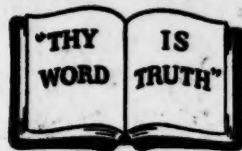


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Department of  
**Systematic Theology**

**FOR WHOM DID CHRIST DIE?**

**BY LEWIS SPERRY CHAFER, D.D., LITT.D.**

*Introduction*

Here the student undertakes the discussion of a question which for many centuries has divided and yet divides some of the most orthodox and scholarly theologians. On the one hand, those who according to theological usage are known as *Limited Redemptionists* contend that Christ died only for that elect company who in all dispensations were predetermined of God to be saved; and, on the other hand, those who according to the same theological usage are known as *Unlimited Redemptionists* contend that Christ died for all men who live in the present age, which age is bounded by the two advents of Christ, and that His death has other and specific values in its relation to the ages past as well as the ages to come. The issue is well-defined, and men of sincere loyalty to the Word of God and who possess true scholarship are found on both sides of the controversy. It is true that the doctrine of a limited redemption is one of the five points of Calvinism, but not all who are rightfully classified as Calvinists accept this one feature of that system. It is equally true that all Arminians are unlimited redemptionists, but to hold the doctrine of unlimited redemption does not necessarily constitute one an Arminian. There is nothing incongruous in the fact that many unlimited redemptionists believe, in harmony with all Calvinists, in the unalterable and eternal decree of God whereby all things were determined after His own will, and in the sovereign election of some to be saved (but not all), and in the divine predestination of those who are saved to the heavenly glory prepared for them. Without the slightest inconsistency the

unlimited redemptionists may believe in an election according to sovereign grace, that *none* but the elect will be saved, that *all* of the elect will be saved, and that the elect are by divine enablement alone called out of the estate of spiritual death from which they are impotent to take even one step in the direction of their own salvation. The text, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him" (John 6:44), is as much a part of the one system of doctrine as it is of the other.

It is not easy to disagree with good and great men. However, as they appear on each side of this question it is impossible to entertain a conviction and not oppose those who are of a contrary mind. The disagreement now under discussion is not between orthodox and heterodox men; it is within the fellowship of those who have most in common and who need the support and encouragement of each other's confidence. Few themes have drawn out more sincere and scholarly investigation.

(1) *Classification of views.*

When recognizing more specifically the divisions of theological thought concerning the extent of the value of the death of Christ, it will be found that the limited redemptionists are divided into two general groups, and that the unlimited redemptionists are likewise divided into two general groups, making, in all, four divisions, or parties, in relation to this question. The position held by these may be defined briefly as follows:

(a) *The Extreme Limited Redemptionist.*

This group is sometimes styled the High, or Ultra, Calvinist. It includes the Supralapsarians who, as has been seen, assert that the decree of divine election stands first in the order of elective decrees—before the decree to permit the fall, and before the decree to provide salvation. Such a view could make no place for an unlimited redemption, nor could it encourage the preaching of the gospel to those who, they contend, were reprobated from the beginning.

(b) The Moderate Calvinist who is a Limited Redemptionist.

The appellation, *Moderate Calvinist*, in this instance, is based on the belief that the decree to elect is preceded by the decree to create and the decree to permit the fall. Though these men contend for a limited redemption, they make a place for world-wide preaching of the gospel and grant certain concessions not possible to the extreme Calvinists.

(c) The Moderate Calvinist who is an Unlimited Redemptionist.

The men who belong to this school of interpretation defend all of the five points of Calvinism excepting one, namely, "Limited Atonement," or what has been termed "the weakest point in the Calvinistic system of doctrine." This form of moderate Calvinism is more the belief of Bible expositors than of the theologians, which fact is doubtless due to the truth that the Bible, taken in its natural terminology and apart from those strained interpretations which are required to defend a theory, seems to teach an unlimited redemption. Men of this group believe that Christ died actually and fully for all men of this age alike, that God has ordained that the gospel shall be preached to all for whom Christ died, and that through the proclamation of the gospel He will exercise His sovereign power in saving His elect. This group believes in the absolute depravity of man and his total inability to believe apart from the enabling power of the Spirit, and that the death of Christ, being *forensic*, is a sufficient ground for any and every man to be saved, should the Spirit of God choose to draw him. They contend that the death of Christ of itself saves no man, either *actually* or *potentially*, but that it does render all men *savable*, that salvation is wrought of God alone, and at the time the individual *believes*.

(d) The Arminian.

An exhaustive study of the Arminian view is not called for here, this being a consideration of those variations which

obtain between Calvinists. Enough will be presented if it be remarked that the Arminians hold that Christ's death was for all men alike, and that it secures for everyone a measure of common grace whereby all are able to believe if they will. Men are, according to this view, subject to divine judgment only on the ground of their wilful rejection of Christ's salvation.

Unclassified mention may be made of a theory advanced by F. W. Grant which is to the effect that Christ's death is a *propitiation* for the whole world, and a *substitution* for the elect; but Mr. Grant has failed to disclose how God could be propitious toward the world apart from the substitutionary aspect of Christ's death. Mr. Grant is doubtless seeking to distinguish between that which is *potential* for all mankind and that which has been *consummated* in, and *applied* to, the elect who are saved.

(2) *Points of agreement and disagreement between the two schools of Moderate Calvinists.*

*First*, it is a common belief that all men are not to be saved. Both schools will unite in a rejection of any form of universalism or restitutionism. An innumerable company are to be saved and an innumerable company are to be lost. *Second*, it is a common belief that the death of Christ is suitable in the sense that it would answer the need of every fallen man. *Third*, it is a common belief that men could be saved by no other means than the death and resurrection of Christ. *Fourth*, the gospel is to be preached to all, but the underlying freedom to preach is different within one group than it is within the other. *Fifth*, faith must be wrought in the unsaved by the Holy Spirit. *Sixth*, only the elect will be saved. *Seventh*, whatever Christ did, whether for the elect or non-elect, is suspended awaiting compliance on the part of the unsaved with the divinely imposed conditions. No person is born forgiven or justified. *Eighth*, the belief of one group is that God provides salvation for the elect to the end that the elect might be saved. The belief of the other group is that God provided salvation for all men to

the end that the elect might be saved. Both schools appeal to the Scriptures, though the one is forced, because of its restricted nature, to make strained interpretations of the so-called universal passages. Reference will be had to these strained interpretations as this paper advances.

