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John Owen's Case for Particular Atonement

(This post was originally written for a **section** in **chapter 8** of the 1689 Baptist Confession.)

INTRODUCTION

Dr. John Owen's work titled "*The Death of Death in the Death of Christ*" is, by the admission of many Calvinists, the most extensive work on the doctrine of Limited Atonement, or better named, Particular/Definite or Atonement/Redemption. Therefore, it is beneficial for us to take a brief look at his case for Particular Atonement over against Universal Atonement. Dr. Owen is aware and acquainted with the material of the opposing position and he interacts with them and answers their objections. He is not writing against caricatures of the opposing side but has researched the materials and arguments of the opposing side and, in my opinion, utterly refutes their arguments.

Almost everyone who has any reasonable knowledge of the debates concerning limited or unlimited atonement must have heard of Owen's trilemma, which we have presented **above**. The trilemma is really forceful, but it is merely *one* argument out many more from Dr. Owen's arsenal. The trilemma is not his only argument for Particular Redemption. But it may be an accurate summary of his case. He argues each of his points biblically. For a good summary of his arguments see **here**.

Dr. Owen's book is divided into four books and various chapters dealing with the issues related to the atonement.

1. Book 1 (8 chapters) deals with the purpose of the Trinity in the design of the atonement.
2. Book 2 (5 chapters) deals with the effects and application of the work of Christ.
3. Book 3 (11 chapters) presents 16 arguments against Universal Atonement and for Definite Atonement.
4. Book 4 (7 chapters) answers various interpretations and objections to Particular Atonement.

Note: All biblical references in the quotes are modernized (e.g. John i. 1 to John 1:1 for the ease of reading and the recognition by the Scripture Tag).

The General Purpose of Christ's Death

First, he enquires about the "*general of the end [i.e., purpose] of the death of Christ*" (**book I, chap. 1**). What does the big picture of Scripture say about the death of Christ? What is indisputable there about it? He divides this question into two sections:

1. "that which his Father and himself intended *in* it" (**book I, chap. 1**):
    a. Luke 19:10 For the Son of Man came to seek and to **save the lost**."
    b. 1Tim. 1:15 The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to **save sinners**, of whom I am the foremost.
    c. Matt. 20:28 even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to **give his life as a ransom for many**."
    d. Gal. 1:4 who gave himself for our sins to **deliver us from the present evil age**, according to the will of our God and Father,
    e. Eph. 5:25-27 Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, 26 that he might **sanctify her**, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, 27 so that he might **present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle** or any such thing, that she might be **holy and without blemish**.
    f. Titus 2:14 who gave himself for us to **redeem us from all lawlessness** and to **purify for himself a people** for his own possession who are zealous for good works.

After citing and alluding to the above-cited passages, Owen says:

> Thus clear, then, and apparent, is the intention and design of Christ and his Father in this great work, even what it was, and towards whom, — namely, to save us, to deliver us from the evil world, to purge and wash us, to make us holy, zealous, fruitful in good works, to render us acceptable, and to bring us unto God; for through him "we have access into the grace wherein we stand" Rom. 5:2.[1]

1. "that which was effectually fulfilled and accomplished *by* it" (**book I, chap. 1**):
    a. Reconciliation:
        i. Rom. 5:10 For if while we were enemies we were **reconciled to God by the death of his Son**, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.
        ii. 2Cor. 5:18-19; Eph. 2:14-16.
    b. Justification:
        i. Rom. 3:23-25 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 and are **justified by his grace** as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, 25 whom God put forward as a **propitiation by his blood**, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins.
        ii. Heb. 9:12; Gal. 3:13; 1Pet. 2:24.
    c. Sanctification:
        i. Heb. 13:12 So Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to **sanctify the people** through his own blood.
        ii. Heb. 1:3; 9:14; 1John 1:7; Eph. 1:3; 5:25-27; Phil. 1:29.
    d. Adoption:
        i. Gal. 4:4-5 But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, 5 to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive **adoption as sons**.
        ii. Eph. 1:14; Heb. 9:15.

The obvious question now is: "Is God able to accomplish that which He intends?" We see that by the blood-shedding of Christ, the Father intends for the Son to be an actual ransom (Matt. 20:28) and to *actually* save, and not *try* to save sinners

(Luke 19:10; 1Tim. 1:15). He is said to deliver us from "the present evil age" and not to *try* to deliver us by the self-giving of Himself for our wickedness (Gal. 1:4). Well…did He or did He not? Not only do we see the intention of the atonement in Scripture, but also its effects and application, which correspond to the intention of God in it.

The Work of the Trinity

Secondly, he enquires about the intention of the Persons of the Blessed Trinity in the work of redemption. What did the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit plan to accomplish through the death of Christ? This is still how many Calvinists at the present time argue for Definite Redemption (i.e. James White). What effect did God want the atonement to have, and is He able to bring it to pass?

- God the Father (**book I, chap. 3**):
    1. "The sending of his Son into the world for this employment":
        - John 3:16-17; 5:37; 10:36; Rom. 8:3-4; Gal. 4:4-5; Isa. 19:20; 48:16.
        - An authoritative imposition of the office of Mediator:
            - **Purpose**: Ps. 2:7-8; 110:1, 4; Heb. 1:2; Rom. 1:4; 8:29.
            - **Inauguration**: John 5:22; Acts 2:36; Heb. 3:1-6; Dan. 9:24 ["anointing of the most Holy"]; Matt. 3:15-17; Heb. 10:5; 1:3; 2:7-8; Matt. 28:18; Phil. 2:9-11.
        - "entering into covenant and compact with his Son concerning the work to be undertaken":
            - **The Father's promise to assist the Son in the accomplishment of redemption:** Isa. 63:8-9; Zech. 13:7; Isa. 63:2-3 and 53:4-5; 49:2-3; Ps. 2:2, 4, 6; 118:22-23; Matt. 21:42; Isa. 28:16; Matt. 21:44.
            - **The Father's promise of "a happy accomplishment and attainment of the end of his great undertaking":** Isa. 49:5-6, 6-12; 53:10-12.
    2. "laying the punishment due to our sin upon him":
        - Zech. 13:7; Matt. 26:31; Isa. 53:4, 6, 10; 2Cor. 5:21; Gal. 3:13.
- God the Son (**book I, chap. 4**):
    1. The "*agent* in this great work":
        - Heb. 5:6-7; Matt. 3:17; John 4:34; 6:38; 17:4; Luke 2:49.
    2. The Incarnation:
        - John 1:14; Gal. 4:4; 1Tim. 3:16 KJV; Heb. 2:13-14.
    3. His Sacrifice:
        - Heb. 9:14; Rev. 1:5; Eph. 5:25-26; Dan. 9:26 KJV ["but not for himself"]; John 17:19; Rom. 5:6; John 1:29; Isa. 53:7; John 10:17-18; Gal. 2:20; Eph. 5:2; 1Pet. 2:24; Heb. 1:3; Matt. 26:28.
    4. His Intercession:
        - Ps. 2:8; John 14:2-3; Heb. 9:11-12, 24; 1John 2:1-2; John 17:9; 11:42; Heb. 7:25; Rom. 8:33-34; John 17:24; Heb. 10:14.
- God the Holy Spirit (**book I, chap. 5**):
    1. The Incarnation of the Son:
        - Matt. 1:18; Luke 1:35.
    2. The Sacrifice of the Son:
        - Heb. 9:14; Rom. 1:4; 1Pet. 3:18.
    3. The Resurrection of the Son:
        - Rom. 8:11.

Some of the proof-texts provided may be strange and that's why they have to be read as Dr. Owen explains them and thereby we will be able to see the reasonableness of using these references. I have tried to provide most if not all the references he provides.

We see that in this inquiry, Dr. Owen tries to establish the purpose and work of the Trinity in the plan of redemption. Thereby we can establish what the purpose of God is. Each Person of the Trinity has a unique role in the work of redemption, to the glory of the Triune God.

Sacrifice and Intercession

In chapters 7-9 of the first book, Dr. Owen deals with a most important and neglected point about this discussion, namely, the relation of the intercession of Christ to His sacrifice. For whom does Christ intercede? We Calvinists argue that He only intercedes for the elect and that His intercession is perfect and accomplishes that which is its purpose. The problem for the non-Calvinist position of the atonement is that His intercession is explicitly connected to His sacrifice. In other words, those for whom Christ died are the same group for whom He intercedes. This is problematic as it obvious that not everyone is or will be enjoying the benefits of redemption. There are those who will eternally be damned and not taste of redemption. Moreover, there are those who have never heard of Christ's sacrifice (supposedly) on their behalf. In their case, therefore, the sacrifice of Christ is meaningless and cannot be applied to them apart from faith.

When Owen speaks of Christ's offering, or as he calls it by a not-so-common word—oblation—he has in mind both the passive and active obedience of Christ. He writes:

> By his *oblation* we do not design only the particular offering of himself upon the cross an offering to his Father...but also his whole humiliation, or state of emptying himself, whether by yielding voluntary obedience unto the law, as being made under it, that he might be the end thereof to them that believe, Rom. 10:4, or by his subjection to the curse of the law, in the antecedent misery and suffering of life, as well as by submitting to death, the death of the cross: for no action of his as mediator is to be excluded from a concurrence to make up the whole means in this work.[2] (**book I, chap. 6**)

His intercession is not only His appearance before the Father on our behalf for the applying of the benefits of redemption, but also His exaltation and resurrection.

> Neither by his *intercession* do I understand only that heavenly appearance of his in the most holy place for the applying unto us all good things purchased and procured by his oblation; but also every act of his exaltation conducing thereunto, from his resurrection to his "sitting down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, angels, and principalities, and powers, being made subject unto him."[3] (**book I, chap. 6**)

The resurrection is essential to His exaltation and therefore also to His intercession. If He had not risen, then our faith is vain (1Cor. 15:13-14), we would be still in our sin (1Cor. 15:17), and we would be miserable (1Cor. 15:19). The resurrection plays an essential part in our justification (Rom. 4:25) as it is also the means whereby God blesses us (Acts 3:26).

