gospel: God has "saved" and "called" us on the basis of his "purpose and grace" through what he has "given" and "revealed" through Christ, who has "destroyed death" and "brought life."[50] Every part centers on the sovereign acts of God in providing salvation through Christ. We have already discussed the fact of God's electing choice "before creation":[51] Ephesians 1:4–7 emphasizes God's absolutely free sovereign choice of the believer. Here we need to discuss the central theme of God's "purpose" in redemption. The point is that if the salvation of those who believe is anchored in God's sovereign "purpose," it must be efficacious. I would agree but define *efficacious* differently, as we have seen.

Romans 8:28–29. The emphasis on God's electing "purpose" occurs in another important passage, Rom 8:28–29, where "in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose" (cf. also Rom 9:11; Eph 1:11; 3:11). Then that purpose is defined in the "golden chain" of 8:29–30 as foreknowledge/predestination, election, justification, and glory. Clearly the reason everything turns out for the best is that God's purpose and plan are in charge (cf. Job 42:2). Schreiner claims that this purpose or "good and sovereign will" must be understood as effectual: "It is not merely an invitation that humans can reject, but it is a summons that overcomes human resistance and effectually persuades them to say yes to God. . . . God's unstoppable purpose in calling believers to salvation cannot be frustrated."[52] This is certainly a viable, logical conclusion, but is it the best one? Does this teach that God's elect purpose is always efficacious and therefore that Christ died only for the elect?[53] Romans 8 distinctly teaches election and the security of the believer, but the final decision on these issues must await the conclusion of this essay. This is certainly one of the primary passages supporting election and particular redemption.

The Intercessory Work of Christ Is Limited to the Elect

Hebrews 7:25. Hebrews 7:25 says that Jesus "is able to save completely" those who come because he "always lives to intercede for them." Jesus' intercessory work seems to be limited to the believer, and it certainly centers on assurance of salvation.[54] This statement is part of that distinct section of Hebrews centering on the Son of God (vv. 3, 28) as the eternal Melchizedekian high priest. The inadequacies of the Levitical priesthood in vv. 11–18 are overcome in the perfect priestly ministry of Jesus the Son. Verse 25 draws the

conclusion from Jesus' permanent priesthood; only a "priest forever" would be able to "save completely" (or "for all time," with both elements of degree and time indicated here). There is certainly a strong emphasis on the efficacy of Christ's redeeming work. Romans 8:34 also notes Christ's intercessory ministry in heaven (cf. 1 John 2:1) and may represent an early confession regarding the risen Christ as "Advocate of the Community."[55] Is there also a sense limiting that redemptive ministry to the elect? It is indeed possible, for the whole emphasis in Hebrews 7 is on the benefits for the believer.

John 17:9. This seems even more the case in the high priestly prayer of Jesus in John 17:9, where he prays, "I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me, for they are yours." This states it even more strongly and has become one of the primary texts for limited atonement. Calvin says that Christ intercedes "with the Father for those only whom the Father willingly loves" and does not pray for the world "because he has no solicitude but about his own flock, which he received from the hand of the Father."[56] Kuiper adds, "If Christ prayed exclusively for those whom the Father had given Him, He also bought only those with His blood."[57] Berkhof asserts that Christ's sacrificial and intercessory works are two aspects of his atoning work and asks, "Why should He limit His intercessory prayer, if He had actually paid the price for all?"[58] However, does this prayer mean that Jesus never prays for the "world" of unbelievers? That is extremely unlikely in light of the fact that "God so loved the world" (it is extremely difficult to limit this to the elect in John) that he "gave his one and only Son" (John 3:16) and that Jesus is called "Savior of the world" in John 4:42 (cf. 1 John 4:14) and removes the sin of the world (John 1:29). The disciples are the focus of the high priestly prayer in 17:9–19, so Jesus is centering on them rather than excluding the world. Andreas Köstenberger asserts, "The world, then, is included in Jesus' prayer to the extent that he desires for it to be won over by believers."[59]

Jesus as the "Ransom for Many" (but Not All) Must Have Died Only for the Elect

Roger Nicole says: "How could Christ intend to die for those the Father has not given him, and whom the Holy Spirit will not regenerate? Unity and harmony in the Trinitarian articulation of the divine purpose demand a redemption which is precisely co-extensive with election on the one hand and effectual application on the other."[60] Mark 10:45 (= Matt 20:28) is the famous soteriological passage in which Christ states directly that he is to die as a

"ransom for many." Several Reformed scholars interpret the "many" as one of those passages[61] that depicts Christ's propitiatory work as limited particularly to the "many" who would be saved and prove themselves to be the elect.[62] The term "ransom" is a metaphor drawn from the payment made to redeem the firstborn (Num 3:46–47; 18:15) or to purchase the freedom of a slave or prisoner of war. Thus, it refers to the blood-payment Christ made on the cross to free the "many" from the bondage of sin. "For" (Gk. *anti*) refers to Christ as our substitute: "The life of Jesus, surrendered in a sacrificial death, brought about the release of forfeited lives. He acted on behalf of the many by taking their place."[63] The "many" seem to be those who come to faith, therefore the elect, with the imagery drawn from Isa 53:11–12, where the Servant of Yahweh surrenders his life for "many." Yet 1 Tim 2:6 states that Christ "gave himself as a ransom for all," and it is quite possible that in both passages "many" and "all" are basically "equivalent."[64] If this is the case, there may be no emphasis on limiting the atonement in Mark 10:45/Matt 20:28. These passages can be understood in terms of particular redemption, but we will have to make the decision after we examine all the evidence.

The Giving of the Father Is Always Efficacious

John 6:37–44 is one of the primary passages for the Reformed approach to election and the security of the believer. God "draws" his chosen to Jesus (v. 44), gives them to him (vv. 37, 39), and keeps them secure so that he will never lose them but raise them up on the last day (vv. 39–40, 44). In all of this, the redemptive work of Father and Son seems always effective. As Jesus brings the people, they already belong to God and are God's gift to Jesus (see also 10:29; 17:2, 6, 9, 24; 18:9). Those chosen will come (irresistible grace), and God's salvific purpose will come to pass (unconditional election). They come because the Father draws them; the Father gives them to Jesus; and Jesus keeps them in the flock.[65] Packer says that "divine love does not stop short at graciously inviting, but that the triune God takes gracious action to ensure that the elect respond . . . both the Christ who saves and the faith that embraces him as Savior are God's gifts, and the latter is as much a foreordained reality as is the former."[66]

This is indeed a major passage, providing evidence for the doctrines of election, irresistible grace, and security as well as for limited atonement. Still there are several points at which I must demur.[67] Predestination is definitely a primary element, but the first thing stated centers on faith-decision (John

6:35, "Whoever comes to me . . . whoever believes in me"), and a major question is the chronology of the *ordo salutis*. Does God's elect choice bring about that faith, or does it work with the faith-response to the Spirit's convicting presence (John 16:8–11)? In my approach it is the latter. The theme of the section is the Jewish rejection of Jesus' claim to be the "bread of life" (John 6:35–36), and clearly they have made a decision to reject his kingdom reality. Faith-decision and God's elect drawing/giving[68] work hand-in-hand in this passage. Moreover, while Jesus here says, "This is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose none of all those he has given me" (v. 39), he states in 17:12 (ESV), "I kept them in your name, which you have given me . . . and not one of them has been lost, except the one doomed to destruction." This links Judas with those "given" Jesus by God, and it describes Judas as "lost." In other words, this does indeed describe God electing, drawing, and giving those who respond (unlike the Jews) to Jesus, but there is more to it (see below on 12:32).

God's Love Is Particular and Centers Especially on the Elect

Packer ably states the Calvinist view:

> So it appears, first, that God loves all in some ways (everyone whom he creates, sinners though they are, receives undeserved good gifts in daily providence), and, second, that he loves some in all ways (that is, in addition to the gifts of daily providence he brings them to faith, to new life, and to glory according to his predestinating purpose).[69]

According to this view, God loves all people, but he does not do so equally. There is a special, particular love for the elect, and there is a qualitative difference between love for the reprobate and love for the people of God.[70]

T. F. Torrance speaks against this, arguing that the doctrine did not originate with Calvin but with later followers like Jonathan Edwards and John Owen, primarily because they begin with the premise that if Christ died for all and some are not saved, then he died in vain, and if God loves all people and some reject him, then he has loved in vain. Since there can be no imperfection in God, the divine love and the death of Christ can focus only on the elect who will come to salvation.[71] Torrance believes this is false Aristotelian logic, as if God "creates all men under natural law for obedience but only the elect in love for love."[72] For him the answer is in the incarnation, as God loved his enemies. We must abandon the logical system with its pigeon holes and begin to understand God's "self-revelation in Jesus Christ as Father, Son and Holy Spirit," namely, a God "who loves all his creatures . . . who is our 'suffering

God.'"[73] In other words, for Torrance his Reformed theology demands universal love rather than two levels of love.

Let us consider the passages used to support this view of a special love for the elect.

Romans 1:7. In Rom 1:7, Paul describes his readers as "loved by God and called to be saints." In and of itself this verse does not establish a special love of God for the redeemed, but it does link divine love to the elect.

Romans 9:13, 23. The issue comes more to the fore in Rom 9:13 ("Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated," quoting Mal 1:2–3) and 9:23, which speaks of the objects of his wrath—"prepared for destruction." Schreiner believes both passages demand a view of double predestination, that God has chosen or "prepared" people for wrath as objects of his hatred, while others he has chosen to be recipients of his love and mercy.[74] If we take "love"/"hate" literally or as a Semitic contrast meaning he loved Esau less than Jacob, it would fit the point here. It is also possible to understand this corporately, since Gen 32:28 uses "Jacob" for Israel and Gen 25:30 uses "Esau" for Edom. That is the meaning of Malachi 1, so it then would mean that God is choosing one group from Israel and rejecting another. It is probably best to understand with Moo that God is "accepting" one group and "rejecting" the other.[75] Moreover it blends the corporate and individual side: there is divine choice (here) and also human responsibility (9:30–33). My point throughout this essay is that it is unnecessary to make either aspect prior: God's election and our faith-decision function together. Cranfield has the best solution for 9:23: we must understand God's "wrath" in relationship to his mercy. In 9:22 ("bore with great patience the objects of his wrath") and 2:4 ("his kindness, forbearance and patience . . . intended to lead you to repentance"), we have the one side, while here ("prepared for destruction") we have the other side of God's love and justice. So the tone here is their destruction on the basis of unbelief, not on the basis of predestination to unbelief.[76]

Colossians 3:12; 1 Thessalonians 1:4; 2 Thessalonians 2:13–14. Several other verses combine the ideas of election and divine love. Colossians 3:12 calls the saints "God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved" and introduces the section (3:12–17) on Christian virtues and conduct. First Thessalonians 1:4 parallels this: "We know, brothers and sisters loved by God, that he has chosen you"; it introduces that epistle. Second Thessalonians 2:13–14 leads into the exhortation to "stand firm": "Brothers and sisters loved by the Lord, because God chose you . . . called you." Love and election in all three passages function

together as the basis of Christian thoughts and actions. The question is this: Does this interdependence between divine love and election point to a doctrine of particular redemption, or can it coexist within a framework of corporate election or of the Arminian triad of foreknowledge → faith → election/decision? That is the subject of this essay.

In conclusion, a formidable array of biblical material supports the doctrine of limited atonement, and while several passages can be explained another way, the cumulative evidence gives strong validity to the Reformed position. I must admit that after examining all the evidence more deeply than I ever have before, I appreciate this view more than I ever thought possible. However, we cannot make up our minds until we have considered all the evidence, so we must now turn to the data supporting the Arminian position.

Texts That Favor Universal Atonement

Not only Arminians but many Calvinists (e.g., Millard Erickson and Bruce Demarest who are often labeled "sublapsarians," meaning that after the fall God decreed that Christ die for all the fallen) accept the view that Christ died for every person. Thiessen provides the key questions: "Did Christ die for the whole world, or only for the elect? If for the whole world, then why are all not saved? And if for the whole world, in what sense? If for the elect only, then what about the justice of God?"[77] The answer for this perspective is that the biblical evidence and the justice of God both demand that the atonement has universal ramifications. Erickson provides a good definition: "God intended the atonement to make salvation possible for all persons. Christ died for all, but his atoning death becomes effective only when accepted by the individual."[78] The atonement is sufficient for all but efficient only for those who respond to the Spirit and believe. Let us now consider the biblical evidence this position adduces.

The Universal Salvific Will of God Points to Universal Atonement

Two sets of passages point in this direction, namely, that God "wants/wills" all people to be saved (see also Rom 2:4; 1 Tim 2:4; Rev 14:6–7, discussed in the next section), which would not be as true under a view of limited atonement.

2 Peter 3:9. Second Peter 3:9 directly states this: "The Lord . . . is patient with you, not wanting [Gk. *boulomai*] anyone to perish, but everyone to come

to repentance." The term for "patience" is *makrothymia* ("longsuffering, forbearance") and means that God's love is willing to wait and withhold his wrath in order to give "every person" time to repent. There are three primary ways to understand this passage: (1) God has a compassionate desire for all (the thrust here) but a "decretive" will that functions only for the elect.[79] (2) The term "everyone" here must be understood on the basis of "with you," therefore referring to the believers and those turning to God as opposed to the false teachers.[80] Both of these are commensurate with a Reformed understanding. (3) God's will that every person be saved stems from his love for every human made in his image (see further below on the third subsection) and leads to both his sending his Son to die for all and sending his Spirit to convict every person and bring them to a faith-decision. This is the best interpretation, for 2 Peter is all about the wrong choices of those who decide to follow the false teachers. Moreover, it does not lead to universalism, for while God desires them all, a significant number refuse to repent.[81]

John 1:4, 7, 9. Another set of passages teaching the same thing is John 1:4, 7, 9. Putting them together, Jesus the Word as "the light of all mankind" (v. 4) came so that "all might believe" (v. 7) through his revealing presence that "gives light to everyone" (v. 9). We are at the heart of John's message, looking to "the revelation of God in Jesus, through whom every person is confronted with their sin and with the light that God has brought in the sacrificial death of Jesus."[82] The goal is the salvation of mankind, and John details the mission from God to Jesus to the Spirit to the church by which that universal mission is to take place.[83] John is all about faith decision, with "every person" encountering the light of God in Jesus and being drawn to him (12:32). As Köstenberger says, John "stresses the universal scope of Jesus' coming and the potential spiritual enlightenment available to all who would believe, an enlightenment that is available not merely to Jews but to all people."[84] Schreiner opposes any idea of a "prevenient grace" that makes atonement available to all people. He argues that the "enlightenment" here is not an inward illumination drawing the unbeliever to Christ but an external exposure that reveals their true relationship to God and Christ.[85] I would argue that in John, the drawing of sinners through Christ as "the light of the world" (8:12) is predominant (see the next section).

Passages Using Universal Language Point to Universal Atonement

This is the major section under this category and contains nearly twenty passages. One could write a doctoral dissertation just on this aspect, so I will have to control the discussion carefully. I begin with two OT passages.

Isaiah 53:6. Isaiah 53:6 says, "We all, like sheep, have gone astray . . . and the LORD has laid on him / the iniquity of us all." First, "the extent of sin is universal," and that is counterbalanced by the fact that "the extent of what will be laid on the suffering servant exactly parallels the extent of sin." The conclusion: "Just as everyone sins, everyone is also atoned for."[86] It does seem as if this should be one of the "us" passages in the previous section ("Christ died exclusively for his people") and refer just to the believing remnant of Israel. This is certainly true in part, but as Oswalt says, "By its lack of specificity" it invites "an extension to the whole world."[87] Humans, specifically Israel, like sheep tend to stray and get lost. The Servant has been sent by God to bear "the iniquity of us all," all people potentially but in particular the faithful in Israel.

Ezekiel 33:11. Then there is Ezek 33:11: "I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live" (cf. 18:31–32). This continues the universal-salvific-will language of the previous section, demonstrating God's intention to redeem not just the elect but the wicked as well. God does not limit his love and mercy to those he has chosen; his salvific lovingkindness embraces the wicked as well.

Piper responds that God has two wills (a moral will and a sovereign will), at times that the wicked not die (Ezek 33:11) and at other times (as with the sons of Eli in 1 Sam 2:22–25) that they die (both passages use the same Hebrew word for "desire/take pleasure"). God has the right to will mercy or to will judgment as he pleases.[88] I agree with what Piper says but understand it differently: God wills that all come and makes it possible for them to do so. This is the same as Romans 9–10: chapter 9 stresses God's sovereignty, and chapter 10 stresses humanity's responsibility.

John 1:29. John contains many of these passages, as we already saw in the previous section. In John 1:29, when Jesus joins the Baptist after his baptism, John tells those around him, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" There is considerable debate as to whether the Baptist was speaking apocalyptically of crushing evil by force or paschally of Jesus as the sacrificial Lamb who takes our sins upon himself. That is not germane for our issue (though I think the latter more in keeping with the message of the Fourth Gospel[89]), for the issue here is the meaning of "the sin of the world." In

John's writings *kosmos* occurs 105 times, always of the world of unbelievers who are hostile to God and yet are the object of God's love and mission. The world (including the Jewish people, 1:10–11) is ruled by Satan (12:31; 14:30) and subject to death (8:24) because of unbelief (3:36; 16:9), but Christ has defeated Satan (12:31; 16:11) and brought salvation to the world (4:42; 5:24; 11:48; 12:32). From this it seems likely that atonement in John is for the whole "world." Another issue is the meaning of "take away," which by this interpretation means sins are potentially removed for all "the world" but effectively removed only for the believers (on the "double jeopardy" question, see the essay's conclusion).

John 3:17. In John 3:17 (we will discuss 3:16 later), we learn that God did not send his Son "to condemn the world, but to save the world through him." This is a problem text for the doctrine of double predestination (that God chose some to perish and some to be saved), for this says directly God did not want to "condemn" but to "save." Also 3:17 and its parallel in 12:47 (Christ is not Judge but Savior) seemingly contradict 5:22, 30; 9:39 (Christ is Judge). John 8:15–16 brings the two sides together: Christ does not judge (8:15), and then when he judges, he is just (8:16). In other words, Christ did not come to judge, but his coming encountered every person and produced faith-decision, so he saves those who believe and judges those who reject him. The main point for us is that "the world" is the object of the encounter. Once more Christ provides atonement for the whole world.

John 4:42. John 4:42 concludes Jesus' mission to the Samaritan woman. Jesus offers her "living water . . . a spring of water welling up to eternal life" (4:10, 14). Her witness leads to the evangelization of her village, with a great many from the village becoming believers (4:39, 41). At the conclusion of the story, the villagers declare Jesus "the Savior of the world" (4:42). The Samaritans were adversaries to the Jews as a political and religious entity; yet here they with the woman acknowledge him as Savior for themselves and indeed for the "world," with implications for Roman imperialism (Jesus, not the emperor, is "Savior") as well as the world's religions. In Johannine theology "Jesus' harvest among the Samaritans therefore signals the return of a part of the unbelieving world to God as a sign of the universal scope of Jesus' saving mission."[90] Some might say that "world" here does not mean all humanity but some non-Jews, namely, the Samaritans: Jesus is the Savior not only of the Jews but also of the Samaritans. But that begs the question, for throughout John (e.g., 3:16–17 in the previous section) "world" refers to the

world of humanity. There is no basis for restricting it in 4:42 just to the Samaritans.

John 6:51. John 6:51 continues this. Toward the end of the bread of life discourse, Jesus makes his incredible demand that the people encounter him totally by metaphorically eating his flesh and drinking his blood as the Passover lamb (6:51–58).[91] He defines it carefully in v. 51: "This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." Clearly we are speaking of substitutionary atonement, the "giving" of Christ's body on the cross "for" (Gk. *hyper*) the world; this atonement is universal, with once more the "world" not just the elect as the object. This takes us back to the same question noted before: If Jesus' death substituted for the sins of every person, how can anyone be condemned to eternal fire? We are back to the basic definition: Christ's death is sufficient for all but efficient only for those who respond in faith. This dissatisfies many, but I believe it is basically correct (see further the conclusion).

John 8:12. In John 8:12 in one of the seven "I AM" sayings, Jesus declares himself "the light of the world." This is critical in that Jesus is personally fulfilling the candle ceremony of the Feast of Tabernacles (see 7:37–39, where he fulfills the water ceremony of that feast). In the ceremony in which four huge candles are lit each evening of the feast, it was said all of Jerusalem was filled with light. Now Jesus is saying all the world will be lit (cf. section on John 1:4, 7, 9 above) with himself as the Shekinah glory, the pillar of fire by night in Exod 13:21–22; 14:24 that brings light into darkness (John 8:12). Once more the "world" and not just the elect will receive the light of God through Jesus.

John 11:48. The next passage is in John 11:48, this time on the lips of Jesus' enemies (11:45–52) who say, "If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him." They realized the universal implications of Jesus' ministry. His influence was going way beyond Galilee and Judea into the Gentile lands of the Transjordan and Syria. It was truly becoming a universal mission.

John 12:32, 47. Two passages in John 12 (vv. 32, 47) conclude our coverage of the Fourth Gospel. The first occurs during Passion Week when Jesus discusses with Greek pilgrims in 12:20–36 his coming death. After God affirms Jesus' glory (vv. 28–29), Jesus states that the defeat of Satan is imminent and then declares, "And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself." This is the concluding "lifted up" saying, John's equivalent to the passion predictions of the Synoptics, and the thrust is that when Jesus is lifted

up on the cross, he will be lifted up to glory. His exaltation is connected to his mission, for at that time he will "draw all people" to himself. Interestingly, in 6:37–44 (see previous section), God draws just those who come (the elect), while here Jesus draws everyone, and the Spirit will continue Jesus' work, convicting[92] the "world" of sin, righteousness, and judgment. Moreover, this "draw[ing] all people" is defined next as "the kind of death he was going to die," defining Jesus' death as exaltation and mission. In this sense again the atonement has a universal dimension, as Jesus dies to "draw all people" to the salvation that the cross made possible. Briefly, 12:47 repeats 3:17 (see above section on 3:17) that Christ has come to "save the world."

Calvinist scholars respond to such arguments in four ways: (1) Some like John Owen interpret "world" in John to refer not to the reprobate but to the elect[93] (a view that makes no sense of the meaning of "world" in John). (2) Some hyper-Calvinists interpret "all" to mean not every person but "all kinds of " people, so that salvation is not offered to every single individual but to "those kinds" God has chosen. (3) Others like Calvin see God having two wills: offering the gospel to "all" (the public proclamation of it) but effectually giving it only to the elect.[94] (4) Many interpret passages showing that the gospel is available to all (John 3:17; 4:42; 12:32) in light of 6:37, 44: the Father effectively draws to salvation only those he has chosen and given to Christ.[95]

The latter two are the more viable and the key to the issue this essay addresses. My view is that in John predestination and faith-decision function together; divine choice makes human response possible (by the prevenient grace of the Holy Spirit) but is not the sole causative agent. This essay's introduction and conclusion explain this further.

Romans 2:4. Now let us turn to Paul, who adds further evidence to the universal implications of the atonement for "all people." We begin with three passages from Romans.

In Rom 2:4, we see the "kindness, forbearance and patience" of God that wishes to "lead you to repentance," offered in Romans 1–3 to Jew and Gentile alike. The point is that such "kindness" would make no sense if it was not a genuine offer of the possibility of repentance.

Romans 5:18. Romans 5:18 further states this: the two sides of "condemnation" (which the "trespass" of Adam produces) as well as "justification and life" (which the "righteous act" of Christ produces) are both alike "for all people." The powerful first Adam/second Adam passage of Rom 5:12–21[96] is not built on a distinction between the reprobate and the elect but

on the universal effects of Adam and Christ for every individual. Paul moves from the gift of justification by faith in 3:21–5:11 and to the section on the problem of sin and its solution in sanctification (5:12–8:39). Sin and death came upon "all people, because all sinned" (5:12), and that means all people, believer and unbeliever alike. So in 5:18, condemnation and justification are the two life-options for "all people."

Romans 10:11–13. Romans 10:11–13 is part of the section on Israel's responsibility for rejecting God's offer of salvation in 9:30–10:21. After the creedal statement on the place of profession and belief (10:9–10), this passage answers the question, Who then can be saved? The answer is "anyone" who "believes" (10:11) and "calls" (10:13). Once again, the universal scope of the gospel is adduced: "The same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him" (10:12). Moo labels "anyone" the "element of universality" and says that v. 12 "unpacks the universality inherent in 'anyone.'" Moreover, v. 13 with its quote from Joel 2:32 combines the two critical terms, "everyone" and "salvation."[97]

2 Corinthians 5:14–15, 19. Now we turn to 2 Cor 5:14–15, 19, part of that section where Paul discusses the "ministry of reconciliation" (5:11–6:10), itself part of the larger digression on apostolic ministry (2:14–7:4). In these verses Paul is marveling over the great "control" or "compulsion" Christ's love has over "us" (believers); the depths of Christ's love have led Paul to be "out of his mind," probably a reference to the way the Corinthians mocked his behavior in following Christ. The reason for this compulsion to follow Christ all the way was the death of Christ and its atoning effects. "One died for all" is likely an early Christian creed (cf. Rom 5:8; 1 Cor 15:3) on the vicarious death ("for [Gk. *hyper*] all") of Christ. Paul emphasizes "all," which appears three times in 2 Cor 5:14–15; yet v. 15 further defines "all" by "those who live." This is a complex issue, for the presence of "all" seems to refer to Jesus' universal death for all humankind; yet "those who live" seems to narrow it to believers. Murray Harris gives the best option: there is a broader sense of universal atonement in the "all" phrases, and then Paul narrows it to the saints in v. 15b.[98] In other words, Paul recognizes that Jesus died for all people, but the saints alone get to experience the new "life" in him (cf. Rom 6:1–4). This universal thrust is also seen in v. 19, where Paul celebrates the results of God in Christ (the ontological unity of the Godhead seen in their corroborative action), namely, the "reconciliation of the world" to the triune Godhead. As in John, "world" is

best seen as the world of humankind, the focus of Christ's mission and (I argue in this essay) of his death.

1 Timothy 2:3–4. A major passage, often noted, is 1 Tim 2:3–4: "God our Savior . . . wants (Gk. *thelei*) all people to be saved." Paul emphasizes the divine "Savior" whose "will" is for the "salvation" of mankind, restated in v. 6 where Paul says that Jesus "gave himself as a ransom for all people." Johnson says, "This ranks with Rom 3:27–31 and 11:26–32 as the most inclusive and universal of Paul's statements concerning God's effective will (*thelei*) for the world."[99] Some like George Knight prefer to take this as "all kinds of people" in the sense of God's elect,[100] but Marshall rightly notes that this stems from a doctrine of particular election and states, "Nothing in the context suggests such a limitation." Paul's point is that God's "real will" or purpose is the salvation of every person, but "there is no guarantee that this purpose will necessarily be fully accomplished" due to the "condition of belief in the gospel, the human responsibility in the process."[101] This emphasis continues in 2:6, asserting that Christ "gave himself as a ransom for all people," once more stressing universal redemption/atonement from v. 4.

Piper's answer is to reflect on the tension between God's universal, saving will of 1 Tim 2:4 and his unconditional individual election in Rom 9:6–23: "God wills not to save all, though he is willing to save all, because there is something else that he wills more, which would be lost if he exerted his sovereign power to save all."[102] I agree with the basic point of God's two wills but disagree with Piper that the "higher commitment" for the Arminian is "human self-determination" as opposed to the "sovereign, efficacious grace" of the Calvinist. That is too great a dichotomy, for Arminians accept the biblical thrust of God's "sovereign grace" and believe it has priority in salvation, with God's "prevenient grace" in the Holy Spirit the only thing making faith possible. So there are two wills, but they function together to convict the world and to save the believers. In this, repentance and regeneration (the effects of the atonement) remain a real God-given possibility for the unbeliever.

1 Timothy 4:10. The other key verse in the debate is 1 Tim 4:10: "the living God" is "the Savior of all people, and especially of those who believe." Both sides claim this verse and obviously understand it differently. This is part of a section (4:6–16) in which Paul challenges Timothy to improve his teaching ministry and Paul explains why he "labors and strives" for godliness, namely, the hope of salvation for "all" and the experience of salvation by "believers." As

Erickson says on this verse, "Apparently the Savior has done something for all persons, though it is less in degree than he has done for those who believe."[103] This favors the view espoused in the introduction that atonement is sufficient for all and efficient for those who believe. The debate concerns whether disbelief can stymie the will/purpose of God for all people or God's will is always efficacious. I cannot agree with Piper that "God wills not to save all," for that to me contradicts 1 Tim 2:4, 6; 4:10. Knight takes "all people" here to be "all sorts of people," understands *malista* as connoting not "especially" but "that is," and so sees believers as the subject throughout, thus "Savior of all sorts of people, that is, believers."[104] But this does not fit Paul's frequent stress on God's mission to "all," as we saw above (Rom 5:18; 10:1–3; 2 Cor 5:14–15, 19; 1 Tim 2:3–4; Titus 2:11). The far more natural understanding is two levels of the work of God: (1) to all and (2) "especially" to believers.

Hebrews 2:9. Let us now turn to the General Epistles and begin with Heb 2:9, which says that Jesus "by the grace of God . . . taste[d] death for everyone." This is part of the midrash (Heb 2:8b–9) on Ps 8:4–6 (Heb 2:6–8a), showing how Jesus in his incarnation experienced humiliation and exaltation. The central point is Christological: Jesus is the ultimate exemplar of humanity and fulfills the meaning inherent in Psalm 8. As William Lane says, "In Jesus we see exhibited humanity's true vocation. In an extraordinary way he fulfills God's design for all creation and displays what had always been intended for all humankind."[105] The "little while lower" refers to his time on earth. The "present" time when all is not "in subjection" is the church age before the Eschaton. His "glory and honor" are commensurate with his sacrifice, and this defines his postresurrection exaltation, as based on his humiliation when he "suffered death," namely, "tasting death for everyone." In "for" (Gk. *hyper*) there is a vicarious emphasis, as Christ's atoning sacrifice has universal implications "for everyone."