No concessions are required on the part of the unlimited redemptionists. Their system is not complicated or involved. The limited redemptionist concedes that what Christ did would be sufficient to save the non-elect were such an one to believe; but the ultra Calvinist could not concede that the elect would be lost if such an one were not to believe, since under that system the death of Christ for a soul becomes the surety for that soul to such a degree that it could not be lost.

In this connection it is well to observe that salvation is vastly more than the forgiveness of sins. It is not difficult to demonstrate that sins are accounted for by the fact that Christ bore them on the cross, but to assert that the bearing of sin is equivalent to the salvation of the one for whom Christ suffered is quite another thing. Certain features of man's salvation through Christ are directly secured through the cross of Christ—forgiveness, eternal life, justification, all his positions in Christ, and some aspects of sanctification. However, other features of salvation—a place in the family and household of God, adoption, heavenly citizenship, access to God, freedom under grace from the merit system—are wrought by God as the expression of divine benevolence and are related to the death of Christ only as God is rendered free through Christ's death to act in behalf of those who believe. It is therefore both unscriptural and misleading to imply that there is no distinction to be drawn between that aspect of the saving work of God which provides a Savior, and the saving work of God in which the mighty transformations which constitute a Christian what he is are accomplished. No responsibility of faith is laid on the sinner to provide the values of Christ's death, but salvation itself is only realized in answer to saving faith. There is



nothing inconsistent, if God so wills, in a circumstance which leaves even the elect in a lost estate until they believe; nor is there any inconsistency if one for whom Christ died should be left in a lost estate forever. The limited redemptionist considers the death of Christ as actual for the elect and of no saving benefit for the non-elect, while the unlimited redemptionist considers the death of Christ as actual for the elect and potential and provisional for the non-elect. The notion is without foundation which assumes that a thing is less real because its acceptance may be uncertain or conditional.

The human estimation of the immeasurable value of Christ's death in behalf of lost men is in no way lessened or discredited by the belief that its value is received at the time that saving faith is exercised rather than at the time the Savior died. The unlimited redemptionist is in no way forced, because of his belief, to take a second place in magnifying the glorious saving work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The highway of divine election is quite apart from the highway of redemption. With respect to election it is declared that "whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified" (Rom. 8:30), and in this great certainty every believer may rejoice. In respect to redemption it is written that Christ died for fallen men, and that salvation based on that death is proffered to all who believe, and that condemnation rests on those who do not believe, and on the ground that they refuse that which has been provided for them. It would seem unnecessary to point out that men cannot reject what does not even exist, and that if Christ did not die for the non-elect they cannot be condemned for unbelief (cf. John 3:18). Both salvation and condemnation are conditioned on the individual's reaction to one and the same thing, namely, the saving grace of God made possible through the death of Christ.

In a former connection, the extent of the outreach of Christ's death has been considered. In all, fourteen measure-



less divine achievements have been enumerated. Only a restricted portion of these achievements is involved in this discussion. In the light of the great and complex work of Christ reaching out to past ages and to ages to come, to an entire merit system, to angelic spheres, to heaven itself, to the judgment of the sin nature, to the propitiation for the Christian's sins, and to the delay of righteous judgments against all sin, the question as to whether He died for the elect or the whole world is reduced, comparatively, to a small issue. The limited redemptionist concedes, with his opponent, that divine judgments are delayed on the ground of a universal thing which Christ accomplished in His death; but, by so much, the principle of a universal value in His death is acknowledged and the step is indeed insignificant from that position to the position occupied by the universal redemptionist.

Within the range of human reason, a problem arises which has been the point of attack against Calvinists by Socinians and by Arminians, namely, that if Christ bears the sin of any person, that person should benefit by that divine sacrifice and be free from that judgment which the Savior bore. To avoid this problem, the limited redemptionist contends that Christ died for the elect only. The unlimited redemptionist believes that, while Christ died provisionally for all men, the benefit is applied only when the condition of personal saving faith is met. The limited redemptionist of the moderate school believes with his opponent that none are forgiven until they believe and by so much he fails to solve the problem which his system was originated to disentangle. To the unlimited redemptionist, the seeming inequity of a judgment falling upon a person after Christ has borne that judgment is but one more mystery which the finite mind cannot understand. The unlimited redemptionist recognizes two revelations which are equally clear—that Christ died for the *cosmos* world, and that His death is the ground of condemnation for those who do not believe. That men are saved on the one condition of personal faith and

that men are condemned for want of that faith are plain teachings of the New Testament. It is equally as great a mystery and one which is closely related to the present problem that, though faith is divinely wrought in the human heart, men are treated as though faith originated in them. They are blessed eternally who have that faith and are condemned eternally who have it not. The devout soul must recognize his own limitations and here, as elsewhere, be satisfied to receive as true what God has spoken.

Much of the truth incorporated in these introductory remarks will be treated more fully in the following pages. This proposed discussion of this issue which divides the two schools of moderate Calvinists will pursue the following order: (a) the dispensational feature of the problem, (b) the three determining doctrines, (c) the fact that the cross is not the only saving instrumentality, (d) universal gospel preaching, (e) the question whether God is defeated if men are lost for whom Christ has died, (f) the doctrine of *Substitution*, (g) the testimony of the Scriptures.