The Particularity of Christ's Intercession

Dr. Owen readily admits that the *oblation* (offering) and *intercession* of Christ are distinct acts, yet they are not to be separated. They are not to be separated because...

1. Both have the goal of redeeming the people of God and bringing many sons to glory;
2. "the object of the one is of no larger extent than the object of the other; or, for whom Christ offered himself, for all those, and only those, doth he intercede"[4] (**book I, chap. 6**);
3. The oblation of Christ is the foundation of His intercession.

Owen cites several passages to the effect that the oblation and intercession are interconnected, chief among those and most conclusive, in my opinion, is Romans 8:33-34. But let us take a look at the other references first.

Isaiah 53:11-12 says:

> Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied; **by his knowledge shall the righteous one**, my servant, make many to be **accounted righteous**, and he shall **bear their iniquities**. 12 ?Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he **bore the sin of many**, and **makes intercession** for the transgressors.

The Lord Christ is prophesied to "bear their iniquities" which becomes the ground of "mak[ing] many to be accounted righteous" (v. 11). The Lord poured His soul to death and thereby "bore the sin of many", which is succeeded by "mak[ing] intercession for the transgressors" (v. 12), namely, the same ones for whom His soul was poured out. We should also not

forget v. 10 in this regard in which the Suffering Servant is assured that "he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand." He receives assurance from the Father that He will see His spiritual offspring, namely, those whose sins He bore and for whom He makes intercession.

Romans 4:25 declares:

> who was **delivered up for our trespasses** and **raised for our justification**.

The same "our" for whose trespasses the sinless Savior was delivered up and the same "our" for whose justification He rose. But it is most evident that not all are justified because "not all have faith" (2Thess. 3:2), which is the means of justification (e.g. Rom. 5:1). In this passage, we see that His sacrifice is closely connected with our justification, which will be bestowed on the elect thanks to His intercession before the Father, at the time that God had decreed. Those who still hold to Universal Atonement must place a great disconnect in this passage between His self-giving for our trespasses and His resurrection for our justification. In the non-Calvinistic scheme, He was delivered for the trespasses of all people everywhere, but He was raised up for the justification of a smaller group.

Romans 8 is one of the strongest places where the Doctrines of Grace are taught. Romans 8 lays the foundation for Romans 9. We must understand these chapters together and in the larger context of which has become before these chapters, obviously. Romans 8:32-34 says:

> He who did not spare his own Son but **gave him up for us all**, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? 33 Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is **God who justifies**. 34 Who is to condemn? Christ **Jesus is the one who died**—more than that, who was **raised**— who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is **interceding for us**.

This passage is used for many purposes. To comfort believers, to argue that none who believe will ever perish, to show the indestructibility of the golden chain of redemption, and so on. Now we want to use this passage to establish the connection between the sacrifice of Christ and His intercession.

The ground for no one being able to bring any charge against God's elect is laid in the verse before, namely, that God gave His Son "for us all" (v. 32). This furnishes the foundation on which every believer may say, "since Christ died for me and I am in Christ, 'There is therefore now no condemnation' for me (Rom. 8:1)." Furthermore, the reason that no charge can be established is that the Judge of all the earth has already declared us righteous in His sight. Likewise, no one is able to condemn us because Christ died for us and thereby satisfied the wrath of God against our sin (Rom. 3:23-26; 2Cor. 5:21). A substitute received the punishment and became a curse on our behalf (Gal. 3:10-13). Therefore, the justice of God was satisfied on behalf of those for whom this payment or ransom was made.

Not only did Jesus die and that His death was substitutionary for those for whom it was made, but He is also the One Whom death could not hold—He was raised! The primal fruit of His resurrection which Paul mentions in this passage is His intercession "for us." Following upon His death and resurrection comes His work of intercession. Notice also that the group for whom the Father gave up the Son, namely, the "us", is the same group who are justified, for whom Christ died and for whom Christ is interceding at the present time!

This is another chain, like the one in Romans 8:29-30, which is not to be broken without breaking the meaning of the passage. Just like in the golden chain of redemption, those who are foreknown (i.e., fore-loved and fore-chosen), are the same group who are predestined, called, justified and glorified. None of those who are foreknown gets to miss any part of the chain. In the same way, the chain in Romans 8:33-34 is that of Christ dying for the elect, the same group in Romans 8:29-30, Christ rising for the elect and Christ interceding for the elect. Owen writes on this passage:

> That he died for *all* and intercedes only for *some* will scarcely be squared to this text, especially considering the foundation of all this, which is (verse 32) that love of God which moved him to give up Christ to death for us all; upon which the apostle infers a kind of impossibility in not giving us all good things in him; which how it can be reconciled with their opinion who affirm that he gave his Son for millions to whom he will give neither grace nor glory, I cannot see.[5] (**book I, chapter 7**)

Dr. Owen obviously does not neglect to take a look at the book of Hebrews in connection to this subject, as it largely deals with the priestly office of our Savior and His priestly work on our behalf. We have tried to exegete some passages from the book of Hebrews in connection to the atonement **below**. The reader is referred to the **chapter**[6] for the rest of the passages

which he surveys (e.g. Heb. 7:24-25; 9:11-13; 10:19-22).

The Fruits of Christ's Intercession

The fruits of Christ's intercession is the application of the work of redemption to those for whom it was intended. It is the granting of the gift of faith, it is the calling, justification, adoption, sanctification and all the countless graces of God poured out upon us.

In Romans 8:32, Paul argues from the death of Christ that God will certainly "with him [Christ] graciously give us all things". Since God went to such ways to demonstrate His glory and redeem us, what doubt can we have that He will not give us all good things which He intended for His glory and our good? This is in the immediate context of Christ's intercession. Christ intercedes before the Father on behalf of those for whom He offered Himself, that the benefits of His work may be applied to them. That through the intercession of Christ, God does indeed graciously give us all things that we need.

In John 17, the great High Priestly Prayer, the Lord Christ intercedes before the Father on behalf of those who were given to Him, in direct opposition to "the world" (John 17:9), i.e., those who were *not* given to Him. Right before offering His great sacrifice, the Lord Jesus, our great High Priest, finds it necessary to explicitly say that His intercession is certainly not for the world, but only those given to Him. In the same chapter, Christ's prays...

- that His own may be kept in the Father's name and from the evil one (John 17:11, 15);
- for the sanctification of His church in the truth of God's Word (John 17:17, 19);
- for the union of Christ's universal church in the Trinity (John 17:20-23);
- for them seeing His glory and the love which the Father has for the Son (John 17:24);
- that the love which the Father has for the Son may be in them (John 17:26).

Hebrews 7:25 tells us that Christ "is able to **save to the uttermost** those who draw near to God through him, **since he always lives to make intercession for them**." The basis for the fact that He is able to save them to the uttermost, or "save completely" (NET), "save forever" (NASB), "save to the very end" (YLT), is grounded upon His intercession. Those who draw near to God, draw near to God through Him (cf. John 14:6). But we know that it is God Himself who draws us to Himself through Christ (John 6:44). In this way, everyone who draws near to Christ, Christ is able and *willing* to save to the uttermost—to the very end and thus accomplish the will of the Father.

Christ does much more than we ask. Just as He prayed for Peter (Luke 22:31-32), so likewise He prays for the faith of His elect. In short, Christ prays that the fruits of His death may be applied to all His people.

The Infallibility of Christ's Intercession

The foundation on which Christ's intercession is built is upon the fact that He always does the will of God. His mission from the Father was to accomplish the work which He had given Him (John 17:4) and that the Lord Christ certainly did. He came not to do His own will, but the will of the Father (John 6:38). What is the Father's will for Him? "And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day" (John 6:39). Basically, that He should save them and keep them to all eternity. Well, the question now is: "Is Christ able to accomplish that which the Father wills for Him?"

To answer this question negatively is blasphemy. To entertain the thought that our Christ could in any way, shape or form disobey the will of the Father is not worthy of His glory. He laid down His prerogative as God and became like us, to obey the will of the Father and accomplish that work which was given to Him to do. That work, our Lord says, that He certainly accomplished (John 17:4). Furthermore, we have a clear word from the Savior as to the attitude of the Father towards Him. The Lord says:

> John 11:42 I knew that **you always hear me**, but I said this on account of the people standing around, that they may believe that you sent me."

Even those who knew Him knew that the Father will do *whatever* Christ asks (John 11:22). Christ on another occasion says that He "always do[es] the things that are pleasing to him [the Father]" (John 8:29). Well, it is the will of the Father that He give eternal life and kept for eternity all those who were given to Him (e.g. John 6:37-44; 17:1-5). Will the Lord ever fail to accomplish the will of the Father? Perish the thought! The Father always hears Him, because just like the Spirit, the Lord Christ—our faithful High Priest—intercedes according to God's will (Rom. 8:27), therefore, His intercession can never fail. This is the firm foundation on which we stand.

Christ died and intercedes for the same group. Christ died that those for whom He died *should* be saved and by His intercession, He *applies* the benefits of His work to them *in time*. He never fails in His intercession. Since it is evident that not all men have faith or will be saved, therefore, Christ did not die in their stead, neither does He intercede for them.

