

## Scriptural Particularism

### [R. B. Kuiper](#)

R.B. Kuiper (1886-1966) taught theology at Westminster Theological Seminary for twenty years, served Calvin Theological Seminary as president for seven, and pastored churches for seventeen. He was the author of nine books and innumerable articles. This particular article is taken from his book, *For Whom Did Christ Die? A Study of the Divine Design of the Atonement* (Baker: Grand Rapids, MI, 1959).

The particularist view of the divine design of the atonement was taught by such great theologians and preachers, among others, as Augustine, Wycliffe, Luther, Calvin, Knox, Jonathan Edwards, Whitefield, Spurgeon, Charles Hodge, Archibald Alexander Hodge, Caspar Wistar Hodge, Thornwell, Kuyper, Bavinck, Warfield and Machen. It was upheld over against Arminianism by the Synod of Dort, which was constituted by representatives of most of the Reformed churches in Europe, and it is taught in all the Reformed creeds, notably in the greatest of them all, the Westminster Confession of Faith, as an essential element of that system of doctrine which is known as the Reformed faith. Today it is upheld by all consistently Reformed theologians and by those churches which are Reformed or Presbyterian not only in name but in reality.

Briefly stated, the particularist view of the divine design of the atonement is that God purposed by the atonement to save only the elect and that consequently all the elect, and they alone, are saved. Says the Westminster Confession:

As God hath appointed the elect unto glory, so hath he, by the eternal and most free purpose of his will, foreordained all the means thereunto. Wherefore they who are elected, being fallen in Adam, are redeemed by Christ, are effectually called unto faith in Christ by his Spirit working in time in due season; are justified, adopted, sanctified, and kept by his power through faith unto salvation. Neither are any other redeemed by Christ, effectually called, justified, adopted, sanctified, and saved but the elect only.<sup>1</sup>

Again it says:

---

<sup>1</sup> III, 6.

The Lord Jesus, by his perfect obedience and sacrifice of himself, which he through the eternal Spirit once offered up unto God, hath fully satisfied the justice of his Father; and purchased not only reconciliation, but an everlasting inheritance in the kingdom of heaven, for all those whom the Father hath given unto him . . . . To all those for whom Christ hath purchased redemption, he doth certainly and effectually apply and communicate the same.<sup>2</sup>

The Canons of Dort teach:

This was the sovereign counsel and most gracious will of God the Father, that the quickening and saving efficacy of the most precious death of His Son should extend to all the elect, for bestowing upon them alone the gift of justifying faith, thereby to bring them infallibly to salvation: that is, it was the will of God that Christ by the blood of the cross, whereby he confirmed the new covenant, should effectually redeem out of every people, tribe, nation and language all those, and those only, who were from eternity chosen to salvation, and given to Him by the Father; that He should confirm upon them faith, which, together with all the other saving gifts of the Holy Spirit, He purchased for them by His death; should purge them from all sin, both original and actual, whether committed before or after believing; and having faithfully preserved them even to the end, should at last bring them, free from spot and blemish, to the enjoyment of glory in his own presence forever.<sup>3</sup>

In this chapter that doctrine will be set forth primarily and positively in the light of the Word of God and incidentally by way of comparison with both unrestricted and inconsistent universalism. It will be argued that the glory of the Reformed doctrine of the divine design of the atonement is twofold. It does justice to all the Scriptural data bearing on the subject and, in doing that, it highly exalts the intrinsic value of the atonement. An elucidation of these claims is in order.

### **The Word of God Honors the Particular Atonement**

It was already shown that the particularistic view of the design of the atonement is in harmony with the universalistic passages of Holy Scripture. It remains to be shown that this view is expressly taught by Scripture. When an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph of Nazareth and told him not to be afraid to take Mary as his wife, that which was conceived in her being of the Holy Ghost, the angel added: "And she shall bring forth a son and thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save *his people* from their sins" (Matt. 1:21). In the allegory of the good shepherd

---

<sup>2</sup> VIII, 5, 8.

<sup>3</sup> Second Head of Doctrine, 8.

