

*Pastor's Papers* | Ronald H. Gann  
Theology/Doctrine

### ***Limited Atonement: What Did It Accomplish?***

Understanding Limited Atonement (Part 3)

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**W**e learn from the doctrine of Total Depravity that man, when left untouched by the Holy Spirit, is intrinsically wicked, spiritually enslaved, oppressed, and blinded; he is dead in sin and unable to choose God of his own desire. This is the natural state of fallen men everywhere, including the redeemed prior to their regeneration. Following that, we learn from the doctrine of Unconditional Election that God has chosen, or predestined, an elect group from this vast pool of depraved sinners to comprise His Church. This He has graciously done from all eternity, irrespective of man's foreseen faith or anything meritorious in the sinner, according to His good pleasure. Thus, we arrive at the "L" in Calvinism's T.U.L.I.P. acronym—and the logical continuation of Unconditional Election—Limited Atonement.

We can define Limited Atonement in abstract terms by answering the following question: What is the link between Unconditional Election and Limited Atonement? The answer is as awesome as it is poetical. In the same way that all believers were chosen by God in eternity past to be a love gift to Christ (John 6:37; 17:6, 24) so Christ was appointed as a love gift from all eternity to be their Redeemer (cf. 1 Pet. 1:20). That is to say, the Father not only chose believers for the Son but He also chose the Son to be the Savior for all believers. This is Unconditional Election as exercised among the Godhead. Those sovereignly elected by the Father are inextricably linked to the atonement of the Son.

More directly, however, the doctrine of Limited Atonement, or Particular Redemption as many Reformed theologians prefer to call it, speaks of God's design in the atonement and who it was He was intending to redeem when Christ died on the cross. Calvinists uphold that Christ died as a substitute for his people and bore the full weight of God's wrath on their behalf, paying the penalty for *their sin alone*. Christ intended to ransom *only His sheep* and actually secured everything necessary for their salvation. The gifts of faith and repentance are infallibly applied by the Spirit to all for whom Christ died, thereby guaranteeing their future salvation.

Limited Atonement is both exclusive in scope and accomplished in total. It achieved exactly *what* Christ intended and for *whom* it was intended. It not only satisfied God's wrath by paying the bloody price for sin but actually *secured* the redemption of all believers for all time (Heb. 9:12). More specifically, as "The good shepherd [who] lays down his life for the sheep" (John 10:11), Jesus Christ *delivered* (Heb. 2:15), *ransomed* (1 Pet. 1:18-19), *reconciled* (Rom. 5:10), *redeemed* (Gal. 3:13), and *justified* those same sheep "by his blood" (Rom. 5:9). It's a done deal, so to speak.

Christ ratified on the cross his redemptive work with the glorious words: “It is finished” (John 19:30).

All those for whom Christ died stand forever delivered, ransomed, reconciled, redeemed, and justified before God. These benefits are not contingent upon the future actions of men (and their willingness to believe) but on the past actions of God who sovereignly predestined “those who are written in the Lamb’s book of life ... before the foundation of the world” (Rev. 21:7, Eph. 1:4). In other words, Christ’s atonement transcends time and space and, in an inexplicable sense, actually predates the physical event itself. To the point, the apostle John reminds us that “the Lamb ... was slain *from the creation of the world*” (Rev. 13:8, emphasis added).

The Bible teaches that all believers—past, present, and future—were redeemed by Christ’s work on the cross. But does this mean, as Arminians try to argue, that Reformed Theology portends that Christians are born in a saved state of being, having been redeemed by an atonement made on their behalf long before they ever existed? The answer is no. Neither Unconditional Election nor Limited Atonement *saves* anyone. In fact, the question ignores the meaning of the word *redemption*.

The reader will search in vain for any biblical evidence that suggests that the death of Christ secured a believer’s salvation. Instead, the Bible makes clear that it was our *redemption* his atonement secured. “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law,” wrote the apostle Paul (Gal. 3:13). Likewise, the writer of Hebrews reminds us that it was “by means of his own blood,” that Christ succeeded in “thus securing an eternal redemption” (Heb. 9:12). While redemption leads unfailingly to salvation according to Calvinism (a point Arminians are quick to contest), the meaning and application of the two terms differ.