Although I have added my own exegesis of the passages above, I have greatly benefited from Owen's insight into the connection between Christ sacrifice and His subsequent intercession. This is, in my opinion, a very powerful argument for Particular Atonement. Even if we take into consideration the work of the High Priest on behalf of Israel, for example, on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16). It will quickly be replied by our opponents that the High Priest interceded for all of Israel, which included unbelievers, and the sacrifice was likewise made for all of Israel. We will not object to that fact, only to the supposition that the membership of the Mosaic and New covenants are the same. The Old Covenant included in it both believers and unbelievers, while the New Covenant includes only believers. It is made only with them and all of its members have the benefits of the covenant applied to them (Jer. 31:31-34; Heb. 8:6-13). Therefore, the analogy or the type, still stands. The only difference is the people who make up the covenant. On the one hand, the Old Covenant contained both believer and unbeliever alike; while the New Covenant subsists of believers only. The High Priest interceded only for the covenant people of God and not for the heathen and godless. Likewise, our High Priest intercedes not for the world, but for those who are His. Furthermore, we should be able to distinguish between the type (Levitical priesthood) and the antitype (Christ's high priesthood) and keep them distinct.

The End of Christ's Death

Now we have began with book II of Owen's monumental work. He **begins** by returning to the subject in **chapter 1 of book I**, which concerned the end (i.e. goal) of Christ's death as Scripture declares it (**see above**).

The primary, or "*supreme* and ultimate" end of Christ's death is the glory of God. The glory of God stands at the center in Reformed theology. That is what attracted me at the beginning to Reformed theology. The *obsession* with the glory of God and trying to do all things to His glory. Everything and anything that God does, He does first of all to and for His glory. Owen cites a few passages to this effect (Prov. 16:4; 2Cor. 4:15; Eph. 1:6, 12; Phil. 1:11; 2:11; Rev. 5:13; I would add Isa. 46:8-11). Owen says:

> The Lord doth necessarily aim at himself in the first place, as the chiefest good, yea, indeed, that alone which is good; that is, absolutely and simply so, and not by virtue of communication from another: and therefore in all his works, especially in this which we have in hand, the chiefest of all, he first intends the manifestation of his own glory; which also he fully accomplisheth in the close, to every point and degree by him intended.[7] (**book II, chapter 1**)

The secondary, or the end that is "*intermediate* and subservient to that last end" of Christ's death, which is "the *bringing of us unto God*" (**book II, chapter 1**). The salvation of the elect is "subservient" to the glory of God. Generally, if you would ask an Arminian, or a non-Calvinist, what God's primary purpose or plan is, they would likely answer "redemption." On the other hand, Reformed theologians see that God's glory is the primary goal and end of everything which God does, including the salvation of the elect, but that in itself is not the primary goal; the glory of God is the primary goal.

Before enquiring in the Scriptures, Owen lays down the thesis which he is trying to prove:

> "Jesus Christ, according to the counsel and will of his Father, did offer himself upon the cross, to the procurement of those things before recounted; and maketh continual intercession with this intent and purpose, that all the good things so procured by his death might be actually and infallibly bestowed on and applied to all and every one for whom he died, according to the will and counsel of God."[8] (**book II, chapter 3**)

He discusses what the Scriptures say concerning this subject under three headings[8] (**book II, chapter 3**):

1. The *purpose* of the Trinity in it, which he titles, "Those [Scriptures] that hold out the *intention and counsel of God*, with our Saviour's own mind; whose will was one with his Father's in this business."
2. The *accomplishment* of the atonement, which he titles, "Those [Scriptures] that lay down the *actual accomplishment or effect* of his oblation, what it did really procure, effect, and produce."
3. The *scope* of the atonement, which he titles, "Those [Scriptures] that point out the *persons* for whom Christ died, as designed peculiarly to be the object of this work of redemption in the end

and purpose of God."

Purpose

The Savior's purpose was to be a Savior. Not a *potential* Savior, but an *actual* Savior. That is the meaning of Jesus, namely—Yahweh saves! In fact, in **Matthew 1:21**, the angel explains the Savior's name saying, "you shall call his name Jesus, for he will **save his people from their sins**." The Lord described His mission when He said that "the Son of Man came to seek and to **save the lost**" (Luke 19:10; Matt. 18:11 KJV). Paul, the Lord's Apostle, makes a similar statement, saying:

> 1Tim. 1:15 The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that **Christ Jesus** came into the world **to save sinners**, of whom I am the foremost.

Well, did He or did He not accomplish that which the Father and He Himself intended? Did He, or will He save the lost and those whom He came to seek or not? Will He save His people or will He not? Had He a people in mind when He offered Himself on the cross or not? Our Lord is not a potential Savior, but an infallible and actual Savior, by virtue of His worth and Father's will for Him. It was the purpose of the Trinity in the atonement to save, redeem, free people from their sins.

In **Hebrews 2:14-15**, we read that Christ through His incarnation and self-giving "destroy[ed] the one who has the power of death" and thereby "**deliver** all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery." Does Christ try to deliver all people without exception, or does He actually deliver His people from the power of Satan and sin (cf. Rom. 6-7)? The passage begins with "Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood". We have to ask ourselves, which "children" are that, and we will find our answer in the previous verse. 'And again, "I will put my trust in him." And again, "Behold, I and the children God has given me."' These are citations from Psalm 18:2 and Isaiah 8:17. The children are in other words, the elect, all those whom the Father gave to the Son. It is for their sake that He partook of flesh so as to deliver them. Will He or will He not deliver all those for whom He died and whom He intended to deliver?

Ephesians 5:25-27 is a passage that cannot be ignored when discussing the atonement as it deals with both the purpose as well as the scope of the atonement. There we are told that Christ's love is specific and is toward the church, which led Him to give Himself for her sake. This is the model which husbands are called up to follow. They are to be faithful to their wives and lead and love them like their Lord loved His church. This passage mentions explicitly the purpose of His self-giving, which is to "**sanctify her**, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, 27 so that he might **present the church to himself in splendor**, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that **she might be holy and without blemish**" (Eph. 5:26-27). The purpose of His self-giving was the complete and eternal salvation of His church. Notice how the passage explicitly mentions that His church was the object of His atonement and the one who receives its benefits. Christ does not die for other "wives." He is a faithful husband, and He has only one wife, and the reprobate are certainly not his "bride." Therefore, at the least, the ends mentioned in this passage do not concern the reprobate but only the elect, even if we should say that Christ's death was for all men without exception, which we will not. The church is the only object of His love and sacrifice in this passage. By mentioning the idea of a wife and a church, the passage makes explicit that the scope and effects mentioned are limited to His bride alone.

Titus 2:14 is to the same effect as the aforementioned passage. Christ had a purpose in His self-giving, which was "to **redeem** us from all lawlessness" and also "to **purify for himself a people** for his own possession". The scope in this passage is likewise limited. He does not redeem all from lawlessness, although that was the purpose of His self-giving and certainly He can accomplish all that He desires. Furthermore, notice that Christ's second purpose, which is mentioned in this passage, is that a specific people might be set apart for Him. He does not desire to have all people for His own possession, but He desires that "a [specific] people for his own possession". This brings to mind the promises of Exodus 19:5-6, which are a reality under the New Covenant people of God (1Pet. 2:9).

After the two aforementioned passages, Owen asks:

> Are all men of this church? Are all in that rank of men among whom Paul placeth himself and Titus? Are all purged, purified, sanctified, made glorious, brought nigh unto Christ? or doth Christ fail in his aim towards the greatest part of men? I dare not close with any of these.[9] (**book II, chapter 3**)

In **John 17:19**, just before His self-giving, the Lord says that He sets Himself apart—He sanctifies Himself—that, i.e., for the purpose, "that they also may be **sanctified in truth**." His setting apart includes but is not limited to His self-giving. In John 17:9, the Lord explicitly tells us that He does not pray for the world, but only for them whom the Father has given Him. He does not set Himself apart that the reprobate may be sanctified in the truth, but only that the elect may be sanctified in the truth. The "may be" in English sounds as unsure or conditional, but that is not the case in the Greek. The *hina* clause at the

beginning of 19b (“that”) expresses a purpose or a design. In this case, it is that the elect should be sanctified in truth.

In **Galatians 1:4**, we read of Christ who “give himself for our sins to **deliver** us from the present evil age”, which was the purpose and “the will of our God and Father”. Does He or does He not deliver? We should not forget that the Father always hears the Son and never rejects Him (John 11:42). In **Galatians 4:4-5**, the purpose of Christ being born under the law was “to **redeem** those who were under the law, so that we might receive **adoption** as sons.” Will He fail in His and the Father's purpose or will He accomplish all that He intends?

Lastly, Owen appeals to **2 Corinthians 5:21**, which says, “For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the **righteousness of God**.” God's purpose in counting and placing all our sins upon Him was so that we might, through Him, become “the righteousness of God.” Who are those who become the “righteousness of God”? It is most evident that they are not all men without exception, but only those who believe, in other words, only the elect. The purpose of God in the giving of His Son and of making the Sinless sin, was so that He may justify us.

Owen draws his first section to a close saying that:

> the Father and his Son intended by the death of Christ to redeem, purge, sanctify, purify, deliver from death, Satan, the curse of the law, to quit of all sin, to make righteousness in Christ, to bring nigh unto God, all those for whom he died, as was above proved: therefore, Christ died for all and only those in and towards whom all these things recounted are effected; — which, whether they are all and every one, I leave to all and every one to judge that hath any knowledge in these things.[10] (**book II, chapter 3**)

Accomplishment

Now we turn our attention to the accomplishment of the atonement. What does Holy Writ say that was accomplished by the atonement?

Scripture teaches that Christ secured “an eternal redemption” (Heb. 9:12). For whom did He secure this, but for those who are saved? They are also the same who are said to have their conscience purged by His offering, through which He secured this great redemption (Heb. 9:14). Christ is said to have made “purification for sins” for sins (Heb. 1:3). In fact, **Hebrews 9:26** is much stronger, declaring that the purpose of His coming was “to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.”