Christ foretold that He would give and lay down His life for *His sheep* (John 10: 11, 15). Speaking to His disciples and referring to them He said: “Greater love hath no man than this, that he lay down his life for *his friends*” (John 15:13). Paul declared to the Ephesian elders that Christ purchased *the church* with His own blood (Acts 20:28), and he reminded all the believers at Ephesus that Christ “loved *the church* and gave himself for it” (Eph. 5:25). And when Paul wrote to the Christians at Rome that God “spared not his own Son but delivered him up for *us all*” (Rom. 8:32), he was referring, according to both the immediately preceding and the immediately following context specifically to *the elect*. All of the statements just quoted are explicit in character. In another passage Christ teaches by inescapable implication that He gave His life for none other than those whom the Father had given Him. In His high-priestly prayer He said: “I pray not for the world, but for those whom thou hast given me” (John 17:9). Indisputably Christ’s sacrificial work and His intercessory work are both priestly activities and therefore simply two aspects of His atoning work. Therefore the scope of the one cannot be wider than the scope of the other. If Christ prayed exclusively for those whom the Father had given Him, He also bought only these with His blood.

Both unrestricted universalism and inconsistent universalism deny certain unequivocal teachings of Scripture. For example, the former denies the plain Scriptural teaching of the eternal punishment of the wicked, and the latter denies, whether admittedly or unadmittedly, the equally plain Scriptural teaching of the sure efficacy of the divine purposes. These views stand or fall with those denials. No such thing can be said of particularism. In order to maintain itself it does not need to deny any truth of Scripture. Positively expressed, the particularistic view of the design of the atonement fits perfectly into the system of doctrine contained in Holy Writ. Reference to a few of the outstanding teachings of Scripture will illustrate that fact.

The particularistic view of the design of the atonement does full justice to the sovereignty of God. God’s purposes cannot be thwarted by man. God’s plans are not contingent on the consent of man. God’s counsel is sure to stand and He is certain to do all His pleasure. Therefore all those whom He designed to save by the death of His Son will be saved, not one excepted. Those whom God designed to save and those who will be saved are identical. Speaking of God’s purpose to save the elect by the blood of the cross, the Canons of Dort assert:

This purpose proceeding from everlasting love toward the elect, has from the beginning of the world to this day been powerfully accomplished, and will henceforth continue to be accomplished, notwithstanding all the ineffectual opposition of the gates of hell.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> Second Head of Doctrine, 9.

The particularistic view of the design of the atonement harmonizes perfectly with the Scriptural teaching of the covenant of redemption. From eternity the persons of the Holy Trinity planned the salvation of a multitude whom no man can number. An essential element in that plan was the giving by the Father to the Son of all who ultimately would be saved. Repeatedly the Saviour spoke of those whom the Father had given Him. In His high-priestly prayer He distinguished sharply between them and the world and clearly identified them with the heirs of eternal life. Said He: "Thine they were, and thou gavest them me . . . . I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me, for they are thine . . . . Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one as we are. While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name; those whom thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, save the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled" (John 17:6, 9, 11, 12). At this point Calvin comments:

Judas is excepted, and not without reason; for, though he was not one of the elect and of the true flock of God, yet the dignity of his office gave him the appearance of it; and, indeed, no one would have formed a different opinion of him, so long as he held that exalted office.

He substantiates this comment with the fact that Judas is here called "the son of perdition." "By these words," says Calvin,

Christ means that his ruin, which took place suddenly before the eyes of men, had been known to God long before; for *the son of perdition*, according to the Hebrew idiom, denotes a man who is ruined, or devoted to destruction.<sup>5</sup>

That Calvin's point is well taken appears from the unmistakable and most emphatic teaching of Christ elsewhere that not one of those whom the Father has given Him can possibly perish. Speaking of the sheep for whom He would give His life, the Saviour said: "And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand" (John 12:28, 29). Again the Saviour declared: "This is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day" (John 6:39). The Son as the Servant of Jehovah (Isa. 53: 11) was commissioned by the Father to bear the iniquities of those whom the Father had given Him, to lay down His life for them, and to accomplish fully for them the work of salvation which the Father had given Him to do (John 10:18; 17:4).

---

<sup>5</sup> *Commentary on the Gospel according to John*, loc. cit.