By definition, to be redeemed means to have the guilt of sin removed from one’s account by penal transaction. To be saved, however, means that same sinner is delivered from eternal punishment *by faith* in the One who made the penal transaction. Redemption, therefore, has nothing to do with a man’s personal belief system. It is something Christ already accomplished and took full responsibility for. But the salvation that comes from this redemption does indeed involve confession, faith, and repentance on the part of men.

Thus, Calvinists maintain that by removing the guilt of sin through the atoning work of Christ (thereby securing redemption), the once-enslaved sinner is free to actionably repent and actionably believe in Christ (thereby receiving salvation). But lest one is tempted to conclude, as Arminians hastily do, that this sequence places the onus for salvation on the response of man, we must not forget that the ability to repent and the act of faith are gifts *granted by God* with discretion. Both redemption and salvation, in other words, are ultimately the result of divine grace.

Limited Atonement, therefore, can be summarized as follows: Christ died specifically for, and limited to, every Christian in the New Testament age, to include all believing Jews and God-fearing Gentiles who lived in the Old Testament dispensation. And in dying for them, Christ *secured* their redemption and *guaranteed* their future salvation.

Arminians, not surprisingly, take the polar opposite position. They ascribe a target audience to the atonement that is limitless. Known as Universal (Unlimited) Atonement, this view maintains that Christ died for *everyone*—not merely the Elect. No

human being falls outside its reach and no sin is too heinous to be expiated, including the sin of unbelief. Everybody, saint and sinner alike, is a recipient of the shed blood of the Savior. However, while this doctrine maintains that Christ redeemed the whole world through his death, it guarantees the salvation of no one in particular. Redemption, while important to the Arminian mindset, is not a rubberstamp guarantee that a person will be saved. Said in reverse, the deliverance from sin's punishment does not necessarily follow the removal of sin's guilt.

By dying for all men, Arminians simply mean that Christ's death demonstrated God's moral hatred for the sins of the whole world. It pictured the *type* of retribution all sinners would have incurred and the *degree* to which God would go if He was to have punished the human race instead of His Son.<sup>1</sup> (This is known among theologians as the Governmental Theory of the atonement as opposed to the Reformed view of Penal-Substitution). Universal Atonement sees no penal transaction in the death of Christ (no actual deliverance was made for those for whom Christ died). It rejects forensic imputation (no actual righteousness was credited to those for whom Christ died). And it insists that no sins were expunged from man's record (no actual reconciliation was made for those whom Christ died). All of these things are simply *possibilities* in Universal Atonement; contingent upon man's applied faith. Thus, in Arminianism, the sacrifice of Christ is more or less a *theoretical* atonement.

Certainly Arminians believe that the aforementioned dividends—deliverance, righteousness, redemption, and reconciliation—are available through Christ's atonement. But they maintain that they are only applied to a sinner's account after he exercises his option of faith. In the end, it is the faith of fallen man that makes the atonement of any value.

Herein hides the fallacy behind the Arminian view. These same Christians overlook the fact that the atonement dividends described in Scripture are written in the *past-tense*. They are *completed actions* "from the creation of the world" (Rev. 13:8); not simply prospective rewards for faith. All believers, both would-be and actual, have already been *delivered* (Heb. 2:15), *reconciled* (Rom. 5:10), *ransomed* (1 Pet. 1:18-19), *redeemed* (Gal. 3:13), and *justified* through "his blood" (Rom. 5:9) long before they were born, much less exercised faith. They are contingent upon nothing that man does!