Christ is said to “**bear our sins**” in **1 Peter 2:24**. This means nothing less than **Christ's substitutionary atonement**. Christ bore our sins and their punishment upon Himself. The purpose for Christ bearing our sins is “that we might die to sin and live to righteousness.” After citing the purpose, Owen says:

> And what was the effect? “By his stripes we are healed:” which latter, as it is taken from the same place of the prophet where our Saviour is affirmed to “bear our iniquities, and to have them laid upon him” (Isa. 53:5, 6, 10–12), so it is expository of the former, and will tell us what Christ did by “bearing our sins;”[11] *(**book II, chapter 3**)*

He underwent the punishment for our sins which we should have received and thereby we have been healed.

Reconciliation with God is one of the fruits of Christ's accomplishments as is said in Colossians 1:21-22; Ephesians 2:13-16; Romans 5:8-10. “Peace and reconciliation, deliverance from wrath, enmity, and whatever lay against us to keep us from enjoying the love and favour of God, — a redemption from all these he effected for his church “with his own blood,” Acts xx. 28.”[12] (**book II, chapter 3**)

By His self-giving, He accomplished both our **justification** as well as our **redemption** (Rom. 5:9; 8:32-34; Rev. 5:9-10). By His death, He gives us life and we **live** (John 10:15, 28; Rom. 5:8-10; 6:4, 10-11).

Scope

What does Scripture say about the scope of atonement? Many different names are given for the objects of Christ's death. Some references are definite, others are indefinite and general, but both concern the same group, namely, the elect who actually receive the benefits of His work, according to the purpose of God.

In various places they are called “**many**” (Matt. 26:28; Isa. 53;11; Mark 10:45; Matt. 20:28; Heb. 2:10; Rom. 5:19; Heb. 9:28). But more important than that there are specific designations as:

- sheep (John 10:15);

- the children of God who are scattered abroad (John 11:52);
- those given of the Father (John 17:2, 6, 9, 11);
- God's elect (Rom. 8:32);
- His people (Matt. 1:21; cf. Acts 18:10; Heb. 13:12);
- those whom He foreknew (Rom. 8:29; 11:2);
- His church (Acts 20:28; cf. Eph. 5:25-27).

Next to this, we should not forget the antithesis between the world and the people of God; those who are God's friends and those who are still His enemies; those who are sheep and those who are goats. When we understand the radical antithesis between the redeemed and the reprobate, it will no longer be necessary to demand a verse in which the word "only" is used.

The Obtaining and Application of Redemption

Next, Dr. Owen deals with the objection that Christ has purchased salvation for all without exception, but it is applied only to those who believe. In other words, the obtaining of redemption, or the death of Christ is for everyone, but the application only to those who believe, i.e., the elect. Owen explains that "by *impetration* we mean the meritorious purchase of all good things made by Christ for us with and of his Father; and by *application*, the actual enjoyment of those good things upon our believing;"[13] (**book II, chapter 4**). Owen answers this objection, among other things, by pointing to Scriptures which enjoin and do not disjoin these two things.

But first let us deal with the question of faith and it being a condition. The condition for enjoying the work of redemption on our behalf is itself a gift of God. Faith, which is the key to justification and enjoyment of the benefits of Christ's work, is itself a result of His work and is conferred on us *absolutely*, without any condition. There is no condition on our side, as the glory of the New Covenant is that God, thanks to the death of Christ, supplies the condition for its members Himself, making it most evident that it is certainly all of grace! Faith, which is our trust in Christ's work on our behalf, is something which we *do*, but it is nonetheless granted to us by God and does not have its origin in us. **Philippians 1:29** says, "For it has been **granted** to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only **believe in him** but also suffer for his sake". It has been given to us, granted to us, for Christ's sake, not our own, that we believe in Him. The faith, the belief itself, has been granted to us and gifted to us by God Himself! Faith is a spiritual blessing, yea, the chiefest spiritual blessing and it is certainly granted to us by Christ (Eph. 1:3). See for more on faith being a gift **here**. Owen deals with this question in **book III, chapter 4**, argument IX, specifically.

If faith be granted of grace, the disjunction between the obtaining and application of redemption as proposed by non-Calvinists will not stand. Since all the good things which God has and is pouring upon us are thanks to the work of Christ, then no doubt, faith is the highest grace which He gives us, and is a fruit of Christ's self-giving.

Now let us turn our attention to the enjoining of the obtaining and application of redemption in Scripture. In **Isaiah 53:11**, we read of Suffering Servant making "many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities." These two things are enjoined together, in fact, the KJV says "for" instead of "and." Upon citing **Isaiah 53:5**, Owen says, "His wounding and our healing, impetration and application, his chastisement and our peace, are inseparably associated"[14] (**book II, chapter 4**). In **Romans 4:25**, the death of Christ and justification are enjoined together. So likewise in **Romans 5:18-19**, on which he says, 'So Rom. 5:18, "By the righteousness of one" (that is, his impetration), "the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life," in the application'[14] (**book II, chapter 4**). **Romans 8:32-34** likewise is an important passage which enjoins those two things under consideration, which we have dealt with **above**.

Both the obtaining and the application of redemption concerns and is limited to the same group, namely, the elect. Lastly, in **chapter 5 of book II**, Owen uses some common sense as to the meaning of Christ obtaining redemption. He argues, **(1)** that is contrary to common sense to say that something is obtained for a person, yet it is uncertain whether he shall have it or not. Owen says, "That which is impetrated or obtained by petition is his by whom it is obtained. It is to offer violence to common sense to say a thing may be a man's, or it may not be his, when it is obtained for him"[15] (**book II, chapter 5**). **(2)** It is contrary "to all reason in the world" that God would intend Christ to die for those whom He knows will have no share in His blessings. Those who oppose the Calvinists basically hold to that the death of Christ "is so applied to all, and yet the fruits of this death are never so much as once made known to far the greatest part of those all"[15] (**book II, chapter 5**). **(3)** It is contrary to reason to hold that a ransom has been paid, but upon the payment of the ransom "those captives not be made free and set at liberty"[15] (**book II, chapter 5**). As we have argued above, faith is the key the enjoyment of those blessings and faith itself is a gift, therefore, this argument cannot be discarded simply because we do not immediately enjoy the blessings of redemption. Since the ransom has been paid, its benefits will, in God's own time, be applied to all for whom the ransom was given. **(4)** It is contrary to Scripture as argued above.

Arguments Against the Universality of Redemption

Book III presents 16 arguments against the general ransom theory and in favor of Particular Atonement. Here are the arguments **as summarized by Dr. J. I. Packer** (slightly edited by me):

I. From the fact that the new covenant, which Christ's death ratified, is not made with all men (**chapter 1**).
II. From the fact that the gospel, which reveals faith in Christ to be the only way of salvation, is not published to all men (**chapter 1**).
III. From the dilemmas involved in asserting that the divine intention in Christ' death was to redeem every man (**chapter 2**).
IV. From the fact that Christ is said to die for one of the two classes (elect and reprobate) into which God divided men, and not for the other (**chapter 2**).
V. From the fact that Scripture nowhere asserts that Christ dies for all men, as such (**chapter 2**).
VI. From the fact that Christ died as sponsor (surety) for those for whom He died (**chapter 3**).
VII. From the fact that Christ is a Mediator, and as such a priest, for those for whom He died (**chapter 3**).
VIII. From the fact that Christ's death cleanses and sanctifies those for whom He died, whereas not all men and sanctified (**chapter 3**).
IX. From the fact that faith (which is necessary for salvation) was procured by the death of Christ, whereas not all men have faith (**chapter 4**).
X. From the fact that the deliverance of Israel from Egypt is a type of Christ's saving work (**chapter 4**).

The next five arguments form a group on their own. They have a common form and are all taken from the biblical terms in which Christ's work is described.

XI. (i). From the fact that Christ's death wrought redemption (deliverance by payment) (**chapter 5**).
XII. (ii). From the fact that Christ's death effected reconciliation between God and men (**chapter 6**).
XIII. (iii). From the fact that Christ's death made satisfaction for sins (chapter **7**, **8**, **9**).
XIV. (iv). From the fact that Christ's death merited salvation for men (**chapter 10**).
XV. (v). From the fact that Christ died for men (**chapter 10**).
XVI. From particular texts: Gen. 3:15: Matt. 7:33; 11:25; John 10:11ff.; Rom. 8:32-34; Eph. 1:7; 2 Cor. 5:21; John 17:9; Eph. 5:25 (**chapter 11**).

These are great chapters, especially chapters XI-XV, which deal with important essential benefits of Christ's death in some detail as they retain to the subject of atonement. I'd like to take a quick look at a few of his arguments.

The New Covenant (Arg. I)

The Covenant of Grace, i.e., the New Covenant according to 1689 Federalism, is made only with the elect (**see chapter 7** for more on Covenant Theology). If that is truly the case, then we have a problem with universal atonement. For more see **chapter 7** on Jeremiah 31:31-34; chapter 17 **here** and **here**.