The particularistic view of the design of the atonement is a necessary corollary of the Scriptural doctrine of election. If God chose out of the lost race of humanity certain persons in Christ before the foundation of the world and predestined them unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself (Eph. 1:4, 5), it cannot but follow that God designed that those whom He had chosen in Christ would be saved by Christ. In his *Systematic Theology* Charles Hodge brings the history of Christian doctrine strongly to bear on this point. Says he:

It never was denied that Christ died specially for the elect until the doctrine of election itself was rejected. Augustine, the follower and expounder of St. Paul, taught that God out of his mere good pleasure had elected some to everlasting life, and held that Christ came into the world to suffer and die for their salvation. He purchased them with his own precious blood. The Semi-Pelagians, in denying the doctrine of election, of course denied that Christ's death had more reference to one class of men than to another. The Latin Church, so long as it held to the Augustinian doctrine of election, held also to Augustine's doctrine concerning the design and objects of Christ's death. All through the Middle Ages this was one of the distinctive doctrines of those who resisted the progress of the Semi-Pelagian party in the Western Church. At the time of the Reformation the Lutherans, so long as they held to the one doctrine held also to the other. The Reformed, in holding fast the doctrine of election, remained faithful to their denial of the doctrine that the work of Christ had equal reference to all mankind. It was not until the Remonstrants in Holland, under the teaching of Arminius, rejected the Church doctrine of original sin, of the inability of fallen man to anything spiritually good, the sovereignty of God in election and the perseverance of the saints, that the doctrine that the atonement had a special reference to the people of God was rejected. It is, therefore, a matter of history that the doctrine of election and the Augustinian doctrine as to the design of the work of Christ have been inseparably united." Hodge goes on to say: "As this connection is historical, so also is it logical. The one doctrine necessarily involves the other. If God from eternity determined to save one portion of the human race and not another, it seems to be a 'contradiction to say that the plan of salvation had equal reference to both portions; that the Father sent his Son to die for those whom He had predetermined not to save, as truly as, and in the same sense that He gave Him up for those whom He had chosen to make the heirs of salvation."<sup>6</sup>

The particularistic view of the design of the atonement is in perfect agreement with the Scriptural teaching of the special love of God. Occasionally one hears it

---

<sup>6</sup> II. 547f.

said by Calvinists that God is good and benevolent to all the children of men but that He loves only the elect. According to Scripture, however, it may be said without the slightest hesitation that God loves all men. Did not Jesus say: "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven . . . . Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" (Matt. 5:44, 45, 48)? But what Scripture does not teach is that God loves all men equally. On the contrary, it tells us that His love for the elect differs qualitatively from His love for others. Now it is to "that peculiar, mysterious, sovereign, immeasurable love which passes knowledge, of which his own people, the Church of the first-born whose names are written in heaven, are the objects"<sup>7</sup> that the gift of Christ as Redeemer is time and again referred. "Greater love hath no man," said Jesus, "than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John 15: 13). "God commendeth his love toward us," said Paul, "in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8). Speaking specifically of the elect, the same apostle said: "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not *with* him also freely give us all things?" And in almost the next breath he exclaimed: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" (Rom. 8:32, 35) The apostle of love said: "Hereby perceive we the love of God because he laid down his life for us" (I John 3:16), and "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (I John 4:10).

The particularistic view of the design of the atonement is an integral part of that teaching which constitutes the very heart of special revelation — salvation by grace. The five points of Calvinism are often ridiculed as expressions of the narrowest kind of dogmatism. The truth is that they are nothing else than an undiluted presentation of the precious Scriptural doctrine of salvation by grace. Nothing is taught more emphatically in Holy Writ than that salvation is by the grace of God and by it alone. And yet there is no doctrine of Scripture which the church in the course of its history has found more difficult to maintain. Always there were influential leaders in the church who in one way or another sought to compromise this doctrine, and times without number the church gave heed to their siren songs. But beyond all doubt salvation by grace is the teaching of Isaiah, of Jesus, of Paul, of Peter, of the whole of Scripture. When the early church lost sight of it, Augustine rediscovered it. When the church of the Middle Ages lost sight of it, Luther and Calvin rediscovered it. When the churches of the Reformation were sorely tempted by Arminianism to depart from it, the Synod of Dort and the Westminster Assembly again confirmed it. And when more recently several Reformed and Presbyterian churches relegated it to the limbus of outdated and outmoded dogmas, God raised up such men as the Hodges, James H. Thornwell, Benjamin B. Warfield, Abraham Kuyper, and Herman Bavinck, not merely to defend it, but to exalt it. The doctrine of salvation by grace is the heart not only of Calvinism, but of Scripture and of Christianity. With it

---

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 549.

