"A massive product of exact and well-informed scholarship . . . with landmark significance. . . . I give this book top marks for its range of solid scholarship, cogency of argument, warmth of style, and zeal for the true glory of God. I recommend it most highly."

J. I. Packer, Board of Governors' Professor of Theology, Regent College

"I cannot imagine that this book could have been published twenty-five years ago: there were not at that time enough well-informed theologians working in the Reformed heritage to produce a volume of such clarity and competence. Whatever side you hold in this debate, henceforth you dare not venture into the discussion without thoughtfully reading this book, which, mercifully, makes argument by stereotype and reductionism a great deal more difficult. Above all, this book will elicit adoration as its readers ponder afresh what Jesus achieved on the cross."

D. A. Carson, Research Professor of New Testament, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School

"The topic is worthy enough. Yet the lineup of contributors to this volume makes this, in my view, the most impressive defense of definite atonement in over a century. Beyond rehearsing traditional arguments, first-rate historical, biblical, and systematic theologians bring fresh angles and exegesis to bear. *From Heaven He Came and Sought Her* is a gift that will no doubt keep on giving for generations to come."

Michael Horton, J. Gresham Machen Professor of Systematic Theology and Apologetics, Westminster Seminary California

"This is the definitive study. It is careful, comprehensive, deep, pastoral, and thoroughly persuasive."

David F. Wells, Distinguished Senior Research Professor, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary

"There is a conventional wisdom that seems to believe definite atonement is the weakest of the five heads of doctrine confessed at the Synod of Dort. But you may come away from this book believing it is the strongest, in its historical attestation, biblical basis, and spiritual blessing. Written by first-rate exegetes and theologians, this book covers all the difficult issues and emerges with a highly persuasive and attractive case. Highly recommended!"

John M. Frame, J. D. Trimble Chair of Systematic Theology and Philosophy, Reformed Theological Seminary, Orlando

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"For whom did Christ die? This volume makes a fresh and impressively comprehensive case for definite atonement as the answer true to Scripture. It shows convincingly, through multi-authored contributions, (1) that the issues of the extent of the atonement and its nature cannot be separated—penal substitution, at the heart of why Christ had to die, stands or falls with definite atonement; and (2) how definite atonement alone provides for a gospel offer of salvation from sin that is genuinely free. In engaging various opposing views on this much-disputed topic, the editors seek to do so in a constructive and irenic spirit, an effort in which they and the other authors have succeeded admirably."

Richard B. Gaffin, Jr., Professor of Biblical and Systematic Theology, Emeritus, Westminster Theological Seminary

"This book is formidable and persuasive. Those familiar with the terrain will recognize that the editors know exactly the key issues and figures in this debate. And none of the authors who follow disappoint. The tone is calm and courteous, the scholarship rigorous and relentless, the argument clear and compelling. This penetrating discussion takes into account the major modern academic criticisms of definite atonement (Barth, the Torrances, Armstrong, Kendall, and others) as well as more popular critiques (Clifford, Driscoll and Breshears). An impressive team of scholars adorns this subject and aims to help Christians toward a deeper gratitude to God for his grace, a greater assurance of salvation, a sweeter fellowship with Christ, stronger affections in their worship of him, more love for people and superior courage and sacrifice in witness and service, and indeed to propel us into the global work of missions with compassion and confidence."

Ligon Duncan, Chancellor and John E. Richards Professor of Systematic and Historical Theology, Reformed Theological Seminary

"Whether you are sympathetic to or suspicious of definite atonement, this book will surprise you. Here are historical details, exegetical links, theological observations, and pastoral perspectives that are fresh and fascinating, even though there is also plenty that will prove controversial. *From Heaven He Came and Sought Her* offers the fullest and most nuanced treatment of definite atonement I know, and will richly add to the substance and quality of future conversations about the intent of the atonement. Whether you think that you agree or disagree with the authors, wrestling with these essays is well worth your time."

Kelly M. Kapic, Professor of Theological Studies, Covenant College

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FROM HEAVEN HE CAME *and* SOUGHT HER

DEFINITE ATONEMENT *in* HISTORICAL, BIBLICAL, THEOLOGICAL, *and* PASTORAL PERSPECTIVE

Edited by DAVID GIBSON & JONATHAN GIBSON

Foreword by J. I. PACKER

CROSSWAY
WHEATON, ILLINOIS

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Foreword

It has been truly said that if you want to survey the full substance of the church's faith you should go to its hymns, just as to appreciate the fullness of Old Testament faith you must immerse yourself in the Psalter. It is supremely from the hymns that you learn the specifics, not only of the church's doctrinal assertions but also of the intimacy of the Father and of the Son into which the Holy Spirit leads believers. The contributors to this volume evidently agree, and ask in effect that their essays be read as elucidations of what is said about the loving action of the Lord Jesus Christ in the verse of the hymn that they have taken as their epigraph:

> From heaven he came and sought her
> to be his holy bride;
> with his own blood he bought her,
> and for her life he died.

In spelling out the Savior's loving initiative and achievement in these biblically warranted terms, the essayists contend, more or less explicitly, for the book's overall thesis, namely, that as the Reformed faith and its pastoral corollaries is the true intellectual mainstream of Christianity, so the belief in definite, particular, and sovereignly effectual redemption—which the above lines express—is its true intellectual center. Their wide-ranging demonstrations that this is the only genuinely coherent way of integrating all the biblical data about Jesus become increasingly impressive when argued as painstakingly against alternatives as is done here.

I count it an honor to be asked to supply a foreword to this massive product of exact and well-informed scholarship. The purpose of a foreword, as I understand it, is to indicate what readers will find in the book and to tune them in on the appropriate wavelength for appreciating it, and this particular

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request reminds me forcibly of a similar occasion in the past when I was tasked with a comparable assignment. More than half a century ago, in the days of its youth, the Banner of Truth asked me to compose an introductory essay for a reprint of John Owen's 1648 classic, *Salus Electorum, Sanguis Jesu: Or The Death of Death in the Death of Christ*. I remember feeling this to be a significant request, since, on the one hand, many, I knew, starting with Owen himself, saw this as a landmark composition (in fact, it was the first of several that Owen produced in the course of his ministry), and, on the other hand, it gave me an opportunity to nail my own Reformed colors to the mast, so to speak, and commend Owen's reasoning, as one who had himself benefited greatly from it. The piece I then wrote, explaining and affirming the essence of Owen's position, made an impact that surprised me; I am glad to be able to say at this time that I see nothing in it that needs to be modified or withdrawn in the light of more recent work by myself or others, and I am happy that it should still stand as part of my announced identity in Christ. Since then, to be sure, academic exploration of seventeenth-century Puritan thought has become a busy-bee cottage industry, some of which has contributed to parts of this book. Now the wheel has come full circle, and once more I am asked to introduce a volume on the reconciling death of Christ, which, in my estimation, with God's blessing, may itself have landmark significance in furthering what John Gill, over two centuries ago, called "the cause of God and truth." I am very happy to do this.

The heart of Reformed Christianity is its Trinitarian Christocentrism, expressed manwardly in evangelistic and pastoral proclamation attuned to human need, according to Christ's Great Commission, and Godwardly in the worshipful offering, both corporately and individually, of responsive praise, prayer, thanksgiving, and song. Within this two-way street of communion with God and service of God, the sustained personal presence of the crucified, risen, reigning, and returning Lord with his people, and his constant personal address through Scripture heard, read, and preached, both to those who are his and to those who are not yet his, are integral and indeed central. Since the seventeenth century, the relational bond into which the Father through the Son draws sinners has been labeled the *covenant of grace*, and has been seen as undergirded by a prior plan and bond between the Father and the Son, which has been labeled the *covenant of redemption*. Both are witnessed to widely in Scripture, implicitly as well as explicitly, the fullest account of the

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covenant of grace (the new and eternal covenant) being found in the letter to the Hebrews, and the key evidence on the covenant of redemption (Christ's mediatorial agenda, set by the Father) being contained in John's Gospel. In this understanding of Christianity, Christ's achievement by his cross of the corporate redemption of the whole church—past, present, and future—as the Holy Three know and love it, and thereby the individual redemption of everyone whom the Father has given to the Son to save, is both the mountaintop of glory, in the primary sense of God putting himself fully on display, and the wellspring of glory, in both the secondary sense of the spur to endless doxology and the tertiary sense of divine action to glorify the redeemed in, with, and through Christ, so that they bear his image and likeness in a full sense. Such is the Christianity that is brought into focus by this fine book.