Owen's basic argument is as follows:

> The first argument may be taken from the nature of the covenant of grace, which was established, ratified, and confirmed in and by the death of Christ; that was the testament whereof he was the testator, which was ratified in his death, and whence his blood is called "The blood of the new testament," Matt. 26:28. Neither can any effects thereof be extended beyond the compass of this covenant. But now this covenant was not made universally with all, but particularly only with some, and therefore those alone were intended in the benefits of the death of Christ.[16] (**Book III, chapter 1**)

The Two Classes of Men (Arg. IV)

Owen's argument here is that since the Bible separates people into two categories, namely, believers and unbelievers, and various other designations of the groups, therefore, when Christ is said to die for one, it is implicit that He did not die for the other. In his own words:

> If all mankind be, in and by the eternal purpose of God, distinguished into two sorts and conditions, severally and distinctly described and set forth in the Scripture, and Christ be peculiarly affirmed to die for one of these sorts, and nowhere for them of the other, then did he not die for all; for of the one sort he dies for all and every one, and of the other for no one at all.[17] (**Book III, chapter 2**)

The elect are designated also as:

> those whom he “loves”...Rom. 9:13; whom he “knoweth,”...John 10:14, “I know my sheep;” 2 Tim. 2:19, “The Lord knoweth them that are his;” Rom. 8:29, “Whom he did foreknow;” chap. 11:2, “His people which he foreknew;” “I know you not,” Matt. 25:12: so John 13:18, “I speak not of you all; I know whom I have chosen.” Those that are appointed to life and glory, and those that are appointed to and fitted for destruction, — “elect” and “reprobate;” those that were “ordained to eternal life,” and those who “before were of old ordained to condemnation:” as Eph. 1:4, “He hath chosen us in him;” Acts 13:48, “Ordained to eternal life;” Rom. 8:30, “Whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.” So, on the other side, 1 Thess. 5:9, “God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation;” Rom. 9:18–21, “He hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth. Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will? Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel to honour, and another to dishonour?” Jude 4, “Ordained to this condemnation;” 2 Pet. 2:12, “Made to be taken and destroyed;” “Sheep and goats,” Matt. 25:32; John 10 passim. Those on whom he hath “mercy,” and those whom he “hardeneth,” Rom. 9:18. Those that are his “peculiar people” and “the children of promise,” that are “not of the world,” his “church;”[18] (**Book III, chapter 2**)

All these things are true only of the redeemed, the elect of God from all eternity. But this is not the only group which Scripture knows. On the other hand, Scripture designates the reprobates in the following words:

> ...in opposition to them, are “the world,” “not prayed for,” “not his people:” as Tit. 2:14; Gal. 4:28; John 15:19, 17:9; Col. 1:24; John 11:52; Heb. 2:10, 12, 13. Which distinction of men is everywhere ascribed to the purpose, will, and good pleasure of God: Prov. 16:4, “The Lord hath made all things for himself, even the wicked for the day of evil.” Matt. 11:25, 26, “I thank thee, O Father, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight.” Rom. 9:11, 12, “The children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth; it was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger.” Verses 16, 17, “So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy. For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might show my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth.”[19] (**Book III, chapter 2**)

Furthermore, Christ is said to die for the first group, but not for the second. He laid His life for “his people” (Matt. 1:21), His own sheep (John 10:11, 14), His "church” (Eph. 5:25; Acts 20:28).

Mediator for Whom He Died (Arg. VII)

This is a strong argument building upon that which we have sought to prove before, namely, that the offering and intercession of Christ are inter-connected and are the two faces of the same coin. Christ intercedes as a Mediator and those for whom He intercedes are “save[d] to the uttermost” (Heb. 7:25). His intercession is limited to those for whom His offering was made. **See above** for more. In his own words:

> For whom Christ died, for them he is a mediator: which is apparent; for the oblation or offering of Christ, which he made of himself unto God, in the shedding of his blood, was one of the chiefest acts of his mediation. But he is not a mediator for all and every one; which also is no less evident, because as mediator he is the priest for them for whom

he is a mediator. Now, to a priest it belongs, as was declared before, to sacrifice and intercede, to procure good things, and to apply them to those for whom they are procured; as is evident, Heb. 9, and was proved before at large: which, confessedly, Christ doth not for all. Yea, that Christ is not a mediator for every one needs no proof. Experience sufficiently evinceth it, besides innumerable places of Scripture.[20] *(**Book III, chapter 3**)*

Typological Exodus (Arg. X)

The exodus of the children of Israel out of slavery in Egypt is typological of our exodus from the slavery of sin by the death of Jesus Christ, our Lord. The Lord freed the Israelites out of Egypt. He gave them His laws and ordinances, and not other nations. His redemption was limited to His covenant people and did not extend to everyone without exception in the world. The type is not identical to the antitype, otherwise, there would be no reason to speak of these things. There are some significant differences. The significant difference between the Old and New covenants is that the New Covenant has only believers as its members, over against the Old, which contained both elect and reprobate. The redemption was limited to the covenant people. In the Old Covenant, it was believers and unbelievers alike who were descended from Abraham and who joined themselves to Yahweh. The New Covenant has only believers in its membership.

In his own words:

> The whole people itself was a type of God's church, his elect, his chosen and called people: whence as they were called a "holy people, a royal priesthood;" so also, in allusion to them, are believers, 1 Pet. 2:5, 9. Yea, God's people are in innumerable places called his "Israel," as it is farther expounded, Heb. 8:8. A true Israelite is as much as a true believer, John 1:47; and he is a Jew who is so in the hidden man of the heart. I hope it need not be proved that that people, as delivered from bondage, preserved, taken nigh unto God, brought into Canaan, was typical of God's spiritual church, of elect believers. Whence we thus argue:— Those only are really and spiritually redeemed by Jesus Christ who were designed, signified, typified by the people of Israel in their carnal, typical redemption (for no reason in the world can be rendered why some should be typed out in the same condition, partakers of the same good, and not others); but by the people of the Jews, in their deliverance from Egypt, bringing into Canaan, with all their ordinances and institutions, only the elect, the church of God, was typed out, as was before proved.[21] *(**Book III, chapter 4**)*

Reconciliation (Arg. XII)

By the precious blood of Christ, we have reconciliation with God. God is said to reconcile us to Himself through Christ (2Cor. 5:18). It is even said that "in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself" (2Cor. 5:19). This reconciliation is through the blood of Christ (Rom. 5:10-11; Col. 1:20-22). But it is an undeniable fact that not all people are reconciled to God. Therefore, what does Christ's work mean for them? Nothing! The non-Calvinists do not believe that faith, which is the condition of salvation on our part, is, in fact, a gift of God Himself. Therefore, in a real sense, the New Covenant is *unconditional* as all of its condition are provided through grace by God.

Reconciliation "is the renewing of friendship between parties before at variance, both parties being properly said to be reconciled, even both he that offendeth and he that was offended"[22] (**Book III, chapter 6**). There is an enmity between God and man, and it is *not* one-sided (e.g. Rom. 5:10; 8:7-8). God has set Himself against the wicked by pouring out His wrath upon them (Rom. 1:18; John 3:36), while the wicked have set themselves against God by disobeying His law (Rom. 8:7-8). This enmity has been healed through Christ. Paul tells us:

> 2Cor. 5:18-20 All this is from God, who through Christ **reconciled us to himself** and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; 19 that is, in Christ God was **reconciling the world to himself**, **not counting their trespasses against them**, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. 20 Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, **be reconciled to God.**

God is said to be reconciled to *us*, even to the indefinite designation, *world*, through the death of His Son. This reconciliation consists of the non-imputation of sins. Well, if this is true, then the logical conclusion is that God is reconciled to us and whoever are designated with the word "*world*". The usual non-Calvinistic interpretation of the "world" as all humanity will not do here. The *world* is limited by the previous reference to "*us*", namely, the believers who are *actually* reconciled to God. The "*world*" here is a reference to believers everywhere in the world, much like how the redeemed are described in Revelation 5:9. But the main point to be taken from this passage is that this reconciliation is directly connected to the non-imputation of trespasses. But, if we take the interpretation of "*world*" as everyone without exception, then we have a huge problem, namely, that God will, in fact, impute sin to the wicked on the day of wrath. Therefore, this means that He has not been reconciled to them, for to be reconciled means to have fellowship and friendship with God, and according to the passage at hand, to have the non-imputation of sins. But this is in fact not the case nor will it be for everyone without

exception.

If the opposing position will attack us on the point that even the elect do not *enjoy* this reconciliation immediately, although it was purchased at the cross, then we reply: It is true, but everyone for whom this reconciliation was made, will, in fact, *enjoy* this reconciliation with God. In fact, the means of enjoying this reconciliation is provided for by God through the work of His Son, namely, our faith, which is a gift. But this is not the case with the non-Calvinistic doctrine of the atonement and reconciliation. For the non-Calvinists claim that Christ died for everyone without exception and *tried* (?) to reconcile everyone without exception to God, yet the majority of humanity either does not know of this reconciliation or rejects it. The Calvinist doesn't run into the trouble of a reconciliation that does not reconcile, or an atonement that does not save, but needs our deciding choice.

To put it at length in the words of Dr. Owen:

> Now, how this reconciliation can possibly be reconciled with universal redemption, I am no way able to discern; for if reconciliation be the proper effect of the death of Christ, as is confessed by all, then if he died for all, I ask how cometh it to pass, — First, That God is not reconciled to all? as he is not, for his wrath abideth on some, John 3:36, and reconciliation is the aversion of wrath. Secondly, That all are not reconciled to God? as they are not, for "by nature all are the children of wrath," Eph. 2:3; and some all their lives do nothing but "treasure up wrath against the day of wrath," Rom. 2:5. Thirdly, How, then, can it be that reconciliation should be wrought between God and all men, and yet neither God reconciled to all nor all reconciled to God? Fourthly, If God be reconciled to all, when doth he begin to be unreconciled towards them that perish? by what alteration is it? in his will or nature? Fifthly, If all be reconciled by the death of Christ, when do they begin to be unreconciled who perish, being born children of wrath? Sixthly, Seeing that reconciliation on the part of God consists in the turning away of his wrath and not imputing of iniquity, 2 Cor. 5:18, 19, which is justification, rendering us blessed, Rom. 4:6–8, why, if God be reconciled to all, are not all justified and made blessed through a non-imputation of their sin? They who have found out a redemption where none are redeemed, and a reconciliation where none are reconciled, can easily answer these and such other questions; which to do I leave them to their leisure, and in the meantime conclude this part of our argument. That reconciliation which is the renewing of lost friendship, the slaying of enmity, the making up of peace, the appeasing of God, and turning away of his wrath, attended with a non-imputation of iniquities; and, on our part, conversion to God by faith and repentance; — this, I say, being that reconciliation which is the effect of the death and blood of Christ, it cannot be asserted in reference to any, nor Christ said to die for any other, but only those concerning whom all the properties of it, and acts wherein it doth consist, may be truly affirmed; which, whether they may be of all men or not, let all men judge.[23] (**Book III, chapter 6**)

The Merit of Christ (Arg. XIV)

The merit of Christ is "that worth and value of his death whereby he purchased and procured unto us, and for us, all those good things which we find in the Scripture for his death to be bestowed upon us"[24] (**Book III, chapter 10**). He received this merit from His Father as obedience to the work which the Father had given Him to do. It was the reward for His suffering and Christ the Lord shall certainly "see and be satisfied" with His accomplishment (Isa. 53:11). The offspring which the Father gave Him (Isa. 53:10), was not of grace, but a reward for His work and obedience. It was His due; it was deserved. Christ paid the price for our freedom, therefore, He purchased us (Acts 20:28; Rev. 5:9; Heb. 9:12). Since the fruits of His work were purchased at the cross, the next question is: for whom was it purchased? The obvious answer is that it was purchased for those whom His Father gave Him, namely, the elect. Those are also the only ones who do *actually* and *effectually* enjoy the fruits of His work on their behalf.