1 John 2:2. Another important passage is 1 John 2:2, which designates Christ as "the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world." John is telling his readers to conquer sin by walking in the light via Christ, who is both "advocate" and "atoning sacrifice" (1:5–2:2). Yarbrough brings out that *hilasmos* here and elsewhere (Rom 3:25; Heb 2:17; 9:5; 1 John 4:10) is a major atonement term that combines the ideas of expiation (canceling or forgiving sin) and propitiation (turning away God's wrath by a vicarious offering).[106] This echoes 1 Tim 4:10, but that emphasizes the believer ("especially of those who believe") while this accents the universal

effects of Christ's atoning work ("the whole world"). Still, as Yarbrough adds, "There is *both* universality *and* particularity in Christ's atoning work."[107] Particularity is seen in "for our sins" and universality in "the sins of the whole world." The both-and is critical; Christ's death makes redemption available for all, but only those who believe experience it. This appears better in light of the larger Johannine emphasis on universality than to force a particular redemption viewpoint on "the sins of the whole world," as if that does not include unbelievers. First John 4:10 echoes this more balanced view ("atoning sacrifice for our sins"), but we discuss that further below.

Universal Atonement Is the Result of God's Universal Love

In the above section "Texts That Favor Particular Redemption," I discuss the view of God's particular love that centers primarily on the elect. So here I want to cover the Arminian response that God loves all, not primarily the elect.

John 3:16. The primary verse is the best known of them all, which I will translate in accordance with the Greek: "God loved the world so much [Gk. *houtōs*] that it resulted [*hōste*] in him giving his one and only Son" (John 3:16). Here God's salvific love is universal, going out to all the world (cf. "the whole world" in 1 John 2:2 above). In John the world is characterized as filled with rebellion; yet it is also the object of God's salvific mission. Jesus is "Savior of the world" (John 4:42; 1 John 4:14) sent to bring "all" to God's salvation (John 3:17; 11:48; 12:32).

Romans 5:8. This parallels Rom 5:8, where God demonstrated "his own love" in that "while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." All sinners are the object of God's redeeming love.

1 John 4:8–10. At first glance 1 John 4:8–10 seems to support a limited atonement view because God shows his love "among *us*" and sends his Son to be the "atoning sacrifice for our sins." However, 4:10 repeats 2:2, where Christ makes atonement for "the whole world," and 4:8–10 prepares for 4:14, where the Father sends Christ "to be the Savior of the world." Clearly, 1 John 4 emphasizes Christ's atoning work for all humankind, and the saints receive that redeeming love through belief. There are two levels to atonement: (1) the universal adequacy of Christ's death (the purpose of general atonement) and (2) the necessity of coming to faith (Rom 3:17–4:25, which stresses "faith" eighteen times), making it possible for sinners to experience Christ's atoning work (specific atonement).

Many for Whom Christ Died Will Perish

Several passages "speak of Christ dying for those who will not be saved."[108] Thus, this intimates that atonement is not restricted to the elect but is made available to all.

Romans 14:15. We will begin with Rom 14:15, which warns the "strong" Gentile Christians not to impose their superior knowledge (about food laws and religious festivals) on the "weak" Jewish Christians and cause them to "stumble" or fall away from their Christian walk. To do so would mean "by your eating [to] destroy someone for whom Christ died." It is generally agreed that the term "destroy" refers to spiritual apostasy, "to turn away entirely from their faith."[109] Note that apostasy is a real possibility for people for whom Christ made atonement. The debate over apostasy is not the subject here. Still, let us assume, as Calvinists state, that these are professing Christians and not true believers. Paul is still saying that Christ "died for" them.

1 Corinthians 8:11. Parallel to Rom 14:15 is 1 Cor 8:11 in the section on meat offered to idols. Paul's point is that if a young weak Christian "for whom Christ died" sees you exercise your freedom by eating in a temple, he or she can go back into idolatry and be "destroyed by your knowledge," using the same verb as in Rom 14:15 (Gk. *apollymi*) for spiritual apostasy.

Hebrews 10:29. Hebrews 10:29 (parallel to 6:4–6) describes the apostates who have kept on sinning after receiving the knowledge of the truth (10:26) as having "treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified them." Here "the death of Christ is related to the enactment of the new covenant," and "Christ's sacrificial death on the cross" is "viewed from the perspective of covenant inauguration."[110] Once more such a person for whom Christ died is seen as headed for eternal judgment: "No sacrifice for sins is left, but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God" (v. 27).

2 Peter 2:1. Second Peter 2:1 describes the false teachers as "denying the sovereign Lord who bought them—bringing swift destruction on themselves." In this chapter Peter is exposing the pernicious group of false teachers who infiltrated the church. Here the "sovereign Lord" or Master is likely Christ, who "bought" or purchased them with his blood. Here too these heretics have been the object of Christ's atoning work and have denied it, resulting in "swift destruction," with the "swift" referring to the certainty of imminent judgment.[111] These people rejected the doctrine of Christ's return and final judgment, and very soon they would experience just how wrong they were!

In all four of these passages those for whom Christ died are to receive eternal punishment. The atonement is not just for the elect.

The Gospel Must Be Universally Proclaimed

Matthew 28:18–20. No one denies the reality of the Great Commission (Matt 28:18–20) and all other texts on the church's mission to the world. Proponents of universal atonement believe this has implications for the purpose of Christ's atoning work and the atonement is meant for all to whom the gospel is preached. As John Miley says, "The very terms of the great commission are decisive of this, that the gospel is for all. And its universal preaching should be, and in the very nature of it must be, the free offer of saving grace in Christ to all."[112]

Matthew 11:28. Several other passages present this obligation of every believer to preach this "free offer of saving grace" to the world. Two passages in Matthew prepare for 28:18. First is 11:28, part of the pastoral promise and invitation of 11:28–30: "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest." The inclusive "all" refers both to recalcitrant Israel and the world as a whole.[113] These are the unbelievers, those troubled and beaten down by life.

Matthew 24:14. Then in Matt 24:14 in the Olivet Discourse, where Jesus prophesies a time of great apostasy (24:10–12), he commissions his followers to their primary task to proclaim this gospel of the kingdom to the entire world. The Eschaton is coming ("then the end will come"), and the primary task of the church in the interim is evangelistic, the universal mission. Again this favors the idea of a gospel and an atonement truly offered to all. Certainly this can be interpreted in both directions, for example, of a God whose moral will desires the salvation of all but whose decretive will makes that gospel effective only for the elect. However, universal atonement is the more natural way to understand "the entire world" as the focus of gospel proclamation.

Acts (Especially 1:8; 17:30). This same focus obviously continues in Acts, where another form of the Great Commission centers on the work of the Holy Spirit in the church's mission to the world (1:8). This verse is the table of contents for the book: Jerusalem (1–7), Judea (8:1–3), Samaria (8:4–25), and the movement of the church "to the ends of the earth" (8:26–28:31). The focus of Acts as a whole is on the witness of the church to the whole world.

Acts 17:30, in particular, is part of Paul's famous Areopagus speech in Athens. God, who created the world and all the people in it (17:24, 26), now

calls all to "seek" him (v. 27) and "commands all people everywhere to repent." This is both explicit and emphatic, with a double stress on "all people" and "everywhere." It is difficult to imagine that Luke does not intend that Jesus' death made atonement available to everyone.

Titus 2:11. In this context we must note Titus 2:11, which provides a fitting close to this subsection: "The grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people." Paul frames this statement with references to "God our Savior" (2:10) and "our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ" (2:13), so it is a major statement of salvific intent and echoes 1 Tim 2:3–4, where "God our Savior . . . wants all people to be saved" (on which see above).

Proponents of particular redemption commonly link "the grace of God" with the doctrine of election, but here Paul links God's grace with God's universal salvific will (see "Universal Salvific Will of God" above). Knight wishes to translate "all people" (the strong *pasin anthrōpois*, stressing the inclusive force) as "all classes of men" and to make it equivalent to "us" (i.e., Christians) in v. 14 ("gave himself for us to redeem us").[114] However, Marshall catches the flow of thought better as he describes "the saving epiphany" resulting from "the character of God as Saviour," with "grace" referring to the saving work of Christ exercised in God's "saving power" as extended to "all" without limitation, thereby providing the foundation for "our" ethical response in vv. 12–15.[115]

Sinners Are Presented as Unbelievers Whose Rejection Has Brought About Their Damnation

Sailer asks, "If Christ died only for the elect and for no one else, why should those non-elect souls *believe* this witness concerning Jesus Christ?"[116] The point is that God intends the gospel to be proclaimed to all and for all to be truly given the opportunity to believe.

John 3:18. The first passage on this is John 3:18: "Whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God's one and only Son." This is the result of God's deep love for the world expressed in 3:16 and Christ's mission to save the world in 3:17 (both discussed above). It seems clear here that a genuine faith-decision is made available to all the world and therefore that atonement is made possible on the basis of faith received through the grace of God (Eph 2:8–9) and the conviction of the Holy Spirit (John 16:8–11). Unbelievers have only themselves to blame for their eternal dilemma.

1 John 5:10–11. In Johannine theology this is connected to 1 John 5:10–11: "Whoever does not believe God has made him out to be a liar, because they have not believed the testimony God has given about his Son." It could be argued that all John wants (he is combating heretics) is an intellectual assent to these realities (the view of some), but Sailer rightly objects that this "is hardly the sort of belief demanded of all men. Judgment is based on a lack of belief (John 3:18; 8:24), and this judgment could not be reversed through intellectual assent (which Satan no doubt owns) to the saving benefits of Christ's atonement."[117] Yarbrough speaks of "the monstrous folly of unbelief," for it not only rejects God but puts a "lie" to his offer of salvation, namely, to his "testimony" about the saving work of his Son.[118]

2 Thessalonians 2:10–12. In 2 Thess 2:10–12, Paul concludes the "man of lawlessness" passage by asserting that the wicked "perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved" and prefer to "believe the lie." Again we have strong language describing the possibility of their salvation, their deliberate rejection and preference for Satan's lies, and the condemnation that results. As Charles Wanamaker states, "Although this might be understood in terms of predestination, the next clause in v. 10 . . . makes it clear that those who are perishing chose the path of destruction for themselves."[119] They clearly had a choice and preferred the lies of wickedness to the truths of Christ.

A View of Universal Atonement Does Not Lead to Pelagianism or Universalism

Pelagius was a monk from Britain who at the beginning of the fifth century denied original sin. He argued that humankind is basically good and that people by their free choice can save themselves. Augustine proved Pelagius a heretic, and the councils of Carthage (418) and Ephesus (431) condemned him. Calvinists commonly accuse Arminians of being semi-Pelagian in stressing free will and faith-decision, asserting that such a view de facto turns faith into a work contra Eph 2:8–9. Admittedly, this is a distinct possibility, but in reality the Arminian system does not fall into this error because of the doctrine of prevenient grace. Universal atonement means Christ died and made atonement for sin possible, but it does not mean humans control their own salvation. Those who take this view have the same definition of total depravity as Calvinists: whenever fallen humans make a decision about Christ, they always reject because they are dominated by sin. God the Holy Spirit convicts every person, overcomes their depravity, and makes a faith-decision possible.

Thereby this does not violate Eph 2:8–9, and God's prevenient grace is the source of all decisions. But this grace is resistible, and people make a true choice. Thus there is no semi-Pelagianism in Arminian theology. One could say that if the gift is universal and God does not control how people respond, then by definition humans control their own salvation. Yet this defines too narrowly what "divine sovereignty" connotes. God has not surrendered his control to human choice. Rather, he has sovereignly made human choice possible. It is the Spirit that is in control, and faith-response is passive (yielding to the Spirit) not active (controlling their salvation).

The same is true with respect to universalism. Berkhof states, "It should also be noted that the doctrine that Christ died for the purpose of saving all men logically leads to absolute universalism, that is, to the doctrine that all men are actually saved."[120] But is this correct? A few have turned in this direction but not many. Choice must by its nature include the decision to reject Christ, so actually there is little room within Arminianism for universal salvation.[121] Moreover, eternal punishment is so predominant in the NT that it is virtually inconceivable that any serious student of the Word would develop a doctrine in which God's love triumphs over (no, negates!) his judgment and justice. A holy God must have interrelated aspects of justice and love within his holy nature. Certainly, people can construe some passages to say this ("In Christ all will be made alive," 1 Cor 15:22; "every knee should bow, / every tongue acknowledge," Phil 2:10–11), but dogma is established on the whole council of Scripture. The innumerable passages on final judgment (e.g., Matt 13:41–42, 49–50; 25:46; Rom 1:32; 2:5–9; 1 Cor 4:5; Heb 6:2; 2 Pet 2:4; Rev 20:11–15) demand a view of eternal punishment for the enemies of Christ.

Summary

The material we have considered on behalf of universal atonement is also strong, fits a logical system, and is a coherent hypothesis. We have shown four things: (1) God loves the world "so much" (John 3:16) that his salvific will extends to all humankind, and therefore "all" the "world" is the focus of Jesus' atoning death, attested in a wide range of passages. (2) People for whom Christ died and made atonement can suffer eternal damnation, meaning that Christ did atone for unbelievers. (3) Passages on the commission of the church to witness to the whole world show Christ's atoning work is available to all humankind. (4) The NT sees unbelief as a result of choice, and the judgment that results points to that choice. In short, the Arminian side strongly argues

that the biblical data supports the universal effects of the atonement on the world. Christ died for all people, not just for the elect.

Conclusion

Most studies of doctrine, especially those arguing for a particular viewpoint, spend their time showing (1) why their position has the greatest logical validity and (2) why their verses prove their point, while their opposition misuses the (comparatively few) verses that might support their view. Few if any put all the verses together and develop a comprehensive law that does justice to all the passages. Yet proper methodology for theological formation demands that the dogmatic description do justice to all the biblical data, not just those verses that support the conclusion that the system demands. We must also admit that both Calvinism and Arminianism are logically viable and defensible. Both are coherent systems. What we must decide is not so much which has stronger logic (I believe they are virtually equal on that score) but rather which is more biblically viable. That is what we want to do in this essay.

There is a statement that fits both sides: Christ's atoning death is possible for all but efficacious only for those who believe. However, for the Calvinist the doctrine of election means Christ actually died only for the elect, and the possibility for the unbeliever is mitigated by two things: (1) they continuously reject the cross (total depravity), and (2) they can never partake of the effects of the cross because they are not elect. Thus atonement is limited to the elect. For the Arminian the gracious offer of salvation comes to all, and the prevenient grace by which the Spirit's convicting presence draws all to Christ makes free choice possible. This means atonement is universally open to all.

How do we put all the data together and make a decision regarding the effects of the atonement? At the outset Christ of course died for the elect, and his atonement was efficacious for those who believe. The question is whether he died *only* for the elect, and we noted the many passages that state clearly that he died also for nonelect sinners. Atonement is sufficient for all, and God sent his Son to die on the cross and bring salvation to all humanity. Thus atonement is universal and not limited. He wills/purposes all to be saved, and Christ is Savior of the world, not just of the elect.

A huge question here is whether people can reject God's will and whether his drawing power can ever fail to achieve its purpose. If people can turn away from God's will, is his sovereignty impugned because he is no longer in control? This question drives many scholars. For them the glory of God is

connected to his power to achieve his will. For the Arminian God is indeed sovereign, and his will is truly uppermost. But his love demands choice, and he himself has sovereignly willed that every created being (the angels and Satan, earthly beings and Adam) choose to love him. So his loving will has given the ability to choose. Sin is indeed an enslaving power, and people have both inherited and chosen sin. So all sinners freely choose to reject Christ. However, the Spirit of grace in his convicting presence overcomes human depravity and makes it possible to choose Christ. Are there two levels of divine love, a "common grace" type of love for the sinner and a particular love for the elect? No, if we are speaking of salvific love, for God wholly desires the salvation of the lost. Yet in another sense, there is a special love of God for the believer, the same as the special love of any parent for his or her children. But these two levels of love do not result in an atonement limited to the elect.

The next issue is whether redemption and atonement are always efficacious and whether salvation is always actualized in all true children of God. Since God chose every saint before creation took place, Calvinists claim that his sovereign choice alone makes salvation possible, thereby atonement is always complete in its effects. I would agree that it is always efficacious in true *believers* but only when they surrender to the Spirit and find Christ. Once more the Arminian system does not obviate the saving grace of God and replace it with the human will. Faith (and faith-decision) is a grace-gift from God and by its nature is not a work (Eph 2:8–9) but rather a result of the convicting presence of the Spirit (i.e., prevenient grace).

One of the best arguments for the definite atonement view is that of "double jeopardy" (noted above).[122] If Jesus was the substitute for the sins of all humanity and if atonement was made for all, does not this mean sinful humankind will suffer a double condemnation, first in Jesus on the cross paying for their sins and then again in their final judgment? If Christ became the substitute for the sins of the whole world and propitiated God's wrath, then how can it be that some people still end up in hell under the wrath of God? If this is the case, then God is unjustly punishing all those sins twice—first in Christ and then in the sinner. Of course, the Arminian response will not satisfy the Calvinist, namely, that Jesus' death for the world made atonement possible, but it becomes actualized and effective only when accepted by faith. Yet the biblical data we have seen fits this understanding well: Jesus died for all humankind (Rom 5:18; 1 Cor 5:14–15; 1 Tim 2:4, 6; Heb 2:9; 1 John 2:2), but sins are expiated only when the person finds the gift of God, faith (Rom 3:27–

4:19; Eph 2:8–9; Phil 1:29). This is not double jeopardy, for expiation and forgiveness do not take place without saving faith made possible by prevenient grace. Calvinists center on the effective nature of Christ's death for the world and the irresistible nature of his grace. Both are denied by Arminians, who state that Christ's death is sufficient for the world and efficient only for the believer. So double jeopardy works only within the Reformed system of logic.

Does Jesus intercede only for the elect (John 17:9; Heb 2:9) and guarantee their salvation, thus limiting atonement only to the elect? These passages do not say that much. In both the discussion is on Christ's prayer for believers, but that does not mean he never intercedes for unbelievers. All the passages we have considered that describe God's love for the world, Christ as "Savior of the world," and Christ as dying for all humankind, suggest otherwise. God and Jesus seek to bring all to salvation, but there is a special love and a special intercession for God's true children. Also, I see no reason in the language of the early church why Christ's giving himself as the "ransom" or payment for salvation demands its totally efficacious nature. Both in the ancient world and today, people can refuse payments, and the decision as to its effective nature is a theological one (i.e., based on the theological system employed) rather than on the actual claims of the texts.

The biblical evidence, taken as a whole, stresses the view that Christ died (atonement was made) for all humanity and is sufficient for all, yet it is efficacious only for the elect, that is, those whom God knows will respond to the Spirit and center their salvation on Christ and the cross by coming to faith in him. Atonement is universal in its divine intent, though only the saved experience it. God "wants all people to be saved" (1 Tim 2:4; 2 Pet 3:9).

Finally, for both sides a great deal more humility is needed. We are all guilty of theological arrogance, thinking we know more than we do. I have tried to show that both systems are logically coherent and that both sides can appeal to a great many biblical passages in support of their view. We can seek only a summary statement of doctrine that makes the best sense of the data taken as a whole. That better and more holistic statement, I believe, is universal atonement.

Response by Carl R. Trueman

Grant Osborne is absolutely correct to see the difference between what he refers to as the Calvinist and the Arminian understandings of atonement as being connected to much broader differences in theology. Rather like the

debate between Baptists and paedobaptists, the discussion cannot be advanced, or even really engaged, by the mere exchange of proof texts or even of the isolated exegesis of such texts. The issues that divide are deeper (though not, I trust, preclusive of Christian fellowship) and really connect to a much more basic understanding of what Scripture teaches about salvation as a whole. In fact, I am inclined to say that it is really a theological matter as much as it is of the exegesis of any given passage.

I would also like to note a number of areas of agreement, or points where I would be happy to concede his critique of my Reformed tradition. I agree with him that a view of universal atonement does not lead necessarily to Pelagianism or universalism. Certainly, the former term is greatly overworked and, because it is almost always used in a pejorative sense, is unhelpful in assisting clarity of discussion. Arminianism is not Pelagianism and whether it is more aptly described as semi-Pelagianism or semi-Augustinianism is of little account, given that neither term is helpful. Further, while I might argue that Arminianism in some theologians exhibits certain tendencies toward universalism, it is clear that Osborne's emphasis on the need for faith in order for the atonement to be effective for the individual precludes such an outcome. Osborne and I have, as far as I can see, no quarrel over the fact that not all will be saved and that conscious faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is a prerequisite for salvation.

With this in mind, it does seem to me that Osborne moves from making a clear statement about the overall differences between the Calvinist and Arminian understanding of salvation to analysis of isolated texts in which he exhibits a fear of what he refers to as "the logic of a system" (p. 92). Certainly, the citation of Owen (p. 86) would give the impression that the notion of particular, effective redemption is built on logical syllogisms rather than the biblical text; but in the work of Owen, the syllogism is an adjunct to an argument that is developed on much firmer exegetical grounds. It is also worth noting that, while *Death of Death* is the most (in)famous statement of "limited atonement," it is among the earliest of Owen's works. The priesthood of Christ, of which redemption is for Owen one facet, fascinated the Puritan throughout his life and found its supreme expression in his work—his exegetical work—on Hebrews. This is not to say that Owen is right or wrong; but it is to make the point that to move from exegesis to doctrinal synthesis is not necessarily to subjugate exegesis to the logic of an independent or alien system—which is a standard aimed at the Reformed by their critics.

It is difficult not to read the phrase "logic of a system" as a pejorative, implying the existence of a Procrustean doctrinal bed into which biblical texts must be forced to fit. Yet it is the case in all biblical exegesis that there must be a relationship between individual texts and pericopes and the larger teaching of Scripture or the analogy of faith. Thus, in Osborne's treatment of 2 Cor 5:21 and Gal 3:13, he comments that both passages could be seen to teach particular redemption if the "we" is taken to refer to the elect, "but that would not be Paul's emphasis but rather our own interpretation dependent on other passages identifying believers as the elect. This passage can be taken either way" (p. 92). I am inclined to say "Amen!" to that and—acknowledging the ambiguity of the passage taken in isolation—connect it to the wider Pauline and biblical doctrinal framework and say that this eliminates ambiguity. The problem here is not so much exegetical and methodological.

When we come to Osborne's impressive and thorough compilation of relevant texts, I must plead that space means I cannot offer a blow-for-blow rebuttal of each one, even if I desired to do so. Instead, I will focus on a representative handful and then address one of the larger theological-pastoral lacunae I see in his essay.

The hermeneutical issue of isolated text versus theological framework is evident in Osborne's treatment of Gal 1:15. He rightly comments that the context is the calling of Paul to apostolic ministry and wishes to make a clear distinction between this and Paul's conversion. Yet the question is whether such a distinction is warranted by the text. In vv. 13–14, Paul describes his preconversion life as a Jewish leader persecuting the Christians. He does not seem to distinguish between his conversion and his call to apostolic office in here, making the point that Osborne wishes to make irrelevant. God's call to Paul—to Christ and to apostolic office—was a sovereign act of God that does not seem to have allowed for its resistibility on the part of the apostle. In fact, it points to precisely that larger theological framework within which I would argue we need to set texts about atonement. One simply cannot address atonement texts in isolation from the broader questions of God's grace and election.

The problem of the larger framework for interpreting individual passages also points to linguistic problems in Osborne's piece. Early on he declares that Arminians believe in total depravity. The use of common terminology does not mean agreement on conceptual content. If this were not so, then the Reformation would never have happened, Catholics and Protestants both

agreeing on the appropriateness of the language of grace and of Christ to characterize salvation. To the Reformed community, total depravity rules out any ability to exert faith either autonomously or with the assistance of (resistible) grace. Only irresistible grace will do. We see this vagueness again when Osborne states that the Arminian faith-response is not a work. That is certainly the case from an Arminian perspective. But if that response is either autonomous or the result of cooperative but resistible grace, then for the Reformed it is a work that can be described as meritorious even if only in an instrumental sense.

This point is crucial for a passage such as Eph 2:8–9. The question of grace is critical for how one understands that passage. If one is committed to an Arminian view of salvation, of course the passage cannot function as evidence of the efficacy of grace. The same applies to other verses, including Phil 1:29. The larger theological picture must be addressed if these verses are to be deployed in arguments about the effectiveness of the atonement.

The same kind of critique applies to much of Osborne's commentary on passages used to support effective atonement. When we come to Christ's intercession, this problem remains, but there are also much broader theological and pastoral concerns.

On the matter of the discrimination between God's general love for all and particular love for the elect, it is perhaps a small point, but the Torrance historiography is incorrect. There is not space to analyze the history of the relationship between anti-Pelagian notions of salvation and the love of God, other than to comment that both Augustine and the great medieval theologians, such as Thomas Aquinas, developed ways in which to distinguish texts relating to God's love in both its more general and in its particular salvific aspects. This becomes doctrinally important because it serves to answer implications of novelty or of the negative effects of Aristotelianism upon Christian theology.

Again, on a point of historical theology, "sublapsarian" (more commonly "infralapsarian") is not the belief that God decreed Christ should die for all the fallen but rather the belief that God decreed the fall before he decreed Christ to be Mediator for the elect. It thus sits happily with "five-point Calvinism," and indeed it is generally accepted that the Westminster Confession is an infralapsarian document; certainly, Francis Turretin, poster boy for five-point Calvinism, was an infralapsarian. Osborne means "hypothetical universalist," not "sublapsarian."

When we come to passages that speak of universal atonement, the same hermeneutical problem noted earlier—the assumption of a framework—is evident.

On Isa 53:6, the key is, who is the "we" in the passage? The resonances with the Day of Atonement and then the reference in v. 8 to "the transgression of my people" seem to point toward giving the first person a specific reference to the people of God in particular and not to everybody in general, Oswalt's cited comment notwithstanding.

Addressing Ezek 33:11, Osborne cites John Piper but disagrees, seeing the two wills of God as speaking to God providing sufficient grace for anyone to be able to turn to him if they so wish. Again, the issue of the larger hermeneutical-theological framework is critical. How does this notion of God's love connect to God's election of Jacob and not Esau, for example? Or indeed, to the commands relating to genocide when the Israelites enter the promised land? These are undoubtedly difficult texts, particularly given modern ethical sensibilities, but they point to the deeper theological complexities involved in discussing God's love. Indeed, one might also add that the tensions Osborne sees in Piper's understanding of God's love are similar to the tensions in his own understanding of "take away" in John 1:29, where the sins of everyone are removed potentially for all but effectively only for believers. The Lamb of God therefore does not "take away" anyone's sins, as John the Baptist says he does. He makes it merely possible for them to be taken away. Those are two very different things.

In other areas I have no real disagreement with Osbourne other than with the conclusions he chooses to draw. Thus, on the matter of the universal proclamation of the gospel, I agree and, indeed, seek week by week to do that from the pulpit of my church, always urging any unbelievers who may be present to accept Christ. I do not see the logic of obligation, however, as leading to ability. Everyone must pay taxes, for example; inability is no excuse at law, even if it is often a powerful and decisive reality. Furthermore, the fact that Scripture indicates that a failure to believe is a cause for damnation is, once again, something with which I have no disagreement. I would not, however, see it as demanding the idea that any individual could, with the help of merely cooperative grace, come to faith.

Where I find Osborne's response most lacking is in his brief treatment of the heavenly intercession of Christ. Here, it seems to me, the pastoral implications of whatever wider theology we hold become immediately relevant.

Osborne correctly sees the high priestly prayer of John 17 as critical to the notion of particular redemption and effective atonement. Yet he hesitates to see the prayer as being so restrictive and cites a series of other texts to soften the particularity. The texts Osborne cites to give Christ's intercession a more universal scope are all ones where a Calvinist would contest the universal meaning. Furthermore, we might note that the prayer occurs in John's Gospel where the language of "world" is commonplace and would have been available. However, Christ does not use it, and that is surely significant. If Christ had meant to indicate that he prayed generally as priest for the world in some way, why make such a restrictive statement? One is tempted to use the language of "the logic of a system" to explain the Arminian interpretation at this point.

Nevertheless, setting those texts aside, it would seem important to do two things at least that Osborne does not do in order to understand what Christ is saying. First, it is important to set Christ's high priestly prayer within the context of the historic priesthood. What constitutes priestly intercession is determined by the priestly action of the Levites in the Old Testament, who act on behalf of God's people, not of the nations surrounding them. That is a clear limiting factor. Further, the action of priestly intercession is connected to sacrifice: the prayer of the Old Testament high priest must be understood as founded on the sacrifices he makes. The same is true for Christ, who stands as the last, perfect priest.

Second, we need to ask the larger theological question about the intercession as it connects to the relationship between the Father and the Son. Of pressing importance here is the idea that the Son can intercede for something the Father either cannot or will not give him. That has implications for the way in which the relationship between Creator and creation is structured, pointing as it does toward a strong form of free will theism that can avoid some form of determinism only by limiting God's power and his knowledge of the future. If Father and Son both desire the same thing, the human will has to be the discriminating factor.

More significantly, if the Son asks for something the Father does not desire, or does not put into effect, then this also has significance for the relationship of Father and Son. If the Father and Son are both God, both consubstantial—to use Nicene terminology—then the notion that the Son can ask for something he desires, which the Father does not desire to give him, is highly problematic. It drives a wedge between Father and Son that undermines the

Son as a revelation of the Father, and it also undermines the basis for Christian confidence and, indeed, for Christian prayer.

To be clear: for the so-called "five-point Calvinist," it is not the effective nature of the atonement that is key; it is the effective nature of Christ's mediation as a whole. The believer can have confidence in God because he knows he has One who sits at God's right hand and lives to make intercession for him. That in itself, of course, is not a sufficient foundation for confidence. What makes it a sufficient foundation is that the Son asks the Father only for what the Father already desires to grant him. That is not the logic of Aristotle but rather the implications of Catholic, Nicene Christology. And it has profoundly practical and pastoral implications.

On Osborne's account of the intercession of Christ, even Christ's particular prayer for those the Father has given him must be attenuated in such a way that it is not a particular prayer for those the Father has given him but a more general prayer regarding the "world." When I preach to the congregation and point them to Christ, I point them to One who prays for them specifically and who prays for them effectively. I am not certain I can do this if the particularity of the heavenly intercession needs to be understood in such a way that it either does not reflect the Father's own deepest desires or that it does so, but in such a general and ineffective way that it cannot really be the foundation for confidence that prayer will be effectively answered.