Unhappily, appreciation of Reformed Christianity in its own terms, at least in the English-speaking world, has long been hindered by a habit, formed in conflict with Arminian revisionism, of calling definite redemption *limited atonement*. This habit seems to have been canonized about a century ago, when the mnemonic TULIP came to be used as a summary of what is supposed to make Reformed Christianity into what it essentially is. In fact, the mnemonic covers the five anti-Arminian theses that the Synod of Dordt affirmed in 1619 to counter the Arminian revisionist agenda. Limited atonement is at the center of TULIP, flanked by Total depravity and Unconditional election on one side, and Irresistible grace and Perseverance of the saints on the other. Now, it is true that definite redemption is central to the Reformed understanding of the gospel and that *atonement*, a word meaning *reconciliation*, is an acceptable alternative for *redemption*; but *limited* is an inappropriate emphasis that actually sounds menacing. It is as if Reformed Christians have a primary concern to announce that there are people whom Christ did not die to save, whom therefore it is pointless to invite to turn from sin and trust him as Savior. Were it so, the logic of Reformed pastoral practice would seem to be: comprehensive evangelistic invitations to ordinary audiences should not be issued indiscriminately. This is not the place to argue that thus to restrict making what is called "the well-meant offer of Christ," in preaching and personal witness and counseling, is false to the biblical Christ, to the apostle Paul, and to the practice of history's most outstanding Reformed evangelists (take George Whitefield, Charles Spurgeon, and Asahel Nettleton, for starters), and thus is simply and sadly wrong; readers of this book will

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soon see that. But perhaps I may say that in my view it is time to lay TULIP to rest, since its middle item does so much more harm than good.

In sum now, I give this book top marks for its range of solid scholarship, cogency of argument, warmth of style, and zeal for the true glory of God—I recommend it most highly. For it, and for the biblical faith it lays out, to the Son of God, our Redeemer-Lord, with the Father and the Spirit, be hearty adoration and thanks. Amen.

J. I. Packer
Vancouver

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Preface

We did not grow up believing in definite atonement. We were privileged to be raised in a devout church tradition that nurtured us in Christ, but our love of the doctrine is not the result of an inherited Reformed hermeneutic that has shaped the only world we have ever known. Nor did we come to believe in definite atonement in the same way. One of us studied theology in three different British universities and has specialized in the history of biblical interpretation; the other studied at Moore Theological College, Sydney, and pursued doctoral research in Hebrew studies at a British university. By separate routes, and at different times, we have come to see in the Scriptures that Christ's death for his people does not contradict his mandate to proclaim the gospel to the world.

This book is offered with the prayer that it will paint a compelling picture of the beauty and power of definite atonement, and so revitalize confidence in this profoundly biblical understanding of the cross of Christ. Definite atonement is beautiful because it tells the story of the Warrior-Son who comes to earth to slay his enemy and rescue his Father's people. He is the Good Shepherd who lays down his life for his sheep, a loving Bridegroom who gives himself for his bride, and a victorious King who lavishes the spoils of his conquest on the citizens of his realm. Definite atonement is powerful because it displays the glory of divine initiative, accomplishment, application, and consummation in the work of salvation. The Father sent the Son, who bore our sins in his body on the tree, and the Spirit has sealed our adoption and guarantees our inheritance in the kingdom of light. The doctrine inhabits the poetic drama and the didactic propositions of Scripture. And not only is definite atonement biblical, it comes to us with a textured history, theological integrity, and pastoral riches.

Yet joyful confidence in definite atonement is often lacking. Even for those committed to Reformed theology, this doctrine can sometimes be regarded as the embarrassing relative included in the household more out of duty

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than delight. But there is no need for any awkwardness. It belongs at the heart of family life. This volume aims to make this plain by providing a depth and breadth of perspective usually only assembled from many disparate sources.

Some who open these pages will be suspicious of definite atonement and will read either convinced that it is wrong or bewildered why some believe that it is true. The essays are written irenically. Dissenting voices are engaged firmly, but there is no shrillness of tone in our replies. There is no animosity of content in the critique of individuals and the movements associated with them. While we do not refer to our position as "Calvinist" (for reasons we will explain), John Newton's designation should be allowed to stand as a fair criticism of some who represent the theology we wish to defend:

> And I am afraid there are Calvinists, who, while they account it a proof of their humility that they are willing in words to debase the creature, and to give all the glory of salvation to the Lord, yet know not what manner of spirit they are of. Whatever it be that makes us trust in ourselves that we are comparatively wise or good, so as to treat those with contempt who do not subscribe to our doctrines, or follow our party, is a proof and fruit of a self-righteous spirit. Self-righteousness can feed upon doctrines, as well as upon works; and a man may have the heart of a Pharisee, while his head is stored with orthodox notions of the unworthiness of the creature and the riches of free grace. Yea, I would add, the best of men are not wholly free from this leaven; and therefore are too apt to be pleased with such representations as hold up our adversaries to ridicule, and by consequence flatter our own superior judgments. Controversies, for the most part, are so managed as to indulge rather than to repress this wrong disposition; and therefore, generally speaking, they are productive of little good. They provoke those whom they should convince, and puff up those whom they should edify.[1]

Precisely because it is articulating the gospel of God, this volume seeks to do away with all self-righteousness on the part of those who love definite atonement as they teach it for the good of the church. It is an invitation to explore the historical foundations of the doctrine and to think afresh about the vitality of its exegetical, theological, and pastoral expressions. Perhaps it is fair to ask for as much charity on the part of the reader as each writer has offered.

David Gibson, Old Aberdeen
Jonathan Gibson, Cambridge
Epiphany 2013

[1] John Newton, "On Controversy," in *The Works of John Newton*, 6 vols. (New York: Williams & Whiting, 1810), 1:245.

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Acknowledgments

This book, more than six years in the making, would not have happened without several people who helped cultivate the project from idea to reality. We owe them an incalculable debt of gratitude.

Justin Taylor at Crossway was our first point of contact as we wondered whether the project could work. He honed our multivolume enthusiasm into the much more realistic undertaking you now hold in your hands. We have been indebted to Justin at each step of the way, as well as to Jill Carter and Allan Fisher for their oversight. It was a delight to work with the Crossway team. Our thanks to Angie Cheatham, Amy Kruis, Janni Firestone, Maureen Magnussen, and especially to Bill Deckard for his patience and editorial skills.

Garry Williams agreed to act as a theological reader, then became a contributor, and each essay is the better for his many years of reflection on the atonement in all its aspects. Tom Schreiner encouraged us enormously with his help in the early stages, and we are grateful as well to Raymond Blacketer, Henri Blocher, Jonathan Moore, Lee Gatiss, Michael Horton, Peter Orr, and Ian Hamilton, who each provided essential assistance. Kylie Thomas kindly checked references of seventeenth-century French works in the Cambridge University Library, as well as providing excellent editorial help. Tom McCall and Mark Thompson interacted critically with some of the material in a most gracious manner. Thanks are also due to Aaron Denlinger, Mark Earngey, John Ferguson, Will Lind, Peter Matthess, Richard Muller, Paul Reed, David Schrock, and Edwin Tay.

Closer to home, Peter Dickson at Trinity Church, Aberdeen, has been as fine an example and friend as one could hope for. At various stages he willingly took on more work to allow David time to read and write and edit.

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Jonathan is indebted to his mentor and friend, Charles De Kiewit, Pastor of Central Baptist Church in Pretoria, South Africa, for first introducing him to Reformed theology.

Our wives, Angela and Jacqueline, have been a constant source of encouragement. They tolerated our late nights and indulged our frequent conversations, and the completed book is as much due to their patience, grace, and humor as anything else. We are grateful to them beyond words.

We dedicate our labors with this volume to our children—Archie, Ella, Samuel, Lily, and Benjamin, respectively. As we write, they are too little to understand all the glorious depths of Christ's atoning death. But enfolded in covenant promise, they have had its beauty proclaimed to them at their baptisms and our prayer is that they will never remember a day when they did not know the love of the Savior.