Christianity stands or falls. Every departure from it, no matter how small, is a departure from Christianity. Next to the Bible itself the clearest and purest expression of this doctrine is found in the five points of Calvinism. And they are just so many links of a chain, dependent on one another and supporting one another. God in His sovereign good pleasure from eternity elected certain persons in Christ to everlasting life. By nature the elect, like all other men, are totally depraved sinners who cannot save themselves. In order to save the elect God sent His Son into the world to purchase redemption for them by His precious blood and perfect obedience. By the atonement Christ merited for the elect the Holy Spirit, who effectually regenerates them and works the gift of saving faith in their hearts. That God's chosen, whom Christ has redeemed and to whom the Holy Spirit has applied redemption, should perish is entirely out of the question. Those are the five points of Calvinism. Together they constitute one doctrine — that of salvation by sovereign grace.

### **The Particular Atonement Exalts the Saving Work of Christ**

The glory of the particularistic doctrine of the divine design of the atonement lies in its consistently Scriptural character. Small wonder that its glory also lies in its exaltation of the value of the atonement. For the value which Scripture ascribes to the atonement is high indeed.

Inconsistent universalism, like unrestricted universalism, seeks to convey the impression that it exalts the atonement far more than does Calvinism. It boasts of having an atonement for all while Calvinism is said to have an atonement for some only. It glories in a universal, a limitless, atonement in contrast with the limited atonement of the Reformed faith. But such boasting and glorying are vain.

The notion is prevalent that, while according to inconsistent universalism a great many will be saved, according to Calvinism few will enter through the gates into the eternal city. But that notion is absurd. According to both Calvinism and inconsistent universalism, whether represented by Barth or by Arminianism, all who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ will be saved and no others. On this point there is no difference. No less absurd is the charge, sometimes brought against Calvinism, that it teaches by implication, if not explicitly, that a truly repentant sinner may fail of salvation because he does not happen to be numbered among the elect, whose redemption Christ purchased on Calvary. It goes altogether without saying that all the elect, and only the elect, will truly repent of their sins and seek salvation in Christ, for repentance is a fruit of election as well as a benefit of the atonement. And it is the unqualified teaching of Calvinism that genuine repentance never comes too late. The Saviour's assurance, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out" (John 6:37) is a favorite text with Calvinistic preachers. The Calvinist rejoices in the Biblical attestation that, when all the elect shall have been gathered in, they will constitute a throng which no man can number and which will be as countless as the grains of sand on the

seashore and as the stars that sparkle in the black-blue firmament of night. Says Shedd in his *Dogmatic Theology*:

In saying that Christ's atonement is limited in its application . . . it is meant that the number of persons to whom it is effectually applied is a fixed and definite number. The notion of definiteness, not of smallness, is intended . . . . The circle of election and redemption must indeed be a circumference, but not necessarily a small one. No man is redeemed outside of the circle. All the sheep must be within the fold. But the circle is that of the heavens, not of the earth.<sup>8</sup>

In his sermon, already referred to, on II Corinthians 5:14, 15, Machen calls attention in his own inimitably tender way to the comforting character of the Reformed doctrine of the design of the atonement and contrasts it with the gloominess of the teaching of Arminianism on the same subject. He begins: "People say that Calvinism is a dour, hard creed. How broad and comforting, they say, is the doctrine of a universal atonement, the doctrine that Christ died equally for all men there upon the cross! How narrow and harsh, they say, is this Calvinistic doctrine — one of the 'five points' of Calvinism — this doctrine of the 'limited atonement,' this doctrine that Christ died for the elect of God in a sense in which He did not die for the unsaved!" He continues: "But do you know, my friends, it is surprising that men say that. It is surprising that they regard the doctrine of a universal atonement as being a comforting doctrine. In reality it is a very gloomy doctrine indeed . . . Ah, if it were only a doctrine of a universal salvation, instead of a doctrine of a universal atonement, then it would no doubt be a very comforting doctrine; then no doubt it would conform wonderfully well to what we in our puny wisdom might have thought the course of the world should have been. But a universal atonement without a universal salvation is a cold, gloomy doctrine indeed. To say that Christ died for all men alike and that then not all men are saved, to say that Christ died for humanity simply in the mass, and that the choice of those who out of that mass are saved depends upon the greater receptivity of some as compared with others — that is a doctrine that takes from the gospel much of its sweetness and much of its joy. From the cold universalism of that Arminian creed we turn ever again with a new thankfulness to the warm and tender individualism of our Reformed Faith, which we believe to be in accord with God's holy Word. Thank God we can say every one, as we contemplate Christ upon the Cross, not just: 'He died for the mass of humanity, and how glad I am that I am amid that mass,' but:

'He loved me and gave Himself for me; my name was written from all eternity upon His heart, and when He hung and suffered there

---

<sup>8</sup> II, 474.

on the Cross He thought of me, even me, as one for whom in His grace He was willing to die.<sup>9</sup>

Calvinism does indeed hold that the number of those whom God designed to save by the death of His Son is limited, but it does not limit the intrinsic value of the atonement. This is a fact of the greatest moment. Inconsistent universalism seriously restricts the efficacy of the atonement. Arminianism teaches that the atonement does no more than make salvation possible; and, as was already pointed out, by unashamedly making the realization of salvation contingent on the will of man, it teaches in effect that the atonement makes salvation an unrealizable possibility. Calvinism, on the contrary, insists that the atonement actually saves all whom it was intended to save. Their doctrine of the divine design of the atonement being what it is, neither the Arminian nor Barth can take that position without concluding that all men will be saved. Therefore the evangelical Arminian rejects that position without hesitation. And Barth, leaning heavily toward unqualified universalism and yet not ready to embrace it, cannot accept that position. The conclusion is inescapable that of the three only the Calvinist teaches a truly effective atonement.

What does Calvinism mean when it insists that the atonement actually saves? By His passive obedience, that is to say, by His obedience manifest in His suffering,<sup>10</sup> particularly in His death on the cross, Christ fully atoned for the sins of the elect; consequently there is no condemnation for them, nor will there be in the future. Not only that, but by His active obedience, His life in perfect harmony with the law of God, He merited for the elect the positive benefit of eternal life. Thus by His passive and active obedience, which are inseparable and together may be said to constitute the atonement, Christ wrought full salvation for the elect. It must not be thought, however, that the elect are saved automatically. In bringing them to salvation God deals with them, not as so many things, but as rational and moral beings; that is, as free agents. Therefore He requires of them faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. However, the atonement guarantees that they will receive the gift of faith. Such ethical benefits of salvation as regeneration and faith are fruits of the atonement as well as is the forensic benefit of justification. In other words, by the atonement Christ merited for the elect the Holy Spirit, who imparts to them the new birth and saving faith. Still further, also the ethical benefits of sanctification and perseverance are guaranteed by the atonement and flow directly from it as their fountainhead. The same is true of ultimate glorification. All that is implied in the Pauline asseveration: "Whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified . . . . He that spared not his own

---

<sup>9</sup> *God Transcendent and Other Sermons*, p. 136.

<sup>10</sup> When theologians describe Christ's obedience manifest in His suffering as "passive," they have in mind the Latin *pati*, to suffer, and do not mean to convey the thought that in His suffering Christ was merely acted upon and was not active. He was active in His very death, for He "laid down His life" (I John 3:16).

Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" (Rom. 8:30, 32). The expression "all things" does not embrace everything in the universe but, in harmony with the context, "the whole of what He has to bestow in accordance with the aim of the surrender of Jesus, . . . the collective saving blessings of His love shown to us in Christ."<sup>11</sup> In brief, the atonement not only renders the salvation of all the elect completely certain, but the realization of their salvation in all its parts was *procured* by the atonement. Says the Westminster Larger Catechism: "Christ, by his mediation, hath procured redemption, with all other benefits of the covenant of grace."<sup>12</sup>

Commenting on the statement by Arminian Henry C. Sheldon of Boston University: "Our contention is for the universality of the opportunity of salvation, as against an exclusive and unconditional choice of individuals to eternal life,"<sup>13</sup> Warfield remarks:

There is to be noted in this declaration, 1) the conscious stress on universalism as the characteristic note of Wesleyanism and 2) the consequent recognition that all that God does looking toward salvation is to afford an opportunity of salvation; so that what is actually contended for is not that God does not save some only but that he really saves none, — he only opens a way of salvation to all and if any are saved they must save themselves. So inevitable is it that, if we assert that all that God does looking to salvation he does to and for all alike and yet that not all are saved, we make all that he does fall short of actual salvation: no one must receive more than he who receives the least.<sup>14</sup>

In sharp contrast with that view of the design of the atonement stands the Reformed view that God by the atonement designed to save and actually does save all who ultimately are saved.

In reference to the popular notion that all men are entitled to "an equal chance" at salvation, Warfield says:

Shall we not fix it once for all in our minds that salvation is the right of no man; that a 'chance' to save himself is no 'chance' of salvation for any; and that, if any of the sinful race of man is saved, it must be by a miracle of almighty grace, on which he has no claim, and, contemplating which as a fact, he can only be filled with

---

<sup>11</sup> Meyer's *Commentary on the New Testament*, loc. cit.