To summarize, Osborne's essay certainly gave me much to think about, particularly in the exegesis of individual verses. But it fails to convince me that my position is fundamentally untenable because it does not address the wider hermeneutical issues relative to soteriology as a whole. Thus, verses are presented as ambiguous or as potentially serving either Calvinist or Arminian purposes without the development of the framework necessary to decide which interpretation is most valid. Further, the theological and pastoral implications of the whole Arminian scheme for the intercession of Christ, particularly as they serve to divest John 17 of its meaning, are devastating both to Catholic Christology and to pastoral application.

Response by John S. Hammett

I would like to begin this response by acknowledging a debt I suspect I share with many of Grant Osborne's former students. More years ago than I like to remember, I sat in a New Testament class taught by Dr. Osborne. My clearest memory of that class is the exceptional fairness and generosity of spirit with

which he presented views different from his own. I am indebted to him for that example, which I have sought to emulate in my own teaching and writing.

He continues to show that fair and generous spirit in his presentation of the argument for the general atonement view. Before arguing for his own view, he devotes nearly half of his chapter to reviewing the arguments for the opposing view, particular redemption.[123] Reflecting his orientation as a New Testament scholar, Osborne focuses mainly on New Testament texts claimed in support of limited atonement and concludes, "There is a formidable array of biblical material supporting the doctrine of limited atonement." Indeed, he states further, "I must admit that after examining all the evidence more deeply than I ever have before, I appreciate this view more than I ever thought possible" (p. 104).

Of course, I agree with much of his evaluation of the biblical texts in support of definite atonement, but go beyond it in seeing additional reasons for affirming a particular or definite intention within my multiple-intentions view, reasons that clash with Osborne's Wesleyan-Arminian perspective. For example, Osborne notes that most Arminian theologians agree with Reformed theologians in accepting the doctrine of total depravity, raising the question of how anyone totally depraved would ever come to faith in Christ. Reformed theology has resolved that question by the doctrine of election; Arminians do so by positing universal prevenient grace, which makes it possible for all persons "to overcome the binding power of their depravity and make a choice" (p. 83), a choice to place faith in Christ. Thus, the different ways Reformed and Arminian theologians resolve the problem raised by total depravity tilt them respectively toward a particular view (as election is particular and not universal) or a universal view (as prevenient grace is universal).

Osborne thus sees a connection between one's doctrine of election and one's view of the atonement. I agree that there may be some connection, but it is weakened by the fact that four-point Calvinists agree with their Reformed brothers and sisters on the doctrine of election but side with the Arminians on the issue of the extent of the atonement. Osborne recognizes this but still wants to maintain the importance of one's view on election for one's understanding of the atonement. Speaking of four-point Calvinists and Arminians, he says, "The end point is similar, but the starting point is radically different" (p. 85).

At least in my case, Osborne may have a point. My view of depravity and election did play some role in my thinking about the atonement. I do not see a

clear basis for universal prevenient grace. I do not see the Arminian argument for election based on God's foreknowledge of who will choose faith as persuasive. My view of unconditional election does introduce an element of particularity in my view of salvation and is consistent with a particular view of the atonement. However, unlike Carl Trueman and most advocates of definite atonement, I do not think a particular intent in the atonement is inconsistent with a universal intent.

At any rate Osborne walks through the biblical support for particular redemption, surveying texts that describe Christ as dying for his people (Matt 1:21), his sheep (John 10:11), his friends (John 15:13), the church (Acts 20:28; Eph 5:25–27), and "us" (Rom 8:32; Eph 1:4–7)—referring to believers. But as critics of definite atonement have often noted, the texts do not say that Christ died *only* for his people, his sheep, his church. Osborne even cites Doug Moo, who, though a Calvinist, says of Rom 8:32, "Note, however, that the text does not say '*only* for all you believers.'"[124] Still, Osborne allows that the texts make a strong case "that the extent of the atonement may be narrowed down to the people of God" (p. 90). I agree and would even go a bit further. Some of the texts go beyond affirming merely that Christ died for a particular group; they affirm that he *saved* a particular group. And this work of Christ is definite, particular, and limited. This leads Osborne to the next argument in support of particular redemption.

Osborne examines texts that advocates of definite atonement use to argue that "Christ died to *effect* atonement, not just to make it possible" (p. 90; emphasis in original). He sees this as "the major issue." He cites primarily passages from Paul, concluding with Eph 1:7 and Col 1:14 and 2:14. He says these last three passages "clearly teach the efficacy of God's salvation in Christ" but questions whether such efficacy "should be linked with the further doctrines of election and limited atonement" (p. 94). In his view the efficacy of salvation is not limited by God's particular intention for what Christ's death will accomplish but by the human choice of faith. It is efficient only for those who believe, whose choice is foreknown by God and is the condition for divine election. Again, while space does not permit a full examination of this issue, I find the case for unconditional election very strong[125] and thus find how Osborne reconciles these verses with general atonement less than satisfying. The efficacious nature of Christ's atonement seems to me to require a definite or particular intent in the atonement; Christ does not just make salvation possible; he *saves* some.

Osborne deals at less length with arguments that "the intercessory work of Christ is limited to the elect" (p. 98), that Jesus died "as the 'ransom for many' (but not all)" (p. 100), and that "the giving of the Father is always efficacious" (p. 101). He concludes his presentation of the texts in support of particular redemption with a survey of five texts used to support the view that God has "a special love for the elect" (p. 103). As noted above, he closes with a generous statement of the strength of the biblical support for limited atonement, but then turns to the case for general atonement.[126]

The majority of the case for general atonement is textual, based on biblical texts that seem to teach explicitly that Christ died for all, that is, for every person without exception, not merely all types of persons without distinction. Yet while the biblical evidence is the focal point, Osborne does add the theological claim that the justice of God requires us to see a universal aspect to the atonement.

He begins with two sets of passages (2 Pet 3:9 and John 1:4, 7, 9) to argue that "the universal salvific will of God points to universal atonement" (p. 105) but moves quickly to the major section of his argument, consisting of nearly twenty passages with universal language that point to universal atonement. While not all the passages he cites are equally clear, many strongly support Osborne and the general atonement view. In particular, the "world" passages from the Gospel and first letter of John (such as John 1:29; 3:17; 1 John 2:2) and the "all" passages from Paul (such as 2 Cor 5:14–15, 19; 1 Tim 4:10) seem hard to fit with the definite atonement view.

Osborne notes different ways Calvinists seek to understand "world" and "all" in a limited sense, but on this point I am not sure that he represents the advocates of definite atonement accurately. He says, "Some hyper-Calvinists interpret 'all' to mean not every person but 'all kinds of' people" (p. 111). He does not cite any sources for this assertion, and the argument that "all" should be understood as "all without distinction" rather than "all without exception" is what I would call a mainstream view among contemporary advocates of definite atonement, not an interpretation characteristic of hyper-Calvinists.[127] Moreover, he does not sufficiently consider the common explanation of "world" as simply a way to refer to both Jews and Greeks. Still I find this textual argument for universal atonement strong and persuasive and the reason I include a universal intention in my own view. For example, if we suppose for a moment that the biblical writers had wanted to communicate that Christ died for all (i.e., all without exception, or universal atonement)

what language would they have used? I think they would have used exactly the language we find: *world* and *all*. The most likely interpretation of the passages, which Osborne cites, supports universal atonement.

I find it interesting that in three cases Osborne mentions interpretations that come close to supporting a multiple-intentions view, such as the view I hold, but does not follow them up to that conclusion, probably because his view of election would not allow it. First, in his discussion of 2 Cor 5:14–15, 19, he cites Murray Harris as the commentator who "gives the best option: there is a broader sense of universal atonement in the 'all' phrases, and then Paul narrows it to the saints in v. 15b" (p. 113).[128] Second, regarding 1 Tim 4:10 he argues that the "far more natural understanding is two levels of the work of God: (1) to all and (2) 'especially' to believers" (p. 115). Third, he argues for both universality and particularity in 1 John 2:2: "The both-and is critical; Christ's death makes redemption available for all, but only those who believe experience it" (p. 116).

Osborne continues to build the case for universal atonement, citing texts that give universal atonement as the result of the universal love of God and texts that argue that many for whom Christ died will perish (2 Pet 2:1 seems a particularly problematic text for definite atonement). Then he moves to lines of argument I find less convincing. Texts that argue "the gospel must be universally proclaimed" (p. 118) are no problem for advocates of definite atonement. They can point to Rev. 5:9 as indicating that Christ has died for some (not all) from "every tribe and language and people and nation," but we do not know who they are. So we proclaim the gospel to all. Thus this argument is not very weighty. Likewise, I do not see how texts that present sinners as "unbelievers whose rejection has brought about their damnation" (p. 120) constitute an argument for universal atonement.

Lastly, Osborne defends his view from the charge that it leads to Pelagianism or universal salvation. Osborne defends Arminian theology from the first charge by his view of prevenient grace. The second charge—that universal atonement logically leads to universal salvation—is more serious and is behind the classic "double jeopardy" argument John Owen gives.[129] The claim is that if Jesus died for the sins of all, then God could not send any to hell for their sins; he would be unjustly punishing the same sins twice. Thus, the charge is made that universal atonement leads to universal salvation. Osborne acknowledges this as "one of the best arguments for the definite atonement view" (p. 125). He offers the defense that "Jesus' death for the world made atonement

possible, but it becomes actualized and effective only when accepted by faith" (p. 125).

Osborne summarizes his case as having shown four points: (1) God's love extends his salvific will to all persons, and thus Christ's death is for all the world; (2) some for whom Christ died are said to perish, which means Christ did not die for just the elect but for unbelievers as well; (3) the commission to proclaim the gospel universally shows the atonement must be universal; and (4) unbelief is a result of choice. Of these four I think only the first two really argue for general atonement. The third means only that Christ must have died for some of every "tribe and language and people and nation" (Rev 5:9), a point that all sides affirm. The fourth relates more to differing views on divine sovereignty and human responsibility, which are related to but not critical to the question of the extent of the atonement.

I believe one of the virtues of the multiple-intentions view is that it allows one to affirm the strongest points of both competing views. The texts that describe Christ's death as for *all*—for the world, even for some who perish—constitute a strong argument for a universal intention in the atonement, and I affirm his interpretation of these texts. But as Osborne himself says, there is also strong biblical evidence for the definite atonement view. He just thinks his view does more justice "to all the biblical data" (p. 123) or "is more biblically viable" (p. 124). However, would not a view that incorporates the data for both universal and particular intentions do still *more* justice to all the biblical data and be *more* biblically viable?

The most important points dividing me from Dr. Osborne would seem to be our differing views of election with a corresponding difference on the efficacy of the atonement. He links one's views of the atonement with one's view of election throughout his essay, and he is correct to a point: I know of no one with a conditional view of election who also holds to definite atonement. To put it in other words, all defenders of definite atonement also hold to a Calvinist view of election. But not all who hold to a Calvinist view of election hold to definite atonement, and Osborne does refer once to four-point Calvinists who come to a similar endpoint on the extent of the atonement, but he sees their starting points as "radically different" (p. 85). The difference is in what makes the atonement efficacious. For Osborne it must be the faith-choice of the individual. Yes, that choice is enabled by prevenient grace, but that grace is given to all. What makes the difference is that some individuals respond positively to prevenient grace and others do not. The faith-choice of

the individual finally determines the efficacy of the atonement. Osborne seems to think any other view calls into question the justice or love of God.

For the Calvinist, what makes the atonement efficacious is, in one sense, the faith-choice of the individual, but behind that choice stands the electing work of God. He issues an effectual call; He exercises irresistible grace; He works internally to give life to one dead in trespasses and sins. I would add that God uses the transforming and drawing power of the cross itself to apply what was objectively achieved on the cross subjectively to the heart of the individual. And this electing work of God is particular.

Osborne's last words again call to mind the model he gave me as a starting theology student: "For both sides a great deal more humility is needed. We are all guilty of theological arrogance, thinking we know more than we do" (p. 126). I think Dr. Osborne is certainly less guilty of the sin of theological arrogance than most—certainly less so than myself. Working through his essay has been a refreshing reminder of his example, and my critique of his work is offered in that Spirit of humility. May God continue to break forth more light and truth from his holy Word to all of us.

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[1] *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, s.v. "*kpr*," by Richard E. Averbeck, 2:689–710.

[2] For an excellent recent discussion, see the articles on justification (and atonement) by Thomas Schreiner, Frank Thielman, and N. T. Wright in *JETS* 54 (2011): 9–63.

[3] Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 393. R. B. Kuiper defines it, "God purposed by the atonement to save only the elect, and . . . consequently all the elect, and they alone, are saved" (*For Whom Did Christ Die? A Study of the Divine Design of the Atonement* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959], 62).

[4] Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 393.

[5] Many favor this description. Cf. Roger Nicole, "Particular Redemption," *Our Savior God: Studies on Man, Christ, and the Atonement*, ed. James M. Boice (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980). I regret that I was not able to interact with Jarvis J. Williams, *For Whom Did Christ Die? The Extent of the Atonement in Paul's Theology*, Paternoster Biblical Monographs (Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 2012), which came out after I completed this essay. He argues that Pauline theology teaches particular redemption.

[6] John Piper, "Are There Two Wills in God? Divine Election and God's Desire for All to Be Saved," in *The Grace of God, the Bondage of the Will*, ed. Thomas R. Schreiner and Bruce A. Ware, 2 vols. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995), 1:123–24.

[7] Thomas F. Torrance, "The Incarnation and Limited Atonement," *EvQ* 55 (1983): 83.

[8] I recognize that other positions (Lutherans, Anabaptists, Roman Catholics, and many Pentecostals) are on the side of universal atonement, but for the sake of brevity and since it is my personal position, I will consistently represent the side demurring from the Reformed position as that of Arminianism.

[9] Fritz Guy, "The Universality of God's Love," in *The Grace of God, the Will of Man: A Case for Arminianism*, ed. Clark H. Pinnock (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1989), 440.

[10] See Grant R. Osborne, *The Gospel of John*, Cornerstone Biblical Commentary (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2007), 222, 233, on John 16:8–11, where I argue that "convict the world" means to

"convict" the sinner of guilt before God, "expose" their sin, and draw or "convince" them of the need to repent. D. A. Carson echoes this: the Spirit as Paraclete is "shaming the world and convincing it of its own guilt, thus calling it to repentance" (*The Gospel According to John*, PNTC [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991], 536–37).

[11] J. I. Packer, "The Love of God: Universal and Particular," in Schreiner and Ware, *The Grace of God, the Bondage of the Will*, 2:421.

[12] Ibid., 419.

[13] John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Ford L. Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), 2:954–55.

[14] An extremely interesting theory on this is provided by William Lane Craig, "Middle Knowledge, A Calvinist-Arminian Rapprochement?" in *The Grace of God, the Will of Man*, 141–64. According to this, God knows not only all future actions but all future possibilities. Human decisions are made within these God-given possibilities. Contra J. A. Crabtree, "Does Middle Knowledge Solve the Problem of Divine Sovereignty?" in Schreiner and Ware, *The Grace of God, the Bondage of the Will*, 2:429–58.

[15] Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 394.

[16] Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 595.

[17] John Owen, *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ*, vol. 10 of *The Works of John Owen*, ed. William H. Goold (1850–53; repr., Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1967), 173–74, formatting added.

[18] Unless otherwise noted, all quotations are from *The Holy Bible: New International Version*®. NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by International Bible Society, www.ibs.org. All rights reserved worldwide.

[19] Andreas Köstenberger sees Zech 12:10; 13:7–9 as another primary passage on the "Messiah's self-sacrifice," presenting Jesus as "a shepherd who is put to death and whose death brings about a turning-point" (*John*, BECNT [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004], 305).

[20] Darrell L. Bock, *Acts*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 630.

[21] Peter T. O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 354.

[22] John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Ephesians: God's New Society* (Leicester: InterVarsity, 1979), 227.

[23] Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 540.

[24] Frank Thielman, *Ephesians*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010), 48.

[25] But see also Titus 2:11, discussed in the second half of this essay.

[26] J. I. Packer, "Introductory Essay" to John Owen, *The Death of Death*, 11.

[27] Ibid., 12.

[28] Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 393.

[29] Darrell L. Bock, *Luke 9:51–24:53*, 2 vols., BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 2:1523.

[30] See Murray J. Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 442–43. Some argue that vv. 14–15, "one died for all, and therefore all died . . . that those who live" can refer only to the elect, since this does not speak of universalism. Harris (420–21) argues (correctly I think) that two distinct groups are intended—all humanity (for whom Christ died as substitute) and the believers (who upon conversion begin to "live").

[31] Augustine and many Reformed theologians believe that "world" here (and in John 3:16) is not the world of humanity but the world of the elect, those predestined to salvation. See Jonathan H. Rainbow, *The Will of God and the Cross: An Historical and Theological Study of John Calvin's Doctrine of Limited Redemption* (Allison Park, PA: Pickwick, 1990), 14–15. For Calvin on this same point, see Rainbow, 154–55.

[32] Rainbow, *The Will of God*, 27–28.

[33] Thomas R. Schreiner, *Galatians*, ZECNT (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 101.

[34] Richard N. Longenecker, *Galatians*, WBC (Dallas: Word, 1990), 30; so also Schreiner, *Galatians*, 100–101.

[35] Thomas R. Schreiner, "Does Romans 9 Teach Individual Election unto Salvation," in Schreiner and

Ware, *The Grace of God, the Bondage of the Will*, 1:93.

[36] J. I. Packer, "The Love of God: Universal and Particular," in Schreiner and Ware, *The Grace of God, the Bondage of the Will*, 2:424.

[37] O'Brien, *Ephesians*, 105.

[38] Kuiper, *For Whom Did Christ Die?*, 65.

[39] Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 395.

[40] Roger Nicole, "The Nature and Extent of the Atonement in Reformed Theology," *Bulletin of the Evangelical Theological Society* 10 (1967): 201–2.

[41] For *hyper* as equivalent to *anti* as preposition designating substitution, see Schreiner, *Galatians*, 217, noting Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 387.

[42] Clinton E. Arnold, *Ephesians*, Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 78; cf. also Thielman, *Ephesians*, 47.

[43] Packer, "Love of God," 415–16.

[44] C. Samuel Storms, "Prayer and Evangelism Under God's Sovereignty," in Schreiner and Ware, *The Grace of God, the Bondage of the Will*, 1:221.

[45] See especially William Klein, *The New Chosen People: A Corporate View of Election* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990).

[46] See Kuiper, *For Whom Did Christ Die?*, 40–41.

[47] O'Brien, *Ephesians*, 174–75.

[48] Arnold, *Ephesians*, 139.

[49] Peter O'Brien, *Commentary on Philippians*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 159. He adds that the present tense "believe" means not only saving faith but also the ongoing trust in Christ that characterizes the Christian life.

[50] See I. Howard Marshall, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999), 700–701.

[51] See "Us" under the section "Christ Died Exclusively for His People" (pp. 89–90).

[52] Schreiner, *Romans*, 451.

[53] For one response, see Grant R. Osborne, "Exegetical Notes on Calvinist Texts," in *Grace Unlimited*, 178, where I argue that divine foreknowledge leaves room for faith-decision.

[54] See Wayne Grudem, "Perseverance of the Saints: A Case Study from Hebrews 6:4–6 and the Other Warning Passages in Hebrews," in Schreiner and Ware, *The Grace of God, the Bondage of the Will*, 1:168.

[55] William L. Lane, *Hebrews 1–8*, WBC (Dallas: Word, 1991), 190.

[56] John Calvin, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 2 vols., trans. T. H. L. Parker (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1961), 2:380.

[57] Kuiper, *For Whom Did Christ Die?*, 64.

[58] Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 395.

[59] Köstenberger, *John*, 492. This is deepened by his recent "Lifting up the Son of Man and God's Love for the World: John 3:16 in Its Historical, Literary, and Theological Contexts," in *Understanding the Times: New Testament Studies in the 21st Century; Essays in Honor of D. A. Carson at the Occasion of His 65th Birthday* (Wheaton, Crossway, 2011), 141–59, where he concludes, "The atonement provided by Jesus' death carries universal significance and is not limited to one group of people" (p. 159). So also George R. Beasley-Murray, *John*, WBC (Waco: Word, 1987), 298.

[60] Nicole, "Extent of the Atonement," 204.

[61] See the above section, "Christ Died Exclusively for His People."

[62] Packer, "Love of God," 424.

[63] *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, s.v. "Prepositions and Theology in the Greek New Testament," by Murray J. Harris, 3:1179–80.

[64] Marshall, *Pastoral Epistles*, 431, cf. also his "Universal Grace and Atonement in the Pastoral Epistles," in *The Grace of God, the Will of Man*, 59.

[65] See D. A. Carson, "Reflections on Assurance," in Schreiner and Ware, *The Grace of God, the Bondage*

of the Will, 2:399. See also his *John*, 290.

[66] Packer, "Love of God," 421.

[67] See Grant R. Osborne, "Soteriology in the Gospel of John," in Pinnock, *The Grace of God, the Will of Man*, 248–49.

[68] Leon Morris says, "There is not one instance in the New Testament of the use of this verb (to draw) where the resistance is unsuccessful" (*The Gospel According to John*, NICNT [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971], 371n110). [Editor's note: Morris's second edition (1995) does not include the above quotation.] If this is true, however, 12:32 ("I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself") would demand universalism. God's "drawing" presence more likely refers to the universal convicting power of the Spirit.

[69] Packer, "Love of God," 419–20. See also Nicole, "Extent of the Atonement," 203; D. A. Carson, *The Difficult Doctrine of the Love of God* (Wheaton, Crossway, 2000).

[70] Kuiper, *For Whom Did Christ Die?*, 68.

[71] Torrance, "Limited Atonement," 84–85.

[72] Ibid., 85.

[73] Ibid., 86.

[74] Schreiner, *Romans*, 500–501, 520–21.

[75] Moo, *Romans*, 585.

[76] C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 2 vols., ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1975, 1979), 2:495.

[77] Henry C. Thiessen, *Lectures in Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 240.

[78] Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 829.

[79] Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, NAC (Nashville: B&H, 2003), 381–82.

[80] Richard J. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, WBC (Waco: Word, 1983), 312; Douglas J. Moo, *2 Peter and Jude*, NIVAC (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 188.

[81] Grant R. Osborne, *James, 1–2 Peter, Jude*, Cornerstone Biblical Commentary (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2011), 340.

[82] Osborne, *John*, 23.

[83] On the mission theme in John, see Osborne, *John*, 14; Andreas J. Köstenberger, *The Missions of Jesus and the Disciples According to the Fourth Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998).

[84] Köstenberger, *John*, 36.

[85] Thomas R. Schreiner, "Does Scripture Teach Prevenient Grace in the Wesleyan Sense?" in Schreiner and Ware, *The Grace of God, the Bondage of the Will*, 2:376. See also Carson, *John*, 124; and William W. Combs, "Does the Bible Teach Prevenient Grace?" *Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal* 10 (2005): 3–18.

[86] Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 830.

[87] John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah Chapters 40–66*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 389.

[88] Piper, "Two Wills in God," 117–18.

[89] For discussion and the scholars on the various sides, see Osborne, *John*, 32.

[90] Köstenberger, *John*, 165.

[91] Against a sacramental understanding linking this with the Eucharist, see Carson, *John*, 295.

[92] On this as an aspect of "drawing" people to Jesus, see note 10 above.

[93] Rainbow notes this as Augustine's understanding of "world" in John 3:16–17; 2 Cor 5:19 (reconciliation of the world); 1 John 2:2 (propitiation for the whole world) (Rainbow, *Will of God*, 14). This is a convenient approach, for all passages that connote universal atonement automatically refer to the elect—a good example of a system dictating the interpretation of texts.

[94] Ibid., 149–50. Piper calls them God's "moral will" (for all to be saved) and his "sovereign will" (his grace in electing some). Piper, "Two Wills of God," 122, 131.

[95] Schreiner, "Prevenient Grace," 377–78. See also Carson, *John*, 293; Köstenberger, *John*, 211.

[96] For the "imputation of sin" debate on this passage, see Osborne, *Romans*, 138–39.

[97] Moo, *Romans*, 659–60.

[98] Harris, *Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 420–21.

[99] Luke Timothy Johnson, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy*, AB (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 191.

[100] George W. Knight III, *Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 119.

[101] Marshall, *Pastoral Epistles*, 427.

[102] Piper, "Two Wills in God," 123 (cf. 122–24). See also Donald J. Westblade, "Divine Election in the Pauline Literature," in Schreiner and Ware, *The Grace of God, the Bondage of the Will*, 1:69–70.

[103] Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 834.

[104] Knight, *Pastoral Epistles*, 203.

[105] Lane, *Hebrews*, 48.

[106] Robert W. Yarbrough, *1–3 John*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 77–78. The tendency of many scholars to turn this "both-and" into an "either-or" is not only unnecessary but is also dangerous.

[107] Ibid., 80n17.

[108] Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 597.

[109] Moo, *Romans*, 855; cf. Schreiner, *Romans*, 734; Cranfield, *Romans*, 714.

[110] William L. Lane, *Hebrews 9–13*, WBC (Dallas: Word, 1991), 294.

[111] Douglas J. Moo, *2 Peter and Jude*, NIVAC (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 93.

[112] John Miley, *Systematic Theology* (1923; repr. Charleston, SC: BiblioLife, 2009), 229.

[113] For the Gentile mission in Matthew, see Osborne, *Matthew*, 1096–99.

[114] Knight, *Pastoral Epistles*, 319. This is the same view he espouses on 1 Tim 4:10 (see above).

[115] Marshall, *Pastoral Epistles*, 267–68.

[116] William S. Sailer, "The Meaning and Extent of the Atonement in Wesleyan Theology," *Bulletin of the Evangelical Theological Society* 10 (1967): 194–95.

[117] Ibid.

[118] Yarbrough, *1–3 John*, 288–89.

[119] Charles A. Wanamaker, *Commentary on 1 & 2 Thessalonians*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 260.

[120] Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 395.

[121] See Guy, "Universality of God's Love," 43–45.

[122] For this approach, see Robert L. Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith*, 2nd ed. (Nashville: Nelson, 1998), 679–80.

[123] In this response I will be using the phrases "particular redemption," "limited atonement," and "definite atonement" as synonyms, as Osborne and most of the literature do.

[124] Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 540, emphasis in original.

[125] The case for unconditional election is made well by Sam Storms, *Chosen for Life: The Case for Divine Election* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2007). For a comparison with other views of election, see Chad Owen Brand, ed., *Perspectives on Election: Five Views* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2006).

[126] The phrases "universal atonement" and "general atonement" are understood and used synonymously in this essay.

[127] For example, many of the contributors make this argument in the fine book *From Heaven He Came and Sought Her: Definite Atonement in Historical, Biblical, Theological, and Pastoral Perspective*, ed. David Gibson and Jonathan Gibson (Wheaton: Crossway, 2013). I regret that this book reached me too late for me to include interaction with it in my essay. Future discussions of definite atonement will have to deal with its arguments, though none, I believe, are fatal to my multiple-intentions view.

[128] Osborne is referring to Murray J. Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 420–21.

[129] John Owen, *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ*, vol. 10 in *The Works of John Owen*, ed. William Goold (Avon, Great Britain: Johnstone & Hunter; reprint, Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 1967), 173–74.

Chapter 3

Multiple-Intentions View of the Atonement

John S. Hammett

Introduction

At the outset I must confess that I accepted the invitation to participate in this debate with some hesitation and reluctance for three reasons. First, some might question the importance of this debate. After all, evangelicals enjoy strong agreement on other, more central aspects of the atonement. For example, among evangelicals there is widespread agreement on penal substitution as at least one major element in the *nature* of the atonement. There is also strong agreement on the *necessity* of the atonement as the indispensable basis for the forgiveness of sins. There is even broad agreement on the *sufficiency* of the atonement: it does not need to be supplemented by any human works, and it is of enough value for the salvation of every person. In a world where all these major points are under assault from those in nonevangelical or non-Christian contexts, some may question the importance of this issue.

Second, while there is abundant biblical teaching on some aspects of the atonement (such as its nature, necessity, and sufficiency), by contrast the biblical teaching on the extent of the atonement is not that abundant or clear. Wayne Grudem cautions us:

> Scripture itself never singles this out as a doctrine of major importance, nor does it once make itself the subject of any explicit theological discussion. Our knowledge of the issue comes only from incidental references to it in passages whose concern is with other doctrinal or practical matters. . . . [T]here is very little direct scriptural testimony.[1]

Some might question the possibility of holding a profitable debate when the evidence is so scant and susceptible to various possible interpretations.

Finally, I have been so personally enriched by those on all sides of this controversy that it seems almost petty to critique them on such a narrow point. The church in which I came to faith and the pastor who was my first

theological mentor were both decidedly Arminian, and I am forever indebted to them for their impact on my life. And for most of my adult life I have been nurtured by those in the Reformed camp, especially J. I. Packer, one of the strongest defenders of limited atonement. I am grateful to many on both sides of this debate, and I would rather give thanks than critiques. My own Baptist denominational heritage has from its beginnings included advocates of both the general and particular understandings of the atonement, a difference that has endured now for four centuries and shows no signs of going away. Some may question the wisdom of pursuing this topic. Will it really lead to greater understanding or just a deepening of division and suspicion?

Despite these significant reservations, upon reflection, the reasons justifying this project and my participation in it seemed even more compelling. First and foremost, the debate is not going away. In Baptist and larger evangelical circles, the resurgence of Calvinist theology means that discussion of the five points of Calvinism, including limited atonement, is happening and is intensifying. The only question now is whether that debate will be conducted informally, with the likelihood that positions will be presented incompletely or inaccurately, or more formally, with more complete presentations of the various positions, including direct exchanges among the advocates of the different views, as provided in this book.

The second reason for a book like this one is simply the lack of anything comparable. While there are numerous books defending one of the various positions, some of which seek to present opposing positions, I am aware of no book that allows advocates of each of the major positions to present their own positions and ask questions of colleagues defending different views. A discerning reader may wonder if even the most objective Calvinist can present the Arminian position as strongly as someone who actually believes that position (and the same would be true of the other positions); here that doubt has no place. Each view is presented in all its strength by someone who firmly believes it. Moreover, the point-counterpoint format allows readers to see the strengths and weaknesses of each position, as pointed out by the participants.

Third, I have been saddened by the "excessively uncharitable rhetoric"[2] often found on all sides of this debate. It is true that there are serious differences between the varying views represented in this book on issues like the nature of God, the nature of humans, and even the nature of Christ's atoning work, but I have already noted the important and significant areas of widespread agreement among them as well. "In some sense, this *is*, for the most part, an

'in-house' fight *between members of the same family*."[3] I hope this book can be a good model of how fellow family members can disagree with one another in a Christ-honoring manner, and I am grateful for the opportunity to participate in it.