> For you, little child, Jesus Christ has come, he has fought, he has suffered. For you he entered the shadow of Gethsemane and the horror of Calvary. For you he uttered the cry, "It is finished!" For you he rose from the dead and ascended into heaven and there he intercedes—for you, little child, even though you do not know it. But in this way the word of the Gospel becomes true. "We love him, because he first loved us."
>
> —French Reformed Baptismal Liturgy

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Abbreviations

AACM	*Ad Acta Colloquii Montisbelgardensis Tubingae edita Theodori Bezae responsio*, *Tubingae edita,* 2 vols. (Geneva: J. le Preuz, 1587–1588)
BAGD	W. Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, ed. W. F. Arndt, F. W. Gingrich, and F. W. Danker (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1979)
BDB	F. Brown, S. R. Driver, and C. A. Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1929)
BECNT	Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament
BSac	*Bibliotheca Sacra*
BTP	Moïse Amyraut, *Brief Traitté de la Predestination et de ses principales dépendances* (Saumur, France: Jean Lesnier & Isaac Debordes, 1634; 2nd ed. revised and corrected, Saumur, France: Isaac Debordes, 1658)
CAH	Brian G. Armstrong, *Calvinism and the Amyraut Heresy: Protestant Scholasticism and Humanism in Seventeenth-Century France* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969; repr. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2004)
CD	Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, ed. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance, 14 vols. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1956–1975)
CO	*Ioannis Calvini Opera quae supersunt omnia,* ed. J. W. Baum, A. E. Cunitz, and E. Reuss, 59 vols. (Braunschweig, Germany: Schwetschke, 1863–1900)
CNTC	Calvin's New Testament Commentaries, ed. David W. Torrance and Thomas F. Torrance (various translators), 12 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1959–1972)
CRT	Richard A. Muller, *Calvin and the Reformed Tradition: On the Work of Christ and the Order of Salvation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012)
CTCT	Ian McPhee, "Conserver or Transformer of Calvin's Theology? A Study of the Origins and Development of Theodore Beza's Thought, 1550–1570" (doctoral thesis, University of Cambridge, 1979)
CTJ	*Calvin Theological Journal*
CTS	Calvin Translation Society
EQ	*Evangelical Quarterly*

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FRR	Jeffrey Mallinson, *Faith, Reason, and Revelation in Theodore Beza 1519–1605* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003)
ICC	International Critical Commentary
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
JETS	*Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*
JTS	*Journal of Theological Studies*
KD	Karl Barth, *Die kirchliche Dogmatik* (Munich: Chr. Kaiser, 1932; and Zürich: Evangelischer Verlag Zürich, 1938–1967)
LXX	Septuagint
MT	Masoretic Text
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
NICOT	New International Commentary on the Old Testament
NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary
NPNF[1]	*Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, A Select Library of the Christian Church, ed. Philip Schaff, First Series, 14 vols. (repr. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994)
NPNF[2]	*Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, A Select Library of the Christian Church, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, Second Series, 14 vols. (repr. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994)
NSBT	New Studies in Biblical Theology
NTS	*New Testament Studies*
PG	Patrologia graeca, ed. J.-P. Migne et al. (Paris: Centre for Patristic Publications, 1857–1886)
PL	Patrologia latina, ed. J.-P. Migne et al. (Paris: Centre for Patristic Publications, 1878–1890)
PNTC	Pillar New Testament Commentary
PRRD	Richard A. Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics*, 4 vols., vols. 1–2, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003)
RTR	*Reformed Theological Review*
SBET	*Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology*
SJT	*Scottish Journal of Theology*
TB	*Tyndale Bulletin*
TDNT	*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans: 1965)
TOTC	Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries
TT	Theodore Beza, *Tractationes Theologiae*
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WCF	Westminster Confession of Faith
WTJ	*Westminster Theological Journal*

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Contributors

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Church (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011); *"At the Pure Fountain of Thy Word": Andrew Fuller as an Apologist* (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster, 2004); *The Spirit of God: The Exegesis of 1 and 2 Corinthians in the Pneumatomachian Controversy of the Fourth Century* (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 1994); *One Heart and One Soul: John Sutcliff of Olney, His Friends, and His Times* (Darlington, UK: Evangelical Press, 1994).

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IL: IVP Academic, 2008); *Believer's Baptism: Sign of the New Covenant in Christ* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2007); *Reclaiming the Center: Confronting Evangelical Accommodation in Postmodern Times* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004); and *Beyond the Bounds: Open Theism and the Undermining of Biblical Christianity* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2003).

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INTRODUCTION

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1

Sacred Theology and the Reading of the Divine Word

MAPPING THE DOCTRINE OF DEFINITE ATONEMENT

David Gibson and Jonathan Gibson

> It is very common for persons, when they find a subject much disputed, especially if it is by those whom they account good men, immediately to conclude that it must be a subject of but little consequence, a mere matter of speculation. Upon such persons religious controversies have a very ill effect: for, finding difficulty attending the coming at the truth, and, at the same time, a disposition to neglect it, and to pursue other things; they readily avail themselves of what appears, to them, a plausible excuse, lay aside the inquiry, and sit down and indulge a spirit of scepticism. . . . But, if all disputed subjects are to be reckoned matters of mere speculation, we shall have nothing of any real use left in religion.[1]

Introduction

The doctrine of definite atonement states that, in the death of Jesus Christ, the triune God intended to achieve the redemption of every person given to the Son by the Father in eternity past, and to apply the accomplishments of his sacrifice to each of them by the Spirit. The death of Christ was intended to win the salvation of God's people alone.

[1] Andrew Fuller, *Reply to the Observations of Philanthropos*, in *The Complete Works of the Rev. Andrew Fuller* (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1848), 233b. "Philanthropos" was the pseudonym of Daniel Taylor, a General Baptist theologian, with whom Fuller dialogued over the nature of Christ's atonement. We are grateful to Henri Blocher for this reference.

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Definite atonement says something essential about Christ's death, but it does not say everything there is to say. There are many aspects of the atonement which need to be affirmed alongside its definite intent and nature: the sufficiency of Christ's death for all; the free and indiscriminate proclamation of the gospel to all; God's love for the non-elect and his salvific stance toward a fallen world; the atonement's implications for the entire cosmos and not simply the church. Definite atonement does not exhaust the meaning of the cross.

Nevertheless, the essays in this book contend that definite atonement is at the heart of the meaning of the cross. Often referred to as "limited atonement" or "particular redemption," this is a doctrine of the Reformed churches which is cherished as a profound explanation of the death of Christ. By revealing the Trinitarian nature of Christ's cross-work, definite atonement advances a rich explanation of how his sacrificial death has an objective and Godward direction. It displays salvation, in all its parts, as the shared intention and accomplishment of Father, Son, and Spirit. It is definite atonement which shows us that our salvation is a divine achievement, rendering redemption fully accomplished by the payment of sin's penalty on our behalf by our Savior. These points combine to suggest that the doctrine is a fitting and necessary corollary of penal substitutionary atonement.

To tie definite atonement to penal substitution immediately exposes the debate which attends the doctrine. Some within evangelicalism would deny that the nature of the atonement is both penal *and* definite. The explanation offered at the start of this chapter views the atonement through the lens of election and therefore as intended to save a specific set of people; it suggests the atonement is complete as a saving act; and it contends that accomplishment is bound together with application in the divine will. From within and without evangelicalism and Reformed theology, each of these aspects of definite atonement has courted controversy.

Many Christians protest that definite atonement simply flies in the face of the clear teaching of the Bible: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son" (John 3:16); "[Jesus Christ] is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world" (1 John 2:2); "[Christ Jesus] gave himself as a ransom for all" (1 Tim. 2:6). In 1610, when forty-six followers of Jacob Arminius (1559/1560–1609) challenged the Reformed orthodoxy of their day on the doctrine of the atonement—and so set in motion

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events which would lead to the Synod of Dort and the classic statement of definite atonement—they cited John 3:16 and 1 John 2:2 as proof that "Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world, died for all men and for every man."[2] More than a century later, John Wesley preached that "the whole tenor of the New Testament" was "flatly contrary" to definite atonement and that the doctrine contained "horrible blasphemies." It presented Christ as "an hypocrite, a deceiver of the people, a man void of common sincerity" and represented God "as more cruel, false, and unjust than the devil!"[3] In the modern era, D. Broughton Knox speaks for many when he claims that definite atonement is very simply "a textless doctrine."[4] No biblical text states that Christ died *only* for his elect, but several texts state that he died for *all*. In vivid terms, "the doctrine of limited atonement truncates the gospel by sawing off the arms of the cross too close to the stake."[5]

Objections also arise beyond the exegetical domain. R. T. Kendall wonders "how many Christians would ever come to the view of limited atonement merely by reading the Bible." This is part of his claim that "the traditional doctrine of limited atonement is arrived at by logic and the need to look for it rather than straightforward reading of the Scriptures."[6] The suggestion is that this doctrine feeds off schemes of analytic precision foreign to the texture of the biblical narrative. For Karl Barth, the "grim doctrine of limited atonement follows logically from Calvin's doctrine of double-predestination,"[7] the implication being of course that what follows is as bleak as what precedes.

Claims about the distorting role of logic in definite atonement are common, but they are made in different ways. In the nineteenth century, John McLeod Campbell, a Church of Scotland minister, was deposed from the ministry on heresy charges for teaching that Christ made a universal

[2] Text in Gerald Bray, ed., *Documents of the English Reformation* (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co., 1994), 454. Cf. Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom. Volume III: The Evangelical Protestant Creeds*, 4th ed., revised and enlarged (1877; repr., Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2000), 546.

