

TRIUNE PARTICULARISM: WHY UNITY IN THE TRINITY DEMANDS A PARTICULAR REDEMPTION

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The doctrine of the Trinity is the fundamental doctrine of Christian theology, and thus is rightly brought to bear on every doctrinal locus. Trinitarianism is particularly relevant to the doctrine of the atonement, and the extent of the atonement more specifically. The doctrine of inseparable operations (grounded in consubstantiality) has implications for the unity of the saving intentions and acts of the persons of the Trinity, namely, the Son cannot act to atone for the sins of any more or any fewer persons than the Father has elected and than the Spirit will regenerate. Particular redemption coheres most consistently with a particular election and a particular regeneration, and thus inseparable operations provides a theological argument for embracing a particular rather than universal atonement. These conclusions are vindicated by examining how the multiple intentions view of the extent of the atonement fails to account for Trinitarian unity, demonstrating that particular redemption is most consistent with orthodox Trinitarianism.¹

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Introduction

Dutch Reformed theologian Herman Bavinck once wrote that “Every [theological] error results from, or upon deeper reflection is traceable to, a departure in the doctrine of the Trinity.”² While such a sweeping statement may strike one as hyperbole intended for rhetorical effect, upon consideration, one finds himself contemplating the different *loci* of systematic theology and nodding in agreement.

¹ This article is adapted from portions of Michael Riccardi, “‘To Save Sinners’: A Critical Evaluation of the Multiple Intentions View of the Atonement” (PhD diss., The Master’s Seminary, 2021).

² Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, vol. 2, *God and Creation*, ed. John Bolt, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 288.

This only makes sense, for the Triunity of God is, as Charles Hodge put it, “the fundamental doctrine of Christianity.”³

Trinitarianism is the heart of the faith once for all delivered to the saints. There is no Christianity without the Trinity, because there is no Christianity without God, and the Trinity is who God is.⁴ Bavinck captured it well when he wrote elsewhere,

The entire Christian belief system, all of special revelation, stands or falls with the confession of God’s Trinity. It is the core of the Christian faith, the root of all its dogmas, the basic content of the new covenant. ... At stake in [the historical] development [of the Trinity] was not a metaphysical theory or a philosophical speculation but the essence of the Christian religion itself. ... In the doctrine of the Trinity we feel the heartbeat of God’s entire revelation for the redemption of humanity.⁵

Just as much as every portion of a building must be rightly founded upon its foundation, so also every article of systematic theology, if it is to teach genuinely *biblical* doctrine, must be rightly related to the Trinity. For example, a proper understanding of the person of Christ or the Holy Spirit depends upon a sound theology of each person’s deity and thus the relation in which He stands to the other persons of the Trinity. Therefore, in examining any particular theological proposal, one must ask whether it is consistent with orthodox Trinitarianism.

Trinity and Atonement

While Christology and pneumatology are rather obvious examples, the same is true with of the doctrine of soteriology, and specifically with the doctrine of the atonement. The Trinity and the atonement are not only related; they do not only need to remain consistent with one another. In truth, they are inextricable: one cannot speak of the one doctrine without the other. The atonement is what the Savior *does* to save sinners; the Trinity is who the Savior *is* who saves sinners. The Savior who saves by the atonement is the Triune God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Because the God who saves is Trinitarian, the gospel itself is therefore fundamentally Trinitarian, for all that God does is grounded in who God is—His saving acts are rooted in His triune being.

As a result, Scripture casts salvation in Trinitarian language. For example, in Galatians 4:4–6, Paul writes, “But when the fullness of the time came, *God* sent forth His *Son*, born of a woman, born under the Law, so that He might *redeem* those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. Because you are sons, *God* has sent forth the *Spirit* of His *Son* into our hearts, crying, ‘Abba! Father!’” Paul notes that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit each carry out the work of redemption

³ Charles Hodge, *1 & 2 Corinthians*, Geneva Commentary Series (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 2000), 690. Theologian William Shedd wrote, “The doctrine of the Trinity . . . is the foundation of theology. Christianity, in the last analysis, is Trinitarianism” (as cited in James White, *The Forgotten Trinity*, [Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House, 1998], 21).

⁴ Commentator Philip Hughes wrote that the Trinity is “the foundation of all [man’s] knowledge of the being and mind of God” (Philip Edgcumbe Hughes, *Paul’s Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, NICNT [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962], 489).

⁵ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 2:333.

according to their persons-appropriate roles. That is, the gospel is inherently Trinitarian: the Father sends the Son into the world; the Son assumes a human nature so that He might stand in man's place and *redeem* those who because of their sin were bound to suffer the curse of the Law (cf. Heb 2:17); and the Spirit is then sent to apply to sinners all of the blessings the Son has accomplished for them, adoption being what Paul emphasizes here. Salvation—the rescue of sinners by means of atonement—is inexorably Trinitarian.

The Trinitarian shape of the gospel not only colors how one sees the atonement conceived generally, but also how one understands the *extent* of the atonement in particular. The debate over the extent of the atonement is often cast as a game of proof-text volleyball. The one holding to universal atonement argues, “Paul says Jesus gave Himself as a ransom for *all!*” (1 Tim 2:6). The particularist counters, “Well, Jesus says He gave His life as a ransom for *many!*” (Mark 10:45). And back and forth they go. The particularist aims to explain why ostensibly universalistic language ought not to be interpreted as absolutely universal (i.e., all of all sorts, all without exception) but rather as indicating some of all sorts, all of some sorts, or all without distinction. Advocates of universal atonement respond that such interpretive moves do not accord with the plain sense of Scripture, and both sides furnish a cadre of commentators supporting their mutually exclusive claims. It is at this point that the conversation typically reaches a stalemate or, worse, gives way to frustration and uncharitable discourse.

The key to breaking that stalemate is to recognize that Scripture's comments on the *extent* of Christ's death must be interpreted in light of its comments on the *design* and the *nature* of the atonement as well. The *scope* of the atonement must be understood in light of both the *substance* of the atonement (i.e., what the atonement is) and the *scheme* of the atonement (i.e., what it is designed to accomplish).⁶ If Scripture teaches that Christ's death did not merely make salvation possible (as in many strains of universal atonement) but actually accomplished the salvation of those for whom He died (as in particular redemption), then when confronted with one text that speaks of Christ's death for “all” (e.g., 1 Tim 2:6) and a virtually identical text that speaks of Christ's death for “many” (e.g., Mark 10:45), there will be an exegetical basis for interpreting “all” in 1 Timothy 2:6 to mean “all without distinction” rather than “all without exception.” The same is true for the design—or

⁶ Thus, the biblical doctrine of the extent of the atonement is not a product of any particular text or set of texts that explicitly states, “Jesus died for all people in history without exception,” or “Jesus died for the elect alone and no one else.” Rather, a biblical doctrine of the extent of the atonement is formulated similarly to the biblical doctrine of the Trinity—held together by the affirmation that the Father and Son are ὁμοούσιος, of the same substance, though such a term never appears in Scripture—or the biblical doctrine of the hypostatic union of divine and human natures in Christ, though no one text explicitly names Christ as one πρόσωπον subsisting in two φύσεων.

As David and Jonathan Gibson put it, “... the diverse biblical parts demand the patient work of synthesis to portray the theological whole. ... definite atonement is a *biblico-systematic* doctrine that arises from careful exegesis of atonement texts and synthesis with internally related doctrines. ... When both exegetical and theological ‘domains of discourse’ are respected as such and taken together, then reductionist objections to definite atonement lose their force and this reading of the meaning of the death of Christ emerges as profound and faithful.” David Gibson and Jonathan Gibson, “Sacred Theology and the Reading of the Divine Word: Mapping the Doctrine of Definite Atonement,” in *From Heaven He Came and Sought Her: Definite Atonement in Historical, Biblical, Theological, and Pastoral Perspective*, ed. David Gibson and Jonathan Gibson (Wheaton: Crossway, 2013), 38, emphases original.

the divine intention—of the atonement. If Scripture teaches that God intended the atonement not merely to *provide* a salvation that could be accepted or rejected (as in many strains of universal atonement) but actually and definitively to *save* those for whom it was accomplished (as in particular redemption), then one could not escape the conclusion that the atonement extends no further than to those who partake of its saving benefits. In both instances, Scripture’s clear teaching on the design and nature of the atonement helps interpret the less clear teaching on the extent of the atonement.

This is where the doctrine of the Trinity may be brought to bear on the doctrine of the extent of the atonement. In speaking of the design, or intent, of the atonement, one necessarily speaks of the Designer, or Intender, of the atonement, who is none other than the Triune God Himself. And since the very nature of God’s *being* as Trinity shapes all God’s *acts* as Savior, one must ask what, if any, implications God’s Trinity have for the atonement planned by the Father, accomplished by the Son, and applied by the Spirit.

The thesis of this article, then, is that the unity of the Trinity is a legitimate exegetical-theological argument in favor of the doctrine of particular redemption.⁷ That is, because the Father, Son, and Spirit are perfectly united in their essence, they must be perfectly united in both their saving intentions and their saving acts. What the Father wills must be what the Son wills, and what the Son wills must be what the Spirit wills. Those whom the Father intends to save must therefore be the same exact number as those whom the Son intends to save, and those whom the Son intends to save must be the same exact number as those whom the Spirit intends to save. Accordingly, since Scripture teaches (a) that the Father has chosen to save a particular people and not all without exception, and (b) that the Spirit will regenerate that *same* particular people and not all without exception, therefore it also teaches (c) that the Son has atoned for that same particular people and not all without exception. To say otherwise is to strike at the unity of the Triune God.

The first major section of this article aims to prove the above argumentation is biblical. The second major section of this article tests this argumentation against an increasingly popular mediating view between particular and universal atonement: the multiple intentions view. It concludes that, like other species of non-particularism, the multiple intentions view fails to account sufficiently for Trinitarian unity and thus ought to be rejected.