#### I. DISPENSATIONAL ASPECTS OF THE PROBLEM

Judging from their writings, the limited redemptionists frequently ignore dispensational distinctions, recognizing, as they usually do, but one elective purpose of God, in which they include all within the human family from Adam to the present generation who have experienced any divine favor. By this method of interpretation the Patriarchs, the Israelites, and the New Testament Church are assumed to be but one unbroken succession. Without hesitation they draw material for argument from the Old Testament relationships, and assume that whatever may have been true in previous dispensations is comparable and applicable in the present age, whereas the informed unlimited redemptionist recognizes the dispensational features of God's dealings with man, and contends that the universal aspect of the value of Christ's death could apply only to the present age of the outcalling of that elect company which comprises the Church (which is also designated the Body of Christ)—an age differing,

as it does, from all other ages in many respects, notably, that in it a universal gospel is to be preached, that all distinctions between Jews and Gentile are broken down (Rom. 3:9; 10:12; Eph. 3:6), and that tremendous changes were wrought by the death and resurrection of Christ which place the people of this age in a position of responsibility toward God heretofore unknown.

It should be recognized that Israel is an elect *nation* into which race each of her succeeding generations entered by physical birth, and that there is no basis in the fact of Israel's *national* election for comparison with the Church which is composed of elect *individuals*, including both Jews and Gentiles, each one predestined, called, justified, and glorified (Rom. 8:30), and commissioned to proclaim a world-wide gospel, which responsibility was wholly unknown in previous ages. It is true that a door was open for proselytes to enter Jewry; but, whatever may have been the facts, nothing is said of their being foreordained to do so, or that they exercised saving faith, or that they were regenerated as men are now regenerated, or that a gospel was ever preached unto them. The striking inability to see divine distinctions and purposes concerning humanity is disclosed in the pamphlet, *The Redeemed, Who Are They?*, by Rev. James Mortimer Sanger, B.A. Contending for the opinion that in all ages there are but two classes of people in the world—the good and the bad, this author further claims that Genesis 3:15 anticipates two lines of seed, and that Christ died for the seed of the woman, but not for the seed of Satan. Unfortunately for this theory the seed of the woman is Christ Himself, and none can doubt from Ephesians 2:1, 2 but that salvation has since come to some, at least, who were originally vitally related to Satan as fully as an unregenerate ever could be.

National election, too often confused with individual election (note the Apostle's warning to the nation Israel on this point as recorded in Rom. 9:4-13), anticipates no more than the ultimate blessing of Israel as a nation and their national

preservation unto that end. Ahab and Athaliah, along with Abraham and Sarah, were partakers alike in Israel's national election. However, a judgment day for Israel is predicted when multitudes will be rejected (Ezek. 20:33-44; Dan. 12:1-3). There is, however, a recognition in the Bible of a spiritual remnant in all Israel's generations; but that spiritual group shared no additional covenants, their distinction being due to their willingness to be more faithful to those relations to Jehovah which were the privileges extended to all in Israel. The remnant out of Israel in this age is "a remnant according to the election of grace" (Rom. 11:5), and is composed of those who are saved by faith in Christ, and therefore partake of the heavenly calling which pertains to the Church. It is not until a Deliverer comes out of Zion that all Israel will be saved (Rom. 11:27), and this salvation will not only be unto the realization of all their national, earthly covenants, but also unto the taking away of their sins. In the present time, as above stated, only a remnant out of Israel are being saved and as *individuals*, which is according to the divine election in grace and unto the heavenly glory of the Church. Nor is there assurance that all Gentiles will be saved in this dispensation. God is rather visiting the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name (Acts 16:14). Eventually worldwide blessings for Gentiles will be experienced (Acts 15:18), but not until the promised One returns and rebuilds the tabernacle of David which is fallen down (Acts 15:16, 17). Therefore, the issues relative to limited or unlimited redemption must be confined to the present age with its divine purpose in the outcalling of the Church, or hopeless confusion must result—such, indeed, as does prevail to a large extent at the present time. Problems relative to God's ways with people of other ages are important in their place, but are not germane to this discussion.

## II. THREE DOCTRINAL WORDS

Though common to theological usage, the terms *limited redemption* and *unlimited redemption* are inadequate to express the whole of the problem which is under consideration.

There are three major aspects of truth set forth in New Testament doctrine relative to the unmeasured benefits provided for the *unsaved* through the death of Christ, and redemption is but one of the three. Each of these aspects of truth is in turn expressed by one word, surrounded as each word is by a group of derivatives or synonyms of that word. These three words are: ἀπολύτρωσις, translated *redemption*; καταλλαγὴ, translated *reconciliation*, and ἰλασμός, translated *propitiation*. The riches of divine grace which these three words represent transcend all human thought or language; but these truths must be declared in human terms if declared at all. As it is necessary to have four Gospels, since it is impossible for one, two, or even three, to present the full truth concerning our Lord Jesus Christ, so the Scriptures approach the great benefit of Christ's death for the *unsaved* from three angles, to the end that what may be lacking in one may be supplied in the others. There are at least four other great words—*forgiveness*, *regeneration*, *justification*, and *sanctification*—which represent spiritual blessings secured by the death of Christ; but these are to be distinguished from the three already mentioned in one important particular, namely, that these four words refer to aspects of truth which belong only to those who are *saved*. Over against these, the three words *redemption*, *reconciliation*, and *propitiation*, though incorporating in the scope of their meaning vital truths belonging to the state of the *saved*, refer in particular to that which Christ wrought for the *unsaved* in His death on the cross. What is termed *the finished work of Christ* may be defined as the sum total of all that these three words connote when restricted to those aspects of their meaning which apply alone to the *unsaved*. *Redemption* is within the sphere of relationship which exists between the sinner and his sins, and this word, with those grouped with it, contemplates sin as a slavery, with the sinner as the slave, and freedom to be secured only through the redemption, or ransom, which is found in Christ Jesus (John 8:32-36; Rom. 6:17-20; 8:21; 2 Pet. 2:19; Gal. 5:1). *Recon-*