[3] John Wesley, "Sermon CXXVIII: 'Free Grace' (Rom. viii.32). Preached at Bristol in the year 1740," in *The Works of John Wesley. Volume VII: Second Series of Sermons Concluded. Also Third, Fourth, and Fifth Series* (London: Wesley Conference Office, 1872; repr., Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, n. d.), 380–83.

[4] D. Broughton Knox, "Some Aspects of the Atonement," in *The Doctrine of God*, vol. 1 of *D. Broughton Knox, Selected Works* (3 vols.), ed. Tony Payne (Kingsford, NSW: Matthias Media, 2000), 260–66 (263).

[5] Jack McGorman in personal conversation with 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), 107. For a response to this edited volume, see Matthew M. Barrett and Thomas J. Nettles, eds., *Whomever He Wills: A Surprising Display of Sovereign Mercy* (Cape Coral, FL: Founders Press, 2012), esp. David Schrock, "Jesus Saves, No Asterisk Needed: Why Preaching the Gospel as Good News Requires Definite Atonement" (77–119).

[6] R. T. Kendall, *Calvin and English Calvinism to 1649* (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster, 1997), viii.

[7] Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, ed. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance, 14 vols. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1956–1975), IV/1, 57 (hereafter *CD*).

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atonement and that assurance is of the essence of faith and necessary for salvation. In his work *The Nature of the Atonement* (1856), Campbell argued that Reformed theologians like John Owen and Jonathan Edwards wrongly began their thinking about the atonement with theological axioms such as "God is just."[8] By starting there, the coming of Christ into the world is viewed as the revelation of God's justice as Christ dies for the elect only and not the reprobate. The universal proclamation of the gospel to all and the revelation that "God is love" are both jettisoned.

As a result, according to Campbell, definite atonement disfigures the doctrine of God. When Owen and Edwards "set forth justice as a necessary attribute of the divine nature, so that God must deal with *all men* according to its requirements, they represent mercy and love as not necessary, but arbitrary, and what, therefore, may find their expression in the history of only *some men*."[9] God is necessarily just toward all, but only selectively loving toward some. All of this is pastorally disastrous, Campbell claimed, for definite atonement "takes away the warrant which the universality of the atonement gives to every man that hears the gospel to contemplate Christ with the personal appropriation of the words of the apostle, 'who loved me, and gave himself for me.'"[10] The charge here is that definite atonement destroys not just the grounds of appeal to the unconverted but also the grounds of assurance for the believer. Can I really be sure that Christ died for *me*?[11]

Campbell's work has proven influential. J. B. Torrance and T. F. Torrance both draw on his thinking to argue that definite atonement represents the worst kind of logical necessity in theology. J. B. Torrance argues that Christ vicariously took to himself the judgment facing all mankind. To deny this is "a sin against the incarnate love of God" and, for Torrance, parallel to the sin against the Holy Spirit.[12] This reveals the key issue in his objections: in the incarnation, Jesus Christ is united with *all* humanity, not merely the elect, so that everything he achieves in his atonement he necessarily achieves for all. Torrance explicitly develops Campbell's stress on

[8] John McLeod Campbell, *The Nature of the Atonement*, with a new introduction by J. B. Torrance (Edinburgh: Handsel, 1856; repr., Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996), 67.
[9] Ibid., 73 (emphasis added).
[10] Ibid., 71.
[11] Bruce L. McCormack, "So That He Might Be Merciful to All: Karl Barth and the Problem of Universalism," in *Karl Barth and American Evangelicalism*, ed. Bruce L. McCormack and Clifford B. Anderson (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011), 240, comments that if limited atonement were true, then "we would very likely despair of our salvation."
[12] J. B. Torrance, "The Incarnation and 'Limited Atonement,'" *EQ* 55 (1983): 83–94 (85).

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God as love in his innermost being: "love and justice are one in God, and they are one in *all* his dealings with his creatures, in creation, providence and redemption."[13]

The opening words of our chapter view the atonement through the lens of election, and for Torrance this would simply confirm our captivity to Aristotelian logic. It makes divine election prior to divine grace, and so incarnation and atonement are formulated simply as "God's way of executing the eternal decrees—thereby 'logically' teaching that Christ died only for the elect, to secure infallibly the salvation of the elect."[14]

It falls to individual writers throughout this book to engage with the substance of these arguments, as well as with other criticisms of definite atonement not outlined above. At this stage, however, we want to reflect on the purpose that such criticisms serve in our articulation of the doctrine.

Toward a Fresh Approach

Some reproaches of definite atonement misunderstand it, and others caricature it, but many are weighty and coherent, arising from a faithful desire to read Scripture wisely and to honor the goodness and love of God. Between them they touch on four interrelated aspects of the doctrine: its controversies and nuances in church history, its presence or absence in the Bible, its theological implications, and its pastoral consequences. This indicates that definite atonement has profound significance and a wide-ranging scope which requires a comprehensive treatment.

But the essays in this volume seek to do more than simply cover four distinct areas in which objections exist. Rather, our aim is to show that history, the Bible, theology, and pastoral practice combine together to provide a framework within which the doctrine of definite atonement is best articulated for today. They are not four separate windows through which we view the doctrine; rather, they are four mezzanine levels of the one house where definite atonement lives. By beginning with church history, we recognize that all contemporary reading of the Bible on the atonement is historically located. We are not hostages to past interpretations, nor do we need to pretend there is such a thing as *tabula rasa* (blank slate) exegesis. By carefully attending

[13] Ibid., 92. Torrance had earlier expressed his indebtedness to Campbell on these points in "The Contribution of McLeod Campbell to Scottish Theology," *SJT* 26 (1973): 295–311.
[14] Torrance, "Incarnation," 87. The views of J. B. Torrance and T. F. Torrance are engaged in detail in Robert Letham's chapter in this volume.

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to Scripture, we seek to submit ourselves to what God has said. By moving from exegesis to theology, we claim that the diverse biblical parts demand the patient work of synthesis to portray the theological whole. By concluding with pastoral practice, we aim to show the implications of the Bible's teaching for the church's ministry and mission. So while the discipline of doctrinal thinking is never less than the ordering of all that the Bible has to say on a given subject, it is also much more.

We suggest that articulating definite atonement is similar to articulating doctrines like the Trinity or the two natures of Christ. The approach needs to be biblical, but not biblicist. No one text "proves" definite atonement, any more than one text "proves" the Trinity or the communion of attributes in christology. In the case of those doctrines, numerous texts are studied and their implications synthesized and their key terms explored in their biblical contexts and historical usage so that, *taken as a whole*, the doctrines of the Trinity or the two natures describe "a pattern of judgment present *in* the texts."[15] With the unfolding of a coherent pattern, these doctrines emerge as the most compelling ways of naming the Christian God or understanding the person of Christ. Although no one text proves the doctrines, several texts teach their constituent parts.

So it is with definite atonement. It is not merely a "biblical" doctrine per se; nor is it a "systematic" construct based on logical or rationalist premises devoid of biblical moorings. Rather, definite atonement is a *biblico-systematic* doctrine that arises from careful exegesis of atonement texts and synthesis with internally related doctrines such as eschatology, election, union with Christ, christology, Trinitarianism, doxology, covenant, ecclesiology, and sacramentology. When both exegetical and theological "domains of discourse" are respected as such *and* taken together,[16] then reductionist objections to definite atonement lose their force and this reading of the meaning of the death of Christ emerges as profound and faithful. This biblico-systematic approach can be viewed pictorially from two angles.

First, doctrinal construction resembles the production of a *web*. The

[15] The phrase is part of David S. Yeago's contention that the Nicene theologians had warrant for their discernment that the Son is of one being with the Father. Cf. "The New Testament and the Nicene Dogma: A Contribution to the Recovery of Theological Exegesis," *Pro Ecclesia* 3.2 (1994): 152–64 (153). Much of Yeago's argument about exegetical and theological method could apply to the formulation of definite atonement.

[16] See D. A. Carson, "The Vindication of Imputation: On Fields of Discourse and Semantic Fields," in *Justification: What's at Stake in the Current Debates*, ed. Mark Husbands and Daniel J. Treier (Downers Grove, IL: Apollos, 2004), 46–80, esp. 47–50, on the importance of respecting "fields of discourse" when discussing theological doctrines such as sanctification, reconciliation, and Christ's imputed righteousness.

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doctrine of definite atonement arises from the attempt to hold together each canonical thread related to the atonement and the forming of the threads into a coherent framework of thought which faithfully maintains the parts and enables them to be seen in their truest light when viewed in relation to the whole. In much the same way that each strand of a spider's web is one thing when taken on its own, but another when viewed in its relation to other strands, so the different aspects of the doctrine of the atonement can be integrated to display powerful coherence. Kevin Vanhoozer captures the concept nicely in his suggestion that constructive theologies of the atonement should conceive of it as "triune covenantal mediation."[17] For him, three biblical strands (doctrine of God, covenant theology, christology) combine to form one theological web. This volume, in the sum total of its parts, aims to be just such a web.