⁷ Particular redemption is here defined as the teaching that the Father’s intention in sending Christ, and Christ’s intention in dying on the cross, was to save the elect (and them alone) by dying in their place as an atonement for their sins (and theirs alone), thus securing everything necessary to put them into possession of saving faith by the work of the Holy Spirit.

Packer defines particular redemption as “Christ’s actual substitutionary endurance of the penalty of sin in the place of certain specified sinners, through which God was reconciled to them, their liability to punishment was for ever destroyed, and a title of eternal life was secured for them” (J. I. Packer, “Saved by His Precious Blood: An Introduction to John Owen’s *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ*,” in *In My Place Condemned He Stood: Celebrating the Glory of the Atonement*, ed. J. I. Packer and Mark Dever [Wheaton: Crossway, 2007], 119–20). Also helpful is David and Jonathan Gibson’s definition: “The doctrine of definite atonement states that, in the death of Jesus Christ, the triune God intended to achieve the redemption of every person given to the Son by the Father in eternity past, and to apply the accomplishments of his sacrifice to each of them by the Spirit. The death of Christ was intended to win the salvation of God’s people alone” (David and Jonathan Gibson, “Sacred Theology,” 34).

Neither Unison nor Discord, but Harmony

One of the greatest causes for confusion and misunderstanding concerning the nature and extent of the atonement is the failure properly to root the Son's saving mission in the eternal Trinitarian plan of salvation.⁸

The acts of the Triune God in creation, providence, and salvation are inextricably grounded in the Trinitarian life of God Himself. In other words, God does what He does because He is who He is. And the most essential comment one can make about the identity and being of God is that He is Triune—that the single, undivided divine essence subsists eternally in three coequal, consubstantial persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (Matt 3:16–17; 28:19–20; 1 Cor 12:4–6; 2 Cor 13:14; Gal 4:4–6; Eph 4:4–6; Titus 3:4–6). Therefore, precisely because the *persons* of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit can never be divided, neither can their *works* be divided (John 14:10). This doctrine of the inseparable operations is a fundamental axiom of classic Trinitarian theology: *opera Trinitatis ad extra indivisa sunt*: the external works of the Trinity are undivided.⁹ That is, in every act that God performs, all three persons of the Trinity are directly involved. Because they share an identical being, no one person of the Trinity ever acts without the other two. They are always indivisibly working together in perfect harmony.¹⁰ As Letham explains, “in all God does, all three persons are directly involved. God's various actions, while particularly attributable—or *appropriated*—to one of the three are yet indivisibly those of all three working together in harmony.”¹¹ So for example, while Scripture identifies God the Father as the creator of the world (Gen 1:1; 1 Cor 8:6a), creation is also attributed to the Son (John 1:3; 1 Cor 8:6b; Col 1:16) and to the Spirit (Gen 1:2; Ps 33:6). The Father creates by speaking, the Son is the Word spoken, and the Spirit is the breath by which the Word goes forth.

The Father created the world, the Son created the world, and the Spirit created the world, but these are not three separate acts of creation. There are not three worlds; rather, the one act of creation is performed *by* the Father *through* the Son *in* the Holy

⁸ Portions of this section are adapted from the author's contributions to *Biblical Doctrine: A Systematic Summary of Bible Truth*, ed. John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue (Wheaton: Crossway, 2017), 513–16, 545–58.

⁹ Richard A. Muller, *Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1985), 213. For a recent presentation of inseparable operations, see Adonis Vidu, *The Same God Who Works All Things: Inseparable Operations in Trinitarian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2021).

¹⁰ Gibson offers a helpful summary: “. . . who God is in the history of redemption arises from who God is in himself. His act reflects his being. And if God's being lives in harmony—three persons in one God and one God in three persons mutually cohering and complementing each other—then when the same God acts in history the economy of salvation, we should expect nothing less than the same harmony of purpose and love” (Jonathan Gibson, “The Glorious, Indivisible, Trinitarian Work of God in Christ,” in *From Heaven He Came and Sought Her*, 366).

¹¹ Robert Letham, “The Triune God, Incarnation, and Definite Atonement,” in *From Heaven He Came and Sought Her*, 440, emphasis original. This language is to be distinguished from how Ware employs it in Bruce A. Ware, *Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: Relationships, Roles, and Relevance* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2005), 42. Ware's presentation is from the perspective of social Trinitarianism which sees the persons of the Trinity as three centers of consciousness collaborating unto a common end. I aim to employ this language to identify the traditional doctrine of inseparable operations grounded in a genuine unity of being—i.e., the three persons subsisting in the identical, undivided, simple divine essence and thus acting inseparably.

Spirit.¹² Three distinct persons act, but their acts, like their *essence*, are perfectly united and inseparable. God's indivisible being is represented in His indivisible acts.

This does not mean, however, that the acts of the Father, Son, and Spirit can never be *distinguished* from each other. Just as the persons themselves must be distinguished but never divided from one another, so also their works, while never being divided, can be distinguished. This is the doctrine of appropriations, the necessary complement to the doctrine of inseparable operations. While no person of the Trinity acts apart from the other two, each divine act is appropriated, or attributed, to one of the persons in particular. Thus, as in the previous example, though the Son and the Spirit are not absent from creation, it is appropriate to ascribe the work of creation to the Father, from whom are all things (1 Cor 8:6). For another example, while the Son alone is the subject of the incarnation (John 1:14; Phil 2:6–7), nevertheless He is sent into the world by the Father (1 John 4:9) and is conceived in Mary's womb by the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:35).

Thus, the persons of the Trinity work in neither unison nor in discord, but in harmony.¹³ The doctrine of appropriations ensures that they do not work in *unison*, because different acts are properly attributed to different persons. But the doctrine of inseparable operations ensures that they are never in *discord*, because their undivided acts are rooted in their undivided essence. In every act of God, all three persons of the Trinity must work in perfect *harmony*, or they are not one God.

The Triune Plan of Salvation

This principle of Trinitarian unity holds true for God's work of salvation as well. This means that the atoning work of Christ can never be adequately understood if it is considered in isolation from the saving work of the Father and the Holy Spirit. When the eternal Son took on flesh to dwell among man and accomplish our salvation by His atoning death, He was not acting as a rogue agent, divorced from the intentions and the actions of the other persons of the Trinity. Indeed, He openly declares, "For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me" (John 6:38). Jesus self-consciously conducted every aspect of His ministry in strict accordance with the will of the Father—a will that was made known to Him in the eternal council of the Trinity, in which the Father, Son, and Spirit devised a plan to rescue fallen humanity from the effects of sin and death.

Scripture testifies of this eternal plan of salvation in several ways. In the first place, several passages of Scripture characterize the saving work of the Son as being divinely predetermined. In Ephesians 3, Paul teaches that the gospel accomplished in Christ's life, death, and resurrection, which Paul preached (Eph 3:6)—the unfathomable riches of Christ (Eph 3:8) that revealed the long-hidden mystery of the administration in which Jew and Gentile would dwell together in one body through faith in Messiah (Eph 3:5–6, 9)—was all accomplished "in accordance with the eternal purpose which He carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Eph 3:11; cf. 1:9–11). That is, Christ's redemptive work

¹² Augustine, *On the Gospel of John*, Tractate 20, *NPNF¹* 7:131–37, *PL* 35:1556–64. See also Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 2:319.

¹³ Letham, "The Triune God, Incarnation, and Definite Atonement," in *From Heaven He Came and Sought Her*, 442.

was carried out according to a predetermined plan, namely, the Father's purpose (πρόθεσις) designed in eternity past,¹⁴ which Ephesians 1:11 calls "the counsel of His will" (τὴν βουλὴν τοῦ θελήματος αὐτοῦ). Thus, when Jesus told the disciples of His impending betrayal at the Last Supper, He said, "For indeed, the Son of Man is going as it has been determined [κατὰ τὸ ὠρισμένον]" (Luke 22:22), or, as a leading Greek dictionary renders it, "in accordance with the (divine) decree."¹⁵ The design of this treachery predated Judas; it had been irrevocably determined in eternity past. According to 2 Timothy 1:9, God has saved us "according to His own purpose [πρόθεσιν] and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity [πρὸ χρόνων αἰώνιων]." So determinative is this eternal saving purpose of the Triune God that the elect are said to have received grace in Christ before they even existed; indeed, before time began.¹⁶ Even the events of the crucifixion itself are described as the execution of this eternal plan of salvation, for Jesus was "delivered over by the predetermined plan [τῇ ὠρισμένῃ βουλῇ] and foreknowledge of God" (Acts 2:23); His crucifiers only did "whatever [the Father's] hand and [the Father's] purpose [ἡ βουλή] predestined [προώρισεν] to occur" (Acts 4:28).

Secondly, besides such statements that the Son's atoning work was carried out according to the eternal divine plan, Scripture also explicitly identifies Jesus' saving mission as His obedience to the Father's will, which clearly indicates that this will had been made known to the Son in a prior agreement. In addition to John 6:38, already mentioned above, Jesus explained that the authority He had to lay down His life as a sacrifice for sin and to take it up again in victorious resurrection derived from the "commandment [He] received from [His] Father" (John 10:18). The author of Hebrews identifies Christ as the prophesied Servant to come who characterized His self-offering for sin as readiness to come and do the will of the Father (Heb 10:7–9; cf. Ps 40:6–8). Indeed, at the outset of His ministry, Jesus says, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work" (John 4:34). At the close of His ministry, as He prepares to return to the glory of the fellowship of the Father which He had enjoyed from all eternity (John 17:5), He says, "I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do" (John 17:4). The work that fell to Him in the Triune council had been obediently discharged, and thus the κένωσις and ταπείνωσις of His incarnation and atonement are cast as matters of becoming obedient to the point of death on a cross (Phil 2:6–8).