*ciliation* is within the sphere of relationship which exists between the sinner and God, and contemplates the sinner as at enmity with God, and Christ as the maker of peace between God and man (Rom. 5:10; 8:7; 2 Cor. 5:19; James 4:4). *Propitiation* is also within the sphere of relationship which exists between God and the sinner, but *propitiation* contemplates the larger necessity of God being just when He justifies the sinner, and Christ as an Offering, a Sacrifice, a Lamb slain, who, by meeting every demand of God's holiness against the offender, renders God righteously *propitious* toward that offender (Rom. 3:25; 1 John 2:2; 4:10). Thus it may be seen that *redemption* is the *sinward* aspect of the cross, *reconciliation* is the *manward* aspect of the cross, and *propitiation* is the *Godward* aspect of the cross, and that these three great doctrines combine to declare, as best any human terms are able, one divine undertaking.

From the foregoing it will be seen that the question at issue between the limited redemptionists and the unlimited redemptionists is as much a question of limited or unlimited *reconciliation*, and limited or unlimited *propitiation*, as it is one of limited or unlimited *redemption*. Having made a careful study of these three words and the group of words which must be included with each, one will hardly deny but that there is a twofold application of the truth represented by each.

There is the aspect of *redemption* that is represented by the word ἀγοράζω, translated *redeem*, which word means *to purchase in the market*; and, while it is used to express the general theme of redemption, its technical meaning implies only the *purchase* of the slave, but does not necessarily convey the thought of his *release* from slavery. The word ἐξαγοράζω, also translated *redeem*, implies much more, in that ἐξ, meaning *out of*, or *out from*, is combined with ἀγοράζω and thus indicates that the slave is *purchased out of the market* (Note here, also, the even stronger terms λυτρόω and ἀπολύτρωσις with their connotation *to loose and to set free*). There is, then, a redemption which *pays the*



*price*, but does not of necessity *release* the slave, as well as redemption which is unto *abiding freedom*. It is probable that the reference to redemption in VIII, 5, and VIII, 8 of the Westminster Confession has the efficacious redemption in view which is completed in those who are saved.

According to 2 Corinthians 5:19 there is a *reconciliation* declared to be world-wide and wholly wrought of God; yet, in the verse which follows in the context, it is indicated that the individual sinner has the responsibility, in addition to the universal reconciliation wrought of God, to be himself reconciled to God. What God has accomplished has so changed the world in its relation to Himself that He, agreeable to the demands of infinite righteousness, is satisfied with Christ's death as a solution of the sin question for each and every one. The *desideratum* is not reached, however, until the individual, already included in the world's reconciliation, is himself satisfied with that same work of Christ (which has satisfied God) as the solution of his own sin question. Thus there is a reconciliation which of itself saves no one, but which is a basis for the reconciliation of any and all who will believe. When they believe, they are reconciled *experimentally* and *eternally*, and become the children of God through the riches of His grace.

In one brief verse, 1 John 2:2, God declares that there is a *propitiation* for our (Christians') sins, and not only for our sins, but also for the sins of the whole world. While due recognition will be given later on to the interpretation of this and similar passages as offered by the limited redemptionists, it is obvious that the same twofold aspect of truth—that applicable to the *unsaved* and that applicable to the *saved*—is indicated regarding *propitiation* as is indicated in the case of both *redemption* and *reconciliation*.

From this brief consideration of these three great doctrinal words it may be seen that the unlimited redemptionist believes as much in unlimited reconciliation and unlimited propitiation as he does in unlimited redemption. On the other hand, the limited redemptionist seldom includes the



doctrines of *reconciliation* and *propitiation* specifically in his discussion of this issue.

### III. THE CROSS IS NOT THE ONLY SAVING INSTRUMENTALITY

It is one of the points most depended upon by the limited redemptionists to claim that redemption, if wrought at all, necessitates the salvation of those thus favored. According to this view, if the redemption price is paid by Christ it must be the thought of ἔξαγοράζω or ἀπολύτρωσις rather than ἀγοράζω, in every instance. It is confidently held by all Calvinists that the elect will, in God's time and way, each and every one, be saved, and that the unregenerate believe only as they are enabled by the Spirit of God; but the question here is whether the sacrifice of Christ is the only divine instrumentality whereby God *actually* saves the elect, or whether that sacrifice is a divine work (finished, indeed, as to its scope and purpose) which renders all men *savable*, but is applied in sovereign grace by the Word of God and the Holy Spirit only when the individual *believes*. Certainly Christ's death of itself forgives no sinner, nor does it render unnecessary the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit. Any one of the elect whose salvation is predetermined, and for whom Christ died, may live the major portion of his life in open rebellion against God and, during that time, manifest every feature of depravity and spiritual death. This alone should prove that men are not severally saved by the act of Christ in dying, but rather that they are saved by the divine *application* of that value when they *believe*. The blood of the passover lamb became efficacious only when *applied* to the door post. The fact that an elect person does live some portion of his life in enmity toward God, and in a state in which he is as much lost as any unregenerate person, indicates conclusively that Christ must not only die to provide a righteous basis for the salvation of that soul, but that that value must be *applied* to him at such a time in his life as God has decreed, which time, in the present generation, is almost two thousand years subsequent to the death of Christ. By so much it is proved that the priceless value in Christ's

death does not save the elect, nor hinder them from rejecting the mercies of God in that period of their life which precedes their salvation.