Second, by showing the relation of historical, exegetical, theological, and pastoral issues to each other, this volume is a *map* to and through the doctrine of definite atonement. Some of the most enduring theological thinking that the church has produced over the centuries has understood itself to be a doctrinal map produced from the biblical terrain in order to be a guide to the biblical terrain. John Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion* is widely regarded as a kind of theological textbook, or even as a pre-critical systematic theology. But this does not quite capture Calvin's own intention. In an introductory note to the reader of the *Institutes*, Calvin writes,

> It has been my purpose in this labour to prepare and instruct candidates in sacred theology for the reading of the divine Word in order that they may be able both to have easy access to it and to advance in it without stumbling. For I believe I have so embraced the sum of religion in all its parts and have arranged it in such an order, that if anyone rightly grasps it, it will not be difficult for him to determine what he ought especially to seek in Scripture, and to what end he ought to relate its contents. If, after this road has, as it were, been paved, I shall publish any interpretations of Scripture, I shall always condense them, because I shall have no need to undertake long doctrinal discussions, and to digress into commonplaces. In this way the godly reader will be spared great annoyance and boredom, provided he approach Scripture armed with a knowledge of the present work, as a necessary tool.[18]

[17] Kevin J. Vanhoozer, "Atonement," in *Mapping Modern Theology: A Thematic and Historical Introduction*, ed. Kelly M. Kapic and Bruce L. McCormack (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012), 175–202 (201).
[18] John Calvin, "John Calvin to the Reader," in *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), 1:4–5.

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It is clear that Calvin proposes his *Institutes* to pave a road through the Scriptures on which others may travel as they read the same Scriptures. Notice Calvin does not say he intends his work to instruct theological candidates in doctrine. The *Institutes* is certainly a doctrinal text. But Calvin intends to instruct theological candidates for their "reading of the divine Word." Mined from the Bible, shaped by the Bible, the *Institutes* is a map for the Bible.[19]

Calvin's work illustrates how theological cartography functions and develops. It is not a conceptually alien guide to the Bible, nor is it meant to be a hermeneutical grid forced on top of the Bible. Where it functions well, a doctrinal map grows organically out of the biblical parts and enables a bird's-eye view of the canonical whole.[20] But it is always constrained by the very thing it plots. Further exegesis is always capable of adjusting the shape of the map. Renewed attention to knotty problems, carefully analyzed in the actual terrain and closely studied on any given map, should always be capable of reconfiguring the map and altering the route one takes for the way ahead.[21] This approach sets up a careful part-whole relationship, one in which the doctrine emerging from the texts is constantly examined against the texts to see if the developing whole is really consistent with the individual parts. Where the move to doctrinal synthesis is made too quickly, distortion occurs.

Take, for example, the issue of what it means for God to love the world (John 3:16). A. W. Pink's treatment of divine sovereignty in salvation goes awry with the suggestion that God's self-giving love for the "world" in John 3:16 refers to his love for the elect.[22] Such an interpretation not only assigns meaning to an individual word clearly different from what the text actually says, but the nature of God's love and the universal offer of Christ to all also warp under the weight of the paradigm. Similarly, Mark Driscoll and Gerry

[19] For extended treatments of the organic relationship between the successive editions of the *Institutes* and Calvin's preaching and biblical commentaries, see Stephen Edmondson, "The Biblical Historical Structure of Calvin's *Institutes*," *SJT* 59.1 (2006): 1–13; David Gibson, *Reading the Decree: Exegesis, Election, and Christology in Calvin and Barth* (London/New York: T. & T. Clark/Continuum, 2009), 17–27.

[20] Cf. Gerald Bray, "Scripture and Confession: Doctrine as Hermeneutic," in *A Pathway into the Holy Scripture*, ed. P. E. Satterthwaite and D. F. Wright (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994), 221–36.

[21] The web and map analogies allow this volume's claims to be heard as provisional, in the proper sense, rather than grandiose. To give one example, Stephen Wellum presents an argument for the priestly nature of Christ's atoning work which reflects new covenant theology understandings of the nature of covenant, election, and ecclesiology. His rich theological thinking leads the reader to see the reality of definite atonement in the Scriptures, but the particular route he takes through the biblical terrain is different from our own classically Reformed understanding of the nature of covenant, election, and ecclesiology. The book maps different routes to the same destination, and not all readers will want to travel each and every path in reaching the same goal. To be used as a tool, it is servant not master.

[22] A. W. Pink, *The Sovereignty of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1983), 204–205, 253–55. For Pink, "the love of God, is a truth for the saints only, and to present it to the enemies of God is to take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs" (200).

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Breshears understand definite atonement to entail a limiting of God's love to the elect. Arguing for "unlimited limited atonement, or modified Calvinism," they ask, "If the five-point Calvinist is right and no payment has been made for the non-elect, then how can God genuinely love the world and desire the salvation of all?"[23] For Pink, the effective provision of salvation for the elect requires a limitation of God's love to the elect; for Driscoll and Breshears, the effective payment of sin's penalty for all requires the expansion of God's love identically for all. In neither case are the several *different* ways in which the Bible depicts God's love allowed to stand together in relation to its different objects (his world, his people) and its different expressions (intra-Trinitarian, providential, universal, particular, conditional). For these writers a conception of the atonement either mandates, or is mandated by, a singular conception of God's love.[24]

Such doctrinal maps are misaligned with the biblical texts which create them. The move toward synthesis needs to be more patient and careful, more attentive to diverse strands of the biblical witness. Comprised of four sections, we hope this volume goes some way to meeting the need. The issue of integration is important enough for Henri Blocher's chapter to be devoted to it entirely. Of course, readers will want to turn to specific parts to focus on particular issues of interest, and each essay is a self-contained argument which can be read in this way. The overall effect of the project, however, is intended to be cumulative. Taken together, each essay within each section and then each section within the book offers a webbed framework of theological thinking which maps the study of definite atonement in the Bible.

Definite Atonement in Church History

Richard Muller suggests that a question belonging to the Patristic, medieval, and early modern Reformed church was "the meaning of those biblical passages in which Christ is said to have paid a ransom for all or God is said to will the salvation of all or of the whole world, given the large number of biblical passages that indicate a limitation of salvation to some, namely, to the elect or believers."[25] Not only does this identify the puzzle which the doctrine

[23] Mark Driscoll and Gerry Breshears, *Death by Love: Letters from the Cross* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008), 173.
[24] For a more satisfying approach, see Geerhardus Vos, "The Biblical Doctrine of the Love of God," in *Redemptive History and Biblical Interpretation: The Shorter Writings of Geerhardus Vos*, ed. Richard B. Gaffin (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1980), 425–57; and D. A. Carson, *The Difficult Doctrine of the Love of God* (Leicester, UK: Inter-Varsity Press, 2000).
[25] See Richard A. Muller, "Was Calvin a Calvinist?," in his *Calvin and the Reformed Tradition: On the Work of Christ and the Order of Salvation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012), 51–69 (60).

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of definite atonement seeks to address, but it also shows that historical matters are intimately connected to exegetical ones. As Barth put it, "church history is the history of the exegesis of the Word of God."[26]

The historical essays in this book, then, explore the question in significant moments in church history. They provide a survey of past approaches to definite atonement in the Bible, introduce us to key players in the debate, and send us on our way with awareness of how crucial terms have been defined and understood thus far. These essays create several compass points for the map, three of which can be highlighted here.

First, the competing terminologies of "Calvinist versus Arminian," so prevalent in popular debate about definite atonement, need to be set aside in favor of richer and more sophisticated understandings of the history of the doctrine. Even where the parameters are expanded to include the extra perspectives of, say, universalism and Amyraldianism, the reality is that viewing the subject through the lens of labels derived from prominent personal names in Reformation history soon introduces distortion.