A third category of biblical evidences for this pretemporal Trinitarian compact consists in passages which outline the Father and Son's roles in accomplishing salvation, in which the Father promises to reward the Son for the obedient completion of His mission. In Psalm 2:7–8, the Son Himself speaks of the Father's eternal decree in which He is promised to inherit the nations and to possess the ends of the earth.¹⁷ The Father will put the Spirit upon the Son, His Servant, who

¹⁴ Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, ed. Frederick W. Danker, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 869.

¹⁵ Bauer, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 723.

¹⁶ Bauer, 33.

¹⁷ William S. Plumer, *Psalms: A Critical and Expository Commentary with Doctrinal and Practical Remarks*, Geneva Series of Commentaries (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1867), 43–45; Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, ed. James T. Dennison, Jr. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1993), 1:294–95. See

will work righteousness among the nations (Isa 42:1–3; 49:6). He will send the Son, appointed as a covenant to the people, to give sight to the blind and to free the captives (Isa 42:6–7; 49:8). The Father will accomplish this not only by sending the Son into the world, but by sending Him to intercede for sinners by bearing their iniquity unto death (Isa 53:10–12). But as a reward for rendering Himself a guilt offering, the Son is promised to see His offspring, to prolong His days, and to prosper in the Father’s good pleasure (Isa 53:10). Because He would justify the many by bearing their sin in the anguish of His soul, He is promised to see His reward unto satisfaction (Isa 53:11–12). Thus, the roles of the three persons of the Trinity according to this council of salvation become clear: the Father will send the Son into the world to accomplish salvation; the Son will accomplish that salvation by working righteousness and dying a substitutionary death for sinners; and the Spirit, whose role is most clearly revealed only in retrospect, will empower the Son throughout His saving mission—from birth (Luke 1:35), throughout life (Luke 4:1, 14), in death (Heb 9:14), and finally unto resurrection (Rom 8:11; 1 Tim 3:16)—and will eventually apply the salvation the Son has accomplished to all those whom the Father has chosen (Gal 4:4–6; Titus 3:5). The Father will then reward the Son for His obedience to this divine plan (Phil 2:8) by highly exalting Him and exhibiting Him to all as the Lord of heaven and earth (Phil 2:9–11).¹⁸

These realities demand a perfect and complete unity of purpose and intention in the saving will and saving work of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit with respect to salvation. Though the three persons are attributed distinct roles—the Father electing, planning, and sending; the Son living and dying and rising to accomplish salvation; and the Spirit empowering the Son and applying the Son’s accomplishments to sinners—nevertheless, the external works of the Trinity are undivided. No person of the Trinity works or wills out of accord with the others. While they work not in unison but in harmony, they indeed work in harmony and not in discord. The slightest rift in the saving will of the Father versus the saving will of the Son versus the saving will of the Spirit would undermine the consubstantiality of the persons of the Trinity.¹⁹

also Augustine, *St. Augustine on the Psalms*, ed. Scholastica Hebgin and Felicitas Corrigan (New York: Paulist, 1960), 1:27; and John Owen, *The Mystery of the Gospel Vindicated and Socinianism Examined*, in *The Works of John Owen*, ed. W. H. Goold, 24 vols. (Edinburgh: Johnstone & Hunter, 1850–1855; repr., Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1967), 12:240–43.

¹⁸ Trueman summarizes the roles of the three persons of the Trinity in the plan of redemption: “In brief compass, the [plan] of redemption is that which establishes Christ as Mediator, defines the nature of his mediation, and assigns specific roles to each member of the Godhead. The Father appoints the Son as Mediator for the elect and sets the terms of his mediation. The Son voluntarily accepts the role of Mediator and the execution of the task in history. The Spirit agrees to be the agent of conception in the incarnation and to support Christ in the successful execution of his mediatorial role.” Carl R. Trueman, “Atonement and the Covenant of Redemption: John Owen on the Nature of Christ’s Satisfaction,” in *From Heaven He Came and Sought Her*, 214.

¹⁹ As Trueman helpfully argues, “Significantly, the *homoousian* means the interaction between Father and Son cannot be construed in any terms that would imply even the most mildly adversarial relationship;” such would be to “clearly tend toward tritheism.” Carl R. Trueman, “Definite Atonement View,” in *Perspectives on the Extent of the Atonement: 3 Views*, ed. Andrew David Naselli and Mark A. Snoeberger (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2015), 26.

Trinitarian Unity a Biblical Doctrine

One sees this Trinitarian unity reflected in key passages of Scripture which inextricably link the persons and their work in salvation, consistently presenting the Father's work in the plan of redemption, the Son's work in the accomplishment of redemption, and the Spirit's work in the application of redemption:

(1) the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for our sins so that He might rescue us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father. (Galatians 1:4)

The Lord Jesus gave Himself for our sins to accomplish redemption (v. 4a), so that we might be rescued from this present evil age, an implicit reference to the Spirit's application of redemption (v. 4b), according to the will of the Father as expressed in the plan of redemption.

(2) But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" (Galatians 4:4–6)

Here we see that the Father sends the Son into the world according to the plan of redemption (v. 4); the Son accomplishes redemption by redeeming those under the Law that they might be received as adopted sons (v. 5); and the Spirit applies that redemption by being sent into the hearts of the redeemed in regeneration (v. 6).

(3) Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself ... In [the Beloved] we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace ... In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory. (Ephesians 1:3–5, 7, 13–14)

Paul's great hymn to the Triune Savior in Ephesians 1 shows us that the Father plans redemption for those He chooses in eternity past (vv. 4–5); the Son accomplishes their redemption through His blood (v. 7); the Spirit (implicitly in this verse) applies that blood-bought redemption unto the forgiveness of God's people (v. 7), sealing them (v. 13) for the time when the Spirit will consummate redemption by bringing God's people to their promised inheritance (v. 14).

(4) But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in

righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. (Titus 3:4–7)

Here in Titus 3, the Father’s plan for redemption is represented by a reference to the love and kindness of His predestining plan (v. 4; cf. Eph 1:4–5; “in love He predestined us ... according to the kind intention of His will”); the Son accomplishes redemption by saving us in mercy (vv. 5–6); the Spirit applies redemption by regenerating and renewing us unto justification and eternal life (vv. 6–7).

(5) ... God, who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity, but now has been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel (2 Timothy 1:8–10)

In this passage, God is represented as having saved us and called us with a holy calling, a reference to our effectual calling unto salvation by the Spirit (cf. Rom 8:28, 30; 1 Cor 1:9; Eph 4:4), which thus speaks of redemption applied. Such salvation was not according to our works, but according to the gracious, electing purpose of the Father in eternity past, which thus speaks of redemption planned. That plan has now been revealed by the atoning work of the Son whereby He abolished death and brought life and immortality, which thus speaks of redemption accomplished.

In summary, the predestining, electing work of the Father, the accomplishing, redemptive work of the Son, and the applying, regenerating work of the Spirit are wrought in perfect harmony. There is a perfect unity of purpose and intention in the saving will of the persons of the Trinity, for it is the identical, selfsame will. Therefore, the objects of these saving acts of God—election, atonement, and regeneration—must be coextensive. If any one person acts to save more or fewer sinners than any other person of the Trinity, they could not be said to be united in their saving will. The Father elects unto salvation; the Son redeems those the Father has chosen; and the Spirit gives life to those same people whom the Father has chosen and the Son has redeemed.

Particular Election, Particular Redemption

The question must be asked, then: Has the Father chosen all without exception to be saved, or has He chosen a particular people to be brought to Himself in salvation? Is the Father’s election universal or particular? Scripture answers in favor of the latter. This eternal plan of salvation was not devised on behalf of sinners in general, but only on behalf of those whom the Father had chosen to receive salvation. Romans 8:28–30 establishes this definitively. Those on whom the Father has set His foreknowing, electing love He also predestined; and those He predestined He also effectually called to life in regeneration; and those whom He called He also declared righteous in Christ through faith; and those whom He justified He also glorified. Since (a) all who are predestined and chosen are eventually justified and glorified, and since (b) not all without exception are justified and glorified—a fact admitted by all who do not

embrace universal final salvation—therefore, it follows that (c) not all without exception have been predestined by the Father unto salvation. The designation “elect” (which appears a few verses later, Rom 8:33), against whom none can bring a charge, necessarily implies a category of those not elected who may indeed be justly charged for their sins and perish for them. As the following chapter makes clear, the Potter has fashioned from the same lump of clay both “vessels of wrath prepared for destruction” as well as “vessels of mercy ... prepared beforehand for glory” (Rom 9:22–23). In His inscrutable wisdom, the Father has not chosen to save every human being without exception, but only a subset of those on whom He has set His sovereign love.²⁰

Therefore, since the Father's election is particular and not universal, and since the Father and the Son must be perfectly united in their saving intention—indeed, since the Son's saving mission is nothing other than the Father's appointed means to save those whom He has chosen²¹—it must be that the Son's atonement is particular and not universal. Robert Reymond illustrates the impossibility of the alternative: “It is unthinkable to believe that Christ would say: ‘I recognize, Father, that your election and your salvific intentions terminate upon only a portion of mankind, but because my love is more inclusive and expansive than yours, I am not satisfied to die only for those you have elected. I am going to die for everyone.’”²² While few opponents of particularism would state their position in such terms, it is difficult to see how all forms of non-particularism do not logically necessitate such a conclusion. A particular election (and a particular regeneration) coupled with a universal atonement inevitably introduces a disjunction between the persons of the Trinity. It is to “separate the Father and the Holy Spirit from the Son, when the very essence of God is that there is one purpose in which they are united.”²³ Gibson rightly observes, “This detracts from the indivisible, Trinitarian work of God in Christ—the Father and the Son united in their distinct works within the economy of salvation, as is the Son and the Spirit. Despite protests to the contrary, these various positions on the atonement cannot evade the accusation of a dysfunctional Trinity, where dissonance rather than harmony is the sounding note.”²⁴ Unity in the Trinity, therefore, demands a particular redemption.