Notwithstanding this glorious truth, Arminians still insist that a sinner must *do something* to reap the whirlwind of blessings. If a sinner declines the generous offer of the gospel, we are then forced to admit that Christ's death was to no avail and the atonement dividends are retracted. In short, whatever Christ accomplished on the cross, Universal Atonement teaches that he did so homogeneously—or equally for all men—but with no guarantees. In the end, it is only a potential atonement, the benefits of which hinge upon the cooperation of reprobate man. Consistent Arminians, such as Norman Geisler, admit as much. "His death on the cross made salvation possible for all men," he affirmed, "but not actual—it is not actual until they receive it by faith."<sup>2</sup>

It is obvious that the atonement of Jesus Christ is no small point of disagreement between Arminians and Calvinists. On one side stands the Calvinist who argues for an atonement that is exclusive; it was intended for, and is appropriated by, an elect few. It guarantees the salvation of those for whom it was intended. On the other side stands the defiant Arminian who argues for an atonement that is inclusive; it was intended for, and

is available to, everybody, though it is beneficial only to the willing. It redeems *everyone* but guarantees the salvation of *no one*.

So on which side does the Bible land—Limited Atonement (Calvinism) or Universal Atonement (Arminianism)? The answer, as I see it, is Limited Atonement. But before defending this doctrine as an essential component to the Doctrines of Grace, we shall first put Universal Atonement to the acid test of Scripture. It is a widely-assumed doctrine among the majority of Christians in America today and, for that reason, warrants the remainder of our space here.

### The Falsehood, Foolishness, & Failure of Universal Atonement

Insofar as I understand Scripture—both logically and exegetically—there are at least four arguments against Universal (Unlimited) Atonement that are worthy of our consideration. Ranked in no particular order, they are as follows: (1) Universal Atonement is *incompetent*; (2) Universal Atonement is *ineffective*; (3) Universal Atonement is *inept*; and (4) Universal Atonement is *inappropriate*. Any one of these arguments—incompetence, ineffectiveness, ineptness, and inappropriateness—whether taken in part or combined as a whole, lay waste to the notion that Christ’s died *effectually* for all people.

The first argument against Universal Atonement is its *incompetence*. If ever there was a doctrine that required a better understanding of the original languages of Scripture it’s the atonement of Jesus Christ. In the Old Testament the word *atonement* is translated from the Hebrew verb *kaphar* (or the plural noun *kippur* that is a derivative of the verb) and appears some 69 times.<sup>3</sup> By definition, and without exception, *kaphar* (atonement) means “to cover [over], purge ... make reconciliation.”<sup>4</sup> The idea, therefore, is that whenever atonement is depicted in Scripture something or someone is “covered over” and “reconciled” to an offended other. In no way is it ever a partial covering, a potential purging, or possible reconciliation, but it is always full, fitting, and finished. Dr. J.I. Packer writes, “Atonement means making amends, blotting out the offense, and giving satisfaction for wrong done; thus reconciling to oneself the alienated other and restoring the disrupted relationship.”<sup>5</sup>

For example, long before the inauguration of the Jewish sacrificial system (cf. Lev. 17:11), the biblical concept of atonement was put into action. God instructed Noah in Genesis 6:14 to “Make yourself an ark of gopher wood. Make rooms in the ark, and cover it (*kaphar* [atonement]) inside and out with pitch.” We then read that “Noah did everything just as God commanded him” (v. 22). From the use of *kaphar* (atonement) in this passage we learn that the ark of Noah was totally atoned for—that is, it was “covered over” and “purged”—with bitumen. The ark was neither potentially nor partially covered but was fully and completely sealed. Noah “reconciled” with pitch all potential leaks in the crevices of the boat’s planking. It was a sufficient and efficient atonement on Noah’s part that redeemed the boat’s usability.

In another context, when Jacob feared for his life just before his reunion with an angry Esau, the patriarch vowed: “I will appease him (*kaphar* [atonement]) with the present that goes before me. Then afterward I will see his face; perhaps he will accept

me” (Gen. 32:20). Similar to Noah in Genesis 6:14, we learn that Jacob intended to “cover over” the wrong he had committed against Esau by providing a gift of reconciliation. It was a sufficient and efficient atonement on Jacob’s part.<sup>6</sup>

Lastly, and most famously, atonement is associated with the Day of Atonement in the Old Testament. Celebrated as Yom Kippur today, the Day of Atonement in Scripture was “the day of covering over” (*kaphar* [atonement]). It was the most sacred convocation of all the Israelite feasts and festivals, occurring only once a year (Lev. 16:1-34; 23:27-28).