The unlimited redemptionist claims that the value of Christ's death is extended to all men, nevertheless that the elect alone come by divine grace (wrought out by an effectual call) into its fruition, while the non-elect are not called, but are those passed by. They hold that God indicates who are the elect, not at the cross, but by the effectual call and at the time of regeneration. It is also believed by the unlimited redemptionists that it pleased God to place the whole world in a position of infinite obligation to Himself through the sacrifice of Christ, and though the mystery of personal condemnation for the sin of unbelief when one has not been moved to faith by the Spirit cannot be solved in this world, the unregenerate, both elect and non-elect, are definitely condemned for their unbelief so long as they abide in that estate (John 3:18). There is nothing more clarifying in connection with this age-long discussion than the recognition of the fact that, while they are in their unregenerate state, no vital distinction between the elect and the non-elect is recognized in the Scriptures (1 Cor. 1:24 and Heb. 1:14 might suggest this distinction along lines comparatively unimportant to this discussion). Certainly, that form of doctrine which would make redemption equivalent to salvation is not traceable when men are contemplated in their unregenerate state, and a salvation which is delayed for many years in the case of an elect person might be delayed forever in the case of a non-elect person whose heart God never moves. Was the objective in Christ's death one of making the salvation of all men *possible*, or was it the making of the salvation of the elect *certain*? Some light is gained on this question when it is thus remembered that the consummating divine acts in the salvation of an individual are wrought when he believes on Christ, and not before he believes.

#### IV. UNIVERSAL GOSPEL PREACHING

A very difficult situation arises for the limited redemp-

tionist when he confronts the great commissions which enjoin the preaching of the gospel to *every* creature. How, it may be urged, can a universal gospel be preached if there is no universal provision? To say, at one time, that Christ did not die for the non-elect and, at another time, that His death is the ground on which salvation is offered to all men, is perilously near contradiction. It would be mentally and spiritually impossible for a limited redemptionist, if true to his convictions, to urge with sincerity those who are known to be non-elect to accept Christ. Fortunately, God has disclosed nothing whereby the elect can be distinguished from the non-elect while both classes are in the unregenerate state. However, the gospel preacher, if he entertains a doubt respecting the basis for his message in the case of even one to whom he is appealing, if sincere, does face a real problem in the discharge of his commission to preach the gospel to every creature. To believe that some are elect and some non-elect creates no problem for the soul-winner provided he is free in his convictions to declare that Christ died for each and every one to whom he speaks. He knows that the non-elect will not accept the message. He knows, also, that even an elect person may resist it to near the day of his death. But if the preacher believes that any portion of his auditors is destitute of any basis of salvation, having no share in the values of Christ's death, it is no longer a question in his mind of whether they will accept or reject; it becomes rather a question of *truthfulness* in the declaration of the message. As Dr. W. Lindsey Alexander points out: "On this supposition [that of a limited atonement] the general invitations and promises of the gospel are without an adequate basis, and seem like a mere mockery, an offer, in short, of what has not been provided. It will not do to say, in reply to this, that as these invitations are actually given we are entitled, on the authority of God's Word, to urge them and justified in accepting them; for this is mere evasion" (*A System of Biblical Theology*, Vol. II, p. 111). Representing the other side of the question, another English-

man, writing as late as 1919, declares: "Alas for the consummate folly of would-be theologians possessing Bibles, yet forever harping upon such mere pickings as 'whosoever believeth' and 'whosoever will'." Almost every theologian has discussed in his writings the question of a limited or unlimited redemption, and clarifying quotations might be multiplied indefinitely could space be given to them. On the question of the beliefs of sincere gospel preachers, it would repay the reader to investigate how universally all great evangelists and missionaries have embraced the doctrine of unlimited redemption, and made it the very underlying structure of their convincing appeal.

V. IS GOD DEFEATED IF MEN ARE LOST FOR WHOM CHRIST DIED?

Back of this phase of this subject is the conviction oft expressed by limited redemptionists that for Christ to die for those who are never saved is to experience defeat on His part. Of course, it must be conceded that if the finished work is a *guarantee* of salvation to those for whom Christ died, there is a very noticeable defeat if *one* fails to be saved. But it is merely *assumed* that redemption is a guarantee of salvation. Christ becomes the surety of salvation when one believes. Christ's death is a finished transaction, the value of which God has not ever applied to any soul until that soul passes from death unto life. It is *actual* as to its *availability*, but *potential* as to its *application*. To state that the value of Christ's death is suspended until the hour of regeneration is not to intimate that its value is any less than it would be were it applied at any other time. There are reasons which are based on the Scriptures why God might provide a redemption for *all* when He merely proposed to save *some*. He is justified in placing the whole world in a particular relation to Himself that the gospel might be preached with all sincerity to all men, and that, on the human side, men might be without excuse, being judged, as they are, for their rejection of that which is offered unto them. Men of this dispensation are condemned for their un-

belief. This is expressly declared in John 3:18 and implied in John 16:7-11, in which latter context the Spirit is seen in His work of convincing the world of but one sin, namely, "that they believe not on me." But to reject Christ and His redemption, as every unbeliever does, is equivalent to the demand on his part that the great transaction of Calvary be reversed and that his sin, which was laid upon Christ, be retained by himself with all its condemning power. It is not asserted here that sin is thus ever retained by the sinner. It is stated, however, that, since God does not apply the value of Christ's death to the sinner until that sinner is saved, God would be morally free to hold the sinner who rejects Christ as being accountable for his sins, and to this unmeasured burden would be added all the condemnation which justly follows the sin of unbelief. In this connection, reference is made by the limited redemptionists to three passages which it is argued indicate that impenitent men die with their sins upon them and, therefore, it is asserted, Christ could not have borne their sins. These passages are:

*John 8:24*: "If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins." This is a clear statement that calls for little exposition. It is a case of believing on Christ or dying in the condemnation of sin. It is not alone the one sin of unbelief, but "your sins" to which Christ refers. There is occasion for some recognition of the fact that Christ spoke these words *before* His death and, also, that He here requires them to believe that He is the "I am"—Jehovah. These facts are of importance in any specific consideration of this text; but enough may be said if it be pointed out that the issue is as much a problem for one side of this discussion as for the other. If it be claimed by the limited redemptionists that these people to whom Christ spoke would die in their sins because they were non-elect and, therefore, their sins were not borne by Christ, it may be replied: (1) the condition indicated by Christ on which they may avoid dying in their sins is not based on His not dying for them, but

rather their *believing* on Him, and (2) were it true that they die in their sins because of their position as non-elect for whom Christ did not die, it would be equally true that those among them who were of the elect (cf. verse 30) and whose sins were laid on Christ, would have no need to be saved from a lost estate. In other words, this important passage teaches that the value of Christ's death, as marvelous and complete as it is, is not applied to the unregenerate until they *believe*. It is the effectual calling of the Spirit which indicates God's elect and not some partial, unidentified, and supposed discrimination wrought out in the death of Christ.