²⁰ The same is true for the ministry of the Spirit. Since (a) it is by the ministry of the Holy Spirit that redemption is applied unto regeneration, justification, and glorification (cf. Rom 8:30), clearly implying that none who are justified will fail to be glorified; and since (b) there are some who do indeed perish in their sins (Matt 7:13–14; 25:46; 2 Thess 1:8–9; Rev 20:15; cf. 14:11); therefore, (c) neither is the regenerating work of the Spirit universal, but particular.

²¹ That election circumscribes the atonement is substantiated by the previous passages cited. It is the Father's will that gives rise to the Son's mission (Gal 1:4); the Son redeems because the Father has sent Him to do so (Gal 4:4–5); the Father has chosen us *in Christ* (Eph 1:4), having granted us grace from all eternity *in Christ Jesus* (2 Tim 1:9). As Gibson argues, “the elective purpose of God the Father (Eph 1:4) and the redemptive purpose of God the incarnate Son (5:27) are one and the same: to present the elect as the Son's bride, holy and blameless on the last day. More specifically, Christ's death is the *means* to accomplish the electing purpose of the Father. In short, election circumscribes atonement.” Jonathan Gibson, “The Glorious, Indivisible, Trinitarian Work of God in Christ,” 346.

²² Robert L. Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith*, 2nd ed. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998), 678.

²³ Roger R. Nicole, *Our Sovereign Savior: The Essence of the Reformed Faith* (Ross-shire, UK: Christian Focus, 2002), 65.

²⁴ Jonathan Gibson, “The Glorious, Indivisible, Trinitarian Work of God in Christ,” 368. Barnes writes, “If God decided in eternity past whom he would call and save—i.e. to whom he would give grace in Christ

Notwithstanding all this, the argument for particularism grounded in Trinitarian unity is not based merely upon logical deductions from orthodox Trinitarianism. It is explicit in the text of Scripture itself. If it is plain that the Father sent the Son to earth for a specific purpose and to accomplish a specific mission, and if Jesus explicitly identified the will of the Father as the driving motivation in all His saving work (cf. John 4:34; 6:38; 10:17–18; 17:4; Heb 10:7), what then was the will of the Father as Jesus understood it? The following passages answer that Jesus knew He was to be the representative and substitute for all those and only those whom the Father had chosen for salvation—a group He identifies as those given to Him by the Father:

All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day. For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day. (John 6:37–40)

I am the good shepherd, and I know My own and My own know Me, even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and *I lay down My life for the sheep. ... My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. (John 10:14–15, 29)*

Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son, that the Son may glorify You, even as You gave Him authority over all flesh, that to *all whom You have given Him*, He may give eternal life. This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent ... I have manifested Your name to the men *whom You gave Me* out of the world; *they were Yours and You gave them to Me*, and they have kept Your word. ... I ask on their behalf; I do not ask on behalf of the world, but of *those whom You have given Me; for they are Yours; ... Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world. (John 17:1–3, 6, 9, 24)*

For both He who sanctifies and those who are sanctified are all from one Father; for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, “I will proclaim Your name to My brethren, in the midst of the congregation I will sing Your praise.” And again, “I will put My trust in Him.” And again, “Behold, I and the children *whom God has given Me*.” Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the

Jesus [2 Tim 1:9], if God decided in eternity past who would be united to Christ and thus receive his grace, then in what way can we say that Jesus Christ died to pay the penalty for sins and to remove the condemnation from those who are not part of this eternal decision? Are we to conclude that God on the one hand decided to pass over some and allow them to go their own way and not be saved, but yet on the other hand to ‘save’ them potentially by purchasing them, by paying their sins?” Tom Barnes, *Atonement Matters: A Call to Declare the Biblical View of the Atonement* (Darlington, UK: Evangelical Press, 2008), 95–96.

devil, and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives. For assuredly He does not give help to angels, but He gives help to the descendant of Abraham. (Hebrews 2:11–16)

It is in the context of these passages—in which Jesus declares the inextricable connection between His mission and the Father's will (e.g., John 6:38; 17:4)—that He also states that the Father has given to Him a particular group of individuals, and that it is particularly on their behalf that He accomplishes His redemptive work.

Consider the characteristics Scripture assigns to those for whom Christ died, which can only describe the elect.

- These individuals belonged to the Father (“they were Yours”) in a way that the rest of the world did not (John 17:6), which can only refer to His foreknowing and predestining them unto salvation (Rom 8:30; cf. Eph 1:4–5; 2 Tim 1:9).
- At various points, Jesus calls these individuals His own (John 10:14) and His sheep (John 10:15),²⁵ whom He will never lose (John 6:39; 10:29).²⁶
- He says they are His brethren (Heb 2:11–12), the children of the Father (Heb 2:11, 13–14);²⁷ and the seed of Abraham (Heb 2:16).²⁸
- “Those whom [the Father] has given” the Son are distinct from “the world,” on whose behalf Jesus does not pray (John 17:9; cf. 17:2). Thus, they are not all without exception; rather, they have been chosen out from among the world (John 17:6).
- Because the Father sovereignly draws them (John 6:44, 65), these sheep cannot fail to come to Christ in faith (John 6:37), to be freed from the slavery of death (Heb 2:14–15), and to receive eternal life (John 6:40; 10:28; 17:2).

²⁵ Note that these sheep are so called not as a consequence of their faith in Him; rather, existence as a sheep belonging to Christ is the prerequisite for saving faith, such that Jesus says, “But you do not believe because you are not of My sheep” (John 10:26). Therefore, Jesus’ people exist as His sheep even before they trust in Him for salvation. That is to say, they are those whom the Father has chosen and given to the Son, the elect. Note, then, especially in light of Jesus identifying the Pharisees as those who are not His sheep in John 10:26, that “Jesus lays down his life for a particular group of people (his sheep) in distinction from others (those who are not his sheep).” Matthew S. Harmon, “For the Glory of the Father and the Salvation of His People: Definite Atonement in the Synoptics and Johannine Literature,” in *From Heaven He Came and Sought Her*, 277. Indeed, for Jesus to say that He lays His life down for His sheep, and then immediately to identify certain persons to be not of His sheep, is to teach that He did not lay down His life for them, and so not for all without exception. For further comment on this, see Riccardi, “To Save Sinners,” 245–48.

²⁶ Given this truth that Jesus loses none for whom He dies, alongside the truth that there are many who do perish in their sins and are finally lost (cf. Matt 7:13; 25:46; 2 Thess 1:9; Rev 20:15), one cannot avoid the conclusion that Jesus did not die for all without exception.

²⁷ Owen comments, “Their participation in flesh and blood moved him to partake of the same—not because all the world, all the posterity of Adam, but because the *children* were in that condition; for their sakes he sanctified himself.” John Owen, *Salus Electorum, Sanguis Jesu: Or The Death of Death in the Death of Christ*, in *The Works of John Owen*, ed. W. H. Goold, 24 vols., 10:139–428 (Edinburgh: Johnstone & Hunter, 1850–1855; repr., Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1967), 10:175.

²⁸ Note that the writer does not say that the Son gives help to the posterity of Adam, which would seem to be required if Christ died for all without exception, but rather to the seed of Abraham, a designation that particularizes the objects of Christ’s help to those who eventually follow in the steps of the faith of Abraham (cf. Rom 4:12–13, 16; Gal 3:7, 9, 29).

- They are the exclusive beneficiaries of the Son's intercession which is denied to the rest of mankind (John 17:9).²⁹
- They will eventually be raised to everlasting life (John 6:40); and they will dwell with Christ forever in glory (John 17:24).³⁰

These are the ones for whom Christ died, and none of the above descriptors can be rightly applied to those who finally perish in their sins. Christ dies for His people (Matt 1:21), His friends (John 15:13), His church (Acts 20:28; Eph 5:25), a people for His own possession (Titus 2:14), the elect (Rom 8:33).

The Multiple Intentions View

Since the Reformation period, several mediating views on the extent of the atonement have emerged in response to the traditional views of universal versus particular redemption.³¹ These included the French hypothetical universalism of John Cameron and Moïse Amyraut of the school at Saumur,³² the British hypothetical universalism of James Ussher, John Davenant, and John Preston,³³ and the

²⁹ It is unthinkable that Jesus, the Great High Priest of the New Covenant, while interceding before the Father on behalf of those for whom He would soon offer Himself as an atonement for sins, would refuse the priestly work of intercession for any for whom He would offer His life as sacrifice for sins.

³⁰ Owen provides helpful clarity: "His own aim and intention, may be seen in nothing more manifestly than in the request that our Savior makes upon the accomplishment of the work about which he was sent; which certainly was neither for more nor less than God had engaged himself to him for. 'I have,' saith he, 'glorified thee on earth, I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do,' John 17:4. And now, what doth he require after the manifestation of his eternal glory, of which for a season he had emptied himself, verse 5? Clearly a full confluence of the love of God and fruits of that love upon all his elect, in faith, sanctification, and glory. God gave them unto him, and he sanctified himself to be a sacrifice for their sake, praying for their sanctification, verses 17–19; their preservation in peace, or communion with one another, and union with God, vv. 20–21. . . ; and lastly, their glory, verse 24. . . . And in this, not one word concerning all and every one, but expressly the contrary, verse 9." *Death of Death*, 171.

³¹ Classic universal atonement is well represented by the second article of the Remonstrance (Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom, Volume 3: The Evangelical Protestant Creeds*, 6th ed. [1931; repr., Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990], 546), whereas classic particularism is well represented by Article VIII of the second head in the Canons of the Synod of Dort (ibid., 3:587), as well as, famously, in John Owen's *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ* (see note 27 for full bibliographic information).