On the tenth day of Tishri, the seventh month of the Hebrew calendar, the high priest performed elaborate rituals to atone for the sins of the people. Among other things, he brought with him to the tabernacle or the Temple two goats, one to be sacrificed “because of the uncleanness and rebellion of the Israelites, whatever their sins have been” (Lev. 16:16) and the other to serve as a scapegoat. The high priest would place his hands on the scapegoat’s head, confess over it the rebellion and wickedness of the Israelites, and then banish the goat from the camp of Israel. The goat carried on itself all the sins of the people, which were “covered over” and “purged” from Israel’s camp for another year. On this solemn holy day, God “reconciled” Himself to His chosen people. In keeping with the definition of *kaphar* (atonement), the best modern colloquialism would be to say that each year on the Day of Atonement the sins of Israel were “swept under the rug.”

To summarize briefly, the biblical concept of atonement is definitive and for which literal, practical, and figurative meanings apply. It can be true *literally* by smearing tar over a boat (i.e. Noah), *practically* by providing a gift of reconciliation (i.e. Jacob), or *figuratively* by smearing animal blood over sin (i.e. the Day of Atonement). In each case, the act of “covering over” is involved.

In terms of its Christological meaning, our Lord’s atonement was literal, practical, and figurative all at the same time. It was literal since Jesus died an actual death on the altar of a cross. It was practical by virtue of the fact that his death fully satisfied God’s wrath. And it was figurative in the sense that Jesus is portrayed in the New Testament as the Old Testament sacrificial lamb (and scapegoat) whose death completely “covered [over]” and “purge[d]” his people from the guilt of their iniquities. There was nothing theoretical or hypothetical about it; neither was it potentially effective or only ninety-nine percent finished (with the last one percent dependent upon man’s faith). It was a work of full restitution that Christ performed alone—literally, practically, and figuratively—and to God’s complete satisfaction. It did not fail to meet its reconciliatory ends for those whom it was intended.

Only when we have a proper understanding of what *atonement* actually means in Scripture do we begin to see the canard that is Universal Atonement. Its proponents, though well-meaning, diminish the propitiating—or satisfactory—work of Christ on the cross by imposing an alien definition that robs the atonement of its beauty and efficacy.

The second argument against Universal Atonement is its *ineffectiveness*. Because Arminians believe that Christ’s atonement was, at best, merely the demonstration of God’s wrath against the sins of the world (Governmental Theory) but was not substitutionary in nature (Penal-Substitution Theory), we can rightly conclude that Universal Atonement is *ineffectual*. By ineffectual we mean that it didn’t really accomplish anything, other than serve as a cautionary tale to reprobate sinners.

That Christ is said to have offered atonement for the sins of *all* men, according to Arminianism, but afterwards the majority of these same men will be eternally punished for their sin of unbelief—for which Christ supposedly already atoned—is to accept a confusing atonement that apparently failed to do its job. This truth is seen in the fact that a vast majority of human beings (for whom Christ supposedly died) will never bend the knee to him in saving faith and therefore will not enter the light of heaven. So while Christ died for all, we are told, not all will be saved. Even more harrowing, Scripture informs us that *most* people will end up in hell. So we must ask: *What kind of a universal atonement is that?*

From the testimony of his own lips Jesus rendered the notion of Universal Atonement preposterous. In point of fact, he warned that “many, I tell you, will try to enter [heaven] and will not be able to” (Luke 13:24). He said elsewhere, “the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction and those who enter by it are many” (Matt. 7:13). The “many” that Christ has in mind in these passages refer to the *majority* of people in redemptive history who have been, or eventually will be, condemned eternally to the parapets of hell. And this “many” he speaks of is juxtaposed against “the few” who have been, or eventually will be, saved eternally in the glories of heaven. His words reveal the startling truth that the salvation of the saints is a minority report. This jives with the apostle Paul who likewise said, “... only the remnant will be saved” (Rom. 9:27). Thus, if Universal Atonement is to be accepted as true, we have no choice but to conclude that the majority for whom Christ died are forever lost to the Hound of Heaven and are rotting in hell. Universal Atonement appears to be not so universally atoning after all.