<sup>12</sup> Question 57.

<sup>13</sup> *System of Christian Doctrine*, 1903, p. 417.

<sup>14</sup> *The Plan of Salvation*, p. 99.

wondering adoration of the marvels of the inexplicable love of God?<sup>15</sup>

That miracle of almighty grace is the atonement.

The same scholarly divine draws the line of demarcation between Calvinism and Arminianism sharply when he asserts:

The issue is indeed a fundamental one and it is closely drawn. Is it God the Lord that saves us, or is it we ourselves? And does God the Lord save us, or does he merely open the way of salvation, and leave it, according to our choice, to walk in it or not? The parting of the ways is the old parting of the ways between Christianity and autosoterism. Certainly only he can claim to be evangelical who with full consciousness rests entirely and directly on God and on God alone for his salvation.<sup>16</sup>

According to the particularistic view of the design of the atonement, the atonement not merely makes salvation possible but actual; and that is another way of saying that the sinner is not saved by himself but by God, and by God alone. That is Calvinism not only, but that is of the very essence of Christianity. Arminian universalism is a departure, and a serious one, from Christianity. Particularism is consistent Christianity.

In the foregoing paragraphs the particular design of the atonement was contrasted primarily with Arminian universalism. There was good reason for so doing, for historically the Reformed doctrine of the design of the atonement acquired its most precise formulation in the crucible of the Arminian controversy in Holland. Not everything that was said is applicable to Barthian universalism. For instance, the charge of "autosoterism" does not apply to Barthianism as it does to Arminianism. According to Arminianism saving faith is not a gift of God but an act of the free will of man of which even the unregenerate is capable. That makes man his own saviour. According to Barth faith is indeed a human act but, prior to that, a gift sovereignly bestowed by the Holy Spirit.<sup>17</sup> Salvation, then, belongs to the Lord. At this precise point Barth subscribes to the Biblical doctrine of salvation by grace, and that, no doubt, is one reason for his speaking repeatedly of "the triumph of grace" in his theology. Yet the fact remains that Barthianism, like Arminianism, does violence to the sovereign love and the loving sovereignty of God manifest in the atonement, by withholding assent to the proposition that the atonement saves all without exception whom God purposed to save by it. That, too, is a significant departure from the Reformed faith and, it must be said, from Christianity.

---

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 101f.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 108.

<sup>17</sup> *Die Kirchliche Dogmatik*, IV, I, 826ff.

Nor may it be forgotten that in important respects Barth departs much farther from the Scriptural doctrine of the atonement than does evangelical Arminianism. Beyond all doubt, evangelical Arminianism teaches a vicarious atonement; whether the atonement according to Barth is vicarious in the historic sense of that term is, as was already pointed out, highly questionable. Evangelical Arminianism teaches that Christ's sacrifice on the cross appeased the wrath of God against sin; Barth holds, as does theological liberalism, that God did not need to be, and was not, reconciled to sinners by the death of His Son, but they were reconciled to God. Evangelical Arminianism is completely certain that not all men will be saved and therefore it definitely rejects unqualified universalism; Barth has strong leanings toward unqualified universalism and admits with reluctance that some will be lost. And Barth's rejection of the Arminian error of foreseen faith as the ground of election does not prove that he holds a higher view of election than does Arminianism. In a most important respect his view is lower. For, although according to both Barth and Arminianism not all will be saved whom God designed to save by the death of His Son, yet Arminianism insists that all whom God *predestined* to eternal life will be saved, and to that position Barth does not hold consistently. In other words, historic Arminianism teaches an election which is not universal but unalterable; Barth teaches an election which is universal but not unalterable. Here Arminianism is on Scriptural ground, Barth is not.

This article is provided as a ministry of [Third Millennium Ministries](#). If you have a question about this article, please [email](#) our *Theological Editor*. If you would like to discuss this article in our online community, please visit our [Reformed Perspectives Magazine Forum](#).

### **Subscribe to Reformed Perspectives Magazine**

RPM subscribers receive an email notification each time a new issue is published. Notifications include the title, author, and description of each article in the issue, as well as links directly to the articles. Like RPM itself, *subscriptions are free*. To subscribe to [Reformed Perspectives Magazine](#), please select this [link](#).