³² Moïse Amyraut, Moïse. *Brief Traité de la Predestination et de ses principaux dependances* (Saumur, France: Jean Lesnier & Isaac Debordes, 1634, 2nd ed., 1658). See also Brian G. Armstrong, *Calvinism and the Amyraut Heresy: Protestant Scholasticism and Humanism in Seventeenth-Century France* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969); and Roger R. Nicole, "Moïse Amyraut (1596–1664) and the Controversy on Universal Grace, First Phase (1634–1637)," (PhD diss., Harvard University, 1966).

³³ James Ussher, *The Judgement of the Late Arch-Bishop of Armagh, and Primate of Ireland* (London: John Crook, 1658); John Davenant, "A Dissertation on the Death of Christ, as to its Extent and special Benefits: containing a short History of Pelagianism, and shewing the Agreement of the Doctrines of the Church of England on general Redemption, Election, and Predestination, with the Primitive Fathers of the Christian Church, and above all, with the Holy Scriptures," in *An Exposition of St. Paul to the Colossians*, trans. Josiah Allport (London: Hamilton, Adams, 1832). On John Preston, see Jonathan D. Moore, *English Hypothetical Universalism: John Preston and the Softening of Reformed Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 71–169. On Ussher and Davenant, see ibid., 173–213.

neonomian hypothetical universalism of Richard Baxter.³⁴ In the twentieth century, there emerged the middle-way of what is often called four-point Calvinism, which holds to total depravity, unconditional election, irresistible grace, the perseverance of the saints, yet not limited atonement (or particular redemption).³⁵

In the early 2000s, Dr. Bruce A. Ware began circulating a handout in his theology classes at Southern Seminary in which he began defending what he called a multiple intentions view (MIV) of the atonement.³⁶ He laments that “much of the debate over the extent of the atonement is owing to the fact that a *single* intention (rather than multiple intentions) was sought by both sides.” Instead, he avers that “God’s intentions in the death of Christ are complex not simple, multiple not single.”³⁷ What particularism and universalism see as an either-or decision—*either* Christ died to infallibly secure the salvation of the elect alone, *or* He died to make possible, or available, the salvation of all without exception—the MIV holds that Christ died for both of these reasons. That is, there are both particular and universal intentions which God designed by the death of Christ.

In 2008, Dr. Ware supervised the PhD dissertation of Gary L. Shultz, Jr., who wrote, “A Biblical and Theological Defense of a Multi-Intentioned View of the Extent of the Atonement,”³⁸ in which he aimed to develop Ware’s thesis and to present “a full-length scholarly work explicitly explaining and defending a multi-intentioned view,”³⁹ which had not yet been done. Shultz argues that in sending His Son to die on the cross, the Father “had both particular and general intentions for the atonement,” that “the Son then died to fulfill these multiple intentions,” and that “the Spirit then works to apply the atonement in both particular and general ways.”⁴⁰

³⁴ Richard Baxter, *Universal Redemption of Mankind, by the Lord Jesus Christ: Stated and cleared by the late learned Mr Richard Baxter. Whereunto is added a short Account of special Redemption, by the Same Author*, 1st ed. (London: John Salusbury, 1694). For an attempt to prove that Baxter was a neonomian, see Michael Brown, “Not by Faith Alone: The Neonomianism of Richard Baxter,” *Puritan Reformed Journal* 3, no. 1 (2011): 133–52. For an attempt to exonerate Baxter, see Hans Boersma, *A Hot Peppercorn: Richard Baxter’s Doctrine of Justification in Its Seventeenth-Century Context of Controversy* (Vancouver: Regent College Publishing, 2004).

³⁵ E.g., Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 3: *Soteriology* (Dallas: Dallas Seminary Press, 1948), 183–205; Lightner, *The Death Christ Died*; Charles C. Ryrie, *Basic Theology* (Colorado Springs, CO: Victor, 1986), 318–23; Henry Clarence Thiessen, *Lectures in Systematic Theology*, rev. Vernon D. Doerksen (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 240–42; John Walvoord, *Jesus Christ Our Lord* (Chicago: Moody, 1980); idem., “Reconciliation,” *BSac* 120 (1963): 3–12.

³⁶ Bruce A. Ware, “Extent of the Atonement: Outline of the Issue, Positions, Key Texts, and Key Theological Arguments” (Unpublished class handout, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY, n.d.).

³⁷ Ware, “Extent of the Atonement,” 3.

³⁸ Gary L. Shultz, Jr., “A Biblical and Theological Defense of a Multi-Intentioned View of the Extent of the Atonement” (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2008). A version of this dissertation was later published as idem., *A Multi-Intentioned View of the Atonement* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2013).

³⁹ Shultz, “A Biblical and Theological Defense,” 11n23.

⁴⁰ Shultz, 12. According to Shultz, God’s particular intention in the atonement is to infallibly secure the salvation of the elect, just as particularists would claim. In addition, Shultz also claims that God intended that the Son pay the penalty for the sins of all people without exception to accomplish at least five other ends: “[1] to make the universal gospel call possible, [2] to make general grace (and not only salvific grace) possible, [3] to provide an additional basis of condemnation for those who reject the gospel, [4] to serve as the supreme example of God’s character, and [5] to make the reconciliation of all things possible.”

Another recent defense of the multiple intentions view has been offered by Dr. John S. Hammett, Senior Professor of Systematic Theology at Southeastern Seminary,⁴¹ offering legitimacy to Snoeberger’s observation that “New variations of hypothetical universalism, among which are located the multiple-intention view defended in this volume, are again making advances in the evangelical church.”⁴² It is beyond the scope of this article to give an exhaustive evaluation of the multiple intentions view.⁴³ However, the MIV does represent a position closer to particularism than the traditional four-point Calvinism of the twentieth century, because it does see the cross accomplishing something more for the elect than for the non-elect. Nevertheless, it falls short of thoroughgoing particularism by broadening the scope of Christ’s death to include all without exception. Given this, it is fitting to ask whether this recent mediating view between particular and universal atonement maintains the Trinitarian unity which the previous portion of this article has demonstrated to be biblically indispensable. The remainder of this article, then, will evaluate the merits of the MIV as it relates to Trinitarian unity. Does this species of non-particularism avoid the Trinitarian difficulties of more traditional forms of universal atonement? The following analysis contends that it does not.

The MIV and Trinitarian Unity

Proponents of the MIV are not insensitive to the need for the Father, Son, and Spirit to be perfectly united in their saving work. Shultz recognizes that traditional non-particularist positions are vulnerable to this critique, saying, “If the Son provided salvation for all, but the Father only intended to save some, then this introduces disjunction into the Godhead, as this implies that the Father and the Son have different salvific goals. Most Moderate Calvinists, who hold together unconditional election and unlimited atonement, are open to this charge.”⁴⁴ He explains,

The multi-intentioned view avoids this charge by asserting that God the Father had multiple intentions for the atonement. The atonement not only accomplishes his elective purposes, but his purposes for the creation and the nonelect as well. The Holy Spirit then works among the nonelect and the elect on the basis of the atonement, fulfilling the Father and the Son’s intentions. Each person of the Trinity has general and particular intentions for creation. The unity of the Trinity is therefore upheld by the multi-intentioned view. Unconditional election has to do with God’s particular purposes, which are accomplished in the atonement,

⁴¹ John S. Hammett, “Multiple-Intentions View of the Atonement,” in *Perspectives on the Extent of the Atonement: 3 Views*, ed. Andrew David Naselli and Mark A. Snoeberger (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2015), 143–94.

⁴² Mark A. Snoeberger, “Introduction,” in *Perspectives on the Extent of the Atonement*, 16.

⁴³ For such an evaluation, see Michael Riccardi, “‘To Save Sinners’: A Critical Evaluation of the Multiple Intentions View of the Atonement” (PhD diss., The Master’s Seminary, 2021).

⁴⁴ Shultz, *A Multi-Intentioned View*, 125. In his dissertation, he calls these moderate Calvinists “four-point Calvinists” (idem., “A Biblical and Theological Defense,” 229n12). Shultz is correct that the moderate Calvinist or four-point Calvinist position is vulnerable to the charge of Trinitarian disunity, as are Semi-Pelagianism, Arminianism, Amyraldianism, and even British Hypothetical Universalism (see Jonathan Gibson, “The Glorious, Indivisible, Trinitarian Work of God in Christ,” 367–71; Letham, “The Triune God, Incarnation, and Definite Atonement,” 442–43).

but these particular purposes do not rule out his general purposes, which are also accomplished in the atonement.⁴⁵

In other words, proponents of the MIV would aim to affirm much, if not all, of what is presented above: the Father chooses some and not all, the Spirit regenerates some and not all, and therefore it is consistent that the Son secures the salvation of some and not all.⁴⁶ However, they would say that this relates only to God's *particular* intentions for the cross. There are also general intentions for the cross shared by all three persons of the Trinity. The claim is that the Father intends the atonement not only to secure the salvation of the elect but also to purchase common grace, which the Father then dispenses upon all without exception as a result of the atonement.⁴⁷ Further, it is claimed that the Spirit exercises a ministry of universal conviction as part of the universal gospel call (cf. John 16:7–11), and, since the Spirit's ministry is contingent upon Christ's ascension to the Father (John 16:7), and since His ascension is contingent upon His resurrection, and since His resurrection is contingent upon His death, therefore the universal convicting ministry of the Spirit is purchased by the atonement.⁴⁸ Thus, according to Shultz, the Son's atoning work is not broader than the Father's or the Spirit's work; it is simply that the Father and the Spirit also have universal non-saving intentions tied to the atonement, and therefore the Son may die for all without Trinitarian discord.⁴⁹

Despite these claims, however, the MIV does not in fact legitimately escape the censure of Trinitarian disunity.