So how can an atonement that claims to be universal in scope wind up so broadly ineffective? If Jesus Christ atoned for the sins of *all* men—that is, he “covered [over], purge[d] ... made reconciliation” for every human being who has ever lived—why, then, are not *all* men reconciled and saved? Even more, why are so many condemned?

Sadly, to these familiar questions we are given unconvincing answers. I was disheartened to read one Arminian blogger who took a stab at these questions only to thoughtlessly dismiss them by towing the party line. In addition to espousing an atonement that contradicts the biblical meaning “to cover [over], purge ... [to] make reconciliation,” this blogger’s online rebuttal included the predictable talking points that Calvinists have come to expect from aficionados of Universal Atonement. He blogged the following:

Jesus did die for the sins of the world ... That free gift was paid for by Jesus suffering and dying on the cross ... [But] God is not going to force that gift [of the atonement] on someone who doesn’t want it. He is not going to violate our free will. Unfortunately, those people who reject God’s free gift of salvation will suffer eternal torment and separation from God ... Jesus died for the sins of all people, but only the people who accepted God’s free gift will benefit from that gift. The others willingly choose not to accept the gift and therefore willingly choose to suffer the consequence.<sup>7</sup>

Here we see the fault lines in the Arminian foundation start to quake. Everything that is crucial to gaining eternal life, we are told, rides on the autonomy of man. In order

for the atonement of Christ to be of any value whatsoever it must first be appropriated by a sinner's self-induced faith. God may decree a person's salvation, the Son may die to obtain his redemption, and the Spirit may exercise His divine prerogative in bringing conviction and enlightenment. But all of this, so says Universal Atonement, is not enough to bring about salvation unless the will of the creature cooperates.

The third argument against Universal Atonement is its *ineptness*. Universal Atonement sees that vast majority of so-called "redeemed" men (for whom Christ died) end up in hell. This forced Arminian writer Rob Bell to say, "Hell is full of forgiven people God loves, whom Jesus died for."<sup>8</sup> Say what one will about Rob Bell's postmodern theology, and he certainly has his critics (of which I am one), but he's refreshingly consistent in his conclusions.

*Hell is full of forgiven people?* Can such an awful thought really be true? It is apparently so in Arminianism. If Universal Atonement is correct, and Christ redeemed all men while at the same time most of them will end up in hell, according to Jesus' own words, we have no choice but to agree with Bell. For the vast majority for whom Christ apparently died—the delivered, the redeemed, the ransomed, the reconciled, and the justified—hell is their eternal home. This is consistent Arminianism at its base level.

But lest we discount Bell's words as less than mainstream and too controversial to be taken seriously, I would caution the reader to remember that Bell stands in good company. His compatriots include renowned men of orthodoxy who have made a big splash in Church history, not the least of which is John Wesley, the leading Arminian of the eighteenth century. Wesley's words in favor of Universal Atonement should give us pause, as they reflect the same sentiment held by many evangelicals today. To Calvinists, however, they are utterly unthinkable. Wesley admitted the following:

What! Can the blood of Christ burn in hell? ... I answer ... If the oracles of God are true, one who was purchased by the blood of Christ may go thither. For he that was sanctified by the blood of Christ was purchased by the blood of Christ. *But one who was sanctified by the blood of Christ may nevertheless go to hell;* may fall under that fiery indignation which shall for ever devour the adversaries.<sup>9</sup>

For Wesley, it was entirely feasible, and in fact a theological reality, that the blood of Christ, and those sanctified by it, could "burn in hell." Universal Atonement, to which Wesley subscribed, agrees with him, since the blood of Christ is purported to have been shed for all of hell's condemned occupants. Consistent Arminians and reluctant Calvinians apparently have no problem embracing an atonement that offers zero guarantees and fails miserably to accomplish its intended purpose—at least for the greater part of humanity.