*Ephesians 5:6*: "Because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience." The designation *children of disobedience* does not refer to the personal disobedience of any individual in this class, but rather to the fact that all unregenerate people are disobedient in the federal headship of Adam. This includes the elect and non-elect in their unsaved state; besides it should be noted that those elect saved people to whom the Apostle is writing were, until saved, not only *children of disobedience*, but under the energizing power of Satan, being in a state of spiritual death (Eph. 2:1, 2). Thus, again, it is proved that the value of Christ's death is applied to the elect, not at the cross, but when they believe.

*Revelation 20:12*: "And the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books according to their works." This scene is related to the Great White Throne judgment of all the unregenerate of all the ages, and it should be noted that, in other ages, men were placed more upon a covenant of works than they are now. The sum total of sin in the present age is *unbelief* (John 16:9), as the sum total of human responsibility toward God in securing a right relation to God is *belief* (John 6:29). It is very possible that those of this vast company who were of this dispensation may be judged for the one inclusive sin of unbelief, while those of other ages may be judged for many



and specific sins; but from the foregoing proofs it is evident that it is in no way unscriptural to recognize that the impenitent of this age are judged according to their own specific sins, since the value of Christ's death is not applied to or accepted for them, until they believe, and these, it is evident, have never believed.

At this point, and in this connection, it is appropriate to consider the challenge which the limited redemptionists universally advance, namely, that if Christ bore the sins of the non-elect, they could not be lost, for it is claimed even the condemning sin of unbelief would thus be borne and, therefore, have lost its condemning power. By this challenge the important question is raised whether Christ bore all the individual sins except *unbelief*. On this aspect of this theme, John Owen wrote nearly three centuries ago: "God imposed His wrath due unto, and Christ underwent the pains of hell for, either all the sins of all men, or all the sins of some men, or some sins of all men. If the last, some sins of all men, then have all men some sins to answer for, and so no man shall be saved. . . . If the second, that is what we affirm, viz., that Christ in their stead and room suffered for all the sins of all the elect in the world. If the first (viz. that Christ died for all the sins of all men), then why are not all freed from the punishment of all their sins? You will say, Because of thir unbelief; they will not believe. But this unbelief is it a sin or is it not? If not why should they be punished for it? If it be, then Christ underwent the punishment due to it or not. If He did, why must that hinder, more than their other sins for which He died, from partaking of the fruit of His death? If He did not, then He did not die for all their sins."

To this it may be replied that the sin of unbelief assumes a specific quality in that it is man's answer to that which Christ wrought and finished for him when bearing his sins on the cross. There is, doubtless, divine freedom secured by Christ's death whereby God may pardon the sin of unbelief since He freely forgives *all* trespasses (Col. 2:



13), and there is, therefore, now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus (Rom. 8:1). The sin of unbelief, being particular in character, is evidently treated as such in the Scriptures. Again, if Christ bore the sin of unbelief along with the other sins of the elect, then no elect sinner in his unregenerate estate is subject to any condemnation, nor does he require to be forgiven or justified in the sight of God.

If it be inquired at this point, as it frequently is, whether the general call of God (John 12:32) could be sincere in every instance since He does not design the salvation of the non-elect, it may be asserted that, since the inability of the non-elect to receive the gospel is due to human sin, from His own standpoint, God is justified in extending the invitation to them. In this connection there is an important distinction to be observed between the sovereign *purpose* of God and His *desires*. For specific and worthy reasons, God, as any other being, may *purpose* to do more or less than He *desires*. His *desire* is evidently toward the whole world (John 3:16), but His *purpose* is as clearly revealed to be toward the elect. In the important passage, "Who [God] would have all men to be saved" (1 Tim. 2:4), this distinction is seen in that the passive rather than the active form of the verb is used.

#### VI. THE NATURE OF SUBSTITUTION

The limited redemptionists sincerely believe that Christ's substitution for a lost soul *necessitates* the salvation of that soul. The following is another quotation from John Owen: "For whom Christ died, He died as their sponsor, in their room and stead, that He might free them from guilt and desert of death (Isa. 53:5, 6; Rom. 5:6-8; Gal. 3:13; 2 Cor. 5:21). Evidently He changeth turns with us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. . . . Christ dying for men made satisfaction for their sins, that they should not die. Now, for what sins He made satisfaction, for them the justice of God is satisfied; which surely is not done for the sins of the reprobates, because He justly pun-

isheth them to eternity upon themselves (Matt. 5:26).” This is a fair issue and there is some light available through the careful consideration of the precise nature of substitution itself.

Man did not first discover the necessity of a substitute to die in his room and stead; this necessity was in the heart of God from all eternity. Who can declare what sin actually is in the sight of infinite rectitude? Who will assume to measure the ransom price God must require for the sinner? Who can state what the just judgments of outraged holiness were which were required by the Father and rendered by the Son? Or who can declare the cost to God of the disposition of sin itself from His presence forever?