On the one hand, sixteenth- and seventeenth-century debates on the atonement did not produce theological ideas and terminology *de novo* but relied on the tradition and sought to develop and apply it, albeit in contested ways, in the particular contexts of the early modern era. The journey from Patristic and medieval through Reformation and post-Reformation periods plotted in this section reveals that this is so. "Calvinism versus Arminianism" simply lobotomizes history. On the other hand, none of the major -isms ever existed for long as monolithic entities with only a single expression. J. C. Ryle once noted that "the absence of accurate definitions is the very life of religious controversy,"[27] and these essays prompt us to recognize distinct positions and nuances on the intent and scope of the atonement—Universalism, Semi-Pelagianism, Arminianism, Amyraldianism and variant approaches to Hypothetical Universalism—always in the service of disciplined theological thinking.[28]

Second, this careful approach to the history of definite atonement explains why the term "Calvinist" is largely absent from the volume's subse-

[26] Barth, *CD* I/2, 681.
[27] J. C. Ryle, *Knots Untied* (1878; repr., Moscow, ID: Charles Nolan, 2000), 1.
[28] Richard A. Muller, "Calvin on Christ's Satisfaction and Its Efficacy: The Issue of 'Limited Atonement,'" in his *Calvin and the Reformed Tradition*, 77 n. 22, argues that, "once the language is suitably parsed, there are at least six distinct patterns of formulation [of Christ's satisfaction] among the early modern Reformed."

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quent exegetical, theological, and pastoral treatments of the doctrine. Not only do the issues surrounding definite atonement massively predate the life and thought of John Calvin, there is no little irony involved in calling definite atonement a "Calvinist" doctrine when his own relationship to it—as all sides have to admit—is a matter of debate. More than this, it is now abundantly clear that the term expresses a reliance on the person which was as insulting to Calvin as it is historically misleading because it fails to account for his own location in a developing tradition.[29] Therefore each of the writers in the book works with a preference for the term "Reformed" or "Reformed theology," both for historical description and as the way of locating themselves within the particularist trajectory.[30]

It follows, thirdly, that this volume is not a presentation of "the five points of Calvinism" or a defence of the "TULIP" acronym widely used as a summary of the Canons of Dort and consequently of Reformed theology. It is not that there is no value to such language. But there can be a tendency to use such terminology as the soteriological map *itself*, without realizing that such terms simply feature as historical landmarks *on* the map.[31] The language emerged at particular points in time in particular contexts in response to particular challenges, and it is those underlying causes and perennial questions themselves that the historical essays attempt to probe. In the process, they lend weight to J. I. Packer's insight that, historically, the Reformed faith cannot be reduced to simply five points, while at the same time, theologically, the five points stand or fall together as simply one point: *God saves sinners*.[32]

Definite Atonement in the Bible

If historical debates about the atonement arose from certain biblical texts, so also our own contribution requires the same engagement with Scripture as the *norma normans* (norming norm) of the discussion.

[29] Carl R. Trueman, "Calvin and Calvinism," in *The Cambridge Companion to John Calvin*, ed. Donald K. McKim (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 226, suggests that the term "Calvinism" is "of no real use to intellectual history." See Raymond A. Blacketer's chapter in the present volume for some of the literature on this issue.
[30] It is the contention of this book that while, historically, Hypothetical Universalism and Amyraldianism came under the umbrella of the Reformed community in the seventeenth century, these positions are, exegetically and theologically, the awkward cousins in the family. This is not to remove them from Reformed orthodoxy, but it is to apply the Reformational principle of *semper reformanda* to the debate, seeking to allow *sola Scriptura* to act as the final authority.
[31] Cf. Richard A. Muller, "How Many Points?," *CTJ* 28 (1993): 425–33.
[32] J. I. Packer, "Introductory Essay," in John Owen, *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ* (London: Banner of Truth, 1959), 5–6.

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There currently exists something of an exegetical impasse over texts which, on the one hand, seem to point to the particularity of the atonement, and texts which, on the other hand, imply a universal atonement. The biblical essays in this volume do not claim to constitute a silver bullet to achieve satisfactory consensus on why all these passages should be put together to affirm definite atonement. Indeed, the chapters simply work inductively through the relevant material and attempt to provide convincing readings of important texts on their own terms. Doubtless debate will still continue.

Nevertheless, the exegetical chapters depict a particular relationship between individual atonement texts and an overall theological framework which we hope may deepen the discussion. We contend that this framework is not imposed on the parts, but rather the parts themselves provide the wide-angle lens through which they invite us to view them appropriately. Two points explain what we mean.

First, we do not begin with contested texts but with the unfolding plot line of redemptive history, so that the progression of the chapters matches the biblical narrative. This is a very simple approach, but by itself already begins to expose the fact that doctrines such as election are not theological categories abstractly connected to theologies of atonement by predetermined Reformed hermeneutical agendas. Rather, election is a redemptive-historical category as much as a dogmatic one. God's choosing of a people to belong to him, so formative in and of the Pentateuch, clearly circumscribes the Bible's unfolding theology of sacrifice and atonement such that election is always an expression of God's grace shaping his covenantal dealings with his people. The exegesis of significant texts which then follows,[33] along with discussion of contested issues (the meanings of "many," "all," and "world"), naturally locates them within this context.

Second, some of the exegetical parts themselves indicate the content of the theological whole. Analysis of Ephesians 1:3–14 and 2 Timothy 1:9–11 reveals that biblical soteriology is painted on an eschatological canvas that consists of four key "moments" of salvation: redemption predestined, redemption accomplished, redemption applied, and redemption consummated. These two texts offer a panoramic view of salvation, and, because of their

[33] Isaiah 53; Matthew 20:28; Mark 10:45; Matthew 26:28; Luke 22:20; John 3:16; Romans 5:9–11, 12–21; 6:1–11; 8:1–15, 29–34; 14:15; 1 Corinthians 8:11; 2 Corinthians 5:14–15, 19; Galatians 1:4; 4:4–6; Ephesians 1:3–14; 5:25–27; Colossians 1:20; 1 Timothy 2:4–6; 4:10; 2 Timothy 1:9–11; Titus 2:11–14; 3:3–7; Hebrews 2:9; 2 Peter 2:1; 1 John 2:2; 4:10, 14; Revelation 5:9–10.

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scope, they unavoidably point toward overall theological frameworks. They help establish a part-whole hermeneutical dialogue whereby we learn to read each of the different parts of the biblical narrative as enveloped within the Bible's own way of looking at its whole story. Our salvation is eternal in origin and inexorably eschatological in movement; it is predestined, accomplished, applied, and consummated, and several biblical texts shine light on aspects of this spectrum. For example, Titus 3:3–7 unfolds two distinct moments of salvation in history (Christ's appearing, and the Holy Spirit's act of regeneration), along with a further anticipatory moment of salvation in the future (unending life with God). The same can be said of Romans 5:9–11 and 8:29–34, with the addition of another moment of salvation (God's foreknowing and predestining). What becomes clear from all these texts is that eschatology is not merely the "goal" of soteriology, "but also encompasses it, constituting its very substance from the outset."[34]

Definite Atonement in Theological Perspective

John Webster has recently argued that the chief task of Christian soteriology is to explain how God is savingly at work in the affliction of Jesus. A dogmatic account "stretches both backwards and forwards from this central event. It traces the work of salvation back into the will of God, and forward into the life of the many, who by it are made righteous."[35] The exegetical essays in the volume reveal that Webster is correct to identify this bidirectional flow in the biblical texts, and the theological and pastoral essays are taken up with expounding both movements. What more can be said about the "pre-history" of the history of salvation in the purposes of the triune God? What does it mean for our salvation to be the work of Father, Son, and Spirit? What does it mean for Jesus to be crushed Servant and interceding High Priest? What kind of sacrifice and payment for sin did he offer? The theological chapters in this volume coalesce to make four key points, each of which shape the map in different ways.

First, the saving work of God is indivisible. This expresses in a single statement the four moments of salvation outlined above,[36] and it has profound

[34] Richard B. Gaffin, *Resurrection and Redemption: A Study in Paul's Soteriology*, 2nd ed. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1987), 59.

[35] John B. Webster, "'It Was the Will of the Lord to Bruise Him': Soteriology and the Doctrine of God," in *God of Salvation: Soteriology in Theological Perspective*, ed. Ivor J. Davidson and Murray A. Rae (Farnham, Surrey, UK: Ashgate, 2011), 15–34 (15).

[36] Ibid., 19–20, construes the overall shape of soteriology in three unified moments: "the eternal purpose of the perfect God; the establishment of that purpose in the history which culminates in the ministry of the incarnate Son; and the consummation of that purpose in the Spirit."

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theological implications. Each of these four moments is distinct, never collapsed into the others, yet never separated from them either. In moment one, our salvation in Christ has been predestined; in moment two, the whole of our salvation has been procured and secured by Christ, even though his redemption is yet to be experientially applied by his Spirit (moment three) and eschatologically consummated in his presence (moment four). None of the moments of salvation belong to separate theological tracks, as if Christ's redemptive work is somehow disconnected from the election of his people. In God's saving work there is unity in distinction and distinction in unity. God's purposes in Christ are one. Such a perspective helps to avoid the error of collapsing the moments of redemption applied into redemption accomplished (as seen in Karl Barth's theology) or the error of fracturing the bond between these moments (as seen in presentations of universal atonement).