Finally, while I acknowledge the incomplete nature of biblical teaching on this issue, I do think there is one position that makes considerably more sense of all the relevant material than the others, and I believe I can make a persuasive case for it. But I am sure my fellow participants feel the same way about their own positions. Let the reader decide!

Defining Terms

It is instructive to note that there is even some disagreement over the *question* at issue among the participants in this debate. While most theologians treat this topic under the heading of the extent of the atonement, they identify the key issue as the design or intent of God in the death of Christ. Louis Berkhof tries to clarify and specify the issue as follows:

> The question with which we are concerned at this point is not (a) whether the satisfaction rendered by Christ is in itself sufficient for the salvation of all men, since this is admitted by all; (b) whether the saving benefits are actually applied to every man, for the great majority of those who teach a universal atonement do not believe that all are actually saved; (c) whether the *bona fide* offer of salvation is made to all that hear the gospel, on the condition of repentance and faith, since the Reformed Churches do not call this into question; nor (d) whether any of the fruits of the death of Christ accrue to the benefit of the non-elect in virtue of their close association with the people of God, since this is explicitly taught by many Reformed scholars. On the other hand, the question does relate to the design of the atonement. Did the Father in sending Christ, and did Christ in coming into the world, to make atonement for sin, *do this with the design or for the purpose of saving only the elect or all men?* That is the question and that only is the question.[4]

More succinctly: For whom did Christ die?[5] That will be the central question examined in this essay, but in so doing, I want to consider some of the issues Berkhof puts to the side, for he inaccurately assumes universal agreement on them.

For example, some believe the advocates of definite atonement cannot logically affirm the sufficiency of Christ's atonement for all.[6] Others see an inconsistency between definite atonement and a genuine offer of the gospel to all.[7] Still others think Berkhof unnecessarily limits the question to an either-or dichotomy. Is it possible to relate the atonement both to the elect and to all, but in different senses?[8] Could the power of the atonement extend even to the cosmos?[9] Many in the definite atonement camp, like John Murray, acknowledge that a variety of temporal or common-grace benefits flow to all persons from Christ's death, but like Berkhof above, they insist that such benefits are not the issue in this debate.[10] This essay defends a multiple-intention view of the atonement and thus broadens Berkhof's question (For whom did Christ die?) to this: What did God intend to accomplish by Christ's death?

The terms used for the positions represented in this book also deserve mention. *Definite atonement* is probably the most accurate term for the position that the death of Christ did not make salvation possible for all but made it certain, or definite, for the elect. Some in this camp have objected to the traditional term, *limited atonement*, as prejudicial. They note that all positions limit the atonement in some way, either in extent or efficacy, and note that the emphasis in their position is on the definitive nature of Christ's accomplishment on the cross for the elect.[11] But since limited atonement, definite atonement, and particular redemption all are used in the literature for this position, they often appear in this essay as synonymous.

The second position is usually called *universal atonement*, but that can be confused with universalism, the idea that all will be saved, which those in this camp do not affirm. Perhaps for this reason some describe this position as "general atonement": the atonement makes salvation available generally, to all without exception. However, "universal" is still the dominant descriptor for this view, and "unlimited" is sometimes used as well. All three may appear in this essay, though preference will be given to "universal atonement," as it is the most commonly used term.

The third view also has diverse designations. "Hypothetical universal atonement," "Amyraldism," and "unlimited/limited" have all been used to convey the idea that the atonement is in some sense universal and in some sense limited. The position defended here is a *multiple-intentions* view; that is, the atonement includes a number of divine intentions. This essay argues that there are three intentions in the atonement: universal, particular, and cosmic.

It affirms that the atonement is in some sense universal and in some sense particular, but *multiple-intentions* best comprehends all of the biblical teaching on the atonement, particularly biblical teaching on the extent of the atonement.

God's Universal Intention in the Atonement

The position advocated here affirms that one intention of God in the atonement was to provide forgiveness of sins for all. This is to say that God's purpose in sending Christ to the cross was for him to serve as the substitute for all of humanity. Christ died in order to satisfy God's righteous wrath toward human sin by serving as the propitiation for all humans and thereby providing redemption and reconciliation for all humans. In support of this view, I offer biblical arguments, evaluate historical considerations, respond to theological objections, and suggest practical implications and applications.

Biblical Arguments

One reason that universal or general atonement has always been the majority viewpoint in Christian theology is the strong *prima facie* biblical case for it. Recognizing space limitations, I limit the presentation here to the strongest verses in support of a universal intention.[12]

The Johannine use of "world." Numerous verses in both the Gospel and First Letter of John state that Christ died for the "world" (John 1:29; 3:16; 6:51) or even "the whole world" (1 John 2:2). But as most commentators acknowledge, "world" (Gk. *kosmos*) can have a variety of meanings; thus, these references may "carry no distinctively universalistic emphasis but merely designate mankind at large as the object of God's love and saving action."[13] John Owen, in his classic defense of definite atonement, gives a detailed analysis of the term in the New Testament, distinguishes five general meanings of "world," and argues that John uses it to emphasize that Christ died not merely for Jews but also for those of all nations. So when 1 John 2:2 says Christ is the propitiation for "the whole world," Owen thinks that refers to "the people of God scattered throughout the whole world."[14]

Others, while agreeing that "world" has a variety of meanings, think that the verses in question fit much more naturally into a universal or general view of the atonement than a limited or definite view. For the latter to be correct, "world" would have to mean "the elect." W. A. Elwell argues, "There is not one place in the entire NT where 'world' means 'church' or 'the elect.'"[15] Numerous

commentators on the Gospel of John think "world" refers to "humanity" and the verses containing "world" sound a strong "universal note."[16] F. F. Bruce says that "the world" God loves in John 3:16 "embraces all mankind" and that Christ was given "for all, without distinction or exception."[17]

First John 2:2 goes beyond affirming Christ's death for the world to affirm it as the propitiation for the sins of "the whole world," and not "ours only."[18] Even definite atonement advocate John Murray says, "The language John uses here would fit in perfectly with the doctrine of universal atonement if Scripture demonstrated elsewhere that to be the biblical doctrine."[19] Because he and others in his camp do not believe universal atonement to be a biblical doctrine, they have suggested a variety of other ways that "the whole world" can be interpreted,[20] but the variety of their suggestions betrays the uncertainty of their exegesis, and they have not persuaded most commentators.[21] Gary Shultz reflects a widely held view in stating of 1 John 2:2: "There is no clearer statement in Scripture indicating that Christ died to pay the penalty of all people."[22] Overall, the Johannine use of "world" with reference to the atonement is strong support for a universal intention in the atonement.

The Pauline "all" statements. While some cite a number of other verses from the Pauline corpus to support universal atonement, two texts from 1 Timothy seem the clearest and most widely used: 1 Tim 2:6 and 4:10. Taken at face value, the wording of 1 Tim 2:6 (Christ "gave himself as a ransom for all people," NIV) seems to indicate clearly a universal or general intention in the atonement, and a number of interpreters take it that way.[23] But defenders of definite atonement have argued that "all" may refer to "all sorts of people" or "all without distinction," rather than "all without exception."[24] Timothy George is himself among the defenders of definite atonement, yet he calls this understanding of *all* "a strained exegesis that is hard to justify in every case." He continues, "Unless the context clearly requires a different interpretation, it is better to say that 'all means all,' even if we cannot square the universal reach of Christ's atoning death with its singular focus."[25] I. Howard Marshall concurs, seeing no reason to restrict the meaning of *all* to "all kinds" or "all without distinction."[26]

If the argument for a restricted meaning is difficult to make for 1 Tim 2:6, it is even harder to sustain for 1 Tim 4:10, which identifies God as "the Savior of all people, especially those who believe." The difficulty for defenders of definite atonement in 1 Tim 4:10 is the clear implication that the "all people" of whom

God is Savior is a broader group than "those who believe." But under definite atonement God is the Savior only of the elect, "those who believe." This distinction between "all people" and "those who believe" seems more supportive of *all* as meaning "all without exception" rather than "all without distinction," but in either case, an "all" that goes beyond the elect is a problem for definite atonement.

The typical response from definite atonement advocates has been to see "Savior" in a nonsoteriological way in this verse. Wayne Grudem says Paul uses "Savior" here "in the sense of 'one who preserves people's lives and rescues them from danger' rather than the sense of 'one who forgives their sins,' for surely Paul does not mean that every single person will be saved."[27] The association of this verse with temporal, common-grace blessings is so strong that it is not even considered in most defenses of definite atonement, and it must be conceded that the death of Christ is not mentioned as the source of salvation in the immediate context in 1 Tim 4.[28]

But any nonsoteriological understanding of God as Savior encounters two interpretive difficulties. First, while the ideas of preserving and protecting can "fit the semantic domain of *soter* ('Savior')," in every other of the six occurrences of "God our Savior" in the Pastoral Epistles, "the meaning is clearly soteriological."[29] Second, the idea that God is Savior, "especially of believers," in a common-grace sense, does not fit either with the idea of *common* grace (commonly bestowed on believers and nonbelievers), or with the experience believers are told to expect and do experience in the world ("tribulation," according to John 16:33, and suffering persecution, according to 2 Tim 3:12). And if "God our Savior" has a soteriological sense, then Christ's atonement must be assumed to be involved, for Paul and the New Testament know of no salvation apart from the cross. As for Grudem's concern that a soteriological sense would have Paul teaching universal salvation, one of the key contentions of this essay is that salvation involves both a divine provision and a human appropriation.[30] Even if the human appropriation is a divine gift or divinely enabled, it is still separate from the provision. Thus the divine provision can be universal without resulting in universal salvation.

A third way some attempt to defend definite atonement from the implications of 1 Tim 4:10 is to interpret *malista*, the word translated "especially," as "namely." This would mean God is the Savior of all, namely those who believe.[31] This would preserve their view that God's salvific intentions do not extend beyond the elect because "all people" would be

identical to "those who believe." While it is certainly true that God is the Savior of all who believe, that does not exhaust the meaning of this verse. Paul uses *malista* eight times; "especially" is clearly the meaning in five of those occurrences, and a viable possibility in the remaining three. In the New Testament as a whole, *malista* occurs twelve times, and "especially" is the normal sense of the word; nowhere is "namely" a preferred translation.[32]

A more likely exegesis is to see "Savior of all people" as indicating a soteriological intention that applies to all persons in one sense but recognize that believers, precisely because they are believers, actually experience the salvation God has provided for all, and thus he is their Savior "especially," indicating a deeper sense. Millard Erickson seems justified in seeing 1 Tim 4:10 as "[a]mong the most impressive" texts supporting universal atonement.[33]

Taken together, the texts from the Gospel and First Letter of John that describe Christ's death for "the world" or "the whole world," the numerous places in the Pauline Epistles where Christ's death is for "all," and a number of similar verses readers can consult for themselves,[34] comprise a strong case for a divine intention to make a universal provision in the atonement. The observation that John Owen and definite atonement advocates have made down through the years that "world" and "all" are capable of different, restricted meanings may be granted. But as Robert Lightner argues, "The question is, *'Is it scripturally and logically sound always to restrict every usage of the words "all," "whosoever," and "world" when they occur in a salvation context?'* . . . . There may not be a single exception if the limited viewpoint is to stand."[35] Even Robert Dabney, an advocate of particular redemption who accepts Owen's argument for a limited sense of "world" for some texts, adds, "There are other of these passages, to which I think, the candid mind will admit, this sort of explanation is inapplicable."[36] These verses place a heavy burden of proof on the definite atonement viewpoint, one I do not believe they have sustained.

The false teachers in 2 Peter. A final category of verses appealed to in support of universal atonement may be mentioned. They do not precisely claim Christ's atonement is universal, but they do claim Christ died for some who will finally perish. Thus, they affirm Christ died for more than just the elect and thus imply a general or universal atonement. While Rom 14:15, 1 Cor 8:11, and Heb 10:29 are occasionally claimed as supporting this idea, a much clearer and more widely used text is 2 Pet 2:1. It describes false teachers

as "bought" by Christ as well as denying Christ and "bringing upon themselves swift destruction."

One issue this verse raises beyond that of the extent of atonement is the perseverance of the saints. Were the false teachers, mentioned here as "among" the people (i.e., the church), and "bought" by Christ, genuinely saved persons who became apostate, denying Christ and as a result suffering eschatological destruction? Thomas Schreiner acknowledges that the most straightforward interpretation of the verse would be this: "Some who submit to Christ's lordship subsequently deny him and are therefore doomed forever." He adds, "This is now the view of most commentators."[37] Schreiner and many on both sides of the universal-definite atonement debate believe that a genuine Christian cannot commit apostasy, so they see the false teachers as never truly saved.

The view that this essay defends is that Christ "bought" the false teachers in a soteriological sense; that is, they were included in the universal provision Christ made on the cross. But they never personally appropriated that provision, so they were never saved. But this issue is secondary for the question of the extent of the atonement. Whether the false prophets were (1) truly saved and became apostate or (2) never truly saved, the question for the extent of the atonement is this: Are there some for whom Christ died who will in the end be lost? This is certainly what 2 Pet 2:1 seems to affirm, and for this reason this text is included in many arguments for universal atonement.[38]

The prominence of this verse in arguments for universal atonement has not gone unnoticed by defenders of definite atonement. John Owen anticipates most of the lines along which advocates of definite atonement have responded by noting three "exceedingly dark, uncertain, and doubtful" questions this verse raises: (1) Does the word for Lord (*despotēs*) refer to Christ? (2) Does "bought" refer to eternal redemption by the blood of Christ or some form of earthly, temporal deliverance? (3) Is the reference to being bought "according to the reality of the thing, or according to their apprehension and their profession"?[39]

The first two questions have not seemed that dark or uncertain to contemporary interpreters. There is a good measure of agreement on the answers among both defenders of definite atonement and advocates of universal atonement. As to the first question, the word *despotēs* occurs only ten times in the New Testament, but the parallel with Jude 4 and the reference to being "bought" clearly point to Christ. Citing these two factors, J. N. D. Kelly

says that "sovereign Lord" (NIV) or "Master . . . undoubtedly here denotes Christ."[40]

Likewise for the second question, the majority of interpreters clearly favor that "bought" refers to a soteriological sense rather than merely temporal deliverance. The reason is that "the New Testament nowhere else uses the word for redemption ['bought,' *agorazō*] in association with Christ in a nonsoteriological sense."[41]

So most supporters of definite atonement have gravitated to the third question to interpret this verse compatibly with their view. They have argued, in a variety of ways, that the description of the false teachers as having been bought by Christ does not describe "the reality of the thing," but "according to their own profession and the judgment of charity. They gave themselves out as redeemed men, and were so accounted in the judgment of the Church while they abode in her communion."[42] In the words of Roger Nicole, they are described "in terms of what they claim, rather than in terms of what they had."[43] Schreiner thinks Peter used "phenomenological language": Peter says that Christ bought the false teachers "in the sense that they gave every indication initially of genuine faith," but their later denial showed that they never truly belonged to the Lord.[44]

Wording it in slightly different ways, all these commentators agree that while 2 Pet 2:1 says the false teachers deny the Lord who bought them, Christ never really bought them at all. It is noteworthy that this interpretation seems to appeal mainly to those who approach the verse with a commitment to definite atonement. But when a commitment to a theological position requires one to deny what a verse straightforwardly appears to affirm, it would seem that the theological position needs reexamination. When one places the earlier verses affirming that Christ died for the world, or all people, alongside this verse from 2 Peter, the biblical case for a divine intention to provide atonement universally is strong.

Historical Considerations

While evangelical theology has always seen Scripture as the sole, normative source for theology, a healthy respect for the fact that we are neither the first to seek to understand Scripture nor the first to receive the illuminating ministry of the Holy Spirit commends a consideration of the evidence of history as an integral part of a healthy theological methodology. Moreover, history can help us discern areas in which we may be in danger of becoming

captive to the spirit of the age. If contemporary thinking is at sharp odds with the bulk of the Christian tradition, contemporary thinking bears a heavier burden of proof. It is possible that one age can understand Scripture on a certain issue more clearly than all those who came before, but the verdict of history should not be laid aside lightly.

On the issue of the extent of the atonement, what have others before us found? On the whole, the majority position in Christian history is decidedly on the side of universal atonement.[45] Up until the time of the Reformation, Augustine is the only strong voice to give support to definite atonement, and while there is no explicit, lengthy, or definitive statement even in Augustine on the extent of the atonement, it is probably accurate to place him on that side of the debate.[46] Some claim Augustine's younger contemporary Prosper of Aquitaine was a fellow defender of definite atonement, but opinion is divided on him with some thinking he modified his views toward universal atonement in the latter part of his life.[47] By the ninth century Augustine's view had become such a minority view that when the monk Gottschalk revived it, his perspective "was considered by most to be extreme, if not heretical."[48]

The next major advance was the formula Peter Lombard developed in the twelfth century: Christ's death was "for all, with respect to the sufficiency of the ransom, but for the elect alone with regard to its efficiency, because it effects salvation for the predestined alone."[49] This formula, often shortened to "sufficient for all, efficient for the elect," became the standard view for centuries, and many today use that language because it is ambiguous enough for both sides to affirm. Arminians may feel more comfortable changing the second half to "efficient for those who believe," but the two phrases refer to the same group. There the debate rested until the Reformation.

In the early seventeenth century, as the followers of James Arminius clashed with the Dutch Reformed Church, controversy over the extent of the atonement burst into flames. Eventually the Reformed position would be identified as definite atonement. But it should be noted that before then a majority of the Reformers had continued to affirm universal atonement (Luther, Melanchthon, Bullinger, Latimer, Cranmer, and Coverdale).[50]

The great question among Reformation scholars is the position of John Calvin on this issue. G. Michael Thomas, in reviewing the literature on this topic, lists Paul Helm, Roger Nicole, Robert Godfrey, Richard Muller, and Jonathan Rainbow as authors claiming that Calvin supported definite atonement, while P. van Buren, B. Hall, B. G. Armstrong, R. T. Kendall, M. C.

Bell, J. W. Anderson, C. Daniel, S. Strehle, and A. C. Clifford have claimed that Calvin belongs in the universal atonement camp.[51] Space limitations forbid a complete examination of the evidence for these claims, but suffice it to say that a tension existed in Calvin's thought. He saw support both for the idea of a universal promise and for particular redemption.[52]

Regardless of Calvin's own position, most of his followers adopted definite atonement. While the position of Arminius and his followers, the Remonstrants,[53] caused considerable debate at the Synod of Dort, it was rejected, and definite atonement became the official Reformed position. It was affirmed in the Westminster Confession and received its classic formulation and defense in 1648 in the work of John Owen, *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ*. At the same time, opposition to definite atonement surfaced from within Reformed circles. From Moise Amyraut and Richard Baxter to John Bunyan and John Newton, there have been, almost from the beginning of Reformed theology, a number who called themselves Calvinist, but denied limited atonement. Others within the Reformed camp affirmed particular redemption and also "unlimited atonement."[54] In the eighteenth century the followers of Arminius received the support of John Wesley, and his support for universal atonement has been bequeathed to the Wesleyan, Methodist, and Holiness churches developed by Wesley's followers.

Modern Baptists trace their origins to seventeenth-century English Separatists, some of whom were living in Holland at the height of the Arminian controversy.[55] This group, led by John Smyth and Thomas Helwys, adopted the view of Arminius and became known as General Baptists because they believed Christ died for all in general. They were soon followed by the development of another group of Baptists in England, called Particular Baptists, who in their London Confession of 1644 stated that Christ died only for the elect. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Particular Baptists became much more numerous than General Baptists in England. But as the nineteenth-century progressed, support for Calvinist theology as a whole, and particular redemption specifically, declined. By 1891, Baptists in England merged into the Baptist Union, with no position on the extent of the atonement required.

In North America, Calvinistic Baptists (called Regular Baptists) vastly outnumbered Arminian Baptists (called Free Will Baptists) in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and the dominant confession among them was the Philadelphia Confession. This confession duplicated the English Second

London Confession of 1677/1689, which was itself modeled after the Westminster Confession and preserved its affirmation of definite atonement.[56] But support for definite atonement waned, even among Calvinistic Baptists, and by 1859, the statement of faith adopted by The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary was noncommittal on the issue of the extent of the atonement, even though its president, J. P. Boyce, himself affirmed definite atonement. In the North, Freewill Baptists merged with the Northern Baptist Convention in 1911, and in the South, Southern Baptists in 1925 adopted a statement of faith, The Baptist Faith and Message, which said simply that Christ's death on the cross "made provision for the redemption of men from sin."

Today the majority view among Baptists, as among evangelicals as a whole, is universal atonement. This is held by all Arminians and by a considerable number of so-called four-point Calvinists.[57] There remains a significant minority voice for definite atonement, and the debate is continuing. But if historical support is taken into account, it strengthens the case for universal atonement more than that for definite atonement. At the same time, the persistence of both views suggests that a multiple-intentions view, such as that represented in this chapter, may be able to preserve the strengths of both sides and provide a more comprehensive explanation.

Theological Objections

The position defended here, that one of God's intentions in the cross is providing forgiveness for all, has much in common with traditional arguments for universal atonement. But because this position sees additional intentions involved in the cross, I believe it can respond better to traditional objections from advocates of definite atonement, at least on some points, than typical formulations of universal atonement.

Universal provision leads to universal salvation. By far the most important theological objection raised against a universal provision of forgiveness in the atonement accomplished by Christ is that it leads inevitably to universal salvation. This concern is supported with three arguments.

The first argument is that God will certainly accomplish his intent. John Owen reasons that if God's intent in sending Christ to die was to provide a ransom for all people, then either God failed to accomplish his end (which seems to Owen "blasphemously injurious to the wisdom, power, and perfection of God, as likewise derogatory to the worth and value of the death of Christ"),

or "all men, all the posterity of Adam, must be saved, purged, sanctified, and glorified."[58] In a similar vein Berkhof asserts, "It may be laid down, first of all, as a general principle, that the designs of God are always surely efficacious and cannot be frustrated by the actions of man."[59]

But this argument misunderstands the view of God's intent being defended here. God did not intend to save everyone by Christ's death on the cross, but to make provision for the salvation of all.[60] Salvation requires both the objective provision and the subjective application. The objective provision is universal, but not the subjective application. God can accomplish his intent without entailing universal salvation.

The second argument is that the atonement is inherently efficacious for salvation. Here is the definite aspect of definite atonement. J. I. Packer says, "Christ did not win a hypothetical salvation for hypothetical believers, a mere possibility of salvation for any who might possibly believe, but a real salvation for his own chosen people."[61] Supporters of this argument see the real or definite nature of salvation indicated in words like reconciliation, redemption, and satisfaction. John Murray asks, "What does redemption mean? It does not mean redeemability, that we are placed in a redeemable position. It means that Christ purchased and procured redemption."[62] Anticipating the claim that the cross makes only the objective provision, Berkhof claims that there is "an inseparable connection between the purchase and the actual bestowal of salvation." Thus, Christ by his death "purchased faith, repentance, and all the other effects of the work of the Holy Spirit, for His people."[63]

In response the actuality of salvation is one of the strengths of the definite atonement position. It honors Christ as Savior, not just Possibility Maker. But while there may be a "connection" between the objective "purchase" of salvation and the subjective "bestowal," there is also a distinction. There is no conflict between positing a universal objective provision and a particular subjective bestowal, both grounded in Christ's atonement. Why make such a distinction? One reason is that provision and bestowal are distinct—certainly chronologically and also theologically. The objective provision was completed at the cross, and so Christ could cry, "It is finished" (John 19:30). But the subjective application happens individually, at times throughout history, and involves the work of the Holy Spirit, as Berkhof acknowledges in the quotation above.

There is a second theological reason for distinguishing between objective provision and subjective appropriation: it allows us to make sense of (1) the

passages examined above that teach a universal provision in the cross and (2) passages considered below in connection with a second, more limited intent of God in the cross.[64] For those who believe in the unity and ultimate harmony of the Scriptures, a position that can allow for the likeliest exegeses of all the relevant passages is certainly preferable to one that requires forced and unnatural interpretations.

The third argument is that sending to hell anyone whose sins have been paid for would be patently unjust. God is not unjust; therefore, a universal atonement would lead to all being welcomed into heaven. John Owen poses this "dilemma" for those supporting universal atonement: "God imposed his wrath due unto, and Christ underwent the pains of hell for, either all the sins of all men, or all the sins of some men, or some sins of all men." He sees the third option as meaning none would be saved; the second option he defends; of the first option, he asks, "Why, then, are not all freed from the punishment of all their sins?"[65]

The response is the same as before. Such thinking overlooks the distinction between objective provision and subjective application. The payment Christ made for sins is not effectual apart from a faith-union with Christ. Calvin says forcefully, "As long as Christ remains outside of us, and we are separated from him, all that he has suffered and done for the salvation of the human race remains useless and of no value to us."[66] Thus, unbelievers who die outside of Christ will be judged and condemned for their sins, even though Christ provided propitiation "for the sins of the whole world" (1 John 2:2). That propitiation, and all Christ did on the cross, though provided to all, remains of no value, ineffectual, useless, until subjectively appropriated. Indeed, as many have observed, to insist that Christ's death removes the wrath of God from those for whom he died, apart from or prior to faith, leaves us unable to explain how Paul could see the Ephesian Christians as at one time, under the wrath of God as the rest of humankind (Eph. 2:3).[67] Even if one wants to argue that the gift of faith is purchased by the cross, until one comes to faith, that person is under the wrath of God, even though Christ has made payment for sins. As Stephen Strehle explains, "The limited atonement arguments of double jeopardy and universalism are not valid, for their proponents too must inconsistently make the atonement ineffectual until it is actually applied."[68]

While the charge of leading to universal salvation is the most well-developed objection to universal atonement, it is not the only one. I will also briefly consider three others.

Universal atonement disrupts the unity of atonement and intercession. Berkhof claims, "The sacrificial work of Christ and His intercessory work are simply two different aspects of His atoning work, and therefore the scope of the one can be no wider than that of the other."[69] John 17:9 is cited as support that Jesus does not pray for the world; therefore, he did not die for the world (despite the statements that he did die for the world, examined earlier). Owen develops this point more fully, linking both Christ's death and intercession to his service as our high priest.[70]

But the argument makes three assumptions: (1) It assumes that Christ died only for the elect, an unsustained assumption with considerable biblical weight against it. (2) It assumes Christ interceded only for the elect, an assumption that Christ's prayer from the cross ("Father, forgive them for they know not what they do," Luke 23:34) seems to undermine.[71] (3) It assumes Christ died for and intercedes for the same number of people, an assumption nowhere explicitly supported in Scripture. Despite the importance of this objection to some advocates of definite atonement, its strength depends on the validity of the assumptions undergirding it. If, as argued here, the assumptions are debatable at best, the argument loses a good deal of its strength.

Universal atonement divides the persons of the Trinity. A third objection to universal atonement is that it "divides the persons of the Trinity"; that is, "particular redemption affirms that the Son's intention in dying to save particular people corresponds with the Father's intention to elect those people to salvation and the Spirit's intention to apply the benefits of Christ's death to those same people."[72] This objection has some weight against those who see only a single, universal intent in the atonement, for all agree that the atonement is applied particularly. But this argument prematurely and unnecessarily narrows the Father's intent. If he intended to make a universal provision for all through the cross *and also* intended to save some through the cross, then the Son's dying for all fulfills both his intents and the Spirit's applying the benefits of Christ's death only to some also fulfills the Father's intent. There is no conflict.

A parallel is God's provision of universal revelation. In the creation God reveals himself universally, though all do not profit from it. To universal revelation God adds special revelation, but even it is not effectual apart from God's particular work of illumination. Why would God give revelation to all when he purposed to savingly illuminate only some? Perhaps God has more than one intention in revelation.

Universal atonement ignores the biblical support for definite atonement. Definite atonement advocates are by no means content to rest their case on the implications derived from other theological doctrines. They claim their view is supported by explicit claims that Christ died for his people (Matt 1:21), his sheep (John 10:11), his church (Eph 5:25).[73] The usual response from universal atonement advocates is that these verses do not state that Christ died *only* for his people, sheep, or church.[74] While this response is accurate, a multiple-intention view can go further and do a better job of giving these verses a fuller voice, without negating the other verses that support a universal provision in the atonement.

Practical Implications

Before moving to a consideration of the particular intent of the atonement, it is worthwhile to pause and consider one practical implication of a universal intent in the atonement that many of its advocates see as an important component of its success. Almost all participants in this debate agree that the gospel should be preached to all,[75] but many in the universal atonement camp think a definite atonement view is inconsistent with a universal offer of the gospel. David Allen says limited atonement "provides an insufficient ground for evangelism by undercutting the well-meant gospel offer"; Robert Lightner devotes a separate appendix to the question and concludes, "Limited atonement runs aground when it comes to sharing the gospel of God's saving grace"; Roger Olson and Kenneth Keathley agree.[76]

Advocates of definite atonement have responded with explanations of how the universality of the gospel call is not contrary to their view of the atonement, but some have seen some validity in the objection and have sought to nuance their affirmation of limited atonement in a variety of ways. Robert Dabney, a nineteenth-century supporter of particular redemption, felt compelled by a number of passages in Scripture to affirm that there is a sense in which Christ died for all. He found it a necessary implication of God's command to all to accept Christ.[77] Similarly, Wayne Grudem urges Reformed theologians to drop their objection to evangelists who say to unbelievers, "Christ died for your sins." He believes there are ways of understanding that statement ("Christ died for your sins") that are not inconsistent with Reformed thought.[78] William Shedd, another advocate of limited redemption, justifies the universal offer of the gospel with words that come close to the idea of a

universal provision: “There are no claims of justice not yet satisfied; there is no sin of man for which an unlimited atonement has not been provided.”[79]

But J. I. Packer argues, “The New Testament never calls on any man to repent on the ground that Christ died specifically and particularly for him,” and Shedd, despite his affirmation of an unlimited atonement, agrees that no one is called by the gospel to believe “that Christ died for them in particular.”[80] Rather, the gospel message is “repent and believe,” and this is a message all Christians may and should offer to all. Definite atonement advocates can give examples of universal gospel invitations from the preaching of John Owen to Charles Spurgeon to show the compatibility of particular atonement and the well-meant offer of the gospel.[81]

I do not question that many advocates of definite atonement are passionate and effective preachers of the gospel who offer it fully and freely. One can preach the gospel and invite people to repent and believe in Christ without necessarily mentioning that Christ died specifically for them. But Gary Shultz makes an excellent point that the first element of the gospel in Paul’s summary of the gospel in 1 Cor 15:3 (“that Christ died for our sins”) assumes a universal provision of the cross:

> If the atonement were limited only to the elect, then how could Paul and the early church preach to a group of nonbelievers that “Christ died for our sins”? The word “our” includes both the preacher and those to whom he is preaching. If the atonement was only for the elect, to preach this message to the nonelect would at best be giving them a false hope and at worst would be untrue.[82]

It seems that gospel preaching, according to Paul, either includes or assumes that Christ died for the sins of those to whom we preach. As stated above, I do not believe advocates of particular atonement are disingenuous or insincere in their claim to believe in the free offer of the gospel to all, nor do I deny that they do in fact share the gospel; but it also seems undeniable that the preaching of the gospel to all fits much more easily and completely into a view that at least includes a universal intent in the atonement to provide a sacrifice for the sins of all.