An Internal Inconsistency

In the first place, while positing both particular and universal aspects to the Father's and Spirit's work would theoretically cohere with an atonement that accomplishes one set of benefits for all without exception and another set of benefits for the elect alone, the proponents of the MIV do not consistently present the atonement in this way. The strength of the MIV in distinction to the so-called "Moderate Calvinist" view that Shultz rejects is that the MIV (at least at times) conceives of the atonement as Christ accomplishing something different for the elect

⁴⁵ Shultz, "A Biblical and Theological Defense," 230n12; cf. 12. A similar model is presented in Curt Daniel, *The History and Theology of Calvinism* (n.p.: Good Books, 2003), 371; D. Broughton Knox, "Some Aspects of the Atonement," in *The Doctrine of God*, in *D. Broughton Knox: Selected Works*, ed. Tony Payne (Kingsford, NSW: Matthias Media, 2000), 1:262, 265; Robert P. Lightner, *The Death Christ Died: A Biblical Case for Unlimited Atonement*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1998), 130. Douty calls it "a single transaction with a double intention." Norman F. Douthett, *A Treatise on the Extent of Christ's Atonement* (1978; repr., Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1998), 60.

⁴⁶ One might have simply said, "the Son atones for some and not all," but the MIV sees a disjunction between the concepts of "atonement" and "securing salvation." Unlike particularism, the MIV claims that these are not the same, and that the latter does not necessarily follow from the former. That is, the Son atones for some whose salvation is not secured. See Shultz, "A Biblical and Theological Defense," 130n26.

⁴⁷ E.g., Shultz, "A Biblical and Theological Defense," 183–95.

⁴⁸ E.g., Shultz, 172–74

⁴⁹ Hammett, "Multiple-Intentions View," 166.

than for the reprobate.⁵⁰ There are two accomplishments: “Christ procured the offer and provision of salvation for all people on the cross, *and* he also procured the definite application of salvation for the elect on the cross.”⁵¹ It is not, as the “four-point Calvinist” claims, that the atonement is a universal provision of salvation made on behalf of all men alike, which is only subjectively applied to the elect through faith. Such a view is “unable to account for any particularity in the atonement because it understands the atonement to be a general payment for all sin that only provides salvation for all, and asserts that the particular saving acts of God are then found in the Father’s election and the Spirit’s saving work.”⁵² Such a view is thus vulnerable to charges of Trinitarian disunity, because it exports particularity from the Son’s work of atonement to the Spirit’s work of regeneration.⁵³

However, at other times, both Shultz and Hammett present the atonement in precisely this way—conceiving of it as a single provision for all alike, which only later is subjectively applied (or made efficacious) to the elect.⁵⁴ Commenting on 1 John 2:2, Shultz says, “It is also important to note that Christ is the propitiation for ‘our sins’ (believers) *in the same way* that he is the propitiation for ‘the sins of the whole world’ (unbelievers).”⁵⁵ According to the “two accomplishments” model of

⁵⁰ This is a strength only in a relative sense, namely, in that it could be seen to evade the charge of Trinitarian disunity. However, a double accomplishment is not without its own problems. First, Scripture never speaks of God’s universal *intention* for the atonement which purchases for the reprobate blessings short of salvation, but only of a divine intention for the atonement to bring to salvation those for whom it is accomplished. There is a not a universal economy of salvation that runs parallel to a particular economy, but a single economy of salvation in Christ (cf. Eph 1:10; 3:9) (see Riccardi, “To Save Sinners,” 107–37). Second, some have aptly argued that the doctrine of a double-accomplishment—present in British Hypothetical Universalism as well as the MIV—“presents a confused Christ” with a “split personality,” resolving to die to make men savable, some of whom (i.e., those who never hear the gospel) He sovereignly determines never to reveal the means by which they might be saved (Gibson, “The Glorious, Indivisible, Trinitarian Work of God in Christ,” 369). Turretin represents the confused Christ this way: “I desire that to come to pass which I not only know will not and cannot take place, but also what I am unwilling should take place because I refuse to communicate that without which it can never be brought to pass as it depends upon myself alone” (*Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, 2:467). Turretin also disputes the coherence of how Christ can die for the elect in one sense and die for the reprobate in another in a single act of dying (ibid., 2:460). The double accomplishment model does not pass biblical and theological muster.

⁵¹ Shultz, “A Biblical and Theological Defense,” 176. Hammett agrees: “. . . another intention of God in sending Christ [i.e., in addition to providing salvation for all] and another intention of Christ in dying was actually to secure the salvation of some” (“Multiple-Intentions View,” 169–70). There are two distinct accomplishments here: one for all without exception and one for the elect alone.

⁵² Shultz, *A Multi-Intentioned View*, 125–26.

⁵³ Shultz, 125.

⁵⁴ Shultz says, “Jesus Christ, in fulfilling the Father’s intentions for his atonement, accomplished several objective realities that only the elect subjectively experience. . . . While God intended for these objective realities [i.e., penal substitution, propitiation, etc.] to accomplish his general purposes in the atonement, he also intended for them to be subjectively applied to the elect, and only for the elect, in order to accomplish his particular purpose in the atonement. In order to fulfill this purpose, Jesus, on the basis of his atonement, sent the Holy Spirit to apply salvation to the elect” (“A Biblical and Theological Defense,” 250–51). On this scheme, propitiation is accomplished provisionally for all, and that universal provision is applied and made particular only by the Spirit’s ministry, not by anything particularizing in the atonement itself. Hammett says, “. . . in addition to making a universal objective provision for the salvation of all, God works subjectively in the hearts of some to apply that provision to them, making that provision efficacious for them” (“Multiple-Intentions View,” 162n50; cf. 154). This is not an efficacious accomplishment of non-saving benefits for the reprobate, but a universal provision for elect and reprobate alike which is only made efficacious for the elect by the Holy Spirit.

⁵⁵ Shultz, “A Biblical and Theological Defense,” 116n59, emphasis added.

the atonement unique to the MIV, Shultz should have said here that Christ is the propitiation for the sins of believers in such a way that He secures their salvation, but that He is the propitiation for the sins of unbelievers such that He makes their salvation possible. Yet at this portion of his work, he believes the exegesis of 1 John 2 does not allow for that interpretation which he later accepts. Similarly, he says, “Just as he did in 4:14, John [in 1 John 2:2] stresses that Christ’s saving work encompasses the sins of all people so that the heretics in the community would know that their sins were forgivable on the basis of the atonement.”⁵⁶ Yet if propitiation makes the reprobates’ sin forgivable, and Christ is the propitiation for the sins of the elect and reprobate “in the same way,” then (a) the atonement is a singular provision that is later applied, not two accomplishments, and (b) the elect’s salvation is not secured by the atonement; their sins are only made forgivable, which forgiveness is applied and particularized by the Spirit.⁵⁷ This is the very exportation of particularity from atonement to application that Shultz (rightly) claimed was open to the charge of Trinitarian disunity. Indeed, Shultz is elsewhere constrained by the inconsistency of his position to admit the very thing he previously denied: “The Son secured the salvation of the elect *by* sending forth the Holy Spirit to apply the salvific benefits of the atonement only to the elect,”⁵⁸ and, “*The way* that Christ secured the salvation of the elect was by sending the Spirit to only apply salvation to the elect.”⁵⁹ If the Spirit’s application of redemption is the *way* and *means* by which the Son secures the

⁵⁶ Shultz, “A Biblical and Theological Defense,” 116–17.

⁵⁷ As another illustration of this, Shultz (156n196) approvingly cites Demarest who says, “In terms of the Atonement’s provision Christ died not merely for the elect but for all sinners in all times and places. Christ drank the cup of suffering for the sins of the entire world. He died as a substitute, a propitiation, a ransom, etc. for the universe of sinners. The non-elect had their sins paid for on the cross, even though through unbelief they do not personally appropriate the benefits of his work. Christ, in other words, provided salvation for more people than those to whom he purposed to apply its saving benefits.” Bruce A. Demarest, *The Cross and Salvation: The Doctrine of Salvation*, Foundations of Evangelical Theology (Wheaton: Crossway, 1997), 191. He then cites Ware, who says, “. . . we cannot speak correctly of Christ’s death as actually and certainly *saving* the elect. No, even here, the payment made by his death on behalf of the elect renders their salvation *possible*” (Ware, “Extent of the Atonement,” 5). These are clear affirmations of the same universal payment provided (note, not accomplished) for all, later particularized in the Spirit’s application. Just a few pages later, however, Shultz says, “God also accomplishes the certain salvation of the elect through Christ’s payment for the sins of all people” (“A Biblical and Theological Defense,” 159). This seems to revert to the “two accomplishments” model. If God accomplishes the certain salvation of the elect via Christ’s payment, why does Ware say we cannot speak of Christ’s death as certainly saving the elect?

This internal inconsistency makes it difficult to critique the MIV, for when a criticism is legitimately brought against the former model of atonement, they insist on their adherence to the latter, and vice versa. This incoherence ultimately stems from attempting to hold two mutually exclusive positions (particularism and universalism) together.

⁵⁸ Shultz, *A Multi-Intentioned View*, 152, emphasis added.