Second, the saving work of God is circumscribed by God's electing grace and purpose. That is, God's redemptive love and divine initiative shape and guide the other moments of salvation. God's love toward his own in election and predestination is the fountainhead from which salvation flows. In this regard, there is an inescapable *ordo* within the divine decree.[37] The argument set forth in this book is that, before time, the triune God planned salvation, such that the Father chose a people for himself from among fallen humankind, a choice that would involve the sending of his Son to purchase them and the sending of his Spirit to regenerate them. In the mind of God, the choice logically preceded the accomplishment and the application of Christ's redemptive work, and so in history it circumscribed them both. Louis Berkhof asks, "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."[38]

This divine *ordo* within the decree, the biblical basis for which is presented in this volume, calls into question attempts that would render election non-determinative for salvation, or that would place the decree of election after the decree of redemption, or that would subordinate God's electing love for his elect at the expense of his universal love for all humankind—problems that attend Semi-Pelagianism and Arminianism, Amyraldianism, and Hypo-

[37] For a helpful overview of the various positions on the order of decrees, see B. B. Warfield's table at the end of Donald Macleod's chapter in this volume.
[38] Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1958), 394 (emphasis original).

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thetical Universalism, respectively. In the Scriptures, God's electing love is given the most distributive emphasis—it is no mere "afterthought."[39]

Third, the saving work of God has its center in union with Christ. The personal union between Christ and believers encompasses all four moments of salvation. John Murray succinctly encapsulates the different aspects of this mysterious union with Christ:

> Union with Christ is the central truth of the whole doctrine of salvation. All to which the people of God have been predestined in the eternal election of God, all that has been secured and procured for them in the once-for-all accomplishment of redemption, all of which they become the actual partakers in the application of redemption, and all that by God's grace they will become in the state of consummated bliss is embraced within the compass of union and communion with Christ.[40]

Thus, we may never think of Christ's accomplished redemption in abstraction from the union with his people at the moment of election; nor may we detach Christ's redemptive accomplishment—and his people's dying and rising with him—from the vital union with Christ that occurs through faith, or from the union yet to be experienced when believers are finally in Christ's presence. As Sinclair Ferguson points out,

> If we are united to Christ, then we are united to him at all points of his activity on our behalf. We share in his death (we were baptized into his death), in his burial (we were buried with him in baptism), in his resurrection (we are resurrected with Christ), in his ascension (we have been raised with him), in his heavenly session (we sit with him in heavenly places, so that our life is hidden with Christ in God), and we will share in his promised return (when Christ, who is our life, appears, we also will appear with him in glory).[41]

It follows that if the moments of redemption are bound together as distinct-yet-inseparable acts of God *in Christ*, then certain conceptions of the *nature* and *efficacy* of the atonement begin to emerge.

Within certain schemes of thought, Christ's sacrifice secures the salvation of no one in particular, since its efficacy is contingent upon something outside the atonement, namely, faith—either synergistic faith (as in forms of

[39] Vos's critique of Amyraldianism ("Biblical Doctrine of the Love of God," 456).
[40] John Murray, *Redemption Accomplished and Applied* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1955), 210.
[41] Sinclair B. Ferguson, "The Reformed View," in *Christian Spirituality: Five Views of Sanctification*, ed. Donald L. Alexander (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1989), 58.

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Semi-Pelagianism and Arminianism)[42] or God-elected, monergistic faith (as in Amyraldian Hypothetical Universalism). These accounts introduce contingency into the atonement, which stands in sharp contrast to the efficacy of the cross, argued for here. The saving power of the cross does not "depend on faith being added to it; its saving power is such that faith flows from it."[43] And precisely because Christ does not win a hypothetical salvation for hypothetical believers, but rather a real salvation for his people, the effectiveness of the atonement flows from its penal substitutionary nature.[44] At issue here is the precise meaning of the cross as *punishment* for sin, and the two complementary essays by Garry Williams offer fresh and rigorous accounts which serve to deepen significantly our understanding of penology. We suggest that the very nature of the atonement is radically redefined when its scope is extended to be for all without exception. Packer states the case exactly:

> if 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.[45]

It is union with Christ which secures the efficacy of Christ's atonement, because his death is an "in-union-with" kind of death. Those for whom Christ died cannot but be affected by his death. Union with Christ also defines the "some" for whom his death is effective. It rescues us from an impoverished view of Christ's death as a mere "instead of" penal substitutionary atonement for all, and instead presents us with a *representative* penal substitutionary atonement: Christ dies as *Someone* for *some* people. He dies as King for his people, as Husband for his bride, as the Head for his body, as Shepherd for his sheep, as Master for his friends, as Firstborn for his brothers and sisters, as

[42] This synergistic faith occurs through either (a) equal cooperation between God and man's *free* will (as in Semi-Pelagianism), or (b) equal cooperation between God and man's will which is *already freed* as a result of prevenient grace (as in classic Arminianism). In either case, the human free/freed will can resist God's grace; conversely, man's choice is ultimately decisive for faith. For this important distinction, see Roger E. Olson, *Arminian Theology: Myths and Realities* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006), 158–78, esp. 164–66.

[43] Packer, "Introductory Essay," 10.

[44] John Owen, *Salus Electorum, Sanguis Jesu: Or The Death of Death in the Death of Christ*, in *The Works of John Owen*, ed. W. H. Goold, 24 vols. (Edinburgh: Johnstone & Hunter, 1850–1853; repr. Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1967), 10:235, put it well: "Christ did not die for any upon condition, *if they do believe*; but he died for all God's elect, *that they should believe*, and believing have eternal life."

[45] J. I. Packer, "What Did the Cross Achieve? The Logic of Penal Substitution," in *Celebrating the Saving Work of God: Collected Shorter Writings of J. I. Packer*, *Volume 1* (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster, 2000), 85–123 (116).

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the Second and Last Adam for a new humanity.[46] This is why the particularity of the atonement cannot be introduced at the point of application,[47] for we were united to Christ in his death and resurrection *prior* to appropriating the benefits of his atonement by faith—which means that the scope of redemption accomplished and applied are necessarily coextensive.

Fourth, the saving work of God in Christ is Trinitarian. The efficacious and indivisible work of God centered in union with Christ ensures that Christ died for a definite group of people; the Trinitarian shape of this soteriology allows us to go further and say that that is the very *intention* of his death.

The Trinity orchestrates the symphony of salvation in all its movements: the Father elects and sends, the Son becomes incarnate and dies, the Spirit draws and vivifies. But while their works are distinct they are not independent: the Father elects in Christ, the incarnate Son offers himself on the cross through the eternal Spirit to the Father, and the Spirit is sent by the Father and the Son to draw and seal the elect. Grounded in the mutual indwelling of their persons, the Father, Son, and Spirit together serve the shared goal of our salvation. "The Spirit serves the Son by applying what he accomplished, and the Son serves the Spirit by making his indwelling possible. Both Son and Spirit, together on their twofold mission from the Father, serve the Father and minister to us."[48]

If, however, as some might argue, Christ's atoning work on the cross is intended for everyone without exception, while its application is limited only to those who believe by the power of the Spirit, then, we contend, a fatal disjunction is introduced. The disjunction is not just conceptual; it is also personal. Aspects of the one union with Christ are disconnected, redemption accomplished is separated from redemption applied, and the divine persons are cleaved from each other in their saving intentions. The Son dies for all, yet the Father elects only some and the Spirit seals only some.[49] We suggest, however, that the nature of the Trinitarian operations envelops a definite construal of the atonement as part of the bigger picture of God's glorification of himself:

[46] Henri A. G. Blocher, "The Scope of Redemption and Modern Theology," *SBET* 9.2 (1991): 102.
[47] Contra Knox, "Some Aspects of the Atonement," 265.
[48] Fred Sanders, *The Deep Things of God: How the Trinity Changes Everything* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 149.
[49] The disjunctions in a universal atonement are many. "It introduces conflict between the purpose of God, who desires the salvation of all, and the will or power of God, who actually either will not or cannot grant salvation to all. It gives precedence to the person and work of Christ over election and covenant, so that Christ is isolated from these contexts and cannot vicariously atone for his people, since there is no fellowship between him and us. It denigrates the justice of God by saying that he causes forgiveness and life to be acquired for all and then fails to distribute them to all" (Herman Bavinck, *Sin and Salvation in Christ*, vol. 3 of *Reformed Dogmatics*, ed. John Bolt, trans. John Vriend, 4 vols. [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006], 469–70).