God’s Particular Intention in the Atonement

Thus far this essay has examined the case for a universal intention in the atonement; that is, one of God’s intentions in sending Christ and one of

Christ's intentions in dying was to provide forgiveness for all. I think the case for this universal intent is persuasive. Biblically, it allows for a much more natural exegesis of numerous texts. Historically, it has been the dominant understanding. The theological objections raised against it can be cogently answered. And practically, it fits better with the command to preach the gospel to all.

So why the debate? Why even the need for a book like this? Because there is also a good case to be made for a particular intention in the atonement. To be specific, I will argue that another intention of God in sending Christ and another intention of Christ in dying was actually to secure the salvation of some. I now examine the case for a particular intention.

Biblical Arguments

In arguing for a particular intention in the atonement, advocates of a multiple-intentions view can use much of the argumentation developed over the years by advocates of definite atonement, with some modifications. For example, almost all arguments for definite atonement refer to verses that speak of Christ's dying for a specific, particular group: his "people" (Matt 1:21), his "sheep" (John 10:11), his "church" (Eph 5:25–27).[83] None of these texts say that Christ died *only* for his people, sheep, or church, so the claim that these verses substantiate definite atonement as the only intent in Christ's death is not persuasive. However, within a multiple-intentions view, they can support the claim that there is one intention in the atonement that may be limited to a particular group.

Gary Shultz argues that a number of similar verses show "God's special love for the elect," a love manifested in securing their salvation by Christ's atonement. The love of God that causes Paul to burst into praise in Rom 8:31–39 is a love for the elect (v. 33), for only they will never be separated from that love (vv. 38–39), and that love was shown most clearly in Christ's death for them (v. 34).[84]

Other verses emphasize the certainty and definiteness of the salvation provided through the cross. Matthew 1:21 says that Jesus "will save his people from their sins." Romans 5:9–10 says, "We have now been justified by his blood," and "we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son." Perhaps most specific is Eph 5:25–27, where Paul says Christ "gave himself up for" the church with a purpose that seems to go beyond merely providing forgiveness: "to make her holy . . . to present her to himself as a radiant church" (NIV). As

noted above, one of the strengths of the definite-atonement position is that it strongly emphasizes Jesus as Savior, not just Possibility-Maker.[85] These verses support an intention of God not just to provide universal forgiveness through the atonement but actually to save some. But these two intentions—to objectively provide forgiveness for all and to subjectively apply it to some—are not contradictory.

Others argue that a particular intention in the atonement is implied by other biblical teachings. Robert Dabney and William Shedd both see the teaching of unconditional election as one of the strongest supports for particular redemption.[86] Gary Shultz links the particular intention in the atonement to his understanding of election and God's sovereignty in salvation:

> Christ's atonement must have done something for the elect that it did not do for the nonelect if anyone is to be saved. If God had only general intentions in the atonement, then the atonement provides an objective salvation for all, but it does not enable people to subjectively experience salvation . . . . Christ's atonement is what saves the elect, and it does so because it secured the salvation of the elect according to the Father's sovereign will.[87]

While I agree with Dabney, Shedd, and Shultz on the nature of election[88] and God's sovereignty in salvation, the lack of clear and explicit biblical connection of election and sovereignty to the intention of the atonement limits the strength of this argument.

Likewise, J. I. Packer thinks the nature of the atonement as penal substitution requires a definite intention. He reasons, "If Christ specifically took and discharged my penal obligation as a sinner, does it not follow that the cross was decisive for my salvation not only as its sole meritorious ground, but also as guaranteeing that I should be brought to faith, and through faith to eternal life?" Or as he puts it later more positively, "My faith in Christ is God's own gift to me, given in virtue of Christ's death for me; i.e., the cross procured it."[89] Verses such as Eph 2:8–9 and Phil 1:29 support the idea that faith is God's gift to the elect, but Packer does not show how the cross "procures" faith for an individual, nor does he give biblical evidence to support his assertion. There is a connection between the atonement and the gift of faith, but I develop it below in a different manner from Packer.

Finally, another common argument for a definite or particular intention in the atonement is unity in the divine will regarding salvation. Thus, if the

Father wills to save only some and the Spirit applies salvation to only some, then it stands to reason that Christ died to save only some.[90] This argument certainly makes logical sense and is generally supported by the relationship in Scripture of Father, Son, and Spirit.[91] But it is inferential more than explicit, and it is qualified by the evidence elsewhere in the New Testament that there is also a universal intention in the atonement. The Father may send Christ to the cross both to save some and provide forgiveness for all; Christ in dying accomplished both; and the Spirit in applying the benefits of Christ's death only to some also acted in harmony with the will of Father and Son. Thus, Christ's atonement may have multiple intentions without in any way contradicting the unity of the divine will.

Thus, while some of the arguments for a particular intention in the atonement are more implicit than explicit, they do have some force. In addition, a number of verses' most natural interpretation does point explicitly toward a particular intention. The combination of these arguments for a particular intention with the arguments for a universal intention, given earlier, most strongly commends a multiple-intentions view of the atonement.

Numerous authors have recognized this, even if not adopting "multiple intention" terminology for their position. For example, Robert Dabney, William Shedd, and Robert Lightner are among those who see the need to incorporate both universal and particular texts in their understanding of the atonement, and thus all affirm that Christ died for all in some sense and for the elect only in a different sense.[92] Augustus H. Strong is more specific, stating that passages such as Eph 1:4, 7; 2 Tim 1:9–10; and John 17:9, 20, 24 assert "a special efficacy of the atonement in the case of the elect," while 2 Pet 2:1; 1 John 2:2; 1 Tim 2:6; 4:10; and Titus 2:11 teach that "the death of Christ is for all."[93] Gordon Lewis and Bruce Demarest concur, saying that a "universal purpose accounts for the passages emphasized by the Arminians indicating that Christ died for all" and that a second, particular purpose "accounts for passages that are highlighted by Calvinists," referring to passages that "indicate that Christ died with a special end in view for those the Father gave him out of the world."[94] Both intentions appear in a single verse in the case of 1 Tim 4:10, in which God is referred to as "the Savior of all people" (universal intention), but "especially of those who believe" (particular intention).

Theological Rationale

It is certainly possible to stop here and simply accept that Scripture teaches both a universal and a particular intention in the atonement. But this assertion raises a question: How is it that the single event of the death of Christ provides both an objective forgiveness of sins for all while actually securing salvation for the elect, especially when the actual salvation of the elect is chronologically separated from the event of the atonement? I argue above that salvation involves both an objective accomplishment that removes the obstacles to fellowship with God on the divine side (such as satisfaction of the justice of God) and a subjective application on the human side (such as repentance and faith). This is why a universal intention to provide forgiveness of sins to all does not entail universal salvation; it provides only the objective aspect.[95] But how does the atonement accomplish the particular intention of bringing the subjective application of the atonement into the lives of people down through history? *That* it does seems strongly supported by the arguments above; *how* it does is more indirect. No verse explicitly says that Christ's atonement secures for the elect both forgiveness of sins and repentance and faith, so how can such an assertion be supported?

The atonement and the Spirit. I begin by noting the central importance of the Holy Spirit in the subjective application of the saving work of Christ and then note the connection between the atonement and the giving of the Spirit. It is true some would separate the subjective application of the atonement from the work of the atonement, thus placing it outside of this discussion of the extent of the atonement.[96] While there is an obvious distinction between the objective accomplishment (which happened in the cross of Christ as one event at a particular moment in space and time) and the subjective application (which happens through the Spirit's ministry in a variety of ways to believers throughout history), the two are so tightly linked that they may be properly recognized as two aspects of the one work of atonement. Indeed, if God has a universal intention that is accomplished objectively and a particular intention that is accomplished subjectively, then any discussion of the atonement is incomplete if it does not consider how the particular intention is accomplished subjectively.

The Spirit in subjective application. The New Testament consistently teaches that the condition for subjectively applying Christ's objective accomplishment is faith. And while faith may rightly be described in some sense as a human response to God's grace, it may also be argued to be a divinely enabled human response, specifically a Spirit-enabled human

response. Calvin said that all Christ has done and suffered for our salvation remains useless as long as we are outside of Christ. We come into union with Christ by faith, which Calvin calls "the principal work of the Spirit" and "the bond by which Christ effectually unites us to himself."[97] This seems amply supported by Scripture.

The Spirit is described as the active agent in regeneration in Titus 3:5 and John 3:5–8; he is the one who washes, sanctifies, and justifies in 1 Cor 6:11. The Spirit's power causes one to place faith in the gospel (1 Cor 2:4) and to confess Jesus as Lord (1 Cor 12:3). The Spirit gives life (John 6:63; Rom 8:6, 11) by setting us free from the law of sin and death (Rom 8:2).[98] He baptizes believers into the body of Christ, thereby uniting them with Christ. The Holy Spirit is the one who seals believers, guaranteeing their subjective enjoyment of Christ's objective accomplishment (Eph 1:13–14). And though it is not explicitly stated, many believe the Holy Spirit is the one who effectually calls those who were predestined by God and who will be justified and glorified (Rom 8:29–30).[99]

The Spirit and the cross. One reason I consider the Spirit's subjective work of application as an aspect of the atonement is that it is closely connected with the objective work of accomplishment in Scripture. We first see it in John 7:39, where "the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified." The cross is inextricably connected to the resurrection and ascension as part of Christ's glorification. While the Spirit was certainly active in a variety of ways in the Old Testament and the Gospels, there was some limitation in the way that the Spirit would be given until the objective work of the atonement had been accomplished.[100] Thus, after the cross, resurrection, and ascension, Acts 2:33 explains what happened on the day of Pentecost. It is the result of Christ's glorification: "Exalted to the right hand of God, he [Jesus] has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear" (NIV).

Kevin Vanhoozer, developing a constructive proposal for atonement theology under the critique of postmodernity, offers this thesis: "The saving significance of Christ's death consists in making possible God's gift of the Holy Spirit." He notes that Jesus spoke of his death as a "departure" (*exodus*) in Luke 9:31. "But what does Jesus' exodus accomplish? To what new Promised Land does it lead us? It leads, I submit, to the kingdom of God: to the reign of God in human hearts."[101] Thus Vanhoozer sees Christ's death as intimately connected to the Spirit's subjective work in the hearts of the elect.

Gary Shultz states more categorically, "Christ secured the salvation of the elect in the atonement by dying for their sin in order to then send the Holy Spirit to apply salvation to the elect."[102] Specifically, "on the basis of the atonement, the Spirit applies salvation to the elect through effectual calling, regeneration, conversion, justification, indwelling the believer, baptism in the Spirit, sanctification, preservation and perseverance, and glorification."[103] All these ministries of the Spirit are particular as opposed to universal; thus, they are included in the argument for a particular intention in the atonement.

Subjective application through the moral influence of the cross. Another way to give a rationale for how the cross can both provide an objective provision of forgiveness for all and bring the subjective application of the cross to a particular group is to note an often neglected understanding of the cross, one that focuses on the subjective effects of the cross. It goes by a number of names; the variety applicable here is the moral influence theory.

At least since the landmark work by Gustav Aulén,[104] it has been common to see the nature of the atonement in three ways.[105] The Christus Victor or classic view sees the cross primarily as Christ's victory over Satan, the demons, sin, death, and all our enemies. While popular in the early church, it gave way to the second major type, the objective, with Anselm's famous work, *Cur Deus Homo* (*Why God Became Man*). Objective views see the atonement primarily in terms of some satisfaction God requires. Satisfaction of the justice and wrath of God through the penal substitution of Christ has been prominent in Reformed and evangelical understandings. The adjective "objective" denotes that the focus is outside the human subject: something happens objectively, apart from any human response. Subjective views, often called moral influence or example theories, are commonly seen as originating with Peter Abelard.[106] They claim the death of Christ is designed to change humans, especially to evoke a response to the love of God revealed on the cross.

Of these three, evangelicals have most prominently championed the objective view, particularly the penal-substitution model. This is appropriate since the penal-substitution model is pervasively supported in Scripture and is the only model that adequately answers the question of why Christ had to die.[107] If the cross was only designed to conquer our enemies or only intended to move us to faith and repentance, it seems there would have been other ways to accomplish such ends. Only the need to satisfy the righteous wrath of God explains the necessity of Christ's death on the cross.

At the same time, evangelicals as prominent as J. I. Packer and Leon Morris have acknowledged that there is some biblical support and value in all of these theories.[108] Morris adds, however, "Upholders of the penal theory have sometimes so stressed the thought that Christ bore our penalty that they have found room for nothing else. Rarely have they in theory denied the value of other theories, but sometimes they have in practice ignored them."[109] In particular, subjective views have been seen with suspicion. Unfortunately, the subjective view was developed in clearly heretical ways during the Reformation by Socinus, and the moral influence theory was widely supported in liberal theology and often coupled with a denial of any objective idea.[110] But all three of these theories on the nature of the atonement can inform a discussion of the extent and intent of the atonement. In particular, they can help us answer the question raised above of how the cross can make both a universal provision of forgiveness and a particular subjective application of the work of the cross.

Objectively the cross satisfies the wrath of God, apart from and prior to any human response. God can receive anyone who comes in repentance and faith because Christ died for the sins of the world; he has made propitiation for all. But left to ourselves, we humans run and hide from God; we make a responsible choice to turn away from what God in Christ has provided and, as Calvin said, "As long as Christ remains outside of us, and we are separated from him, all that he has suffered and done for the salvation of the human race remains useless and of no value for us."[111] So God also purposes to change the hearts of some subjectively, through the beauty and power and love demonstrated on the cross.

The biblical basis for the subjective view is not nearly as substantial as that for the objective views, reflecting perhaps its secondary role, but a biblical argument can be made for the idea that the cross has a subjective impact. First, the cross preeminently objectively reveals the love of God. From John 3:16 to Rom 5:8 to 1 John 4:10, God's love is seen and shown through the cross. The subjective impact of this love is to teach us to love ("We love because he first loved us" [1 John 4:19]) and even to constrain us to live for the One who died for us ("Christ's love compels us" [2 Cor 5:14]). But this impact is clearly particular, not universal. Peter Abelard, in reflecting on what Christ has done in taking upon himself our nature and dying for us, says, "He has more fully bound us to himself by love; with the result that our hearts should be enkindled by such a gift of divine grace, and true charity should not now shrink from enduring anything for him."[112] In other words, some see what

Christ has done for them on the cross, and cry, with Isaac Watts, "Love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all."[113] But not all respond to the cross in the same way. While it could be argued that the variety of responses is due to human choice, it can also be maintained that God directs the subjective moral influence of the cross toward a particular group. By God's intention the cross does compel a responsive love in them toward the God who has first loved them. It is effectual in drawing forth a response of faith and repentance.

Second, the cross objectively shows the power and wisdom of God (1 Cor 1:22–24; Rom 1:16). Though the message of the cross is foolishness to the world, it comes to some with power because the Spirit uses it to bring some to faith (1 Cor 2:2–5). Paul says those to whom the message of the gospel comes with power show by their response that they are among the elect of God (1 Thess 1:4–5). The moral influence of the cross enlightens them to see the cross in a different way, not as foolishness but as wisdom and power. Such a view of the cross leads them to embrace it in faith and repentance. But such a response is not universal but particular.

Objective views of the atonement fit well with a universal intention in the cross; subjective views show how the cross also has a particular intention; and as the final section of this essay will argue, classic or Christus Victor views of the atonement point to a cosmic intention in the cross. But before moving to consideration of that intention, I will consider some objections raised against the assertion of a particular intention in the atonement.

Theological Objections

Because the particular intention advocated in this essay is joined to a universal intention, it is not subject to many of the objections raised against definite atonement by its critics. Specifically, as discussed above, I agree with the objections that definite atonement cannot deal fairly with the universal texts in Scripture and that definite atonement is difficult to square with the preaching of the gospel to all. A multiple-intention view is not subject to these objections because it incorporates a universal intention alongside the particular intention.

Still there is one major objection that any particular intention must face by the assertion of a particular intention. Some say God's intention in the cross is only universal and that any particular intention in the atonement is contrary to the universal love of God.[114] They appeal to texts such as John 3:16 in -

support of God's universal love, and 1 Tim 2:4; 2 Pet 3:9; and Ezek 18:23 as evidence for the universal saving will of God, and they see any assertion of a particular intention to secure the salvation of some as contrary to this universal love and universal saving will. Moreover, some also see a theological and moral problem in an intention to save only some. Roger Olson states, "Any human being who had the ability to rescue a large number of people from a terrible calamity but rescues only some would never be considered good or loving or just." Such a God would be "morally ambiguous if not a moral monster."[115]

How may a multiple-intention view of the atonement respond to this objection? First, it seems a multiple-intentions view may more fully fit biblical descriptions of God's love than any single intention view because the Bible speaks of God's love in differing ways. With regard to the issue here, it is worth noting that while the Bible does speak of God's universal love for the whole world (John 3:16), it also speaks of a particular love, the love that makes believers more than conquerors (Rom 8:37), the love that joins them to Christ in an inseparable relationship (Rom 8:35, 38–39). A multiple-intentions view can see the universal love of God reflected in the universal provision of the atonement and the particular love of God manifested in the definite aspect of the atonement. Any single-intention view will tend to slight one aspect of God's love or the other.

Second, it may well be that universal atonement faces a similar moral problem as that posed to the position advocated here, an atonement that includes a particular intention. Under most forms of universal atonement, those who die in infancy are regarded as exempt from judgment and in no danger of condemnation.[116] If this is so, why would God not strike down all those he foreknows will never choose to accept his grace while they are still in infancy, before they become able to make a choice that will damn them? It seems that even the God of universal atonement does not do all he can to save all he can.

Third, it may be that part of the objection to a particular intention in the atonement is the sense that God is unfair in giving to some what he does not give to all. But this is to confuse fair treatment with equal treatment. The parable of the Workers in the Vineyard in Matthew 20 is instructive here. The landowner treated all the workers fairly, for he gave none less than he had agreed to pay them. But he did not treat them all equally, for some worked longer for the same pay. In the same way, God treats all fairly; no one is

condemned for less than condemnable choices. But to some God is more than fair; he is gracious. But grace is not what anyone deserves. In electing some, God is treating some differently from others. That does not mean he is treating any unfairly.

Still, at the end of the day, the question remains, why does God save only some? Why does God have any particular intention in the atonement? That God does have a particular intention in the atonement seems well grounded biblically and theologically. It coheres well with my understanding of God's sovereignty in salvation, the depth of human depravity, and the unconditional nature of election. While this is not the place to give a full defense of my views on these issues, they combine to make the case for a particular intention in the atonement unavoidably strong for me. Thus, here I am willing to accept an element of mystery. To the question of why God has a particular intent in the atonement, to save only some, I say with Luther that we have no answer here and now. He confesses that now it appears to us unjust of God to save one and not another; but we await the light of glory, which "will show us hereafter that the God whose judgment here is one of incomprehensible righteousness is a God of most perfect and manifest righteousness. In the meantime, we can only *believe* this."[117] Calvin reminds us that election is a point at which the Bible tells us we may expect to encounter mystery: Paul "calls God's judgments 'unsearchable,' and thou settest out to search them? He speaks of his ways as 'unscrutable' [Rom 11:33], and thou dost track them down?" He counsels us that here we may be at a point beyond our depth: "Thou seekest reason? I tremble at the depth. Reason, thou; I will marvel. Dispute, thou; I will believe. I see the depth; I do not reach the bottom. Paul rested, for he found wonder."[118]

Thus, while the objection to a particular intention in the atonement from the universal love and universal saving will of God does raise the difficult question of why God purposes to save only some, I do not find the objection sufficient to overrule the strong evidence for a particular intention. A particular intention is not contrary to biblical depictions of the love of God but rather consistent with it. Moreover, the idea of grace as something undeserved allows us to see how a particular intention toward some is not unfair or unjust toward others. In the end both positions reach something of a place of mystery in the face of the unsearchable judgments of God.

Final Observations

More could be said about the advantages of accepting both a universal and a particular intention in the atonement. By far the most important advantage is that it allows for the most natural exegesis both to universal and to particular texts. It also allows for a clear and unmistakable basis for calling all to repentance and faith and for affirming that Christ has secured the salvation of the elect in his atonement.

In short, the multiple-intentions view seems to have all the virtues of both traditional positions with few of the problems of either. I could close our essay at this point, for the central issue under discussion historically has been universal versus particular. But for the sake of completeness, I will consider one more intention in the atonement.

God's Cosmic Intention in the Atonement

I note above that the three major views on the nature of the atonement correlate well with the three major intentions advocated in this essay for the extent of the atonement. The objective views correlate with the universal provision of forgiveness God has made for all. The subjective views fit with the salvation God secures for some. The classic or Christus Victor view seems to fit with an intention in the atonement that addresses all the enemies believers face in this world. But does Scripture support this third supposition? Yes, in the themes of the atonement as reconciliation and victory.[119]

Biblical Arguments

Reconciliation is one of the terms normally used in the New Testament in association with the restoration of fellowship between God and sinners, but as George E. Ladd notes, it is used primarily in an objective sense: "Reconciliation is not primarily a change in man's attitude toward God; it is, like justification, an objective event that is accomplished by God for man's salvation."[120] Thus, verses like 2 Cor 5:19 support an objective, universal provision of reconciliation in that God has accepted Christ's death as the satisfaction of his righteous wrath and is now ready to receive penitent sinners. In this sense reconciliation supports a universal intention in the atonement, as the scope mentioned in 2 Cor 5:19 is "the world." With humans the subjective aspect of reconciliation depends on the human response to Paul's appeal: "Be reconciled to God" (2 Cor 5:20). But there is at least one important text where reconciliation goes beyond universal in the sense of extending to every human, to universal, in the sense of extending to all the cosmos.

In Col 1:20, Paul says that through the cross God has reconciled to himself "all things." Richard Melick interprets this phrase to mean, "The scope of reconciliation includes the material creation, the animal world, humanity, and spiritual beings."[121] Douglas Moo concurs, noting that "all things" occurs five times in the context of Colossians 1, each time referring to "the created universe," and that the use of the neuter (*ta panta*) and the parallel to Col 1:16 "make clear that all created things are included."[122] The fact that this reconciliation goes beyond the world of humans to all creation reveals a third intention, one that is not merely universal but cosmic. But there are two difficulties involved in understanding the implications of this verse.

One issue often raised is whether Col 1:20 teaches universal salvation and even universal restoration of fallen angels to a renewed relationship with God. For F. F. Bruce, the analogy of Scripture is enough reason to deny that this verse teaches universalism: "It is contrary to the analogy of Scripture to apply the idea of reconciliation in the ordinary sense to fallen angels." He sees the same objection to the idea that this verse teaches the salvation of all humans.[123] Moo adds, "The spiritual beings to which Paul refers explicitly in 1:20 are not saved by Christ but vanquished by him (see 2:15)."[124] If reconciliation is seen as primarily objective, it becomes possible to understand how cosmic reconciliation need not imply that all of humanity, or fallen angels, have been restored to fellowship with God and will enjoy the blessings of salvation.

The second question springs from the answer to the first. If cosmic reconciliation does not involve the salvation of all humans and fallen angels, what does it mean for them? Furthermore, how can things like the material creation be reconciled to God? Melick suggests this understanding: "Reconciliation must be defined in this context, therefore, as all things being put in right relation to Christ."[125] For those who come in faith and repentance, right relationship is salvation. For those who have rejected Christ and rebelled against him, right relationship involves judgment and punishment. For the material creation, reconciliation will mean restoration to the original condition of peace, harmony, and order that sin disturbed.[126] Even those who might desire to continue their rebellious ways will be subdued. This underscores the objective nature of the reconciliation: it is "imposed."[127] Some accept it willingly; others involuntarily. For the material creation, lacking volition, this reconciliation is by God's ordination. It is now right for God to relate to creation in a restored way because of what Christ has accomplished

on the cross. In reference to this vision of the restoration of the harmony of the original creation by the power of the cross, James Dunn exclaims: "The vision is vast. The claim is mind-blowing."[128] Adding to the stupendous nature of the claim is that it is a statement of faith. As Moo observes: "Of course, this 'peace' is not yet fully established. The 'already/not yet' pattern of New Testament eschatology must be applied to Col. 1:20."[129] Yet such is Paul's confidence in the power of the cross that he speaks of it as an accomplished fact.

The biblical basis for a cosmic intention in the atonement goes beyond this one statement on cosmic reconciliation, important as it is. A number of other verses see the power of the cross extending beyond the relationship of humans to God, to affect victory over the enemies of humanity.

A companion statement to Col 1:20 is Col 2:15. The "powers and authorities" (NIV) here are usually seen as "evil spiritual beings," or "all the spiritual forces of this world that are in rebellion against God."[130] But here they have been "disarmed," rendered powerless to harm those in Christ, because he has won the victory over them "by the cross." In John 12:31, the impending cross also marks the defeat of the Devil. This defeat also follows the pattern of already/not yet. Though defeated and driven out by the cross, Satan still seeks to devour and destroy. But as Tenney states, "Though Satan is still active, his action is only the desperation of futility."[131] Hebrews 2:14–15 sees the death of Christ as the instrument of the Devil's destruction and our liberation from the fear of death. Philippians 2:9–11 sees the obedient death of Christ as the prerequisite to his victorious exaltation over every enemy, such that every knee will bow, willingly or grudgingly. Finally, 1 Cor 15:26 identifies the last enemy to be defeated as death. Only by undergoing death could Christ show his victory over it by his resurrection and promise his followers victory over it too (see 1 Cor 15:54–55).

Theological Evaluation

I know of no one who explicitly objects to this cosmic intention of the cross. Indeed, a number of definite atonement advocates mention it favorably but usually in passing or as an ancillary issue at best.[132] It forms no major point in arguments either for universal or definite atonement because they see it as not the issue upon which there is disagreement. The multiple-intentions view wants to broaden the discussion and see the intentions in the atonement in a fuller fashion. Thus, the cosmic intention seems entirely fitting and worthy of

inclusion. Not only is it firmly rooted in biblical teaching, but its import should deeply move every Christian. Christopher Wright eloquently expresses this:

> *Ultimately all that will be there in the new, redeemed creation will be there because of the cross. And conversely, all that will not be there (suffering, tears, sin, sickness, oppression, corruption, decay and death) will not be there because they will have been defeated and destroyed by the cross.* That is the length, breadth, height and depth of God's idea of redemption. It is exceedingly good news. It is the font of all our mission.[133]

A Survey and Evaluation of Other Suggested Intentions in the Atonement

The multiple-intentions view is a relative newcomer to the extent-of-the-atonement debate, though the Amyraldian and hypothetical universal views may have been seeking a way toward it in earlier centuries. In fact, over the years a number of theologians, both Reformed and Arminian, have suggested that the atonement may serve other intentions than the one traditionally debated. More recently, those in the so-called prosperity gospel movement have argued that health and wealth are among the benefits of the atonement. In this section I survey and evaluate these additional suggested intentions in the atonement.

Reformed Multiple Intentions

Historically many advocates of definite atonement have allowed for some nonsalvific universal benefits from the atonement, most often the gifts of common grace.[134] They typically did not see such universal benefits as relevant to discussions of the intent of the atonement. Berkhof, in stating "the exact point at issue" in the limited atonement debate, specifies that it is not "whether any of the fruits of the death of Christ accrue to the benefit of the non-elect in virtue of their close association with the people of God, since this is explicitly taught by many Reformed scholars."[135] However, others in the Reformed camp have given such additional benefits a place in their discussions of the extent of the atonement.

Robert Dabney does not use the language of multiple intentions, but he notes numerous "ends" in his discussion of the extent of the atonement: "Along with the actual redemption of the elect, it [Christ's sacrifice] works out several other subordinate ends. There is then a sense, in which 'Christ died' for

all those ends, and for the persons affected by them."[136] William Shedd thinks the term *redemption* implies the application of atonement, so he distinguishes atonement and redemption: "Atonement is unlimited, and redemption is limited."[137] He sees this statement as accounting for all the scriptural texts, both those asserting Christ's death for all and those that refer to his death as for his people.

It seems that they were struggling to come up with something similar to a multiple-intentions view of the atonement. Bruce Ware cogently observes, "Much of the debate over the issue of the extent of the atonement is owing to the fact that a single intention (rather than multiple intentions) was sought by both sides. As soon as one admits multiple intentions for the atonement, one then can account for the variety of biblical teaching."[138] Ware and Gary Shultz, who wrote his dissertation under Ware's supervision, have developed a more careful and thorough formulation of the multiple-intentions view.[139] My view, though arrived at independently, agrees with much of their argumentation but differs in two ways: (1) it links the definite intention in the atonement with the subjective view of the nature of the atonement in that God purposes for the atonement to exercise an influence on the hearts of the elect, such that they respond in repentance and faith; and (2) it limits the multiple intentions to three. Ware and Shultz both add further "purposes" (Ware) or "intentions" (Shultz).