Such a notion should disturb any thoughtful Christian—whether an Arminian, a Calvinian, or a Calvinist. To even suggest that those who have been delivered (Heb. 2:15), reconciled (Rom. 5:10), ransomed (1 Pet. 1:18-19), redeemed (Gal. 3:13), and justified (Rom. 5:9) through the sacrificial blood of Christ can just as easily be undelivered, un-reconciled, un-ransomed, un-redeemed, and un-justified and lost to eternity by an act of free-will is the height of theological dementia. For this reason, it bears repeating one more time: If the effectiveness of the atonement is ultimately

dependent upon the responsibility of men to accept it by faith, lest they face the licking flames of eternal perdition, then the atonement of Jesus Christ, in and of itself, is largely ineffectual. It only *becomes* effective, or a reality, if sinners believe that it is so.

The Arminian view of atonement pleads with us to believe that God was able to accomplish the *meriting* aspect of salvation but the *applying* aspect is dependent upon man and his free-will. It asks us to believe that God has worked out everyone's salvation up to a point, short of actually guaranteeing it, but will go no further. The implication is that God has built the bridge of salvation between Him and us, and we have only to walk over it by accepting His terms of salvation through a free act of faith. "God does his part," Arminians generally say, "and now we must do our part." On this point Dr. R.C. Sproul has observed:

In this view faith is not only a condition for redemption, but also one of the very grounds of redemption. If the atonement is not efficacious apart from faith, then faith must be necessary for the satisfaction of divine justice. Here faith becomes a work with a vengeance because its presence or absence in a sinner determines the efficacy of Christ's work of satisfaction for this person ...

It is one thing to agree that faith is a necessary condition for the appropriation of the benefits of Christ's atoning work, for justification and its fruits. It is quite another to say that faith is a necessary condition for the satisfaction of divine justice. *If faith is a condition for God's justice to be satisfied, then the atonement, in itself, is not sufficient to satisfy the demands of God's justice* (emphasis added).<sup>10</sup>

To a certain extent the Arminian view of atonement, no matter how unintentional, disavows the saving ministry of the Holy Spirit, since it claims that Christ's blood has a wider application than does the Spirit's saving work. In other words, the blood of Jesus Christ reaches all men, we are told, but apparently the convicting touch of the Holy Spirit falls short. But this is a theological fallacy. Any presentation of salvation that makes the Holy Spirit's work in salvation lag behind the Father's or the Son's contradicts the inherent unity of the Trinity. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are one, both in essence and in purpose. Therefore, Christ could not possibly have died for those whom the Father did *not* decree to save and in whom the Spirit does *not* savingly work. God cannot be at odds with Himself.

The fourth argument against Universal Atonement is its *inappropriateness*. The theological and philosophical problems posed by Universal Atonement do not end with an atonement that sees the majority of so-called redeemed people wind up in hell, as outlandish as such teaching is. But this doctrine is also stricken with ailments that baffle one's sense of justice. More specifically, at issue are some of the subjects for whom Christ is said to have shed his blood under the all-inclusive umbrella of Universal Atonement. And when we consider just some of these names, we cannot help but shutter.

Modern Arminians are generally unaware of the history of Arminianism, and the fact that the phrases "Jesus took the place of sinners" or "Jesus died for us" or "Jesus'

death paid the penalty for sin” are lifted straight from the Reformed doctrine of Penal-Substitution. But to apply Penal-Substitution across the board to all men for all time in every place by way of Universal Atonement is to blunder egregiously. It is to essentially say that Christ sacrificially died as a substitute for Esau whom God hated (Rom. 9:13); for Judas, “the son of perdition” (John 17:12); for the Antichrist, the “man of sin” (2 Thess. 2:3); for the whore of Babylon, and those in the false church (Rev. 17:1-2); as well as for those who commit the unpardonable sin (Matt. 12:32), who never hear the Word (Psa. 147:19-20), and those who are already condemned in hell.