⁵⁹ Shultz, 154, emphasis added. This notion is reinforced by multiple references to the “saving works of the Holy Spirit” (e.g., *ibid.*, 144, 148) and statements that “the Spirit saves” (*ibid.*, 151). Hammett says the “objective accomplishment” of the cross merely “removes obstacles to fellowship with God”—which does not secure salvation for anyone—while the “subjective application” is what actually effects that fellowship. The particular intention is achieved only by the Spirit’s power to cause one to have faith in the gospel, such that the Spirit’s application and Christ’s accomplishment are “two aspects of the one work of atonement” (Hammett, “Multiple-Intentions View,” 174). Thus, the particularity of Christ’s work is nothing more than laying the groundwork for the eventually-particular, saving work of the Spirit. Despite hoping to avoid evacuating particularity from the Son’s work, the MIV does just that, and therefore cannot maintain Trinitarian unity.

salvation of the elect, then the cross cannot be that way and means. Christ is reduced to the very “Possibility-Maker” which Hammett explicitly denies Him to be.⁶⁰

Thus, though the MIV claims to uphold the notion that the Father, Son, and Spirit each have universal and particular intentions in their saving work, their own argumentation leaves no place for particularity in the Son’s work. The atonement only lays the groundwork for the truly-particular saving work of the Spirit. When pressed for consistency, the MIV views the cross as *substantially* universal but only merely *formally* (and thus not really) particular. This leaves us precisely where the other species of hypothetical universalism fail: with a particular election, a particular regeneration, and yet a universal atonement. When its argumentation is tested, the MIV does not deliver on its promise of a genuinely particular intention in the Son’s cross-work which corresponds to the Father’s and the Spirit’s particular intentions. Trinitarian unity is thus undermined.

Purchase versus Result

However, if one were to overlook this inconsistency and assume for the sake of argument that the MIV uniformly conceives of the atonement as two accomplishments—one particular and one universal—even in this case, the MIV’s claim of Trinitarian unity fails. The truth of this claim depends on (a) the Father and the Spirit working in all people without exception, not merely the elect alone; and on (b) the notion that such work is purchased by Christ’s universal payment for all sins. In other words, it is not the mere existence of common grace or the existence of the Spirit’s work in the hearts of the reprobate that would prove the MIV’s case; particularism grants that God is good to all without exception (e.g., Ps 145:9; Matt 5:44–45) and that the Spirit restrains evil even in those who will finally perish in their sins (cf. 2 Thess 2:6–7). Rather, for the MIV’s claim of Trinitarian unity to obtain, the atonement must *purchase* both the Father’s common grace to mankind and the Spirit’s ministry to the non-elect.

Yet the MIV never successfully demonstrates this to be the teaching of Scripture. It is simply not the case that everything the Father and Spirit accomplish in the world, short of salvation, must be purchased by the atonement. Christ does not have to pay for the sins of all people without exception for the Father to be merciful to His enemies or for the Spirit to restrain wickedness in them.⁶¹ There may be benefits that indirectly accrue to the reprobate as a result of the atonement made solely for the elect,⁶² but the results of the atonement must not be conflated with the atonement

⁶⁰ Hammett, “Multiple-Intentions View,” 171.

⁶¹ Indeed, if the atonement is the highest display of God’s mercy and goodness to sinners (which mercy is the cause of the atonement), and if God is not free to be merciful to sinners apart from purchasing these blessings by atonement, the atonement would be thus conceived as the cause of itself, a logical impossibility. But the love and kindness of God is a *cause* of the atonement (John 3:16; Titus 3:4), not its consequence.

⁶² MacArthur and Mayhue give an example of this: “If God had not intended to save sinners through Christ’s atonement, it is likely that he would have immediately visited justice on sinful man as he did the fallen angels (2 Pet. 2:4). Yet because God intended to save his people through Christ in the fullness of time, even those whom he will not ultimately save will have enjoyed the benefits of common grace, divine

itself.⁶³ Particularism makes a very clear conceptual distinction between (a) the direct and proper *purchases* or *purposes* of the atonement, on the one hand, and (b) the indirect and consequential *results* of what the atonement did purchase, on the other. The atonement may be said to “give occasion for”⁶⁴ or “indirectly produce”⁶⁵ common grace blessings. But this does not mean that the atonement *purchases* the blessings of common grace as the proper and direct fruit of its nature as an *atonement*, or that the atonement was *intended* for all without exception on this basis. Christ does not need to pay for the sins of all people without exception in order for God to be kind to all people without exception.

This distinction between proper purpose and indirect result is observable in the way Scripture speaks about the design of the death of Christ. In John 3:17, Jesus says, “For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world [οὐ γὰρ ἀπέστειλεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν υἱὸν εἰς τὸν κόσμον ἵνα κρίνῃ τὸν κόσμον], but that the world might be saved through Him.”⁶⁶ Based on this verse, it may be safely concluded that the Father did not design the Son’s saving mission, nor did the Son come into the world on His saving mission (which finds its climax in the atonement) for the purpose of judgment and the destruction of sinners’ lives (cf. Luke 9:56). However, Jesus’ comment in John 9:39 would seem almost contradictory to His words in John 3:17. Jesus says there, “For judgment I came into this world [εἰς κρίμα ἐγὼ εἰς τὸν κόσμον τοῦτον ἦλθον], so that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may become blind.” In John 3:17, He says He was not sent for judgment (οὐ . . . ἵνα κρίνῃ), while in John 9:39, He says He did come into the world for judgment (εἰς κρίμα). Unless one is ready to admit a contradiction in Scripture, one must admit a sense in which Christ did come for judgment and a sense in which He did not come for judgment. The direct and proper *purpose* of the coming of Christ into the world was salvific; it was “that the world might be saved through Him” (John 3:17).⁶⁷ However, when Christ is rejected in unbelief, judgment is the necessary *result* (cf. John 3:18). As the true Light which comes into the world, Christ enlightens every man (John 1:9); that is, the Light of truth “shines on all, and forces a distinction”⁶⁸ between those who love darkness, hate the light, and flee lest their deeds be exposed (John 3:19–20), and

forbearance, and a temporary reprieve from divine judgment” (*Biblical Doctrine*, 544). This is not to say that the cross *purchased* these benefits; rather, it is to say that a particular redemption may have universal effects or results without requiring that it be a universal redemption.

⁶³ Cunningham captures it well when he writes, “[I]t is not denied by the advocates of particular redemption . . . that mankind in general, even those who ultimately perish, do derive some advantages or benefits from Christ’s death; and no position they hold requires them to deny this. They believe that important benefits have accrued to the whole human race from the death of Christ, and that in these benefits those who are finally impenitent and unbelieving partake. What they deny is, that Christ intended to procure, or did procure, for all men those blessings which are proper and peculiar fruits of His death, in its specific character as an atonement [e.g., redemption, reconciliation, etc.] . . . for all men.” William Cunningham, *Historical Theology: A Review of the Principal Doctrinal Discussions in the Christian Church since the Apostolic Age, Volume 2* (1862; repr., Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1960), 332–33.

⁶⁴ Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, 2:459.

⁶⁵ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:467.

⁶⁶ A related comment from Jesus in Luke 9:56 confirms the same thought: “For the Son of Man did not come to destroy men’s lives [οὐκ ἦλθεν ψυχὰς ἀνθρώπων ἀπολέσαι], but to save them.”

⁶⁷ As He repeats in John 12:47, “For I did not come to judge the world [οὐ γὰρ ἦλθον ἵνα κρίνω τὸν κόσμον], but to save the world [ἀλλ’ ἵνα σώσω τὸν κόσμον].”

⁶⁸ D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 124.

those who love the light, practice the truth, and come into the light that their deeds may be manifest as having been wrought in God (John 3:21). Thus, as Laney concludes, “the purpose of Christ’s coming was redemptive. Yet, when His saving work is rejected, judgment results. Even though judgment results from unbelief, condemnatory judgment was not the purpose of the incarnation.”⁶⁹ A distinction emerges, then, between purpose and result. Judgment and condemnation *result* from the incarnation and the cross, but it would be misguided to conclude that such condemnation is a proper purpose or intention for the atonement.⁷⁰ So also, common grace *results* from the incarnation and the cross, but it would be misguided to conclude that such blessings are a properly purposed purchase of the atonement.⁷¹

Shultz aims to defend the notion that whatever the Spirit does in the world is a direct, purchased benefit of the atonement by observing that the coming of the Spirit is a consequence of Christ’s ascension, which is a consequence of His resurrection, which is a consequence of His death. On this basis, it is argued, His death must be universal.⁷² Yet we might with the same consistency observe that Christ’s death is a consequence of His obedient life, and His obedient life is a consequence of His incarnation. However, it would not be legitimate on this basis to conclude that the ministry of the Spirit was purchased by Christ’s incarnation, or by His obedient life of righteousness, or even by His resurrection and ascension, which is a more immediate prerequisite of the Spirit’s coming than the atonement is. The Spirit’s ministry is as much a result of those other aspects of Christ’s work as it is a result of the atonement, and yet, to take the incarnation as an example, Scripture explicitly declares the incarnation to have been designed with exclusively *salvific* intentions (John 3:17; 12:46; 1 Tim 1:15; Heb 10:5–10; 1 John 3:5; 4:9).⁷³ The Son partook of flesh and blood because the *children* (Heb 2:14) whom the Father had given Him

⁶⁹ J. Carl Laney, *John*, Moody Gospel Commentary (Chicago: Moody, 1992), 82.

⁷⁰ Interestingly, Hammett, though himself a proponent of the MIV, grants this distinction between proper purpose and indirect result on precisely these same textual grounds. He says that such judgment “seems more like [a] resul[t] or outcom[e] of the . . . atonement rather than [a] separate and additional purpos[e] or intentio[n] of the atonement. . . . Judgment and condemnation come upon those who reject Christ, but God’s purpose in sending Christ was not for him to be rejected” (“Multiple-Intentions View,” 190).