Now I'll give you Owen at length who will present to you the fruits which Christ purchased for us:

> Christ then, by his death, did merit and purchase, for all those for whom he died, all those things which in the Scripture are assigned to be the fruits and effects of his death. These are the things purchased and merited by his blood-shedding, and death; which may be referred unto two heads:—
>
> First, Such as are privative; as, —
>
> 1. Deliverance from the hand of our enemies, Luke 1:74; from the wrath to come, 1 Thess. 1:10.
> 2. The destruction and abolition of death in his power, Heb. 2:14;
> 3. Of the works of the devil, 1 John 3:8.
> 4. Deliverance from the curse of the law, Gal. 3:13;
> 5. From our vain conversation, 1 Pet. 1: 18;
> 6. From the present evil world, Gal. 1:4;

7. From the earth, and from among men, Rev. 14:3, 4.
8. Purging of our sins, Heb. 1:3,

Secondly, Positive; as, —

1. Reconciliation with God, Rom. 5:10; Eph. 2:16; Col. 1:20.
2. Appeasing or atoning of God by propitiation, Rom. 3:25; 1 John 2:2.
3. Peacemaking, Eph. 2:14.
4. Salvation, Matt. 1:21.

All these hath our Saviour by his death merited and purchased for all them for whom he died; that is, so procured them of his Father that they ought, in respect of that merit, according to the equity of justice, to be bestowed on them for whom they were so purchased and procured. It was absolutely of free grace in God that he would send Jesus Christ to die for any; it was of free grace for whom he would send him to die; it is of free grace that the good things procured by his death be bestowed on any person, in respect of those persons on whom they are bestowed: but considering his own appointment and constitution, that Jesus Christ by his death should merit and procure grace and glory for those for whom he died, it is of debt in respect of Christ that they be communicated to them. Now, that which is thus merited, which is of debt to be bestowed, we do not say that it may be bestowed, but it ought so to be, and it is injustice if it be not.[25] [formatting changed for ease of reading] (**Book III, chapter 10**)

If Christ died for all, why do not all enjoy the benefits of His work? Is it because they did not meet the condition for the enjoyment of His fruits, namely, faith? Well, Scripture testifies and we believe, that the condition itself, faith, is a fruit of His merit. His work on the cross provides the condition for the enjoyment of its benefits. But this is not the case with the position of the opposing party.

Substitutionary Atonement (Arg. XV)

That beautiful doctrine of substitutionary atonement is a Reformed doctrine. It is inconsistent with Arminianism. The doctrine teaches that Christ bore the sins and stood in the place of everyone for whom He died, so as to take their penalty upon Himself. He made payment to the Father with His blood and purchased His Bride (e.g. Acts 20:28). The problem for the Arminian view of the atonement is that it has Christ dying *in the same way* for both elect and reprobate. In the non-Calvinistic view, the atonement does not provide the condition for its enjoyment, namely, faith. According to the non-Calvinistic view, the Lord Christ on the cross bore the sins and took the place of the reprobates even as He took the place of those who were chosen from before the foundation of the earth. Alas! Even though the Lord died in the same way for the elect as well as the reprobates, one group will believe but the other will not. It is obvious that in this scheme the deciding factor does not lie with the Lord, but with the free will of man. The atonement is not effectual in and of itself, but requires the assistance of man. Even if a reply would come to us that the faith of man will count only for 1% or even less, the fact is clear: without that 1%, the atonement, which was made on your behalf, is useless. Furthermore, this atonement does not provide the condition for its enjoyment but leaves that to the wretched sinner himself.

Dr. Owen in his own words:

The very phrases of “dying for us,” “bearing our sins,” being our “surety,” and the like, whereby the death of Christ for us is expressed, will not stand with the payment of a ransom for all. To die for another is, in Scripture, to die in that other’s stead, that he might go free; as Judah besought his brother Joseph to accept of him for a bondman instead of Benjamin, that he might be set at liberty, Gen. 44:33, and that to make good the engagement wherein he stood bound to his father to be a surety for him. He that is surety for another (as Christ was for us, Heb. 7:22), is to undergo the danger, that the other may be delivered...And this plainly is the meaning of that phrase, “Christ died for us;” that is, in the undergoing of death there was a subrogation of his person in the room and stead of ours...But concerning the word ἀντί, which also is used, there is no doubt, nor can any exception be made; it always signifieth a commutation and change, whether it be applied to things or persons: so Luke 11:11, Ὄφις ἀντὶ ἰχθύος, “A serpent instead of a fish;” so Matt. 5:38, Ὀφθαλμὸς ἀντὶ ὀφθαλμοῦ “An eye for an eye;” so Heb. 12:16; — and for persons, Archelaus is said to reign ἀντὶ Ἡρώδου τοῦ πατρός, “instead of his father,” Matt. 2:22. Now, this word is used of the death of our Saviour, Matt. 20:28, “The Son of man came δοῦναι τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ λύτρον ἀντὶ πολλῶν,” — which words are repeated again, Mark 10:45, — that is, to give his life a ransom in the stead of the lives of many. So that, plainly, Christ dying for us, as a surety, Heb. 7:22, and thereby and therein “bearing our sins in his own body,” 1 Pet. 2:24, being made a curse for us, was an undergoing of death, punishment, curse, wrath, not only for our good, but directly in our stead; a commutation and subrogation of his person in the room and place of ours being allowed, and of God accepted.[26] (**Book III, chapter 10**)

If these things are true, how can it be said that Christ died in the stead of all men without exception? Why would God lay the sins of those whom He knew certainly to be damned upon Christ, to make Him their Mediator and representative Who fails to achieve His work? Did Christ die in the stead of those who were long damned or not?

Particular Texts (Arg. XVI)

The last general argument is made by brief comments on several texts of Scripture.

Matthew 7:23

> And then will I declare to them, '**I never knew you**; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'

Christ will declare to some who profess His name on the last day that He does not know them. In fact, He has *never* known them. It is obvious that "know" in this place is used for relationship and love, and not knowledge about someone. How could this be the case if Christ lays down His life for the sheep whom He knows (John 10:14-17)? In fact, in John 10:14-17, the Lord Christ makes it explicit that He gives His life for those whom He actually knows, and thereby excluding those whom He does not know, namely, the reprobates.

In Owen's words:

> Christ at the last day professeth to some he never knew them. Christ saith directly that he knoweth his own, whom he layeth down his life for, John 10:14–17. And surely he knows whom and what he hath bought. Were it not strange that Christ should die for them, and buy them that he will not own, but profess he never knew them? If they are "bought with a price," surely they are his own? 1 Cor. 6:20.[27] (**Book III, chapter 11**)

John 10

Owen points in particular to John 10:11, 15, 16, 27, 28 and says that this is a "clear place, which of itself is sufficient to evert the general ransom"[28] (**Book III, chapter 11**). **First** things first, only a particular people are among the sheep of Christ, and not everyone without exception. **Second**, some are explicitly said to not be sheep (John 10:26). **Third**, Christ is said to die for His sheep (John 10:11, 15). **Fourth,** the sheep are said to be known by Christ and they follow Him (John 10:27) and to whom Christ gives eternal life (John 10:28), which cannot be taken away from them (John 10:29).

Some will object that this place does not say that He died *only* for His sheep and that is true, but the point which they try to prove thereby is false. People are divided into two groups, namely, the sheep and the non-sheep (goats). These two groups are diametrically opposed to each other with different natures and different masters. There is no need to say that He lays down His life *only* for the sheep when the context makes those two different groups obvious. That which is said of the sheep is not true of the non-sheep. Notice that the death of Christ for His sheep leads to their eternal salvation, which is not true of everyone without exception, but it is absolutely true of the sheep.

In his own words:

> That Christ so says that he laid down his life for his sheep, that plainly he excludes all others; for, — *First*, He lays down his life for them as sheep. Now, that which belongs to them as such belongs only to such. If he lays down his life for sheep, as sheep, certainly be doth it not for goats, and wolves, and dogs. *Secondly*, He lays down his life as a shepherd, verse 11; therefore, for them as the sheep. What hath the shepherd to do with the wolves, unless it be to destroy them? *Thirdly*, Dividing all into sheep and others, verse 26, he saith he lays down his life for his sheep; which is all one as if he had said he did it for them only. *Fourthly*, He describes them for whom he died by this, "My Father gave them me," verse 29; as also chap. 17:6, "Thine they were, and thou gavest them me:" which are not all; for "all that the Father giveth him shall come to him," chap. 6:37, and he "giveth unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish," chap. 10: 28. Let but the sheep of Christ keep close to this evidence, and all the world shall never deprive them of their inheritance. Farther to confirm this place, add Matt. 20:28; John 11:52.[28] (**Book III, chapter 11**)

Romans 8:32-34

> 32 He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him **graciously give us all things**? 33 Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is **God who justifies**. 34 Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who **died**—more than that, who was **raised**— who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is **interceding for us**.