A genuine universal gospel call/additional basis for condemnation. For Ware, the additional purposes are a "*bona fide* offer purpose" (which Shultz calls "a genuine universal gospel call" intention) and a "just condemnation purpose" (which Shultz calls "an additional basis for condemnation" intention).[140] While both seem logically related to the atonement, they seem more like results or outcomes of the universal intention of the atonement rather than separate and additional purposes or intentions of the atonement. So while God sent Christ to die for all and while that does validate the *bona fide* offer of the gospel to all, that was not God's purpose in sending Christ. At least there is no biblical text indicating that was the purpose in Christ's death. Likewise, Christ's dying for all does add an additional basis for the judgment and condemnation of those who hear and reject the gospel message, but it seems that God's purpose in sending Christ was not to add to their culpability but "to save the world through him" (John 3:17 NIV). Judgment and condemnation come upon those who reject Christ, but God's purpose in

sending Christ was not for him to be rejected. Again, at least there is no clear biblical text giving this as a purpose or intention of God in the atonement.

Common grace. Shultz adds two further "general intentions" of the atonement, "the provision of common grace" and "the supreme revelation of God's character."[141] As mentioned above, the idea that the atonement provides the general benefits of common grace to all has been fairly widely held by many in the Reformed camp and by some who would affirm universal or unlimited atonement.[142] Despite this wide support the texts usually cited in support of common grace (e.g., Matt 5:45; Acts 4:17) seem to associate common grace more with the character of God (his love and kindness) than with the atonement of Christ. It makes logical sense that the provision of undeserved benefits to all could be grounded in the universal intention of the cross, but in the absence of more explicit biblical support I hesitate to affirm it.

Revealing God's character. As to the last of Shultz's intentions, "the supreme revelation of God's character," I agree that the Bible points to the cross as the ultimate demonstration of God's love and justice (Rom 3:25–26; 5:8; 1 John 4:10–11). But whereas Shultz sees this as one of the general intentions of the atonement, I would associate it with the subjective view of the atonement and the definite intention.[143] Not all see the cross as revealing God's love and justice; some see it as a "stumbling block" and "folly" (1 Cor 1:23). Only to "those who are called" does the cross appear in its true light as "the power of God and the wisdom of God" (1 Cor 1:24). God exercises his calling and drawing power in the revelation of love and justice in the cross, but that power is effectual only in a particular, definite group.

The Arminian Prevenient-Grace Intention

Finally, two other groups have offered what could be called multiple-intentions views, though they do not use such language. Arminians use the language of multiple benefits flowing from the atonement, some being conditional upon the exercise of faith and repentance (such as salvation), others given unconditionally and universally. One could see how a multiple-intentions view could develop along such lines. One such benefit provided by the atonement is a universal gift of prevenient grace. H. Orton Wiley calls it one of the "unconditional benefits" of the atonement, involving a "free gift of grace" and "the restoration of the Holy Spirit."[144] Universal prevenient grace "cancels the deadening effects of original sin and restores ability to respond to Christ."[145] This view has two problems: (1) no text affirms such a universal,

restorative gift, and (2) descriptions of humans, even after the atonement, suggest that they still need a special work of God to bring them to repentance and faith (see Eph 2:1, which views the Ephesian Christians as formerly "dead" in their sins).

The Prosperity Gospel Health-and-Wealth Intention

A last formulation of additional benefits or intentions in the atonement is found in certain segments of the Pentecostal and charismatic movement that affirm the provision of physical healing and wealth in the atonement. This is a major theme among those who advocate the so-called prosperity, or health-and-wealth gospel, such as Kenneth Hagin, Joyce Meyer, Kenneth Copeland, Joel Osteen, and many others. They cite Isa 53:4–5 ("by his wounds we are healed," NIV) and claim that nothing except a lack of faith keeps believers from enjoying the health Christ's atonement provides for them.[146]

There are a number of problems with this view. Biblically, Matt 8:17 sees the fulfillment of Isa 53:4 in Jesus' life, not his death. Empirically, there is the problem of the continuation of sickness among believers, in the New Testament (2 Cor 12:7, Paul's "thorn in the flesh") and down through history, with the death rate remaining a constant 100 percent. Theologically, this view fails to understand the already/not yet of the effects of the atonement. The cosmic intention in the atonement includes the absence of disease in the new creation (Rev 21:4), but that is part of the "not yet." Already some of the power of the atonement has been released, and God does at times heal. But the complete removal of disease is still in the "not yet."

Conclusion

I believe the multiple-intentions view has much to commend it. First and most important, it best incorporates all the biblical data. It allows for a natural exegesis of the texts claimed in support of both definite and universal atonement, and it goes beyond the traditional positions in more firmly including texts supporting a cosmic intention.

Second and concomitantly, it is more theologically comprehensive than either of the two traditional positions. By recognizing both a universal and a particular intention, the multiple-intentions view can better relate the atonement to the objective and subjective aspects of salvation. It can affirm a universal provision of forgiveness and the satisfaction of God's wrath without entailing universal salvation because the universal intention relates to the

objective, divine side. Because of the cross, God can be both just and the justifier of all who come to him in faith (Rom 3:25–26). It can also maintain the certainty or reality of the salvation of the elect because it affirms a particular intention, relating to the subjective side of salvation. God's Spirit intends to use the cross to work subjectively in the hearts of some, drawing and calling them to appropriate what Christ has provided for them. Furthermore, in adding a cosmic intention, this view appropriately broadens the scope of salvation beyond that of humanity; it relates the atonement to the already/not yet theme of New Testament eschatology.

Third, it allows both sides to preserve at least some of their key concerns. Universal atonement advocates think definite atonement contradicts the universal love of God and at the very least makes a genuine offer of the gospel to all problematic. The universal intention affirms the universal love of God and validates the offer of the gospel to all. Definite atonement advocates think universal atonement leads to universal salvation or weakens the atonement to making salvation merely possible. The particular intention of the atonement limits the subjective appropriation of salvation to God's elect and makes their salvation certain.

I think the three intentions this essay describes are sufficient to cover all the pertinent biblical data, but I am open to adding to these three if shown a clear biblical base for another intention. But for the time being, I offer these three as a fitting formulation of the multiple intentions of the atonement.

Response by Thomas H. McCall with Grant R. Osborne

John S. Hammett has made a strong case for the "multiple-intentions view" of the extent of the atonement. He argues that we should see three intentions in the atonement: God's "universal" intention was to "provide forgiveness of sins for all" by offering Christ as the "propitiation for all humans"; God's "particular" intention was to "secure the salvation of some"; and God's "cosmic" intention was to "reconcile" the forces of evil by defeating and subduing them. There is much to appreciate in this well-informed and well-written essay, and my comments largely follow his treatment of these three basic intentions.

Universal Intentionality

Hammett is convinced that there are strong theological arguments for an undeniably universal aspect of Christ's atoning work. On his view Christ "died

in order to satisfy God's righteous wrath toward human sin by serving as the propitiation for all humans and thereby providing redemption and reconciliation for all humans" (p. 149). He marshals an impressive amount of biblical data in support of this claim. He argues from the Johannine use of *world*, from the Pauline statements of *all*, and from the examples of false teachers (e.g., 2 Pet 2:1). He treats potential objections to his interpretation fairly and thoroughly, and in most cases I found myself not only agreeing with his conclusions but also admiring his treatment of the issues. Hammett also makes some helpful—if somewhat cursory—observations about the historical development of the doctrine of the atonement. Of course (as Hammett surely knows), a great deal more could be said about these matters, and much more evidence could be brought to the fore on behalf of historical-theological arguments for the universal extent of the atonement.[147]

Overall, Hammett also does a fine job of addressing some common theological objections to universal atonement. Although he might usefully have explored it further, especially helpful is his distinction between the objective provision of salvation and its subjective application. As he puts it, "The objective provision is universal, but not the subjective application" (p. 162). I agree with this and so should any Reformed theologian who thinks the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit and the genuine, grace-enabled response of the repentant sinner make a difference. Furthermore, I find J. I. Packer's exclamation that "Christ did not win a hypothetical salvation for hypothetical believers, a mere possibility of salvation" to be beside the point of the discussion.[148] Since no theologian (of whom I am aware) thinks salvation is merely possible but never actual, Packer's worry is a red herring. Similarly, Hammett makes some helpful observations about Berkhof's argument from the unity of atonement and intercession; he is right to point out that while we do not know that Christ did not pray for the nonelect (John 7 shows us only that he did not do so in that moment), there is good reason to think he in fact did do so (e.g., Luke 23:34).

I agree with much of what Hammett has to say about the universal aspect of the atonement. But I'm not entirely sure how to square what he says about this with what he says about the "particular intention."

Particular Intentionality

Hammett says that "another intention of God in sending Christ and another intention of Christ in dying was actually to secure the salvation of some" (p.

169–70). As it stands, this is ambiguous. On some ways of understanding this, I can affirm it. On other interpretations, the view would become problematic. Putting these statements together with what he says earlier, I am not entirely sure just what to make of his statements about universal "provision." And depending on what he means by the conjunction of such statements, it still is not entirely obvious to me that he can completely escape the charge that universal atonement entails universal salvation.

I am sure Hammett will want to resist universalism. But how will he do so? He says God's purpose is to "provide forgiveness of sins for all." As it stands, this affirmation of provision is rather ambiguous. It could be taken as something like this:

> (P*) Christ's atonement makes forgiveness of sins available to and possible for all.

Or it could be taken as something more like this:

> (P**) Christ's atonement makes forgiveness of sins actual for all.

If (P**) is intended, then why should we not conclude that universalism is true? If all sins of all sinners are already and actually forgiven, then why are not all saved? Owen's "double jeopardy" argument would rear its head again. Given Hammett's insistence that there is a clear and important distinction between the universality of objective provision and the particularity of subjective application, surely he does not intend (P**).

So, will the multiple-intentions theorist endorse (P*) (which, at any rate, seems to enjoy strong *prima facie* biblical support)?[149] Hammett recognizes that there may be different versions of multiple-intentions views, including some that are clearly nondeterminist and that can wholeheartedly endorse (P*) (and without entailing universalism). But given his commitment to his "understanding of God's sovereignty in salvation . . . and the unconditional nature of election" (p. 182), his own version does not seem to be open to such views. His own account affirms a broadly "Reformed" doctrine of predestination, but this makes it difficult to know what "available to and possible for all" might mean. If God's all-determining decree is the ultimate reason some sinners perish, then what does it mean to say the salvific benefits of Christ's work are available to them? If God's all-determining decree of election intends to exclude some sinners, then what sense can we make of an affirmation that God intends to make salvation possible for and available to them? I confess that the meaning of this claim escapes me.

Apparently Hammett wants to say something like this: *Christ died to make the salvific benefits of his atonement available to all*. If I am understanding him correctly, he also seems to want to say something like this: *God's all-determining decree ensures that reprobate sinners will persist in their sinful rebellion and never accept salvation, thus by God's all-determining decree the salvific benefits of Christ's work are not accessible to all*. But how are the salvific benefits of the atonement really available to those for whom they are not accessible?[150] I do not understand how this might work, so it is difficult to be optimistic about it. Moreover, and despite Hammett's protestations, these intentions really do look contradictory. Perhaps this is not really Hammett's view (and I hope that it is not)—in such a case then let this be a call for clarification and a note of caution to those who *do* endorse theological determinism.

All nonuniversalists can agree that the subjective application is distinct from the objective provision, and they should also agree that the subjective application is limited. But what *ultimately* limits it? The theological determinist might say the rebellion and unbelief of the sinner limit it. The theological determinist would be correct, but the theological determinist must also admit that the sinner persists in her rebellion and unbelief because God determines that she will do so. So, then, is not God's all-determining decree the ultimate deciding factor? Hammett thinks his view enjoys an advantage because it can account for the biblical witness to the full scope of God's loving action in Christ *and* the biblical witness to the particularity of election. But I am not so sure that his "multiple-intentions view" really can claim this advantage. Consider a text such as Ezek 18:23: "Do I take any pleasure in the death of the wicked? declares the Sovereign LORD. Rather, am I not pleased when they turn from their ways and live?" (NIV). This text does not say merely God wanted to make some "provision" of salvation that was never really intended for them or accessible to them anyway. Instead, it says he takes "no pleasure" in the death of the wicked but is pleased when they turn from their wicked ways and live.

Or consider Ezek 33:11: "'As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live. Turn! Turn from your evil ways! Why will you die, people of Israel?" This text does not say God desired merely to make a "provision" for sinners that they could not—given his all-determining decree—have access to anyway. Rather, the text tells us that the life of God is tied up with his desire

that rebellious sinners come to repentance and faith. "*As surely as I live*," God says—*God himself would have no life if he did not desire for the salvation of these sinners*! There is no hint whatsoever in this text that God has some secret desire for their destruction; instead, God ties his own life to his good intentions for these rebellious sinners. Nor is there even the slightest indication that God is somehow working to determine their damnation. To the contrary God unmistakably puts the ball in their court: "Turn! Turn from your evil ways! Why will you die, people of Israel?" As Peter puts it, God is "not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance" (2 Pet 3:9 NIV). He does not intend to make something merely "available" to them. He indeed does intend to make a provision, but he also wants them to receive it and come to repentance. God does not, then, intend merely to provide something for them that he then renders inaccessible to them by his all-determining decree. Instead, he does not want *anyone* to perish but wants *everyone* to *come to repentance*.[151]

Cosmic Intentionality

Hammett also addresses (albeit much more briefly) the "cosmic intention" of God in the work of Christ. This is seen in the themes of "reconciliation and victory" (p. 184). In my judgment much of what he says about victory closely reflects some important—though sometimes overlooked—biblical teaching about the work of Christ. It is not clear to me that some theological views have the room to appreciate the nature of this victory; if Berkhof is right that "it may be laid down, first of all, as a general principle, that the designs of God are always surely efficacious and cannot be frustrated by the actions of man," then it is not immediately obvious just what is conquered.[152] If theological determinism is true and everything is always and necessarily in perfect accord with God's will, then what does "victory" mean? From what he says, I am not entirely sure where Hammett stands on this issue. Nonetheless, what Hammett says overall about victory is helpful.

To summarize my response to this point, while I do not use the language of "multiple intentions," I find much to appreciate and to affirm in Hammett's treatment. I can affirm that the design of the Triune God was both to provide for the salvation of all and to certainly save those who repent and believe. My disagreement is with his efforts to square these affirmations with what I take to be a mistaken view of divine action; difficulties begin to emerge with his

view of unconditional election, and the problems are deepened by determinism.

Prevenient Grace

Fortunately, Hammett recognizes that "the Arminian prevenient-grace" account can also affirm much of what he says. But unfortunately, he rejects this theology—and in the space of a single sentence: "This view has two problems: (1) no text affirms such a universal, restorative gift, and (2) descriptions of humans, even after the atonement, suggest that they will need a special work of God to bring them to repentance and faith (such as Eph 2:1, which sees the Ephesian Christians as formerly 'dead' in their sins)" (p. 192).

This is not the place, nor is there space, for a full-blown defense of the venerable doctrine of prevenient grace. But three points stand out in response.

First, the label "Arminian prevenient-grace account" might suggest that the doctrine of prevenient grace is unique to the Arminian traditions. But this would be deeply misleading. The doctrine of prevenient grace (in some form or other)[153] is found throughout the Christian tradition. For instance, Augustine clearly teaches a doctrine of prevenient grace.[154] Some interpreters take Augustine (at least the mature Augustine of the anti-Pelagian controversies) to be a theological determinist; perhaps they will remonstrate that Augustine's view entails that prevenient grace is always successful.[155] But such interpreters should note carefully that while Augustine insists that no one can will to believe apart from God's prevenient grace, he also says the will that has been acted upon by God's grace can either accept and yield to God or reject and oppose God. Augustine also makes clear that God wishes all to be saved but has not extinguished the free will with which sinners reject God.[156] Does God determine all movements of the human will? Not at all, for Augustine exclaims, "Nowhere, however, in Holy Scripture do we find such an assertion as 'There is no volition but comes from God.' And rightly is it not so written, because it is not true: otherwise would God be the author even of sins."[157] Augustine is far from alone in his advocacy of prevenient grace. Consider a few examples: the Second Council of Orange affirms prevenient grace—and does so while rejecting "Semi-Pelagianism."[158] Aquinas agrees that grace is fittingly divided into prevenient and subsequent grace.[159]The Regensburg Agreement (1541), where such prominent Roman Catholic theologians as Gasparo Contarini and Johann Gropper as well as such Protestant luminaries as the

Reformed theologian Martin Bucer and the Lutheran divine Philipp Melanchthon managed to come to some substantial areas of agreement on the doctrine of justification, endorses the prevenience of grace.[160]Among Lutheran scholastic theologians, such important thinkers as Johann Wilhelm Baier and Johann Andreas Quenstadt embraced the doctrine as well.[161]Of course, Arminius also believes in prevenient grace, but he is far from original in doing so.[162]

Second, let us consider Hammett's criticism that "no text affirms" such a doctrine. Here I recall Carl Trueman's helpful observations about doctrinal formulation. Trueman pushes back—rightly in my view—against the kind of narrowly biblicist theological method according to which some doctrinal proposal counts as "biblical" if and only if it can be demonstrated from some discrete passage. Trueman shows that many important doctrines of Christian orthodoxy (such as the doctrine of the Trinity, or, one could add, the two natures of Christ in one person) can count as properly "biblical" even in the absence of a proof text. Even though such doctrines may not be proven by any single text, they do deserve acceptance and affirmation because they help us make sense of the biblical witness when taken as a whole. I do not find Trueman's own case for definite atonement persuasive, but I do appreciate his observations about theological method. So consider: if a case can be made for the doctrine of prevenient grace from several themes that indeed *are* found in abundance in Scripture—for starters, (1) the depravity and inability of human sinners; (2) the responsibility of sinners; and (3) God's unblemished good intentions for all humanity—then the doctrine may enjoy not only strong historical precedent but also a solid biblical foundation. In this light Hammett's rejection seems hasty and unwarranted.

But before moving from this complaint, let me note that it is not at all obvious that there is no explicit biblical basis (in the form of a key text or set of texts) for the doctrine. Hammett says there is no such basis, but he never considers such passages as John 1:9 ("The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world") or Titus 2:11 ("For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people").[163]

Finally, Hammett observes, "Descriptions of humans, even after the atonement, suggest that they still need a special work of God to bring them to repentance and faith." Many classical Arminians will—or at least could and should—agree with Hammett. But I fail to see how this counts against the doctrine of prevenient grace.

Conclusion

John S. Hammett has given us an informed and well-formed statement of a "multiple-intentions" view of the atonement. He draws from Scripture and Christian (especially Baptist) tradition; he helpfully makes use of "subjective" and "*Christus Victor*" views; he addresses various potential objections to his proposal; and overall he makes a strong case for it. Even though I have concerns about some elements of it, these should not obscure my appreciation for his work. In fact, I think what he says might hold much promise for contemporary Christians who seek to understand the work of Christ, especially if those Christians are willing to eschew determinism and bolster the proposal by affirming the doctrine of prevenient grace.

Response by Carl R. Trueman

It should come as no surprise that my response to John Hammett indicates that he and I share more common ground than I do with Osborne. I would also wish to affirm Hammett's assertion of the need for discussion on this issue that is both charitable and conducted within the context of a shared and accepted Catholic Christianity. John Owen, whom Hammett cites as one of those who failed in this, was perhaps a man of his time, when the label *Arminian* stood for something more sinister than a simple theological label. It also carried implications of Socinianism and even a crypto-Roman Catholicism for the English ear. We live in an age where the theological stakes might still be high, but the social and political stakes are considerably lower.

Hammett is also right when he sees this disagreement as being between brothers. That was, in fact, reflected somewhat in the origins of the debate in the seventeenth century. Admittedly, for the reason touched on above, Arminians were the subject of harsh rhetoric from the Reformed. But the differences between those like Owen, the Amyraldians, and the hypothetical universalists (as defined in my own essay) were such that the rhetoric was often much calmer, reflecting the proximity of positions and the shared common ground.

At the level of terminology, I agree that "definite atonement" is a better designation than "limited atonement," though I might perhaps argue for yet another being even better: *effective* atonement. This is the key to the issue of the matter, whether one regards the atonement as actually achieving anything or simply making something possible. I do believe it is unhelpful, however, to place all of what I would call hypothetical universalist positions together.

Amyraldianism is a specific and technical reconstruction of federal theology with a view to maintaining a universal intention in the atonement. Many hypothetical universalists do not operate with a finely tooled covenantal structure and so are not strictly Amyraldian. This is not simply a semantic point, as the way in which God's will to save is construed in Amyraldian and alternative hypothetical universalist schemes does differ.

While that common core of evangelical Protestant commitment to the language of penal substitutionary atonement is something all three of us share, we are distinguished from one another by the broader theological framework within which that concept is to be placed and indeed understood. Hammett and I share a more typically Augustinian framework while Osbourne holds to a more classically Arminian approach. Yet even between Hammet and myself there is an important difference: a substitution that is for certain people in particular and effective for them precisely because it is a substitution different from a substitution that is for everyone in general and effective for nobody in particular. The criticism of particular redemption that it prevents the preacher from saying, "Christ died for you," is certainly a serious one; but the advocate of hypothetical universalism faces one that is arguably more serious: what does it mean to say, "Christ died for you," when he died for everyone? If Christ has died in the same substitutionary way for the one who dies in Christ and the one who dies outside of Christ, has Christ really substituted in any meaningful, saving way for anyone?

This also points us to the so-called "double jeopardy" argument: if Christ died for everyone's sins, does that not demand either universal salvation or equivocation in order to avoid the problem of the sins of the one who died outside of Christ being punished twice—once on the cross and then again in eternity? Again, here is the problem of defining what exactly the hypothetical universalist is claiming when he says Christ substituted for all. To use an analogy: if a friend pays my speeding ticket and takes my penalty points on his license, he has substituted for me. If, however, my wife is caught speeding and a friend simply makes it a possibility that she can pay her ticket, or if she does pay her ticket but my wife still faces exactly the same fine, then she has not really substituted for my wife in the way my friend substituted for me. We might use the same impressive sounding language for both situations, but we are using that language equivocally.

One might also add here that Hammett's problem flows from a failure to allow the Old Testament to set the categories for understanding the New. The

Old Testament develops notions of sacrifice and substitution and provides the basic foundation for understanding the same in the New. We need to take the whole Bible seriously when we approach the death of Christ, and central to that task is making sure we set Christ's death in the same context that Paul and the other New Testament writers did. That context is not simply that of sin and salvation but also of the history of redemption as it develops in ancient Israel and then culminates in Christ. The context for New Testament texts is thus not simply the New Testament but the Old Testament too. We must allow the Old Testament to shape how we understand substitution. Thus, Isaiah 53, for example, is crucial, as is Leviticus 16. That John Hammett only briefly touches on the Isaianic text and does not address in depth how the New Testament engages it is a serious weakness in his argument. That he does not mention at all Leviticus 16—surely the key text for understanding sacrifice in the Old Testament—is a serious omission. One can use the language of substitution vis-à-vis sacrifice, but if that language is not rooted explicitly in Leviticus 16, then there is a troublesome vulnerability to the accusation of not allowing the Bible to shape how that terminology is used and understood.

This also connects to another aspect of the biblical case that Hammett's essay seems to downplay: the New Testament emphasizes that the atonement actually accomplishes that salvation that God intends to accomplish by it. The hypothetical universalist must inevitably cut the immediate causal connection between the death of Christ and the actual accomplishment of salvation in the believer, as he must also cut the connection between the purpose of the death of Christ (to provide salvation for all) and the intercession of Christ (to provide salvation for only some). Thus, those verses in the New Testament that speak of the death actually purchasing salvation for God's people are stripped of their power (e.g., Acts 20:28; Titus 2:14; cf. John 1:29; 1 John 2:2, which uses the language of expiation and propitiation in this connection). When one looks at the relationship between Leviticus 16 and Hebrews 9–10, one sees that death, oblation, and intercession are all part of a unified priestly action that culminates in the forgiveness and removal of sin for God's people. Furthermore, the connection between Isaiah 53 and 1 Peter 2:22–25 makes the causal connection between the sacrifice of Christ and the actual accomplishment of salvation clear. Indeed, one of the real weaknesses of Hammett's essay is his failure to set the New Testament death of Christ firmly within the context of the Old Testament. In so doing he both misses the larger

redemptive-historical context of Christ's work and also the critical connection between sacrifice and application.

Since much of Hammett's essay covers exegetical issues relating to specific texts, I will not respond to those here. For further and more elaborate exegetical discussion of key passages, the reader should consult the various essays in *From Heaven He Came and Sought Her*.[164] As for my views, the reader is capable of comparing the two essays and making a thoughtful judgment on who, if either of us, has the better case on any specific texts and on the biblical testimony in general. I was surprised, however, that Hammett's essay primarily aims to refute the definite atonement position. Since advocates of definite atonement and Calvinistic hypothetical universalists share more common ground with each other than with Arminians, this emphasis seems a little odd.

Hammet's historical section is a good overview of the history of the issue, although he tends to reduce the issue to those who make direct statements on the matter of the extent and intention of the atonement. Like so many other Christian doctrines, the later formulations emerge from a complicated matrix of other dogmatic positions. Thus, the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Reformed views of the atonement also stand against the background not only of the influential logic of the Anselmic argument laid out in *Cur Deus Homo?* but also of the rather more arcane debates between Thomists and Scotists. These latter debates served to accent the will of God in construing the value (and thereby the intention) of the atonement. As such they are crucial.

The last two decades have seen a definite dethroning of John Calvin as the atonement benchmark. It is now generally accepted that the Reformation was always a work in progress and that the thought of individual figures can only be used with caution as a gauge of orthodoxy. Calvin and company thought in terms of confessions, not personal contributions. Then, it is not the case that his followers, such as they were, adopted definite atonement. John Davenant, for example, seems to have been a hypothetical universalist and was also a delegate at the Synod of Dordt. Further, the Amyraldian controversy was only just starting during the time of the Westminster Assembly and is thus only tangentially addressed in the confessional documents. The historical situation is far more complicated than a simple "majority report/minority report" distinction allows.

In some senses this might perhaps be seen as strengthening Hammett's "majority case" position. However, I would argue that what history really

indicates is not the existence of a handful of clearly defined positions that had their own partisans but rather a much more complicated situation where a variety of theologians held a variety of views, some of which differed from one another in subtle ways, others in more significant matters. The numbers game is actually of little use in establishing any case unless the taxonomy being used is sufficiently intricate so as to do justice to the range of views.

I would also add to this the historical fact that Reformed understandings of the atonement were developed alongside the elaboration of Christ's high priestly role in his mediation. As in my response to Osborne, I would press the need for the question of the atonement's extent, and of the divine intention behind it, to be connected to a broader range of doctrinal (and thus exegetical) issues and not simply by the question of whether this or that text, or this or that theologian, taught a definite atonement.

Again I see this as the major weakness in Hammett's case, as I do with that of Osborne's. The failure to set the death of Christ within the context of Christ's mediatory role is crucial. Some years ago I addressed this matter in responding to Alan Clifford's critique of John Owen on atonement. What was striking about Clifford's critique was his virtual silence on the issue of priesthood. If Christ is a sacrifice for sin, as Hammett clearly and rightly believes, then that sacrifice must be understood in the manner in which the Bible understands sacrifice. That is the way the New Testament writers operate: they set Christ within an Old Testament context. More narrowly, they set his atoning sacrifice within trajectories established by the Old Testament concerning both priesthood and offering. This not only has implications for understanding for whom sacrifice is offered; it also demands that we understand Christ's priestly action as a unified whole. We can spend all our time talking about the death of Christ, about its extent, about its intention; instead, we should spend our time talking about the priestly mediation of Christ, for that demands that we see death and offering, atonement and intercession, as two sides of the same theological coin. Hammett rightly distinguishes what he calls the objective and subjective aspects of the atonement, but he does not connect these to the full-orbed priesthood of Christ—death and intercession—which is both what the Bible does and crucial for that Trinitarian perspective toward which his discussion of the Spirit rightly seems to point.

One example of where this is so pertinent would be Hammett's comments on the claim by definite atonement advocates that his view subverts the

doctrine of the Trinity by positing a basic conflict between the will of God the Father and the will of God the Son. Hammett meets the objection by pointing to the two-wills idea.

This is a complicated area, but one or two thoughts come to mind by way of surrejoinder. First, there are the theological questions raised by the explicit particularity of the high priestly prayer in John 17. This a central text for advocates of definite atonement. This is not because it provides merely a proof text that speaks of limitation that can be set over against universal texts elsewhere. Proof texts can take the debate only so far. Far more important is the larger context of Scripture as a whole and the being and action of God. The high priestly prayer takes us into the inner personal relations and activity of the Trinitarian God in the execution of salvation. It is thus foundational to understanding Christ's work on the cross. It reveals the nature of Christ's intercession as high priest, an intercession that cannot be taken in isolation from his death. They are two sides of the same coin. Furthermore, the great confidence the Christian can have in Christ's intercession is that, being one with the Father, he does not ask for anything the Father himself does not will. The Father gives the Son what he wants, for they want exactly the same thing. John Hammett avoids this problem by not connecting Calvary to the heavenly intercession. That is where the question of the conflict of wills becomes acute, and it is also where the idea of two wills becomes incoherent. Is Christ praying for all to be saved? In that case his Father denies his request. Is Christ praying for only some to be saved? Then the intention behind Christ's death and that behind his intercession are different. That raises some questions: Is Christ's priestly office unified? Does the statement "God wills Christ to die for all" in an unqualified sense have any real meaning? It is certainly an attractive phrase, but it seems to have no theological substance.

I am also unconvinced that there are any real practical (as opposed to simply rhetorical) gains to be made from the two-will idea. Advocates of particular redemption disagree on this point, with some (such as John Piper) finding the distinction helpful.[165] My own position is more cautious. Thus, if we, for the sake of argument, set John 17 to one side and reflect on the nature of Christ's priesthood in terms of the two wills, we are left with confusion. What does it really mean to say that God both wills to save all and not to save all at the same time? Of what value is the universal will to save all when the long, dark shadow of the particular will to save only some is always there to darken the horizon? To preach, "Christ died for you (but the real saving intention of God might not

apply to you because of God's sovereign election)," does not seem to offer anything significantly different to that preached by many advocates of definite atonement. Hypothetical universalism looks like sleight of hand at this point—Calvinism without the pain.