Two Greek prepositions are involved in the doctrine of substitution: (1) ὑπέρ (translated *for*), which word is broad in its scope and may mean no more than that a thing accomplished becomes a benefit to others. In this respect it would be declared by this word that Christ's death became a benefit to a greater or less degree to those for whom He died. This word is, however, at times invested with the most absolute substitutionary meaning (cf. Heb. 2:9; Tit. 2:14; 1 Pet. 2:21; 3:18; 4:1). (2) ἄντι (also translated *for*), which word conveys the thought of complete substitution of one thing or person in the place of another. Orthodox men, whether of one school or the other, will contend alike that Christ's death was *for* men in the most definite sense. However, substitution may be either *absolute* or *conditional*, and in the case of Christ's death for the sinner it was both *absolute* and *conditional*. Mr. Marshall Randles in his book on *Substitution*, page 10, states this twofold aspect of truth thus: “Substitution may be absolute in some respects, and conditional in others, e.g., a philanthropist may pay the ransom price of an enslaved family so that the children shall be unconditionally freed, and the parents only on condition of their suitable acknowledging the kindness. Similarly, the substitution of Christ was partly absolute, and partly conditional in proportion to man's capacity of choice and

responsibility. His death availed for the rescue of infants from race guilt; their justification, like their condemnation, being independent of their knowledge and will, and irrespective of any condition which might render the benefit contingent. But for the further benefit of saving men who have personally and voluntarily sinned, the death of Christ avails potentially, taking effect in their complete salvation if they accept Him with true faith."

It is not a question of the perfect character of Christ's substitution; His substitution is as complete whether applied at one time or another, or if it never be applied. It is not a question of the ability or the inability of the sinner to believe apart from divine enablement. It is rather a question of whether the full value of Christ's death might be *potentially* provided for the non-elect, even though they never benefit by it, but are only judged because of it. The elect are saved because it is *necessary* for them to be saved in view of the fact that Christ died for them. The unlimited redemptionists believe that the substitutionary death of Christ accomplished to infinite perfection all that divine holiness could ever require for each and every lost soul of this age, that the elect are saved on the ground of Christ's death for them through the effective call and divine enablement of the Spirit, that the value of Christ's death is rejected even by the elect until the hour that they believe, and that that value is rejected by the non-elect forever, and for this rejection they are judged.

It has been objected at this point that the belief of the unlimited redemptionist results in the end in man being his own savior; that is, he is saved or lost according to his works. The question of whether believing on Christ is a saving work has been considered earlier, in Soteriology. One passage of Scripture will suffice to clear this matter. In Romans 4:5 it is written: "But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." Here the thought is not that the candidate for salvation performs no works *except* belief,

but rather that by believing he turns from all works of his own, on which he might depend, and confides in Another to do that which no human works could ever do. By so much the determination rests with man, though it is recognized that no man possesses saving faith apart from a divine enablement to that end. Recognition must be given by all to the fact—to be expanded later on—that the peculiar manner in which God enlightens the mind and moves the heart of the unsaved to the end that they gladly accept Christ as Savior is in no way a coercion of the will; rather the human volition is strengthened and its determination is the more emphatic. It is futile to attempt to dismiss the element of human responsibility from the great gospel texts of the New Testament.

It is both reasonable and Scriptural to conclude that a perfect substitution avails for those who are saved; that, in the case of the elect, it is delayed in its application until they believe; and that in the case of the non-elect it is never applied at all.

#### VII. THE TESTIMONY OF THE SCRIPTURES

In the progress of the discussion between the limited redemptionists and the unlimited redemptionists, much Scripture is noted on each side and, naturally, some effort is made by each group to harmonize that which might seem to be conflicting between these lines of proof. Some of the passages cited by the limited redemptionists are:

*John 10:15*: "I lay down my life for the sheep." This statement is clear. Christ gave His life for His elect people; however, it is to be observed that both Israel's election and that of the Church are referred to in this text (vs. 16).

*John 15:13*. Christ laid down His life for His friends.

*John 17:2, 6, 9, 20, 24*. In this most important Scripture Christ declares that He gives eternal life to as many as are given to Him, that an elect company has been given to Him, that He prays now only for this elect company, and that He desires that this elect company may be with Him in glory.

*Romans 4:25.* Christ is here said to have been delivered for *our* (elect) sins and raised again for *our* (elect) justification. This, too, is specific.

*Ephesians 1:3-7.* In this extended text the fact that Christ is the Redeemer of His elect people is declared with absolute certainty.

*Ephesians 5:25-27,* in which passage Christ is revealed as both loving the Church and giving Himself for it that He might bring it with infinite purity and glory into His own possession and habitation.

In contemplating the Scriptures cited above, and many others of the same specific character, the unlimited redemptionists assert that it is the primary purpose of Christ to bring many sons into glory and that He never lost sight of this purpose (that it actuated Him in all His sufferings and death is beyond question) and that His heart is centered on those who are thus given to Him of the Father. However, not once do these passages *exclude* the truth, equally emphasized in the Scripture, that He died for the whole world. There is a difference to be noted between the *fact* of His death and the *motive* of His death. He may easily have died for all men with a view to securing His elect. In such a case, Christ would have been actuated by two great purposes: one, to pay the forensic ransom price for the world, the other, to secure His elect Body and Bride. The former of these purposes seems to be implied in such texts as Luke 19:10, "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost," and John 3:17, "For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved," while the latter seems to be implied in such passages as John 10:15, "As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep." The Scriptures do not always include *all* the truth that is involved in the theme presented, at a given place. Similarly, if the fact that any reference to the non-elect world is omitted from these passages (i.e., which refer only to the elect) is a sufficient ground for the con-

tention that Christ died only for the elect, then it could be argued with inexorable logic that Christ died only for Israel (cf. John 11:51; Isa. 53:8), and that He died only for the Apostle Paul (for Paul declares of Christ, "Who loved me, and gave himself for me," Gal. 2:22). As well might one contend that Christ restricted His prayers to Peter because of the fact that He said to Peter: "But I have prayed for thee" (Luke 22:32). To the unlimited redemptionist these Scriptures present not the slightest difficulty. He interprets these great passages precisely as does his opponent. He believes in the sovereign election of God and the one and only heavenly purpose to gather out a redeemed people for heaven's glory. However, the limited redemptionist is not able to deal with the unlimited redemption passages as easily. Important passages may be grouped together thus:

1. Passages which declare Christ's death to be for the whole world (John 3:16; 2 Cor. 5:19; Heb. 2:9; 1 John 2:2).

The limited redemptionist states that the use of the word *world* in these and similar passages is restricted to mean the world of the elect, basing the argument on the fact that the word *world* may at times be restricted in the extent of its scope and meaning. They claim that these universal passages, to be in harmony with the revelation that Christ died for an elect company, must be restricted to the elect. According to this interpretation, John 3:16 would read, "God so loved the elect that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever of the elect believeth on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." 2 Corinthians 5:19 would read, "God was in Christ reconciling the elect unto Himself." Hebrews 2:9 would read, "He tasted death for every man comprising the company of the elect." 1 John 2:2 would read, "He is the propitiation for our (elect) sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of those who comprise the world of elect people." John 1:29 would read, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the elect."

A study of the word *cosmos* has been presented elsewhere. There it was seen that usually this word refers to a

satanic system which is anti-God in character, though in a few instances it refers to the unregenerate people who are in the *cosmos*. Three passages serve to emphasize the antipathy which obtains between the saved, who are "chosen out of the world," and the world itself: "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you" (John 15:18, 19); "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world" (John 17:16); "And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness" (1 John 5:19). Yet, in support of a theory, it is claimed that the elect, which the world hates and from which it has been saved, is the world. W. G. T. Shedd points to certain specific passages. To quote: "Sometimes it is the world of believers, the church. Examples of this use are: John 6:33, 51, 'The bread of God is he which giveth life to the world' [of believers]. Rom. 4:13, Abraham is 'the heir of the world' [the redeemed]. Rom. 11:12, 'If the fall of them be the riches of the world.' Rom. 11:15, 'If the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world.' In these texts, 'church' could be substituted for 'world'" (*Dogmatic Theology*, Vol. II, p. 479). It is an assumption, quite foreign to Dr. Shedd, to declare that the word *ecclesia*—called out ones—should be substituted for the word *cosmos* in these passages. Not one of them require to be considered in any other light than that usually accorded to the satanic system.

2. Passages which are all-inclusive in their scope (2 Cor. 5:14; 1 Tim. 2:6; 4:10; Tit. 2:11; Rom. 5:6).

Again, the limited redemptionist points out that in various passages the word *all* is restricted to the elect. Indeed, such passages must be restricted if the cause of the limited redemptionist is to stand—but are these properly so restricted? By the limited redemptionist's interpretation, 2 Corinthians 5:14 would read: "If one died for the elect, then were the elect dead." 1 Timothy 2:6 would read: "Who



gave Himself a ransom for the elect, to be testified in due time." 1 Timothy 4:10 would read: "Who is the Saviour of the elect, especially of those who believe." Titus 2:11 would read: "The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared unto the elect." Romans 5:6 would read: "In due time Christ died for the elect, in their ungodly estate."

3. Passages which offer a universal gospel to men (John 3:16; Acts 10:43; Revelation 22:17, etc.). The word *who-soever* is used at least 110 times in the New Testament, and always with the unrestricted meaning.

4. A special passage: 2 Peter 2:1, wherein the ungodly false teachers of the last days who bring swift destruction upon themselves are said to "deny the Lord that bought them." Men are thus said themselves to be ransomed who deny the very ground of salvation and who are destined to destruction.

Two statements may be in order in concluding this division of this discussion:

(a) The interpretation of John 3:16 which the limited redemptionist offers tends to restrict the love of God to those among the unregenerate who are the elect. In support of this, passages are quoted which declare God's peculiar love for His saved people. There is no question but what there is a "much more" expression of the love of God for men after they are saved than before (Rom. 5:8-10), though His love for unsaved men is beyond measure; but to assert that God loves the elect in their unregenerate estate more than the non-elect is an assumption without Scriptural proof. Some limited redemptionists have been bold enough to say that God does not love the non-elect at all.

(b) What if God did give His Son to die for all men of this dispensation in an equal sense to the end that all might be legitimately invited to gospel privileges—could He, if actuated by such a purpose, use any more explicit language than He has used to express such an intent?

*Conclusion.*

Again let it be said that to disagree with good and

worthy teachers is undesirable, to say the least; but when these teachers appear on both sides of a question, as in the present discussion, there seems to be no alternative. By an inner bent of mind some men tend naturally to accentuate the measureless values of Christ's death, while others tend to accentuate the glorious results of the application of those values in the immediate salvation of the lost. The gospel must be understood by those to whom it is preached and it is wholly impossible for the limited redemptionist, when presenting the gospel, to hide with any completeness his conviction that the death of Christ is only for the elect. And nothing could be more confusing to an unsaved person than to be drawn away from the consideration of the saving grace of God in Christ to the contemplation of the question of whether he is elect or not. Who can prove that he is of the election? If the preacher believes that some to whom he addresses his message could not be saved under any circumstances, those addressed have a right to know what the preacher believes and in time will know. Likewise, it is not wholly sincere to avoid the issue by saying the preacher does not know whether any non-elect are present. Are they absent from every service? Is it not reasonable to suppose that they are usually present when such a vast majority of humanity will probably never be saved at all? In this discussion of this and other problems respecting the value of Christ's death, no greater wrong could be imposed than by a philosophical contemplation of truths that are throbbing with glory, light, and blessing, lest the evangelistic fervor of even one who is called to preach salvation through Christ to lost men should be dampened. May the God who loved a lost world to the extent that He gave His own Son to die for that world ever impart that passion of soul to those who undertake to convey the message of that measureless love to men!

**Dallas, Texas**