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> For when God designed the great and glorious work of recovering fallen man and the saving of sinners, to the praise of the glory of his grace, he appointed, in his infinite wisdom, two great means thereof. The one was *the giving his Son for them*, and the other was *the giving his Spirit unto them*. And hereby was way made for the manifestation of the glory of the whole blessed Trinity; which is the utmost end of all the works of God.[50]

Hypothetical Universalists attempt to avoid the accusation of Trinitarian disharmony by arguing that each person of the Trinity wills both limitation and universalism on different levels, thus eliminating any division between them.[51] Their position, however, is not without problems for Trinitarian theology, since it introduces a division within the will of *each* person as they seek to perform salvation. The position must concede that, at the universal level, the person and work of Christ are divided as he performs atonement for everyone without reference to his person, roles, or offices. He therefore dies on the one hand as a *representative* substitute for his people, yet on the other hand as a *mere* substitute for people whom he knows the Father never elected and for whom he will never send his Spirit to draw to himself. The hypothetical scheme not only suggests that God has two economies of salvation running in tandem, but it inadvertently presents us with a confused Christ. Such a position runs counter to the biblical description of Christ's work and person (and his offices) being interrelated, and his substitutionary death being representatively performed in union with his people.

Setting issues such as the intent, nature, and efficacy of the atonement in a full-orbed Trinitarian context allows us to understand the relationship between them. Just as the efficacy of the atonement flows from its penal nature, so we may say in turn that its nature flows from its divine intent. The Servant is crushed and suffers and is made to be a guilt offering *because* it was the will of the LORD (Isa. 53:10). Intending to save all those given to him by the Father, the Son offers himself through the Spirit as an atoning sacrifice and achieves the salvation of his people (Heb. 9:14).

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[50] John Owen, Πνευματολογια *or, A Discourse Concerning the Holy Spirit*, in *Works*, 3:23 (emphasis original).

[51] For example, John Davenant, "A Dissertation on the Death of Christ, as to its Extent and special Benefits: containing a short History of Pelagianism, and shewing the Agreement of the Doctrines of the Church of England on general Redemption, Election, and Predestination, with the Primitive Fathers of the Christian Church, and above all, with the Holy Scriptures," in *An Exposition of the Epistle of St. Paul to the Colossians*, trans. Josiah Allport, 2 vols. (London: Hamilton, Adams, 1832 [English trans. of 1650 Latin ed.]), 2:398 and 2:542, argued that the Son had a universal intent that "conformed to the ordination of the Father," and yet, at the same time, Christ affirmed the particular will of God when he died, for how else could Christ have "exhibited himself as conformed to the eternal appointment of his Father, if, in his saving passion, he had not applied his merits in a peculiar manner infallibly to effect and complete the salvation of the elect?"

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This helps to explain why the terms "definite atonement" or "particular" or "effectual redemption" are to be preferred above "limited atonement," which is commonly used for the doctrine. Not only is there an innate negativity attached to the language of limitation which obscures what the doctrine consistently includes (such as the sufficiency of Christ's death for all or the cosmic implications of the atonement), it also misleads given that other views of the atonement necessarily "limit" it in some way. John Murray is surely right: "Unless we believe in the final restoration of all mankind, we cannot have an unlimited atonement. On the premise that some perish eternally we are shut up to one of two alternatives—a limited efficacy or a limited extent; there is no such thing as an unlimited atonement."[52] In this book, we commonly adopt the term "*definite* atonement," since the adjective "definite" is able to convey that the atonement is specific in its *intention* (Christ died to save his people) and effective in its *nature* (it really does atone).[53]

Definite Atonement in Pastoral Practice

The aim of any doctrinal map must be to show the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ as revealed in the pages of Scripture. It is the aim of this volume to show the vital place that a definite atonement occupies in just such an account of God's glory. And it is that overall ambition that grounds our understanding of the connection between definite atonement and pastoral care of God's people. The three chapters that conclude the volume are not themselves essays in pastoral practice; rather, they seek to provide the deep foundations upon which pastoral practice may build and flourish. For if the final end of salvation is "the reiteration of God's majesty and the glorification of God by all creatures,"[54] then our greatest human need is to give God glory in gratitude and praise and to structure our creaturely life by the divine wisdom of the crucified Messiah.

His atoning death and resurrection provide the incarnate Son of God

[52] John Murray, *The Atonement* (Philadelphia: P&R, 1962), 27.
[53] Similarly, referring to the "extent" of the atonement is less than ideal given that the word can qualify different aspects of the atonement: its intention, accomplishment, or application. As Robert Letham, *The Work of Christ* (Leicester, UK: Inter-Varsity Press, 1993), 225, argues, "extent" gives the impression that the atonement is being calculated mathematically or spatially. "Translated into debate on the atonement, the focus becomes that of *number*: how many, or what proportion benefit from Christ's death? Did Christ atone for the sins of all or simply for those of the elect? Did he atone for the sins of all in a provisional sense? Or, from quite another direction, is the atonement of limited or unlimited value? If the idea of *intent* is the central theme, however, the principal point at stake becomes that of *purpose* or *design*. In short, the issue crystallises into the place of the atonement in the overall plan of God for human redemption. The spatial and mathematical yields to the teleological."
[54] Webster, "It Was the Will of the Lord," 20.

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with the full display of the glory of God (Phil. 2:5–11), and so provide the people of God with the deepest of reasons for the praise of God. A definite understanding of Christ's atonement flows from seeing the successive stages of his humiliation and exaltation as unified parts of a complete accomplishment.[55] The glory Jesus receives as the Son of God in power in his exaltation is his *because* he has *triumphed* over sin and death and hell and has lost none of those whom the Father gave to him (John 17). As our Great High Priest, he is seated *because* he has *opened* a new and living way to God and by his sacrifice "has made perfect forever those who are being made holy" (Heb. 10:14, NIV). The glory of God shines with radiance in the cross of Christ because from his sin-bearing death stems the re-creation of the world and the reconciliation of all things to God (Col. 1:20). The atonement secured salvation, a world made new, and eternal *shalom*.

It is often alleged that in the pastoral domain the weaknesses of definite atonement become most acute. This is not so. We contend that, precisely because it is a definite atonement that gives greatest glory to God, so it is this understanding of the atonement that affords church and world the greatest good. The drama of the Son-King who was promised the nations as his inheritance (Ps. 2:8) adds motivation for the evangelization of the peoples of the world. The Lamb has *purchased* people for God (Rev. 5:9–11). Conversely, the "unevangelized" become an uncomfortable "stone in the shoe" for advocates of a universal atonement: Christ has provided a *de jure* salvation for all but which *de facto* is not accessible to all and, inadvertently, ends up in reality limited in its scope. Definite atonement ensures that what is offered in the proclamation of the gospel is the actual accomplishment of redemption. To herald the gospel is to herald a *Savior* who has by his blood *established* the covenant of grace which all are called to join. Proponents of a general, universal atonement cannot in fact, if being consistent, maintain a belief in the sincere offer of salvation for every person. All that can be offered is the opportunity or the possibility of salvation—and that not even to all in reality.

An atonement symbolized by the Good Shepherd who lays down his life for his sheep provides pastoral riches of motivation, joyful obedience, and

[55] Bavinck explains the structure of this unity in *Sin and Salvation in Christ*, 323–482, and beautifully explores its cosmic scope (see esp. 473–74). Interestingly, he includes his discussion of the atonement under the exaltation of Christ, not his humiliation. For Bavinck, when Christ rose from the dead and ascended to heaven "he took with him a treasure of merits that he had acquired by his obedience," chief among them the reconciliation which he won in his atoning death (447). Reconciliation is therefore a gift given by the risen and ascended King to his people (450).

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perseverance for pastor and people alike. Atonement which radiates from the union of Christ with his people and which is set within the wider paradigm of the triune operations cannot but give assurance to the believer. If God—Father, Son, and Spirit—has worked indivisibly for us in Christ, who then can be against us? Models of the atonement that make salvation merely possible fail to provide this robust assurance and comfort. Assurance of salvation necessarily becomes detached from the secure source of what Christ has done and lodges itself in the unstable realm of our response. Atonement has been made, yes—but knowledge of it sufficient to calm our fears and assure us of our adoption is grounded in human action, not divine. We are salvation's decisive donors.

If John Piper is correct in his concluding essay, that the death of Christ is the climax of the glory of God's grace, which is the apex of the glory of God, then the issues of the intent and nature of the atonement are not subjects of "little consequence" or "matters of mere speculation"—they touch the very nerve center of the glory of God. He is not glorified when his salvation is reduced to a mere opportunity. He is not glorified when his redemption of lost sinners is abridged to being simply a possibility. God is glorified when he is seen and savored and enjoyed for what he actually bestows: *saving* grace. In this glorification, we his creatures are made whole and healthy, worshiping and happy, and commissioned as his ambassadors in his world—*soli Deo gloria*.

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