As to the exegesis of those passages that seem to posit two wills in God relative to the desire to save, Reformed theology has offered a variety of solutions over the years. Some have been resolved simply through contextual exegesis. Others have been addressed by reflecting on the doctrine of God. For example, Ezekiel 33:11 states that God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked. We might use this, as Erasmus did against Luther, to argue for some kind of will or desire in God to see all saved. An alternative approach would be to see it as akin to how ordinary language functions for many people with regard to the death penalty. I take no pleasure in the execution of a criminal; I would desire that no criminal is ever put to death for a crime; but I find such executions, while regrettable, to be entirely desirable in another sense—that of punishing a crime and publicly demonstrating that the innocent will be protected and the guilty will be dealt with in a just manner. This position, articulated by Francis Turretin, allows that God may desire something that he actually chooses not to realize. We might add that the complexities and paradoxes of a world that is not as God designed it to be, where evil has penetrated and wreaked havoc, have placed limits on our own noetic capacities to grasp the mind of God even as he has revealed it in Scripture.

I might make a number of other smaller quibbles. Hammett's reference to his universal-intention approach as allowing "more natural exegesis" of certain texts rather begs the question of what is "more natural." To the convinced particularist, such universal readings seem to go against the analogy of Scripture as a whole and thus are far from "natural." Further, my major concern with hypothetical universalism is not that it points toward full universalism or that it weakens the atonement by making salvation merely possible. To me, it fails to give a coherent account of the biblical teaching on priesthood and sacrifice, as it flows from Old Testament to New and finds its most elaborate expressions in John 17 and the Christology of the book of Hebrews.

Nevertheless, I am grateful to Hammett for his assertion both of God's sovereignty in election and of the penal nature of the atonement even if I suspect that we understand that penal component in ways that are significantly different.

[1] Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 603. Timothy George notes that of the five points of Calvinism, limited atonement is the one "least prominent in the Scriptures" (*Amazing Grace: God's Pursuit, Our Response*, 2nd ed. [Wheaton; Crossway, 2011], 92).

[2] Andrew David Naselli, in giving ten suggestions for avoiding unhealthy schism over this issue, uses this phrase for the type of rhetoric found in John Owen's famous defense of limited atonement, and he encourages Christians to avoid such rhetoric ("John Owen's Argument for Definite Atonement in *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ:* A Summary and Evaluation," *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 14, no. 4 [Winter 2010]: 60–82).

[3] Terry Miethe, "The Universal Power of the Atonement," in *The Grace of God and the Will of Man: A Case for Arminianism*, ed. Clark Pinnock (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1989), 91, emphasis in original.

[4] Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 4th ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1949), 393–94. Italics in original.

[5] See, for example, the title of the book on this topic by R. B. Kuiper, *For Whom Did Christ Die? A Study of the Divine Design of the Atonement* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959).

[6] Norman Douty, *The Death of Christ*, rev. ed. (Irving, TX: Williams & Watrous, 1978), 40, and David L. Allen, "The Atonement: Limited or Universal?" in *Whosoever Will: A Biblical-Theological Critique of Five-Point Calvinism*, ed. David L. Allen and Steve W. Lemke (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2010), 64, say that definite atonement can affirm only an intrinsic, hypothetical sufficiency, as opposed to an extrinsic, actual sufficiency. Thomas J. Nettles, *By His Grace and for His Glory: A Historical, Theological, and Practical Study of the Doctrines of Grace in Baptist Life* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1986), 302–5, though himself an advocate of definite atonement, agrees that a limitation in intent means a limitation in sufficiency. He does acknowledge that his is a minority view in the definite atonement camp.

[7] Roger E. Olson, *Against Calvinism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 137, argues, "Belief in limited atonement, particular redemption, makes it impossible reasonably to make a well-meant offer of the gospel of salvation to everyone indiscriminately." Allen ("The Atonement," 97–102), and Kenneth Keathley (*Salvation and Sovereignty: A Molinist Approach* [Nashville: B&H Academic, 2010], 207–8), express a similar concern.

[8] So, Augustus H. Strong, *Systematic Theology* (Valley Forge: Judson, 1907), 771–73; Robert Lightner, *The Death Christ Died: A Biblical Case for Unlimited Atonement*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1998), 46–47; Gordon Lewis and Bruce Demarest, *Our Primary Need, Christ's Atoning Provision*, vol. 2 of *Integrative Theology* (Grand Rapids: Academie Books, 1990), 409–10. A number of advocates of limited atonement believe they can say, "Christ died for all," but in a different sense than that in which Christ died for the elect. See Robert Dabney, *Systematic Theology*, 2nd ed. (St. Louis: Presbyterian Publishing; reprint, Edinburgh: UK and Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1985), 527; William G. T. Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology*, 3rd ed., ed. Alan J. Gomes (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2003), 743; Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 602.

[9] Such an affirmation has been associated with the Christus Victor view of the nature of the atonement, but it is also affirmed by several advocates of definite atonement, such as Kuiper, *For Whom Did Christ Die?*, 95–100. It has been developed more fully by Gary Shultz Jr. in his dissertation ("A Biblical and Theological Defense of a Multi-Intentioned View of the Atonement" [Ph.D. dissertation, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2008], 203–24) and in a later article ("The Reconciliation of All Things in Christ," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 167 [October-December 2010]: 442–59).

[10] See John Murray, *Redemption Accomplished and Applied* (Grand Rapids; Eerdmans, 1955), 61–62. Also see Roger Nicole, *Our Sovereign Saviour* (Ross-shire, Great Britain: Christian Focus, 2002), 58; and Kuiper, *For Whom Did Christ Die?* 78–100, among many others, who affirm some nonredemptive universal benefits from the atonement.

[11] See, for example, Nicole, *Our Sovereign Saviour*, 50–52.

[12] For a fuller presentation of verses in support of Christ making a general provision in the atonement, see Douty, *The Death of Christ*, 68–127, and Shultz, "Multi-Intentioned View," 101–51.

[13] George E. Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 226.

[14] John Owen, "The Death of Death in the Death of Christ," in *The Works of John Owen*, ed. William Goold (Avon, Great Britain: Johnstone & Hunter, 1850–53; reprint, Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 1967), 10:302. See the detailed table on the meanings of "world," 304–5.

[15] *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 2nd ed., s.v. "Atonement, Extent of," by Walter A. Elwell, 116.

[16] Those who use "humanity" in discussing John's use of world include Gerald Borchert, *John 1–11*, NAC (Nashville: B&H, 1996), 184; F. F. Bruce, *The Gospel of John: Introduction, Exposition, and Notes* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 53; and Andreas Köstenberger, *John*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), 129. Bruce (ibid., 53) and Köstenberger (ibid., 165) both see the "universal note" in John's language.

[17] Bruce, *Gospel of John*, 89.

[18] Unless otherwise noted all Scripture passages are taken from the English Standard Version.

[19] Murray, *Redemption*, 72.

[20] Owen sees the expression as referring to Jew and Gentile ("Death of Death," 302); Robert Yarbrough argues that it "refers to believers scattered everywhere and in all times" (*1–3 John*, BECNT [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008], 80). Murray (*Redemption*, 73–74) and Roger Nicole ("The Case for Definite Atonement," *Bulletin of the Evangelical Theological Society* 10 [1967]: 206) suggest that John is referring to the perpetuity and exclusiveness of Jesus' propitiatory sacrifice.

[21] I. Howard Marshall, *The Epistles of John*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 119; Colin Kruse, *The Letters of John*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 74; Stephen Smalley, *1, 2, 3 John*, WBC (Waco, TX: Word, 1984), 51:40, and Daniel L. Akin, *1, 2, 3 John*, NAC (Nashville: B&H, 2001), 84, all affirm that "the whole world" has a universal referent.

[22] Shultz, "Multi-Intentioned View," 120. First John 2:2 is almost universally cited as a key text for the universal atonement position, by both advocates and opponents.

[23] Philip Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 181; Thomas Lea and Hayne Griffin Jr., *1, 2, Timothy, Titus*, NAC (Nashville: Broadman, 1992), 91; William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, WBC (Waco, TX: Word, 2000), 89, and I. Howard Marshall, "Universal Grace and Atonement in the Pastoral Epistles," in Pinnock, *The Grace of God and the Will of Man*, 55–63.

[24] Owen, "Death of Death," 307–9; Nicole, "Definite Atonement," 204; George Knight III, *The Pastoral Epistles: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 122; and virtually all those in the definite atonement camp.

[25] George, *Amazing Grace*, 94.

[26] Marshall, "Universal Grace," 61–63.

[27] Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 599, n. 38.

[28] I was surprised to find discussion of this verse missing from Owen, "Death of Death," Murray, *Redemption*; Nicole, *Our Sovereign Saviour*, and Michael Horton, *For Calvinism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 90–98. It is discussed in Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 434–44, and Kuiper, *For Whom Did Christ Die?*, 81, but under the heading of common grace, rather than the extent of the atonement *per se*.

[29] Shultz, "Multi-Intentioned View," 138.

[30] Millard Erickson uses the language of an objective factor and a subjective factor, but his meaning is the same (*Christian Theology*, 851).

[31] This view is defended by Knight, *Pastoral Epistles*, 203–4.

[32] "Namely" is not even included as a possible translation for *malista* in the standard Greek-English lexicon (Walter Bauer, Frederick W. Danker, William F. Arndt, and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed., rev. and ed. Frederick W. Danker [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000], s.v. "*malista*," p. 613); see also Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 256–57.

[33] Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 851.

[34] In view of space limitations, I have limited our consideration here to only the strongest verses. There are numerous others: passages commonly cited as support for universal atonement include Isa 53:4–6; many specific verses in the Gospel of John and 1 John; 2 Cor 5:14–15, 18–21; Titus 2:11; and Heb 2:9.

[35] Lightner, *The Death Christ Died*, 69. Italics in original.

[36] Dabney, *Systematic Theology*, 525. Dabney lists John 3:16, 2 Cor 5:15, and 1 John 2:2 as some of the texts in which it is difficult to interpret "world" in a limited sense.

[37] Thomas Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, NAC (Nashville: B&H, 2003), 331. Cf. Richard Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, WBC (Waco, TX: Word, 1983), 240: "2 Peter does not deny that the false teachers are Christians, but sees them as apostate Christians."

[38] See, for example, Lightner, *The Death Christ Died*, 76–77; Douty, *The Death of Christ*, 111–27; Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 847–51.

[39] Owen, "Death of Death," 362.

[40] J. N. D. Kelly, *The Epistles of Peter and of Jude*, Black's New Testament Commentaries (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1969), 327. Also affirming this view, see Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, 240; Schreiner, *Jude, 2 Peter*, 329; Peter Davids, *The Letters of Jude and 2 Peter*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 221.

[41] Schreiner, *Jude, 2 Peter*, 330. So also Davids, *Letters of Jude and 2 Peter*, 221; Kelly, *The Epistles of Peter*, 327; Edwin Blum, "2 Peter," in *Hebrews Through Revelation*, vol. 12 of *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gæbelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 276. Nettles argues for a temporal sense of deliverance. He says that since there is no mention of the price of redemption in the verse, we have no reason to assume that the reference is to the blood of Christ (*By His Grace*, 301). But this is very much a minority position.

[42] Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 397. He cites this opinion from George Smeaton, *The Doctrine of the Atonement as Taught by the Apostles* (1870), p. 447, as "the most plausible explanation." Lewis and Demarest, *Integrative Theology*, 396, concur.

[43] Nicole, *Our Sovereign Saviour*, 67.

[44] Schreiner, *Jude, 2 Peter*, 331.

[45] Elwell claims that general redemption was held "by the vast majority of theologians, Reformers, evangelists, and fathers from the beginning of the church until the present day" ("Atonement, Extent of," 115). Marshall lists it first among arguments for universal atonement, claiming the support of virtually everyone before the Reformation, with the possible exception of Augustine ("Universal Grace," 79).

[46] Owen adds a few pages at the end of his work, seeking to claim some support from Ignatius, Cyprian, Athanasius, and others, but his claims are based on scant and equivocal statements ("Death of Death," 422–24). For discussion of Augustine's position, see Raymond Blacketer, "Definite Atonement in Historical Perspective," in *The Glory of the Atonement*, ed. Charles Hill and Frank James III (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Academic, 2004), 308–10, and Robert Godfrey, "Reformed Thought on the Extent of the Atonement to 1618," *WTJ* 37, no. 2 (Winter 1975): 133–34.

[47] Blacketer thinks Prosper was even more explicit than Augustine ("Definite Atonement," 310); Godfrey is more guarded ("Reformed Thought," 135–36).

[48] Blacketer, "Definite Atonement," 311.

[49] Peter Lombard, "*Libri quatuor sententiarum*," in *Patrologiae cursus completus* 192 (Paris: Garnier Fratres, 1880), 799.

[50] Elwell, "Atonement, Extent of," 115.

[51] See G. Michael Thomas, *The Extent of the Atonement: A Dilemma for Reformed Theology from Calvin to the Consensus (1536–1675)* (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster, 1997), 12n1 for the bibliographic information on all these works. To them could be added Kevin Kennedy, *Union with Christ and the Extent of the Atonement in Calvin*, Studies in Biblical Literature 48 (New York: Peter Lang, 2002). Kennedy places Calvin in the universal atonement camp.

[52] Thomas, *Extent of the Atonement*, 34.

[53] The Remonstrants submitted five articles that were condemned by the Synod of Dort in 1618. The second of these articles stated their position on the extent of the atonement: "Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world, died for all men and for every man, so that he has obtained for all, by his death on the cross, reconciliation and remission of sins; yet so that no one is partaker of this remission except the believers." *Documents of the Christian Church*, ed. Chris Maunder, 3rd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 283.

[54] Dabney, *Systematic Theology*, 527–28, and Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology*, 743, both felt pushed to include some universal aspect in the atonement by the scriptural texts, yet still affirmed definite atonement as their view.

[55] This is the majority view among Baptist historians, although some claim some influence from sixteenth-century Anabaptists. See the discussion in Leon McBeth, *The Baptist Heritage* (Nashville: Broadman, 1987), 49–63.

[56] The Philadelphia Confession did add two articles; otherwise, it is identical to the earlier English Particular Baptist Confession, which had been self-consciously modeled after the Westminster Confession and preserved the language of most articles verbatim. In North America the Philadelphia Confession was adopted by many local churches and associations, the most important being the Charleston Association. Even the Separate Baptists of Virginia agreed to let it serve as the basis for union between Regular and Separate Baptists in Virginia in 1783. See the discussion in William Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, rev. ed. (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1969), 348–53.

[57] Gary Shultz, "Multi-Intentioned View," 91–94, credits the persistence of four-point Calvinism in evangelical theology "to the work of the Dispensationalist movement and Baptists." He cites the support given to "unlimited atonement" by Dispensational theologians such as Lewis Chafer, John Walvoord, Charles Ryrie, and Robert Lightner, and states that Baptists such as Augustus H. Strong, E. Y. Mullins, Gordon Lewis and Bruce Demarest, Millard Erickson, and James Leo Garrett Jr. "have all argued for unlimited atonement while avoiding Arminianism."

[58] Owen, "Death of Death," 159.

[59] Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 394.

[60] I will argue below that in addition to making a universal objective provision for the salvation of all, God works subjectively in the hearts of some to apply that provision to them, making that provision efficacious for them. But I see the subjective application as a second and separate intention in the atonement. See further below.

[61] J. I. Packer, "Saved by His Precious Blood: An Introduction to John Owen's *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ*," in *In My Place Condemned He Stood*, J. I. Packer and Mark Dever (Wheaton: Crossway, 2007), 123.

[62] Murray, *Redemption*, 63. He adds, "We have the same result when we properly analyze the meaning of expiation, propitiation, and reconciliation." Owen devotes whole chapters to showing the inherent efficacy of the atonement from the words *reconciliation*, *redemption*, and *satisfaction* ("Death of Death," 258–73). Nicole claims that these words emphasize "the actual achievement of salvation" (*Our Sovereign Saviour*, 63).

[63] Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 395. Owen says, "Faith itself is among the principal effects and fruits of the death of Christ" ("Death of Death," 235).

[64] This is where the multiple-intentions view diverges from a traditional universal atonement view, in seeing a particular as well as universal intent in the cross. Strong (*Systematic Theology*, 771) is not far from this view. He argues for a "universal atonement, but a special application of it to the elect." But since it is the application that is particular, he separates it from the intent of the atonement itself (773). I argue that the application is a second intent of the atonement.

[65] Owen, "Death of Death," 173–74. George, *Amazing Grace*, 93; Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 395; Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 595, and many advocates of definite atonement see this as a strong objection to universal atonement.

[66] John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, LCC

(Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), 20:537 (3.1.1). Language such as "for the salvation of the human race" scattered throughout the *Institutes* and Calvin's commentaries are part of the reason many claim Calvin for the universal-atonement camp.

[67] Lightner, *The Death Christ Died*, 96–98; Robert Picirilli, *Grace, Faith, Free Will; Contrasting Views of Salvation: Calvinism and Arminianism* (Nashville: Randall House, 2002), 94; Shultz, "Multi-Intentioned View," 156–58.

[68] Stephen Strehle, "The Extent of the Atonement Within the Theological Systems of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries" (Ph.D. diss., Dallas Theological Seminary, 1980), 278.

[69] Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 395. George, *Amazing Grace*, 93, mentions it briefly.

[70] Owen devotes one whole chapter to developing this argument and another to answering objections he anticipates to it ("Death of Death," 182–200).

[71] Owen makes the unlikely argument that Jesus' prayer in Luke 23 was "effectual and successful . . . faith and forgiveness being granted to them for whom he prayed" ("Death of Death," 195–96). Certainly there were a number of Jews converted in the early church, but to suppose that every single one of those present at the cross, involved in Jesus' crucifixion, were among them, is an assumption that seems inherently implausible.

[72] Steve Jeffery, Michael Ovey, and Andrew Sach, *Pierced for our Transgressions: Rediscovering the Glory of Penal Substitution* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2007), 275. Nicole (*Our Sovereign Saviour*, 63–65) and Grudem (*Systematic Theology*, 595) make similar arguments.

[73] Almost every defense of definite atonement includes these verses. See Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 395; Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 595; Owen, "Death of Death," 245.

[74] For example, Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 849–50.

[75] The only exception may be some like David Engelsma, *Hyper-Calvinism and the Call of the Gospel: An Examination of the "Well-Meant" Offer* (Grandville, MI: Reformed Free, 1994).

[76] Allen, "The Atonement," 107; Lightner, *The Death Christ Died*, 153; Olson, *Against Calvinism*, 137; Keathley, *Salvation and Sovereignty*, 207.

[77] Dabney, *Systematic Theology*, 527.

[78] Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 602. He says the statement, "Christ died for your sins," can be understood "in the doctrinally correct sense that 'Christ died in order to offer you forgiveness for your sins' rather than in the doctrinally incorrect sense, 'Christ died and completely paid the penalty already for all your sins.'"

[79] Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology*, 750. This is one of nine reasons Shedd gives to support the universal offer of the gospel; he thinks all are compatible with a particular redemption view (750–53).

[80] J. I. Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1961), 68; Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology*, 752.

[81] See the example from Owen in Packer, "Saved by His Precious Blood," 134; from Spurgeon in George, *Amazing Grace*, 94–95.

[82] Shultz, "Multi-Intentioned View," 168.

[83] These verses are cited by Owen, "Death of Death," 214, Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 395; Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 595; Jeffrey, Ovey and Sach, *Pierced for Our Transgressions*, 272; Horton, *For Calvinism*, 94–95; and are listed by Elwell, "Atonement, Extent of," as one of the typical arguments for particular redemption.

[84] Shultz, "A Multi-Intentioned View," 236–42, develops an entire section on this theme of God's special love for the elect. John Murray, *Redemption Accomplished and Applied*, 65–69, sees Rom 8:31–39 as one of the strongest arguments for definite atonement; Shultz shows that it also fits well within a multiple-intentions view.

[85] See the definite-atonement arguments for the inherent efficacy of the atonement above.

[86] Dabney sees unconditional election as one of the "more conclusive proofs of particular redemption" (*Systematic Theology*, 521). Shedd says bluntly, "The tenet of limited redemption rests upon the tenet of election," which Shedd understood as unconditional (*Dogmatic Theology*, 744).

[87] Shultz, "A Multi-Intentioned View," 235–36. Shultz acknowledges that Arminians see universal prevenient grace as enabling all to potentially receive the subjective application of the atonement, and thus see no need for a particular intention, but he sees universal prevenient grace as contrary to God's sovereignty in salvation and as lacking biblical warrant.

[88] This argument assumes a view of unconditional election, in which repentance and faith are gifts God gives to the elect, as opposed to conditional election, in which election is conditioned by God's foreknowledge of those who will of their own volition respond to God's grace by choosing to repent and believe. Consideration of the arguments for different views of election would take us far beyond the bounds of this essay, and thus such consideration is omitted here. For more on this topic, see Chad Brand, ed., *Perspectives on Election: Five Views* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2006).

[89] Packer, "What Did the Cross Achieve?" 90, 97. Others who argue that substitution entails definite atonement include Murray, *Redemption*, 75; Nicole, *Our Sovereign Savior*, 63 and many others. For the idea that faith is given to the elect via the atonement, see Owen, "Death of Death," 235.

[90] This argument occurs in the works of many advocates of definite atonement, from Owen ("Death of Death," 163–79) to Horton ("For Calvinism," 93–94).

[91] Especially the submission of the Son to the will or intention of the Father, seen repeatedly throughout the Gospel of John (5:19; 6:38; 8:29; 15:10) and most climactically in the garden of Gethsemane (Matt. 26:36–44).

[92] Dabney, *Systematic Theology*, 525–29; Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology*, 743; Lightner, *The Death Christ Died*, 47.

[93] Strong, *Systematic Theology*, 771.

[94] Lewis and Demarest, *Integrative Theology*, 409.

[95] See above, 14–16.

[96] E.g., Strong, *Systematic Theology*, 773: "Christ is specially the Savior of those who believe, in that he exerts a special power of his Spirit to procure their acceptance of his salvation. This is not, however, a part of his work of atonement; it is the application of the atonement, and as such is hereafter to be considered."

[97] Calvin, *Institutes*, 1:541 (3.1.4), 1:539 (3.1.4).

[98] As the giver of life in John 6:63, the Spirit is likely the one involved in drawing people to Christ (John 6:44) since the result of being drawn is life.

[99] For this understanding of effectual calling as the work of the Holy Spirit, see Demarest, *Cross and Salvation*, 211; Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 943; and Bruce Ware, "Effectual Calling," in *Still Sovereign: Contemporary Perspectives on Election, Foreknowledge, and Grace*, ed. Thomas Schreiner and Bruce Ware (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), 204.

[100] For more on how the Spirit worked among believers in the Old Testament, see James M. Hamilton Jr., *God's Indwelling Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Old and New Testaments*, NAC Studies in Bible & Theology (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2006), especially 9–24, and Graham Cole, *He Who Gives Life: The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit*, Foundations of Evangelical Theology (Wheaton: Crossway, 2007), 143–45.

[101] Kevin Vanhoozer, "The Atonement in Postmodernity: Guilt, Goats and Gifts," in Hill and James, *The Glory of the Atonement*, 398–99.

[102] Shultz, "A Multi-Intentioned View," 226.

[103] Ibid., 255.

[104] Gustav Aulén, *Christus Victor: An Historical Study of the Three Main Types of the Atonement*, trans A. G. Hebert (1931; reprint, New York: Macmillan, 1960).

[105] The following discussion draws from Paul Eddy and James Beilby, "The Atonement: An Introduction," in *The Nature of the Atonement: Four Views*, ed. James Beilby and Paul Eddy (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Academic, 2006), 9–20. Their book contains an example of each of the three main types plus a "Kaleidoscopic View." Similar descriptions of the three main types can be found in J. I. Packer, "What Did the Cross Achieve?" 71–73; *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 2nd ed., s.v.

"Atonement, Theories of," by Leon Morris, 116–19; and John Stott, *The Cross of Christ* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1986), 167–251.

[106] While there does seem to be a basis for seeing this view reflected in Abelard's *Commentary on Romans*, some have questioned if this is a completely accurate rendering of Abelard's view of the atonement. See Alister McGrath, "The Moral Theory of the Atonement: An Historic and Theological Critique," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 38 (1985): 205–20.

[107] For example, while Stott devotes a chapter in *The Cross of Christ* to each of the three major views of the atonement, he clearly sees the themes of satisfaction and substitution as central, supported by all the Old Testament sacrificial system was designed to teach, by the ministry of the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53, and by the description of the cross as propitiation, redemption, justification, and reconciliation (see 133–203). For an exposition of the biblical, historical, theological, and pastoral case for penal substitution and for a defense of it against contemporary criticisms, see Jeffery, Ovey, and Sach, *Pierced for Our Transgressions*. For a presentation of penal substitution in dialogue with other views, see Thomas Schreiner, "Penal Substitution View," in Beilby, *The Nature of the Atonement*, 67–98.

[108] Packer, "What Did the Cross Achieve?" 72; Morris, "Atonement, Theories of," 119.

[109] Leon Morris, *The Cross in the New Testament* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1965), 401.

[110] See the discussion in Eddy and Beilby, "Introduction," 19–20. Among those advocating subjective ideas, they list Friedrich Schleiermacher, Horace Bushnell, Hastings Rashdall, and Albrecht Ritschl.

[111] Calvin, *Institutes*, 1:537 (3.1.1).

[112] Peter Abailard, "Exposition of the Epistle to the Romans (Excerpt from the Second Book)," trans. Gerald E. Moffatt, in *A Scholastic Miscellany: Anselm to Ockham*, trans. and ed. Eugene Fairweather, LCC (Louisville and London: Westminster John Knox Press, 1956; paperback reissued 2006), 283.

[113] This is the last line of Watt's hymn, "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross," which is filled with imagery drawn from the subjective view of the atonement.

[114] Shultz, "A Multi-Intentioned View," 199n118 states, "Almost all proponents of unlimited atonement make the universal nature of God's love one of the central arguments for their view." See this argument, for example, in several of the contributions to *The Grace of God and the Will of Man*, such as Fritz Guy, "The Universality of God's Love"; I. Howard Marshall, "Universal Grace and Atonement in the Pastoral Epistles"; and Terry Miethe, "The Universal Power of the Atonement."

[115] Olson, *Against Calvinism*, 110.

[116] I know of no Arminian or universal-atonement proponent who sees those who die in infancy as lost, and I know of very few among those of a Reformed or definite-atonement view. Lewis and Demarest, who see both general benefits to all and special benefits to believers coming from the cross, suggest "salvation for those who die in infancy" as one of the general benefits (*Integrative Theology*, 2:392–93).

[117] Martin Luther, "On the Bondage of the Will," trans. Philip Watson and B. Drewery, in *Luther and Erasmus: Free Will and Salvation*, ed. Gordon Rupp and Philip Watson, Library of Christian Classics (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1969), 332. Italics in original.

[118] Calvin, *Institutes*, 2:953 (3.22.5).

[119] Limitations of space preclude a full treatment of the themes relating to the cosmic scope of God's victory and reconciliation. For a more thorough discussion, see Robert Peterson, *Salvation Accomplished by the Son: The Work of Christ* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2012); Robin Parry and Christopher Partridge, eds., *Universal Salvation? The Current Debate* (Grand Rapids and Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans, 2003); P. T. O'Brien, "Col. 1:20 and the Reconciliation of all Things," *Reformed Theological Review* 33, no. 2 (1974): 51–53; Gary L. Shultz Jr., "The Reconciliation of All Things in Christ," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 167 (October-December 2010): 442–59; and Shawn Bawulski, "Reconciliationism, a Better View of Hell: Reconciliationism and Eternal Punishment," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 56, no. 1 (March 2013): 123–38.

[120] Ladd, *Theology of the New Testament*, 452.

[121] Richard Melick Jr., *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*, NAC (Nashville: Broadman, 1991), 225.

[122] Douglas Moo, *The Letter to the Colossians and to Philemon*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008),

134–35.

[123] F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 75.

[124] Moo, *Colossians*, 135.

[125] Melick, *Colossians*, 227.

[126] Peter O'Brien says, "The presupposition [of Col. 1:20] is that the unity and harmony of the cosmos have suffered a considerable dislocation, even a rupture, thus requiring reconciliation" (*Colossians, Philemon*, WBC [Waco: Word, 1982], 53).

[127] This is the term of Bruce, *Colossians*, 76.

[128] James Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 104.

[129] Moo, *Colossians*, 137.

[130] Melick, *Colossians*, 228, and Curtis Vaughan, "Colossians," in *Ephesians Through Philemon*, vol. 11 of *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 202.

[131] Merrill Tenney, "The Gospel of John," in *John and Acts*, vol. 9 of *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 131.

[132] Nicole mentions it as one of the benefits of the cross that flow to those who are unsaved, but then says this is not the issue in dispute (*Our Sovereign Saviour*, 58–59). Berkhof lists it as one of the elements under "the wider bearing of the atonement" (*Systematic Theology*, 398–99). Kuiper also mentions it near the end of his work (*For Whom Did Christ Die?*, 98).

[133] Christopher Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Academic, 2006), 315. Italics in original.

[134] John Murray is typical of many Reformed theologians who see a variety of common grace benefits coming to all through the atonement (Murray, *Redemption*, 61–62).

[135] Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 393–94.

[136] Dabney, *Systematic Theology*, 529. Among the other subordinate ends accomplished by Christ's death, Dabney includes "a reprieve of doom" seen in that we do not die at birth, the sincere offer of salvation to all who will believe, a greater degree of condemnation for those who reject the gospel, and a revelation of the tenderness and compassion of God (528–29).

[137] Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology*, 743.

[138] Bruce Ware, "Extent of the Atonement: Outline of the Issue, Positions, Key Texts, and Key Theological Arguments." This is an unpublished outline available at http://evangelicalarminians.org/files/Ware.%20Extent%20of%20the%20Atonement.pdf and many other websites.

[139] Ware's formulation can be found in the outline cited above, "Extent of the Atonement."

[140] Ware, "Extent of the Atonement," and Shultz, "Multi-Intentioned View," v.

[141] Shultz, "Multi-Intentioned View," v.

[142] Among the benefits associated with common grace, Richard Mouw lists "(1) the bestowal of natural gifts, such as rain and sunshine, upon creatures in general, (2) the restraining of sin in human affairs . . . and (3) the ability of unbelievers to perform acts of civic good" (*He Shines in All That's Fair: Culture and Common Grace* [Grand Rapids and Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans, 2001], 9). Terrance Tiessen explains the third item in Mouw's list as "God's facilitating of what is true and good in philosophy, arts, science and technology" (*Who Can Be Saved? Reassessing Salvation in Christ and World Religions* [Downers Grove and Leicester, UK: InterVarsity, 2004], 100–101).