Are we really to believe that Christ spilt his blood *effectually* for these individuals, to include the likes of Emperor Nero, Pontius Pilate, Bloody Mary, Pol Pot, and Adolf Hitler, on the gamble that these so-called delivered, ransomed reconciled, redeemed, and justified people would take him up on his atoning offer and voluntarily repent? How such teaching squares with divine justice goes well beyond reason.

Those who see the atonement of Christ as limited, however, see this Arminian teaching as a gross fiction, and do so without apology. If Universal Atonement is true, then Christ’s atonement is merely theoretical at best; the extent of its value is worthless unless appropriated by man through faith. Secondly, if Universal Atonement is true, and Christ died and made expiation (cleansing) for every single human being who has ever lived, then the fact that the vast majority of people throughout history are eternally condemned to hell is the greatest miscarriage of divine justice known to man. And lastly, if Universal Atonement is true, we are then forced to swallow the ugly notion that Christ died a substitutionary death for every notorious God-hater who has ever scarred human history and refused to repent.

The tragedy of Universal Atonement is that it makes all men *savable* while failing to save the preponderance of them. It redeems the entire world, but does not rescue the world from hell. It makes salvation *possible* for everybody but certain for no one. The comprehensive atonement of Jesus Christ is to no avail, we’re asked to believe, unless depraved, reprobate, and spiritually dead sinners embrace it by an act of so-called free-will.

In the end, Arminianism leaves us with an ineffective atonement of an impotent Savior who accomplished virtually nothing. The Arminian atonement is inconsequential on its own merits. Moreover, by contending that Christ died for the vilest of men (who never repented), to include Judas Iscariot and the Antichrist, demonstrates that it is also desperately inappropriate in its reach. The only alternative to such ghastly teaching is an atonement that is limited and particular—for Limited Atonement in Calvinism is an atonement that succeeds where Arminianism fails; it’s an atonement that ultimately saves where Arminianism mostly condemns; and it is an atonement that is actual and accomplished, rather than merely partial and plausible.

—Ronald H. Gann

<sup>1</sup> Although many Arminians object to the accusation, such as Roger E. Olson, and insist they believe in the Reformed doctrine of penal substitution in Christ's atonement, the truth is that most Arminians ignorantly hold to the moral government theory instead.

<sup>2</sup> Norman Geisler, *Chosen But Free*; (Bethany House Publishers; 1999); p. 80

<sup>3</sup> Brown, Driver and Briggs, *Brown-Driver-Briggs' Hebrew Definitions*; (Hendrickson Publishers, 1996)

<sup>4</sup> Blue Letter Bible. "Dictionary and Word Search for *kaphar* (Strong's 3722)". Blue Letter Bible. 1996-2011

<sup>5</sup> J.I. Packer, *Concise Theology: A Guide to Historic Christian Belief*; (Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1993); p. 134

<sup>6</sup> What is more, the resulting ceasefire between the two brothers foreshadowed Christ's atoning reunion with his own spiritual brothers. Christ laid claim to this reconciliation in Hebrews 2 where he is said to have atoned for "my brothers ... the children God has given me" by making "their salvation perfect through suffering" (2:10-11, 13).

<sup>7</sup> [jesusandfaith.com/2010/02/10/did-christ-jesus-die-for-the-sins-of-everyone](http://jesusandfaith.com/2010/02/10/did-christ-jesus-die-for-the-sins-of-everyone)

<sup>8</sup> Rob Bell, *Velvet Elvis: Repainting the Christian Faith*; (Zondervan, 2006); p. 146

<sup>9</sup> *The Works of John Wesley, Vol. 10*; (Baker Books, 1996); p. 297

<sup>10</sup> R.C. Sproul, *What is Reformed Theology?*; (Baker Books; 1997); pp. 165-66