This is a vital passage in Owen's entire book, dealt with several times on which he later says:

> ...I desire the reader to peruse that one place, Rom. 8:32–34; and I make no doubt but that he will, if not infected with the leaven of the error opposed, conclude with me, that if there be any comfort, any consolation, any assurance, any rest, any peace, any joy, any refreshment, any exultation of spirit, to be obtained here below, it is all to be had in the blood of Jesus long since shed, and his intercession still continued; as both are united and appropriated to the elect of God, by the precious effects and fruits of them both drawn to believe and preserved in believing, to the obtaining of an immortal crown of glory, that shall not fade away.[29] (**Book IV, chapter 7**)

In this passage, we have the connection of Christ's work on behalf of His elect even from His death even unto their redemption and intercession for their sake. Christ intercedes for His own so that they will receive those things which God intends for them; the same God who did not spare His own Son. **See above** for more on this passage.

2 Corinthians 5:21

> For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

I find it hard to square the idea of substitutionary atonement with an atonement that is not able to save all for whom it was made. Those for whose sake Christ was made sin and are the same group who are made the righteousness of God. In fact, that was the purpose of the Father in making Christ sin. Owen says:

> for whomsoever he was made sin, they are made the righteousness of God in him: “By his stripes we are healed,” Isa. liii. 5; John xv. 13, “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.” Then, to intercede is not of greater love than to die, nor any thing else that he doth for his elect. If, then, he laid down his life for all, which is the greatest, why doth he not also the rest for them, and save them to the uttermost?[30] *(**Book IV, chapter 7**)*

The next argument which follows simply cites **John 17:9, 19**, in which we learn that Christ, before going to the cross, did not even pray for the world of unbelievers. Furthermore, His consecration was only for His own, which the Father had given Him. He was consecrated to them as an offering and a mediator, but He was not so consecrated nor for the purpose of them being sanctified for the reprobates.

Universal Language in Scripture

It is no surprise for Calvinists that Scripture does speak of the atonement of Christ in universal language as "world”, “whole world”, “every man” and the like. The non-Calvinists sometimes act as if the Calvinists are not aware of these Scriptures. We actually do know them and try to interpret them according to their context and by comparing Scripture with Scripture. Very often, the reason for the rejection of Particular Atonement hangs upon these universal expressions. In fact, Owen says, ‘Upon these expressions hangs the whole weight of the opposite cause, the chief if not the only argument for the universality of redemption being taken from words which seem to be of a latitude in their signification equal to such an assertion, as the *world*, *the whole world*, *all*, and the like; which terms, when they have once fastened upon, they run with, “Io triumphe,” as though the victory were surely theirs’[31] (**Book IV, chapter 1**). This is still true today.

The Reason

According to Owen, the purpose for the use of general and indefinite or universal language has to do with several things. Here are the two most important summarized:

1. Showing the infinite value of the work of Christ for all the world without exception, if the Lord had so willed. Yea, even for 10,000 worlds! Therefore, in our proclamation, we should declare the exclusivity of Christ as the only way of salvation. There is no other name (Acts 4:12).
2. The change of the covenant from the Old to the New. The Old was exclusive to Israel after the flesh, while the New is inclusive of everyone who believers from all four corners of the earth (Rev. 5:9). Therefore, it is certainly right to speak of the atonement and work of Christ in universal terms, but it is something else to conclude that this is an absolute universality. This is a significant point considering how the Jews generally thought that they would be the only

benefactors of the Messiah's work. By using words like “world" and other universal designations, the authors of Scripture make clear that salvation is no longer confined in Israel.
3. That the engrafting of the Gentiles was a serious issue at the beginning of the church could be seen from the Jewish exclusivity even outside of Jerusalem until Acts 11. In Acts 15, even some of the apostles were questioning the status of the Gentile believers among the people of God. Therefore, using universal and general language about the atonement and work of Christ, dispells this Jewish exclusivity.

These are all important factors which Owen gives for the use of universal and indefinite language in the NT.

World

It is simply false to claim that whenever the word "world” is used that it speaks of all of humanity without exception. In fact, Owen finds several senses of the word in both testaments, which I have put into a list:

1. For the created world:
    i. The whole fabric of heaven and earth (Job 34:13; Acts 17:24; Eph. 1:4);
    ii. Heaven distinguished from the earth (Ps. 90:2);
    iii. The habitable earth (Ps. 24:1; Matt. 13:38; John 1:9; 3:17, 19; 6:14; 1Tim. 1:15; 6:7).
2. For the world contained:
    i. Universally for all and everyone (Rom. 3:6, 19; 5:12);
    ii. Indefinitely for men, without restriction (John 7:4; Isa. 13:11);
    iii. Many (Matt. 13:7; John 4:42; 12:19; 16: 8; 17:21; 1Cor. 4:9; Rev. 13:3);
    iv. Comparatively, for a great part of the world (Rom. 1:8; 10:18; Matt. 24:14; 26:13);
    v. Restrictively, for the inhabitants of the Roman world (Luke 2:1);
    vi. Men distinguished in their qualifications:
        a. God’s people (*Ps. 22:27 KJV*; John 3:16; 6:33, 51; Rom. 4:13; 11:12, 15; 2Cor. 5:19; Col. 1:6; 1John 2:2);
        b. The wicked (Isa. 13:11; John 7:7; 14:17, 22; 15:19; 17:25; 1Cor. 6:2; 11:32; Heb. 11:38; 2Pet. 2:5; 1John 5:19; Rev. 13:3).
3. For the corrupted world:
    i. Gal. 1:4; 6:14; Eph. 2:2; James 1:27; 4:4; 1John 2:15–17; 1Cor. 1:20, 21; 3:18, 19; 7:31, 33; Col. 2:8; 2Tim. 4:10; Rom. 12:2.
4. For the worldly condition of men and things:
    i. Luke 16:8; John 18:36; 1John 4:5 “and very many other places.”
5. For the accursed world under Satan:
    i. John 7:7; 14:30; 16:11, 33; 1Cor. 2:12; 2Cor. 4:4; *Eph. 6:12 KJV*.
6. Extra: “All nations”:
    i. Rom. 1:5; Rev. 18:3, 23; Ps. 118:10; 1Chron. 14:17; Jer. 27:7.

It is even true that the same word can mean different things even in the same verse or passage. This is what Owen calls an ἀντανάκλασις [*antanaklasis*], which is the repetition of the same word, but with a different meaning. He gives several examples to this effect (Matt. 8:22; John 1:10, 11; 3:6). Romans 9:6 may also be added to the list.

The best interpreter of the word “world” is the context. We cannot simply *apriori* define the word, without looking at the context and what Scripture says. Owen says:

> Secondly, That no argument can be taken from a phrase of speech in the Scripture, in any particular place, if in other places thereof where it is used the signification pressed from that place is evidently denied, unless the scope of the place or subject-matter do enforce it. For instance: God is said to love the world, and send his Son; to be in Christ reconciling the world to himself; and Christ to be a propitiation for the sins of the whole world. If the scope of the places where these assertions are, or the subject-matter of which they treat, will enforce a universality of all persons to be meant by the word world, so let it be, without control. But if not, if there be no enforcement of any such interpretation from the places themselves, why should the world there signify all and every one, more than in John i. 10, “The world knew him not,” which, if it be meant of all without exception, then no one did believe in Christ, which is

contrary to verse 12; or in Luke 2:1, “That all the world should be taxed,” where none but the chief inhabitants of the Roman empire can be understood; or in John 8:26, “I speak to the world those things which I have heard of him,” understanding the Jews to whom he spake, who then lived in the world, and not every one, to whom he was not sent; or in John 12:19, “Behold, the world is gone after him!” which world was nothing but a great multitude of one small nation; or in 1 John 5:19, “The whole world lieth in wickedness,” from which, notwithstanding, all believers are to be understood as exempted; or in Rev. 13:3, “All the world wondered after the beast,” which, whether it be affirmed of the whole universality of individuals in the world, let all judge? That all nations, an expression of equal extent with that of the world, is in like manner to be understood, is apparent, Rom. 1:5; Rev. 18:3, 23; Ps. 118:10; 1 Chron. 14:17; Jer. 27:7. It being evident that the words world, all the world, the whole world, do, where taken adjunctively for men in the world, usually and almost always denote only some or many men in the world, distinguished into good or bad, believers or unbelievers, elect or reprobate, by what is immediately in the several places affirmed of them, I see no reason in the world why they should be wrested to any other meaning or sense in the places that are in controversy between us and our opponents.[32] (**Book IV, chapter 1**)

There are places in Scripture where the word "world” definitely does not mean all without exception as in John 1:10; 7:4; 12:19; 14:17; Luke 2:1; Acts 19:27; Rom. 1:8; Col. 1:6; 1John 5:19; Rev. 12:9 (cf. Rev 13:3, 8). It is a simple denial of the fact that the word "world” is used in many ways to always take the references where it used to be speaking of all humanity without exception. The meaning must be determined by the context and exegesis.