[143] As John Stott, *The Cross of Christ*, 217–24, does, though Stott is quick to insist on the value of the subjective, moral influence theory only when linked to penal substitution, a view I too would affirm.

[144] H. Orton Wiley, *Christian Theology*, 3 vols. (Kansas City: Beacon Hill, 1952), 2:297.

[145] Demarest, *The Cross and Salvation*, 58. See also the larger discussion, ibid., 55–59.

[146] For further discussion, see Bruce Barron, *The Health and Wealth Gospel: What's Going On Today in a Movement That Has Shaped the Faith of Millions* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1987); Robert Bowman Jr., *The Word-Faith Controversy: Understanding the Health and Wealth Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Baker,

2001); and David Jones and Russell Woodbridge, *Health, Wealth and Happiness: Has the Prosperity Gospel Overshadowed the Gospel of Christ?* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2011).

[147] E.g., Christopher T. Bounds, "The Scope of the Atonement in the Early Church Fathers," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* (2012): 7–27.

[148] J. I. Packer, "Saved by His Precious Blood: An Introduction to John Owen's *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ*," in J. I. Packer and Mark Dever, *In My Place Condemned He Stood* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2007), 123.

[149] See, e.g., 2 Cor 5:19–20, where the statement of fact about God's action ("God was reconciling [*katalasson*] the world to himself in Christ") is followed by the imperative (*katalaggete*, "be reconciled to God").

[150] For the sake of clarity, I'll state this with just a bit more precision: according to theological determinism, for some sinner *S*, some possible world *w**, and some time *t*, if *S* is reprobate in *w**, then at any time *t* in *w** at which *S* is confronted by the gospel call, there is no possible world that shares an initial world segment (which of course includes all divine as well as all creaturely action) with *w** up to *t* in which *S* could respond positively to the gospel. So if *S* is reprobate in the actual world, then no possible world shares an initial world segment (including the death and resurrection of Christ in its plan and execution) with this one in which *S* responds to the gospel call in repentance and faith and is saved. So any sense in which *S*'s salvation might be said to be made "possible" by the death of Christ seems remote indeed.

[151] The defender of Hammett who might wish to take refuge in the well-known "two wills of God" strategy might wish to consult Thomas H. McCall, "I Believe in Divine Sovereignty," *Trin J* (2008): 205–26; John Piper, "I Believe in God's Self-Sufficiency: A Response to Tom McCall," *Trin J* (2008): 227–34; Thomas H. McCall, "We Believe in God's Sovereign Goodness," *Trin J* (2008): 235–46.

[152] Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1949), 394.

[153] I say "in some form or other" because I do not wish to suggest that there is only one version of the doctrine in the tradition, nor do I wish to suggest that all theologians in the tradition employ it the same way.

[154] E.g., *De Spiritu et Littera* 60, in *NPNF* V:110/*PL* 44:240; idem, *De natura et gratia ad Timasium et Iacobum conta Pelagium* xxxi/35, in *NPNF* V:133/*PL* 44:264; idem, *Sermones ad populum omnes* CLXXIV.iv.4 in *PL* 38:942–43; idem, *Contra duas epistolas Pelagianorum* IV.vi.15 in *PL* 44:620.

[155] For an example of a well-informed interpretation of Augustine as a compatibilist, see Jesse Couenhoven, *Stricken by Sin: Cured by Christ: Agency, Necessity, and Culpability in Augustinian Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013). Couenhoven focuses on what Augustine says in his "final and most mature views" (after 412 and especially after 418) (22). For an interpretation of Augustine as an indeterminist, see Eleonore Stump, "Augustine on Free Will," in the *Cambridge Companion to Augustine*, ed. Eleonore Stump and Norman Kretzman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 124–47.

[156] *De Spiritu et Littera* 58, in *NPNF* V:109/*PL* 44:238.

[157] *De Spiritu et Littera* 54, in *NPNF* V:107/*PL* 44:236.

[158] *Canons of the Council of Orange*, canon 18, in *Creeds and Confessions in the Christian Tradition*, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan and Valerie R. Hotchkiss (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 695.

[159] Thomas Aquinas, *ST* Ia-IIae QQcxi.3.

[160] See Anthony N. S. Lane, "A Tale of Two Imperial Cities: Justification at Regensburg (1541) and Trent (1546–1547)," in *Justification in Perspective: Historical Developments and Contemporary Challenges*, ed. Bruce L. McCormack (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 143.

[161] In Heinrich Schmid, ed., *The Doctrinal Theology of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Philadelphia: Lutheran Publication Society, 1876), 486–87.

[162] On Arminius, see Keith D. Stanglin and Thomas H. McCall, *Jacob Arminius: Theologian of Grace* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), especially 151–57.

[163] For objections to the use of these texts as foundational support for a doctrine of prevenient grace, see

Thomas R. Schreiner, "Does Scripture Teach Prevenient Grace in the Wesleyan Sense?" in *Still Sovereign: Contemporary Perspectives on Election, Foreknowledge, and Grace*, ed. Bruce A. Ware and Thomas R. Schreiner (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), 229–46, and William W. Combs, "Does the Bible Teach Prevenient Grace?" *Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal* (2005): 3–18.

[164] David Gibson and Jonathan Gibson, eds., *From Heaven He Came and Sought Her: Definite Atonement in Biblical, Historical, Theological, and Pastoral Perspective* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2013).

[165] John Piper, *Does God Desire All to Be Saved?* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2013), available at http://www.desiringgod.org/books/does-god-desire-all-to-be-saved.

Conclusion

Andrew David Naselli

My evangelical background started with a Southern Baptist church and later included both fundamentalism and conservative evangelicalism. I have been in many church and parachurch contexts in which definite atonement (usually called "limited" atonement) is a controversial issue.

1. *Some reject definite atonement as extreme error.* I have heard my fair share of fiery sermons warning people about the dangers of "limited" atonement and how that contradicts evangelism and missions.
2. *Others respect it for its logical rigor but cannot embrace it because they think it lacks exegetical support.* This was my view when in college.
3. *Others affirm it but rarely talk about it.* I was a member of a healthy church like this.
4. *Others not only affirm it but celebrate it.* Full disclosure: I celebrate it. I am a member of Bethlehem Baptist Church in Minneapolis and teach at their school, Bethlehem College and Seminary, where John Piper is chancellor.

I understand (at least partially) why some who do not embrace definite atonement are so wary of the doctrine. Unfortunately, misunderstandings about the extent of the atonement abound at all levels in both church and academy, and these misunderstandings foster unhealthy disunity. That is where this book comes in.

Mark Snoeberger and I designed this book with a major goal in mind, and it is not to convince every reader to embrace definite atonement.[1] Our major goal is to help Christians better understand this controversial issue and consequently disagree with their brothers and sisters in Christ in a God-glorifying way who hold different views. We want this book to help correct misperceptions and foster a better understanding of the extent of the atonement. I do not expect all Christians to agree on this issue prior to Christ's return. But it would be encouraging if more Christians understood this issue

more accurately because it would encourage unity in Christ's body and discourage sinful schism.

Clarifying similarities and differences is a step forward that results in less caricature and more productive dialogue and relationships. So the next section summarizes this book's three major views, and the chapter closes with ten practical suggestions for avoiding unhealthy schism over this issue.

Summary

How do the contributors defend their positions?

Definite Atonement View

Carl Trueman (a historical theologian) makes a cumulative case for definite atonement based not on any single text but primarily on two themes:

1. In Christ's mission to save people from their sins, he intended to save *particular* people as their mediator. He is their high priest.
2. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit work in perfect harmony in planning and accomplishing the end for which the atonement was the means. Christ's saving work as a penal substitute accomplishes that definite result.

Because these themes are so prominent in Scripture, this is the basic theological framework against which we should interpret biblical passages that may at least on the surface seem to be "problem" texts for definite atonement.

General Atonement View

Grant Osborne (a New Testament exegete) and Tom McCall (a systematic theologian) affirm that many texts teach that Christ's atonement has a definite aspect. But many texts also favor a universal atonement: Christ did not die *only* for the elect but for nonelect sinners as well. Christ atoned for all people without exception, but God applies that atonement only to those who respond to the Spirit and trust Christ.

Multiple-Intentions View of the Atonement

John Hammett (a systematic theologian) argues that there are three complementary intentions in the atonement:

1. In relationship to God, his intention for the atonement is *universal*: Christ made provision for all.
2. In relationship to humans, God's intention for the atonement is *particular*: God draws some effectually to repent and believe the gospel.
3. In relationship to the universe, God's intention for the atonement is *cosmic*: the atonement is the basis for God's eschatological work of making all things new.

Hammett believes this view allows him to naturally exegete texts that transparently support either general or definite atonement.

Table 1. Three Views on the Extent of the Atonement[2] 10 Ways to Create Unhealthy Schism over the Extent of the Atonement[3]

	General	*Multiple-Intentions*	*Definite*
For whom did Jesus make atonement?	*All people without exception:* The atonement provides salvation for all people without exception.	*All people without exception and especially the elect:* The atonement provides salvation for all people without exception and accomplishes salvation for only the elect.	*All people without distinction, namely, the elect:* The atonement provides and accomplishes salvation for only the elect.
How does God apply Jesus' atonement?	Jesus' atonement provides payment for the sins of all people without exception, but God applies it only to those who repent and believe.	Jesus' atonement provides payment for the sins of all people without exception, but God applies it only to the elect.	Jesus' atonement provides payment for the sins of only the elect, and God applies it only to the elect.

Before I started dating my wife in the summer of 2003, we were in summer school at the same time. She had one year left of undergraduate studies, and I was a graduate student. She was taking a theology class and asked me what I thought about "limited atonement." I immediately froze and instead of answering her question replied, "Why are you asking me?" I did not want to get in trouble. I had been in contexts where the leadership practically equated embracing definite atonement with heresy and being sinfully divisive.

The extent of the atonement can be a controversial issue among Christians. Unfortunately, the doctrine of the extent of the atonement is often inflammatory, and there are many ways to create unhealthy schism over it. Regardless of whether Christians hold to definite atonement, general

atonement, or a multiple-intentions view, they can hold their position in an unhealthy, divisive way. I offer the following practical suggestions for the sake of unity in Christ's body. Here are ten ways to create unhealthy schism over the extent of the atonement. Let us avoid them.

1. Uncharitably denigrating other positions. This includes both the proponents and their arguments. Rhetoric such as *ad hominem* and cutting, unkind, derogatory ridicule has no place in Christian argumentation—especially as a characteristic tendency (cf. 2 Tim 2:24–26). Pragmatically, such rhetoric offends rather than persuades those who hold different views. Respect and graciousness should characterize Christian conversations and debates. Intramural arguments among Christians are not between merely fellow human beings whom God created in his image but brothers and sisters "for whom Christ died" (Rom 14:15; 1 Cor 8:11).[4]

2. Setting up and tearing down straw men. Instead, represent the position of others so accurately that they are satisfied with how you represent them. I've learned this lesson most deeply from Tim Keller, founding pastor of Redeemer Presbyterian Church in Manhattan. One reason Keller's apologetic method is so effective is that he understands his non-Christian audience so well that he articulates their objections to Christianity better than they can. It is respectful, loving, and even disarming. This principle applies to the extent-of-the-atonement debate: when we engage people who hold views that differ from ours, we should respectfully and accurately portray their position and articulate their objections to our own. This is essential for meaningful, constructive dialogue.

For example, if a Calvinist is disagreeing with a hypothetical universalist, the Calvinist should describe hypothetical universalism in a way that a hypothetical universalist would not find objectionable. This requires doing one's homework by carefully reading the best literature by proponents of other views.

One of the most common straw men for general atonement is that it results in universalism. But the writings and ministries of Arminians overwhelmingly refute this.

One of the most common straw men for definite atonement is that it eliminates the need for evangelism. But the writings and ministries of Calvinists overwhelmingly refute this.[5]

3. Viewing other evangelical views as heresy. Theologians normally reserve the word "heresy" for extreme theological error that denies essential elements

of the gospel. A "heretic" deliberately rejects fundamental biblical truth and instead propagates extreme theological error.

This book presents three evangelical[6] views on the extent of the atonement, and none of them is heresy. Orthodox evangelicals hold all three of them.

There is a big difference between Calvinism and hyper-Calvinism. They both embrace definite atonement, but hyper-Calvinism goes beyond Calvinism. Hyper-Calvinism excessively maximizes God's sovereignty and minimizes human responsibility with the result that there is no need for evangelism.[7]

And there is a big difference between Arminianism and universalism. Both embrace general atonement, but universalism goes beyond Arminianism. Universalism affirms that God will eventually save all humans without exception, and it denies eternal punishment.[8]

4. Insufficiently defining a personal position. It is not helpful to describe your position on the extent of the atonement if it does not meaningfully contrast with other positions. Specifically, it is not helpful when people define their position with the phrase "sufficient for all, efficient for the elect" unless they carefully define every word in the phrase and show how their view contrasts with other positions.

When I was fresh out of college and in my first year of graduate school, I interviewed for a ministry position at an institution where some of the leaders were known for their anti-Calvinism. I was a Calvinist. And at one point during my interview, I was asked about my position on the extent of the atonement. I succinctly replied, "I believe Christ's atonement is sufficient for all and efficient for the elect." That satisfied the interviewer. What I did not realize at the time is that I did not sufficiently define my position. Arminians, hypothetical universalists, and Calvinists alike have used that elastic phrase to describe their positions; so using it to define one's position results in confusion rather than clarity and precision.[9] Although the phrase may defuse tension in some situations, it is ambiguous and blurs distinctions, so it is unhelpful to use for defining a position.

David and Jonathan Gibson explain:

> The maxim "sufficient for all, efficient for the elect" was first coined by Peter Lombard in the 12th century. It is often used by some as a summary of the classical Reformed position on the atonement. This, however, is inaccurate, since, as a statement concerning the doctrine of atonement, it can be affirmed by all sides. Arminians have no problem with it because they, along with Amyraldians and hypothetical universalists, generally

interpret it to mean that Christ's death is sufficient for all *because an atonement was paid for all*, according to the will of God, but it is efficient only for those who believe. In other words: universal atonement by Christ on the cross, limited application at the point of faith. John Owen, among others, interpreted it differently: Christ's death is sufficient for all *because it has an intrinsic value irrespective of the number of those for whom he died*, but it was *intended* solely for the elect and therefore it was efficient for them alone. This does not mean that the atonement was insufficient for the non-elect because it wasn't intended for them. Owen spoke of Christ's death being sufficient for "the whole world." If Christ had died for more people than the elect, he would not have suffered any more. So, Christ's death was of infinite worth ("sufficient for all"), but it was intended only for the elect ("efficient for some").[10]

The Gibson brothers argue that it is better to focus on the *intent* rather than the *extent* of the atonement because that "steers us away from trying to 'quantify' the atonement in commercial or mathematical terms and instead brings the purposes of the triune God front and center."[11]

5. Claiming that a personal view is the result of exegesis and biblical theology but not systematic theology. Some argue that their view depends solely on explicit statements of Scripture and not on logic. But all positions involve systematic theology because they use logic to correlate biblical texts in order to answer the question, "What does the whole Bible teach about the extent of the atonement?"[12] The answer to this question reflects tensions in other doctrines. (See Table 2.)

Table 2. Doctrinal Tensions[13]

Doctrine	Tension	Explanations to Resolve the Tension
God's Tri-Unity	A. There is one God.	Tritheists deny A.
	B. Three persons are called God.	Arians (e.g., Jehovah's Witnesses) deny B.
	C. Those three persons are distinct.	Modalists and Sabellians deny C.
Christ's Person	A. Christ is fully God.	Ebionites and Arians deny A.
	B. Christ is fully human.	Gnostics/Docetists and Appollinarians deny B.
	C. Christ is one person.	Nestorians deny C.
	A. God is all good.	Some Calvinists (e.g., Gordon Clark) qualify A.

The Problem of Evil	B. God is all powerful and all wise.	Finitists (e.g., Edgar S. Brightman) deny B.
	C. Evil exists.	Pantheists (e.g., Benedict Spinoza) and adherents of Mary Baker Eddy's Christian Science deny C.
The Extent of the Atonement	A. The atonement is universal.	Calvinists qualify A.
	B. The atonement is effectual.	Arminians deny B, and hypothetical universalists deny or qualify B.
	C. Only some people will be saved.	Universalists deny C.

I affirm definite atonement. So for the extent of the atonement in Table 2, I would qualify A by affirming that the atonement is (1) unlimited in its sufficiency, value, and offer and (2) definite in its intention, accomplishment, and application. The adjective "universal" (not "unlimited") in the sense of "all without distinction" genuinely and adequately modifies "intention, accomplishment, and application" in a manner consistent with scriptural usage. Calvinists, Arminians, and hypothetical universalists all "limit" the atonement: Calvinists limit its object, and the others limit its efficacy, that is, its ability to produce a desired or intended result.

The point is that each "system" or approach to the extent of the atonement seeks to resolve apparent tensions in Scripture. From the Arminian and hypothetical universalist perspectives, those who deny an unlimited atonement do not satisfactorily account for A. From the Calvinist perspective those who deny a definite atonement do not satisfactorily account for B. This is not as simple as saying definite atonement is systematic theology and general atonement is biblical theology. Every position involves systematic theology.

6. Overemphasizing the importance of the atonement's extent. The way some Calvinists talk about definite atonement makes it sound like it is essential to the gospel. I find John Owen's classic argument for definite atonement in *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ* to be thorough and cumulatively convincing, but I think he overstates definite atonement's relative importance.[14] J. I. Packer describes Owen's book as "a polemical piece, designed to show, among other things, that the doctrine of universal redemption is unscriptural and *destructive to the gospel*."[15] "Destructive to the gospel" is strong language that requires qualification.[16]

It is helpful to think of the Bible's teaching as having different levels of importance. Some people tend to have a toggle switch for evaluating doctrines:

either a doctrine is important or unimportant. The toggle switch is a poor model for doctrine. Some Bible teachings are *more* important than others, but all are important.

Some doctrines are essential to Christianity. For example, there is one God in three persons; Jesus is fully God and fully human; Jesus sacrificially died for sinners; Jesus bodily rose from the dead; we are justified by grace alone through faith alone in Jesus alone; Jesus is coming back. One cannot *deny* these teachings and still be a Christian in any meaningful sense.[17]

This book presents three different views on the extent of the atonement, and none of them is essential to Christianity. But that does not mean the extent of the atonement is unimportant. The extent of the atonement is not a trivial issue. It is important. It is just not as important as some other teachings.

This doctrine is not necessarily at the heart of the gospel,[18] nor is it the primary facet of the atonement that Scripture emphasizes.[19] But the three views this book presents agree on what is most important:[20]

1. The good news about Christ's atonement is universally available (and Christians should universally proclaim it) to all humans without distinction.
2. God applies the atonement not to all humans without exception but to all who repent and believe.

Whether one holds to definite or general atonement, it is a mistake to magnify a position's distinguishing features to the neglect of other doctrines that are much more significant and clear in Scripture.

One of the most frequently asked questions that examiners pose to students after they have written their doctoral dissertations is this: "What would falsify your thesis?" In other words, what exactly would it take to disprove your argument? It is a question worth asking for any position you hold.

What would falsify general atonement? Some proponents say all it would take is a Bible passage that explicitly says Jesus died *only* for the elect.

What would falsify definite atonement? I suggest that absolute negative language would falsify it. Scripture distinctly emphasizes the universality of human sinfulness by using language that is more precise and is unequivocally unlimited, extending to all humans without exception.[21] Perhaps the most effective way to communicate this through language is with absolute negatives, which are indisputably clear and unambiguously inclusive. For

example, "Absalom has struck down *all* the king's sons; *not one* of them is left" (2 Sam 13:30 NIV).[22] Absolute negative language clarifies in order to avoid misunderstanding and emphasizes universality without exception. That is why when God wants to emphasize that every single human without exception is sinful, he expresses it with absolute negatives: "There is *no one* righteous, *not even one*; . . . there is *no one* who does good, *not even one*" (Rom 3:10, 12 NIV).[23] This language is indisputably unambiguous. God could use this type of language with reference to the extent of the atonement, but he does not. God has not stressed an unlimited nature of the extent of the atonement like he has the doctrine of humanity's sinfulness. Scripture could say, "Christ died for *x* (e.g., "all humans" or "the whole world"); there is *not one* human for whom Jesus did not die." That would be a strong case for general atonement.

The point is that Scripture could be more explicit regarding the extent of the atonement and that we should not blow this issue out of proportion.[24]

7. Assuming that only non-Calvinists can tell a non-Christian, "God loves you" or "Jesus died for you." Some Calvinists refuse to tell non-Christians, "God loves you" or "Jesus died for you." But other Calvinists argue (rightly, I think) that those statements are true and right.

A Calvinist can tell a non-Christian, "God loves you," depending on what he by means "love." D. A. Carson has convincingly argued that the Bible speaks of God's love in at least five ways: (1) the peculiar love of the Father for the Son (e.g., John 3:35; 5:20) and of the Son for the Father (e.g., John 14:31); (2) God's providential love over all that he has made (e.g., Ps 145:9, 13, 17); (3) God's saving stance toward his fallen world (e.g., John 3:16); (4) God's particular, effective, selecting love toward his elect (e.g., Eph 5:25); and (5) God's love toward his own people conditioned on obedience (e.g., John 15:10).[25] Carson elaborates:

> When I have preached or lectured in Reformed circles, I have often been asked the question, "Do you feel free to tell unbelievers that God loves them?" . . . I have no hesitation in answering this question from young Reformed preachers affirmatively: *Of course* I tell the unconverted that God loves them. . . .
>
> Provided there is an honest commitment to preaching the whole counsel of God, preachers in the Reformed tradition should not hesitate for an instant to declare the love of God for a lost world, for lost individuals. The Bible's ways of speaking about the love of God are comprehensive enough not only to permit this but to mandate it.[26]

A Calvinist can tell a non-Christian, "Jesus died for you," because non-Christians generally understand the conjunction "for" in that sentence to mean that the benefits of Jesus's death are available if they repent and believe.[27]

8. Requiring that others adhere to a particular view when flexibility is appropriate. Sometimes inflexibility on this issue is appropriate. For example, a Reformed seminary that adheres to the Westminster Confession of Faith as its doctrinal statement is not likely to hire a professor who holds to general atonement, nor is an Arminian seminary likely to hire a professor who holds to definite atonement.

But sometimes flexibility is appropriate. For example, some healthy conservative evangelical seminaries allow flexibility on this issue as long as professors hold their (orthodox) view in a nonschismatic, noncrusading way. The same applies with reference to church membership requirements: local churches should not require that every person in their congregation hold the same view on the extent of the atonement in order to be a member.

9. Giving the impression that complete understanding is possible regarding the extent of the atonement. We can know only what God reveals to us. And he has not revealed everything to us. The doctrine of the atonement is rich and deep, and what Scripture says about its extent raises some questions Scripture does not *explicitly* answer—at least not as explicitly as some of us would like! The pinnacle of doxology is praising God for being infinitely greater than our finite minds can comprehend (Rom 11:33–36).[28]

10. Holding a personal position with sinful pride. It is sad that the doctrine of the extent of the atonement sometimes has a reputation for being connected with strident debates and divisiveness and arrogance. Jesus died for that kind of sinful pride.

The cross of Christ is central to the Christian faith, and when we discuss issues inseparably related to the cross, we are "on holy ground." That should be profoundly humbling. Carl F. H. Henry asked precisely the right question: "How on earth can anyone be arrogant when standing beside the cross?"[29]

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[1] Another book has that goal. As we were finalizing our manuscript for this book, the definitive book on definite atonement released: David Gibson and Jonathan Gibson, eds., *From Heaven He Came and Sought Her: Definite Atonement in Biblical, Historical, Theological, and Pastoral Perspective* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2013). For a critical assessment from an Arminian perspective, see A. Philip Brown II and Thomas H. McCall's review article in *TrinJ* 35 (Fall 2014).

[2] Thanks especially to Mark Snoeberger and Jonny Gibson for suggesting insightful ways to improve this table.

[3] This section adapts (with permission) Andrew David Naselli, "John Owen's Argument for Definite Atonement in *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ:* A Brief Summary and Evaluation," *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 14, no. 4 (2010): 60–82, especially 74–76, 81–82, available at http://andynaselli.com/wp-content/uploads/2010_Owen.pdf.

[4] Unless otherwise noted all Scripture passages are taken from the English Standard Version.

[5] To name just a handful of examples, consider John Owen (1616–1683), Jonathan Edwards (1703–1758), George Whitefield (1714–1770), William Carey (1761–1834), Charles Haddon Spurgeon (1834–1892), David Martyn Lloyd-Jones (1899–1981), and John Piper (1946–).

[6] Defining *evangelicalism* "depends largely on one's approach, and there are at least two basic approaches: (1) sociology—a *descriptive* approach that most historians adopt, and (2) theology—a *prescriptive* approach that some theologians adopt" (Andrew David Naselli, "Conclusion," in *Four Views on the Spectrum of Evangelicalism*, ed. Andrew David Naselli and Collin Hansen, Counterpoints [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011], 209). I am using the term "evangelical" in the second sense.

[7] Cf. Curt D. Daniel's 912-page thesis, "Hyper-Calvinism and John Gill" (PhD diss., University of Edinburgh, 1983); Peter Toon, "Hyper-Calvinism," in *New Dictionary of Theology*, 324; Iain H. Murray, *Spurgeon v. Hyper-Calvinism: The Battle for Gospel Preaching* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1995).

[8] Cf. N. T. Wright, "Universalism," *New Dictionary of Theology*, 701–3; D. A. Carson, "On Banishing the Lake of Fire," in *The Gagging of God: Christianity Confronts Pluralism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 515–36; Christopher W. Morgan and Robert A. Peterson, eds., *Hell Under Fire: Modern Scholarship Reinvents Eternal Punishment* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004).

[9] For an explanation of the history of this phrase, which originated with Peter Lombard's *Four Books of Sentences*, see W. Robert Godfrey, "Reformed Thought on the Extent of the Atonement to 1618," *WTJ* 37 (1975): 133–71, esp. 136, 142, 149, 159, 164–69; Carl R. Trueman, *The Claims of Truth: John Owen's Trinitarian Theology* (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster, 1998), 199–206; Raymond A. Blacketer, "Definite Atonement in Historical Perspective," in *The Glory of the Atonement: Biblical, Historical, and Practical Perspectives: Essays in Honor of Roger Nicole*, ed. Charles E. Hill and Frank A. James III (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2004), 311.

[10] David Gibson and Jonathan Gibson, interview by Fred Zaspel, *Books at a Glance* (March 15, 2014), http://booksataglance.com/author-interviews/david-and-jonathan-gibson-editors-of-from-heaven-he-came-and-sought-her (italics in original).

[11] Ibid.

[12] On the relation between exegesis, biblical theology, historical theology, systematic theology, and practical theology, see Andrew David Naselli, "D. A. Carson's Theological Method," *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology* 29 (2011): 245–74, available at http://andynaselli.com/wp-content/uploads/2011_Carson.pdf.

[13] Other doctrines where there are similar tensions include inspiration, prayer, evangelism, and progressive sanctification.

[14] See Naselli, "John Owen's Argument for Definite Atonement," 71–73.

[15] J. I. Packer, "'Saved by His Precious Blood': An Introduction to John Owen's *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ*," in *A Quest for Godliness: The Puritan Vision of the Christian Life* (Wheaton: Crossway, 1990), 125 (emphasis added); cf. 126–30, 133–34, 137

[16] Granted, Packer does not say general atonement "destroys the gospel." By "destructive," he likely means the *implications* of universal redemption cannot logically or scripturally cohere with a substitutionary atonement.

[17] See Wayne Grudem, "Why, When, and for What Should We Draw New Boundaries?," in *Beyond the Bounds: Open Theism and the Undermining of Biblical Christianity,* ed. John Piper, Justin Taylor, and Paul Kjoss Helseth (Wheaton: Crossway, 2003), 339–70; Naselli and Hansen, *Four Views on the Spectrum of Evangelicalism*, especially the section "Theological Triage" in the chapter by R. Albert Mohler Jr. (pp. 77–80); Joe Rigney, "How to Weigh Doctrines for Christian Unity," *The Gospel Coalition Blog*, May 26,

2014, http://thegospelcoalition.org/article/weigh-doctrines-for-christian-unity.

[18] The word "necessarily" is important because pushing supposed implications of a general atonement or definite atonement too far results in heresy. See practical suggestion above.

[19] Wayne Grudem (*Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994], 603) suggests, "Although Reformed people have sometimes made belief in particular redemption a test of doctrinal orthodoxy, it would be healthy to realize that Scripture itself never singles this out as a doctrine of major importance, nor does it once make it the subject of any explicit theological discussion." Grudem advises a "cautious" and "balanced pastoral perspective" that places "almost no emphasis on this question at all." Robert W. Yarbrough's concise but detailed treatment of atonement does not even find it necessary to entertain the issue: "Atonement," in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander and Brian S. Rosner (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2000), 388–93.

[20] Cf. Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 597.

[21] This paragraph reflects a discovery that Phil Gons and I made while studying for our doctoral comprehensive exams in July 2005.

[22] Emphasis added. One could find *scores* of examples like this by searching on the words "not one," "not even one," "no one," or "none." Cf. Exod 8:31; 9:6; 10:19; Num 1:19; Josh 10:8; 21:44; 23:14; Matt 24:2; Luke 12:6; John 17:12; 18:9; Acts 4:32; Rom 14:7.

[23] Emphasis added. Cf. Ps 53:3.

[24] When I took a doctoral course on soteriology in spring 2003, my professor, Layton Talbert, respectably defended a hypothetical universalist view, and I am sympathetic with how he ended our weeks of lively discussion on the atonement's extent: "The fact that God avoids consistent terminology that is equally unambiguous to both sides suggests that we should inform our understanding as fully and biblically as we are able, be dogmatic on unambiguous texts, charitable on ambiguous issues, and glory in a God whose mind cannot be reduced to ink and paper for the satisfaction of the curiosity of the mind of man."

[25] D. A. Carson, *The Difficult Doctrine of the Love of God* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2000), 16–20.

[26] Ibid., 78.

[27] See Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 602.

[28] Andrew David Naselli, *From Typology to Doxology: Paul's Use of Isaiah and Job in Romans 11:34–35* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2012), 146–58.

[29] Quoted in D. A. Carson, *Basics for Believers: An Exposition of Philippians* (Grand Rapids, Baker, 1996), 58.

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