⁷¹ An illustration from daily life may serve to elucidate this point. Scripture indicates that marriage is an illustration of Christ’s relationship to the church; He is the bridegroom and she is His bride (cf. Eph 5:22–33; Rev 19:7–9). In the case of an earthly wedding, the proper and direct purpose of the wedding is for the bride and groom to be joined together in the covenant of marriage. Nevertheless, there are seemingly innumerable other details that come to pass as indirect results or benefits of the ceremony. One example is that the bridesmaids usually purchase dresses for the ceremony which, oftentimes, they keep for themselves after the wedding has ended. This is certainly a benefit which results from the marriage of the bride and groom; without the wedding, each bridesmaid would not have gotten a new dress. And such a benefit is certainly *designed*; the bride often expends significant effort with her bridesmaids in picking out dresses that each woman likes, that match the color scheme of the wedding, and that match the style of each other’s dresses. But it would not be accurate to say that a *purpose* of the wedding is that the bridesmaids receive new dresses. Nor even would it be proper to say that the marriage was the *primary* purpose of the wedding ceremony while the bridesmaids receiving their dresses was a *secondary* purpose. No, the direct and proper purpose of the wedding is that the bride and groom be married to one another, even if there are spillover benefits—even *designed* spillover benefits—that are enjoyed as indirect results of the wedding. Such is the case with the atonement and the benefits of common grace. While various blessings for all mankind naturally and necessarily *result* from the death of Christ, those common grace blessings are not a *purpose* or *intention* of the atonement.

⁷² For examples of this, see Shultz, “A Biblical and Theological Defense,” 100, 172–74, 218–19.

⁷³ See Riccardi, “To Save Sinners,” 107–37.

(Heb 2:13; cf. John 17:9) were of flesh and blood; He gives help to the seed of Abraham, the believer (cf. Gal 3:9), not to the entire posterity of Adam (Heb 2:16), and *therefore* He had to be made like His *brethren* in all things, in order to make propitiation for the sins of His people (Heb 2:17). Thus, the MIV fails to provide conclusive biblical or theological evidence that the common grace of the Father or the Spirit's work among the reprobate are purchased by the cross.

The Spirit's Conviction Not Universal

Further, Shultz's basis for arguing for universality in the Spirit's work is that John 16:7–11 teaches the Spirit convicts "the world" of sin, righteousness and judgment, which Shultz believes refers, at least in part, to those who finally perish in their sins.⁷⁴ Yet if this claim is shown to be false, Shultz has no basis for arguing for a universal scope to the Spirit's ministry, and the MIV's case for Trinitarian unity fails.

A brief survey of the text shows just that. In order to make the case that "the world" refers at least in part to the reprobate, Shultz argues that the "conviction" of this text does not necessarily lead to conversion. In some cases, the term ἐλέγχω denotes a conviction that is not necessarily effectual unto salvation (e.g., Jude 1:15; cf. Jude 1:12–13, 18). However, in other instances, such as in the case of the unbeliever entering the worship gathering in 1 Corinthians 14:24–25, such a one is "convicted by all," called to account for his sin, the secrets of his heart are disclosed, such that he finally "fall[s] on his face and worship[s] God," which is indicative of conversion.⁷⁵ Thus, lexical considerations alone cannot determine whether the Spirit's conviction of John 16:7–11 is effectual unto salvation or not.

However, a key consideration suggests that this conviction is indeed effectual unto salvation. Jesus notes that this convicting ministry of the Holy Spirit is for the disciples' advantage (John 16:7). What advantage to the disciples would be accomplished by the Holy Spirit's conviction of the world? Given that Jesus is preparing the disciples for their persecution at the hands of unbelievers (John 15:18–16:2; cf. 16:32–33), it seems best to see this "advantage" as a reference to the encouragement they would enjoy when the very ones persecuting them would become their brothers in Christ by repenting and trusting in Him.⁷⁶ An example of this comes in Acts 2:36–38, where Peter's Pentecost sermon indicts the Jews for crucifying the One whom "God has made ... both Lord and Christ" (2:36). The Spirit's work of conviction is seen in their being "pierced to the heart" and crying out, "Brethren, what shall we do?" that is, to be saved (2:37; cf. Acts 16:30). Another example is the conversion of Saul, who, when he was converted, was the cause of

⁷⁴ Shultz, "A Biblical and Theological Defense," 171–74; idem., "Why a Genuine Universal Gospel Call Requires an Atonement That Paid for the Sins of All People," *EQ* 82, no. 2 (2010): 118–20. Shultz often conflates the category of unbelievers with the reprobate (see idem., *A Multi-Intentioned View*, 93; idem., "A Biblical and Theological Defense," 168). But there is such a thing as elect unbelievers, those chosen by God to receive salvation who have not yet come to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Each one of the elect were at one point part of the unbelieving "world." Shultz does not need to prove the Spirit's work amongst *unbelievers*, but amongst the *reprobate*.

⁷⁵ Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 687.

⁷⁶ Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, NICNT, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 619; cf. J. H. Bernard, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. John*, 2 vols., in ICC, ed. A. H. McNeile (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1929).

joyful astonishment: “Is this not he who in Jerusalem destroyed those who called on this name, and who had come here for the purpose of bringing them bound before the chief priests?” (Acts 9:21). As a result of the Spirit’s ministry of conviction, the disciples were not only spared of the particular persecutions that would have come to them at Saul’s hand; they were also mightily encouraged to continue in the work of gospel ministry even amidst other opposition, because the Lord was turning their enemies into their brothers.⁷⁷

However, the disciples would have known none of these advantages if the Spirit’s convicting ministry in the world did not result in the eventual conversion of those convicted. If the Spirit convinced unbelievers that they were in sin for refusing to believe in Jesus (John 16:9), that He was indeed righteous as evidenced by His resurrection (John 16:10), and therefore that their judgment of Him was satanically unrighteous (John 16:11), but such conviction was not effectual unto repentance and faith and was only temporary, one struggles to discern why those very unbelievers would not return to their former course of unrighteousness and continue to persecute Jesus’ followers. It is difficult to see what *advantage* that convicting ministry would be to the disciples. Thus, it seems best to understand this conviction as that which would eventually result in the salvation of its objects, and thus it is best to understand the “world” whom the Spirit will convict as those elect persons not yet brought to faith, the sheep Jesus presently “has” but has not yet brought into the fold (John 10:16; 17:20), but who will not fail to be saved by the Good Shepherd (John 10:27–29; cf. John 6:39). Contrary to Shultz’s claims, then, John 16:7–11 does not teach that the Spirit ineffectually convicts the reprobate, but effectually brings the unbelieving elect to repentance and faith in Christ.

Besides this, even if it were granted that the Spirit’s ministry of conviction extended to sinners who finally perish in their sins, this would still not meet the burden of proof required to demonstrate that the Spirit’s convicting ministry of “the world” in John 16:7–11 was an absolutely universal conviction. If there is to be a universal intention of Christ’s atonement proven by a supposedly universal convicting ministry of the Holy Spirit, the MIV must prove that the Spirit exercises this ministry in all persons throughout history without exception. But it is granted by all sides that, in God’s providential control of history, the Holy Spirit has not brought the gospel (which Shultz declares to be the means of this conviction⁷⁸) to the vast majority of persons who have lived, much less to all without exception. If the Spirit’s conviction comes by means of the preaching of the gospel, and if the gospel has not been preached to all without exception, the Spirit’s ministry of conviction cannot be universal. Gibson is correct when he concludes, “The unevangelized remain a problem for proponents of a universal atonement. In this regard, the Spirit underperforms and in so doing brings disharmony into the Trinity.”⁷⁹ Therefore, a universal intention in the atonement is not supported by the Spirit’s convicting ministry.

⁷⁷ D. A. Carson, “The Function of the Paraclete in John 16:7–11,” *JBL* 98 (1979): 564.

⁷⁸ “The Holy Spirit only convicts people through special revelation, or the gospel.” Shultz, “A Biblical and Theological Defense,” 181.

⁷⁹ Jonathan Gibson, “The Glorious, Indivisible, Triune Work of God in Christ,” 369.

Thus, even on the supposition of a twofold accomplishment, a position not without its own problems,⁸⁰ the MIV is unable to account for a universal aspect of the Spirit's work on the basis of the atonement, and thus fails to coherently safeguard Trinitarian unity in the atonement. If there were no other reason to reject the MIV, one finds sufficient ground here, for it cannot cohere with the cardinal doctrine of the Christian faith.

Conclusion

This article has argued that the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity is the fundamental doctrine of the Christian faith, and that therefore every genuinely biblical doctrine must cohere consistently with it. It has also argued that the unity of the Trinity necessarily entails a particular redemption. By virtue of their own unity of essence, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are perfectly united in their saving will and work. Christ has been sent by the Father and in the power of the Holy Spirit to save no more and no fewer people than the Father chooses and the Spirit regenerates. The Father has elected some, and not all; the Spirit regenerates some, and not all. To suggest that Christ has atoned for all, and not some, is to put the Persons of the Trinity at odds with one another—to say that the will of the Son is not the will of the Father and the Spirit. This not only threatens the consubstantiality of the Persons of the Trinity, but it contradicts Christ's explicit statements that He had undertaken His saving mission precisely to do the will of His Father. As the Father has given to the Son a particular people out of the world, it is for these—who Scripture calls His sheep, His own, the church, the many—that Christ lays down His life. Unity in the Trinity demands particular redemption.

After showing this argumentation to be biblical, this article then presented a test case in the multiple intentions view of the atonement, a recently-developed species of non-particularism somewhat akin to forms of 17th-century hypothetical universalism. Given that the MIV claims to hold to the notion that Christ died for the elect in a way that He did not die for the reprobate, it seems to be the variation of non-particularism that is closest to particularism. It also claims to evade the charge of Trinitarian disunity by positing both particular and universal intentions in the atonement for all three persons of the Trinity. However, it was demonstrated that, when pressed for consistency, the MIV fails to consistently maintain a genuinely particular intention in the Son's work of atonement, and it fails to substantiate a genuinely universal intention in the Spirit's work of conviction. Despite its claims, this leaves the persons of the Trinity at odds with one another in the very way Scripture prohibits. This worked example vindicates the thesis that only particular redemption consistently coheres with the orthodox doctrine of Trinitarian unity, and it stands as a compelling reason to reject all variations of universal atonement.

⁸⁰ See footnote 50.