

The Logical Consistency of the Doctrines of Grace

Moreover whom He predestined, these he also called; whom he called, these he also justified; and whom he justified, these he also glorified. **Rm 8:30**¹

For many modern Christians theology is a pot-pourri. Desiring a sweet smelling savour that pleases man, they take a few petals of this notion, a few leaves of those ideas, sprinkle on some favourite dogmas and shake it all up together. The result is their own homespun take on what the Bible teaches. All too often the result is more like the literal translation of pot-pourri - a pot full of rotteness!

While liberals elevate intellectuality and ignore the literal truth of the Bible, all too often evangelicals, seeking to be spiritual, completely avoid logic. But if we fail to be rational, all we have is irrationality and foolishness. This is evidenced in the theology of many believers; like the pot-pourri above, they mix incompatible ideas together to avoid confrontation with their own delicate consciences or the sensitivities of others. The result is a set of doctrines that are mutually inconsistent, that can only be upheld by ignoring the claims of logic and twisting various verses of scripture.

If we are to have any theology at all, it must be consistent with itself. If one truth contradicts another, then our theology must be wrong. If our ideas contradict what God says or minimise the truths of God's attributes - then our doctrines must be re-evaluated. It is by being strict with ourselves on our journey of discovery about God that we grow in knowledge. When we notice an inconsistency in our teaching we must search the scriptures, pray and struggle through until we find the truth. It is through these personal crises of faith and knowledge that we learn true theology. This struggle of faith is vital for true teachers, it is something that being taught parrot fashion in seminary can't replace. Merely accepting the ideas of men is insufficient, we must forge our own theology through personal discovery and ruthless honesty.

It is here that many 'Reformed' evangelicals fall down; seeing that Arminianism is unscriptural and demeaning to God, they seek to uphold a Calvinist/Augustinian theology of grace but are hampered by fear of seemingly 'harsh' doctrines that confront man's pride. Seeking with Moises Amyraut (the founder of Amyraldism) to soften Calvinism and make it more attractive, they ignore certain matters, diminish others and add rogue elements. The result is thoroughly inconsistent - it is impossible to be a four-point Calvinist, such is simply an inconsistent theologian. One is either an Arminian, a universalist Pelagian, a five-point Calvinist or self contradictory.

Now this is not meant to be harsh and disrespectful to such brothers (and I have close friends in this position), but the time really has come to be brutally honest. This paper explains why the doctrines of grace must hang together in one consistent unit. The starting point is election.

¹ Bible quotes are from the New King James Version unless specified otherwise.

The driving implications of election from eternity

The root of Reformed truth

The root of Calvinist theology is the sovereignty and glory of God; this is of more importance than predestination in Calvin's Institutes. The desire to see God glorified and given his proper place is what drives Reformed doctrine; added to this is the urge to let scripture speak for itself and not diminish difficult sayings. Following on from this is a clear focus upon election (of men to glory or condemnation) and the predestination of all things, the control of history.

Once the primacy of God's sovereignty in his decrees is understood, then it is clear that election must control everything else. For instance, man's will cannot be free to choose spiritual good if God has elected some to damnation. This then accords with passages that teach man is dead in sin or must be drawn by God or must be granted faith. To teach that man's will is free, that he can decide to be saved without divine intervention, means that the doctrine of election must be thrown overboard. This, in turn, destroys God's sovereignty, and this is where many modern Christians stand - with a weak God and a powerful humanity.

Reprobation

In this touchy-feely, superficial age people do not want to face the reality of reprobation. They are happy to accept that Christians are chosen by God in eternity because they cannot avoid clear scriptures such as:

- He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world. (Eph 1:4)
- God from the beginning chose you for salvation. (2 Thess 2:13)
- ... that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory. (Rm 9:23)

But they are hesitant to accept the logic that if God elects some to life, he has automatically selected others to death. But it is not just logic that is at stake; God states categorically in his word that:

- The LORD has made all for Himself, Yes, even the wicked for the day of doom. (Prov 16:4)
- God, wanting to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction. (Rm 9:22)
- But indeed for this purpose I have raised you [Pharaoh] up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth. (Ex 9:16)

Election and reprobation are two sides of the God who both creates man and saves him, despite his sin. Mankind was created for God's good pleasure:

- Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created. (Rev 4:11, KJV)
- Having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will. (Eph 1:5)
- This people I have formed for myself; they shall declare my praise. (Isa 43:21)

Despite these obvious scriptures and clear Biblical logic, many evangelical believers, indeed many Reformed folk, refuse to accept that the doctrine of reprobation exists. They cannot accept that God would decree such a thing, as if he can't do what he wishes with his own creation (see Paul's argument in Rm 9). This weakness is due to two things: a weak view of sin and a low view of God.