In this way, Owen interprets "world” in John 3:16 to be speaking of the world of God's elect (see **Book IV, chapter 2,** see also **here**). The first "world” in John 3:17 is the human realm into which Christ was sent; the second and the third are for God's elect (see **Book IV, chapter 3**). The expression "world" is used in these passages to denote the extent of God's grace to all who believe. It refutes that Jewish exclusivism, which prevailed in their day. In this way, the author (whether it be John commenting or the Lord Christ speaking) shows us that the Jews are not only the object of God's love and grace but even the Gentiles. The same is true of John 1:29 (see **Book IV, chapter 3,** see also **here**).

1 John 2:2 is also dealt with in detail (see **Book IV, chapter 3**). The passage is for the purpose of giving consolation to sinning believers, but it is no consolation to them that the propitiation of Christ, which means “to appease, pacify, and reconcile God in respect of aversation for sin”[33] (**Book IV, chapter 3**), is the same for them as for the damned. Furthermore, this passage should be read in close connection with John 11:51-52 and with the meaning of propitiation (**see here**). The expressions “whole world” and the like are used in Scripture to refer to only one particular group and not all without exception. See for example Luke 2:1; Romans 1:8; Colossians 1:6; Revelation 3:10.

When approaching all of these passages Revelation 5:9 should be kept in mind. The Scriptures themselves give us a universality which is particular. The passage reads, “…you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation". Notice the universality of the language. The people of God come from everywhere in the world. But let us not overlook the particularity. It was not that those tribes, languages, peoples and nations were purchased, but “people for God *from* every” corner of the earth. The realization of this purchase is not in question as everyone for whom this purchase was made is said to have been made a kingdom of priests and they will reign on the earth (Rev. 5:10). Therefore, we are more than justified, when the context requires, to take expressions like “world” and "all” to be speaking of God's elect from everywhere on the earth.

All, Everyone

According to Owen the word “all” does mean all without exception, but this is not its only use. In fact, this is not even the most used sense. I will simply quote Owen at length here:

That it is sometimes taken in the first sense, for all collectively, is granted, and I need not prove it, they whom we oppose affirming that this is the only sense of the word, — though I dare boldly say it is not once in ten times so to be understood in the usage of it through the whole book of God; but that it is commonly, and indeed properly, used in the latter sense, for some of all sorts, concerning whatsoever it is affirmed, a few instances, for many that might be urged, will make it clear. Thus, then, ye have it, John 12:32, “And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all unto me.” That we translate it “all men,” as in other places (for though I know the sense may be the same, yet the word *men* being not in the original, but only πάντας), I cannot approve. But who, I pray, are these *all*? Are they all and every one? Then are all and every one drawn to Christ, made believers, and truly converted, and shall be certainly saved; for those that come unto him by his and his Father’s drawing, “he will in no wise cast out,” John 6:37. *All*, then, can here be no other than many, some of all sorts, no sort excluded, according as the word is interpreted in Rev. 5:9, “Thou hast redeemed us out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.” These are the *all* he draws to him: which exposition of this phrase is with me of more value and esteem than a thousand glosses of the sons of men. So also, Luke 11:42, where our translators have made the word to signify immediately and properly (for translators are to keep close to the propriety and native signification of every word) what we assert to be the right interpretation of it; for

they render πᾶν λάχανον (which ῥητῶς is “every herb”), “all manner of herbs,” taking the word (as it must be) *distributively*, for herbs of all sorts, and not for any individual herb, which the Pharisees did not, could not tithe. And in the very same sense is the word used again, Luke 18:12, “I give tithes of all that I possess;” where it cannot signify every individual thing, as is apparent. Most evident, also, is this restrained signification of the word, Acts 2:17, “I will pour out of my Spirit, ἐπὶ πᾶσαν σάρκα·” which, whether it compriseth every man or no, let every man judge, and not rather men of several and sundry sorts. The same course of interpretation as formerly is followed by our translators, Acts 10:12, rendering πάντα τὰ τετράποδα, (literally, “all beasts or four-footed creatures,”) “all manner of beasts,” or beasts of sundry several sorts. In the same sense also must it be understood, Rom. 14:2, “One believeth that he may eat all things;” that is, what he pleaseth of things to be eaten of. See, moreover, 1 Cor. 1:5. Yea, in that very chapter where men so eagerly contend that the word *all* is to be taken for all and every one (though fruitlessly and falsely, as shall be demonstrated), — namely, 1 Tim. 2:4, where it is said that “God will have all men to be saved,” — in that very chapter confessedly the word is to be expounded according to the sense we give, namely, verse 8, “I will, therefore, that men pray ἐν παντὶ τόπῳ·” which, that it cannot signify every individual place in heaven, earth, and hell, is of all confessed, and needeth no proof; no more than when our Saviour is said to cure πᾶσαν νόσον, as Matt. 9:35, there is need to prove that he did not cure every disease of every man, but only all sorts of diseases.[34] (**Book IV, chapter 1**)

The word "all" is most of the time not used to denote everyone without exception. This is evident in places like John 12:32 (compare John 6:37-44); Luke 2:1; 11:42 (“every”); 18:12; Acts 2:17; 10:12; Romans 14:2; 1 Corinthians 1:5; 1 Timothy 2:8; Matthew 9:35. Add to those also the following passages: Jeremiah 13:19 (comp. Jer 39:9-10); Matthew 2:3-4; 3:5; 5:11 (literally "all evil”); Mark 1:5; Luke 3:21; John 4:29; 8:2; Acts 10:39; 17:21; 21:28; 22:15; 26:4; 1 Corinthians 6:12. In all of these places and more, the better understanding of the expression is that it refers to all kinds of things (men, herbs, etc.), or all without distinction instead of all without exception. It is just too simplistic to take these expressions to be speaking of humanity without exception.

1 Timothy 2:4-6 speaks of all sorts of men, and specifically the elect of God. The passage does not speak of God's will of desire, but God's will of decree (see **Book IV, chapter 4**, see also **here**). The "all” and “every” in **2 Peter 3:9** is limited by the “you” (in the KJV "us-ward”), who are the elect and the beloved of the epistle (see **Book IV, chapter 4**, see also **here**). See also his comments on Hebrews 2:9 (see also **here**) and on 2 Corinthians 5:14-15 (see also **here**) in **chapter 4**.

Comparing the Two Systems

Much more could be said about this work, but I'll leave that task to you to find out by reading it. Let us close with a table which Owen provides[35] (**Book IV, chapter 7**):

Universalists.	Scriptural Redemption.
1. Christ died for all and every one, elect and reprobate.	1. Christ died for the elect only.
2. Most of them for whom Christ died are damned.	2. All those for whom Christ died are certainly saved.
3. Christ, by his death, purchased not any saving grace for them for whom he died.	3. Christ by his death purchased all saving grace for them for whom he died.
4. Christ took no care for the greatest part of them for whom he died, that ever they should hear one word of his death.	4. Christ sends the means and reveals the way of life to all them for whom he died.
5. Christ, in his death, did not ratify nor confirm a covenant of grace with any federates, but only procured by his death that God might, if he would, enter into a new covenant with whom he would, and upon what condition he pleased.	5. The new covenant of grace was confirmed to all the elect in the blood of Jesus.
Christ might have died, and yet no one be saved.	6. Christ, by his death, purchased, upon covenant and compact, an assured peculiar people, the pleasure of the Lord prospering to the end in his hand.
7. Christ had no intention to redeem his church, any more than the wicked seed of the serpent.	7. Christ loved his church, and gave himself for it.
8. Christ died not for the infidelity of any.	8. Christ died for the infidelity of the elect.

Conclusion

John Owen makes a biblically and logically tight case for what is commonly but unfortunately called Limited Atonement. He extensively uses Scripture and Scriptural concepts to argue his case, which makes the case all the more convincing. Adding to the final and primary authority of Scripture, his good use of "sanctified” common sense and logic against universal

atonement and for definite redemption. This work, while extensive and verbose, is truly a blessing and a very good case not only for Particular Redemption, but on the whole question of the accomplishment and application of redemption. Owen spent 7 years writing and researching for this book, and it is still the foremost defense of particular redemption. No learned theologian may dismiss “Limited Atonement” without first giving Owen a hearing.

Μόνῳ σοφῷ Θεῷ, διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ἡ δόξα εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας. Ἀμήν.

Footnotes

1. ^ *John Owen. The Death Of Death In The Death Of Christ. (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust. 1959, 2013 reprint). p. 45.*
2. ^ *Ibid. pp. 67-68.*
3. ^ *Ibid. p. 68.*
4. ^ *Ibid. p. 69.*
5. ^ *Ibid. pp. 70-71.*
6. ^ *Ibid. pp. 71-74.*
7. ^ *Ibid. p. 89.*
8. a, b *Ibid. p. 96.*
9. ^ *Ibid. p. 98.*
10. ^ *Ibid. p. 99.*
11. ^ *Ibid. p. 100.*
12. ^ *Ibid. p. 101.*
13. ^ *Ibid. p. 111.*
14. a, b *Ibid. p. 113.*
15. a, b, c *Ibid. p. 121.*
16. ^ *Ibid. p. 124.*
17. ^ *Ibid. p. 131.*
18. ^ *Ibid. pp. 131-132.*
19. ^ *Ibid. p. 132.*
20. ^ *Ibid. p. 137.*
21. ^ *Ibid. p. 146.*
22. ^ *Ibid. p. 150.*
23. ^ *Ibid. p. 152.*
24. ^ *Ibid. p. 174.*
25. ^ *Ibid. pp. 175-176.*
26. ^ *Ibid. pp. 176-177.*
27. ^ *Ibid. p. 179.*
28. a, b *Ibid. p. 180.*
29. ^ *Ibid. p. 309.*
30. ^ *Ibid. p. 182.*
31. ^ *Ibid. pp. 190-191.*
32. ^ *Ibid. pp. 194-195.*
33. ^ *Ibid. p. 221.*
34. ^ *Ibid. pp. 195-196.*
35. ^ *Ibid. pp. 302-303*