Modern believers do not understand the exceeding evil of sin; not do they see the serious problem of man's wickedness to a holy God. Because man's iniquity has damaged the universe, there has to be a divine reaction in holiness, justice and wrath. Hell is necessary to declare the awfulness of sin and the terrible strength of the wrath of a holy God. Sin is a

blackness that we will not fully perceive until our eyes are fully opened on the Day of Judgment. This evil must be seen to be paid for in the universe - condemnation is the result of this evil of man and Satan.

Secondly, today we have a wishy-washy perception of God as all love. Indeed modern evangelical books are being published that diminish every attribute of God that is not focused upon his love. God loves the world, they say; which they interpret as being every single person. This ignores the textual context which, if it meant everyone in Jn 3:16 would teach complete universalism in Jn 3:17² so that there would be no hell at all. But these folk also ignore that many men and women were condemned by God, in judgment, throughout OT history (such as the populations of Sodom, Gomorrah, and the Canaanite tribes); were these loved? Were these promised salvation?

Despite modern weak views of sin and God, the doctrine of reprobation is Biblical and cannot be avoided. Judas did not just fall away, he was predestined to be a son of perdition (Jn 17:12, Acts 1:16-20 with Ps 41:9, 109:6-19).

So, the starting point of salvation is a decree of God in eternity that separates mankind into sheep and goats. The elect (sheep) are seen by God as being in Christ from eternity and are given to him by God the Father who created them (Jn 17). They are loved from eternity (Eph 1:4b) and are saved in time by the Holy Spirit applying the truth of the Gospel. The reprobate are condemned to hell in eternity and are raised for the purposes of demonstrating the justice and wrath of God (Rm 9:17). As sinners left in sin, they are seen as wicked and are hated by God (Ps 5:5, 11:5; Mal 1:3). The condemnation of God's wrath hangs upon them (Ps 7:11; Jn 3:36), to be revealed at the Judgment.

This crucial division of mankind is utterly foundational to understanding the doctrines of salvation. If we get this wrong, we skew all the other related doctrines.

The driving implications of total depravity

Another foundational doctrine is that of the utter depravity and inability of man to foster any spiritual work at all. This is another concept that man hates and even religious folk find great difficulty in coping with.

The Bible teaches that man is dead in sins (Eph 2:1, 5; Col 2:13) This is not just a theoretical concept, God actually looks at man as dead (Jn 5:5), which is why Jesus came to bring life (Jn 10:10). Without Christ, man has no life as far as God is concerned. Man cannot do any spiritual good. He has no powers of self-determination to righteousness. Sin and death go together and are a law as powerful as the law of gravity, holding man down (Rm 8:2).

So the starting point of salvation is to empower him in some way since he can do nothing on his own. This is exactly what God does by the Holy Spirit when man is regenerated. As a result of this he receives faith to believe the Gospel message and repentance to change his mind and follow Christ as Lord.

What are some of the logical implications of this?

If man can do nothing of himself in conversion, then it must be a work of God from start to finish. Indeed, scripture everywhere declares this to be the case: salvation belongs to the Lord (Ps 62:1; Lam 3:26; Jon 2:9; Acts 28:28). Consequently, if people are not converted,

² The same applies to the word 'all' in 1 Tim 2:4 and 2:6. If 'all' here means everyone, the result is universalism.

it is because God did not empower them to believe (Eph 2:8), he chose not to draw them to Christ (Jn 6:44, 65). He chose not to open their eyes and ears to the Gospel (Jn 8:43, 12:40; Matt 11:25-27).

The driving implications of the doctrine of God

Since believers should agree with the main assertions about God's attributes, I will not labour the theological points, but merely outline them.

Everything God does, arises in eternity past, and continues into eternity future

If God loves, for instance, it is forever. He does not love something one day and then change his mind and hate it later.

I know that whatever God does, it shall be forever. Nothing can be added to it, and nothing taken from it. God does *not*, that men should fear before Him. (Eccles 3:14)

When scripture declares that the elect were loved in eternity, it means that God has always loved them and always will, unto everlasting. This means that when the wicked are declared to be hated (Ps 11:5), they were hated in eternity and will be forever. God hated Esau before he was born because he was chosen to represent the reprobate (Rm 9:11-13), while Jacob was loved as a type of the elect (despite his sins). When Esau came later to desire repentance, he was unable to repent because they divine gift was withheld (Heb 12:17).

Thus it is impossible for God to love everyone, to desire their salvation, then hate them when they reject the Gospel and ultimately condemn them in hell. God is not fickle, but eternal.

God never changes; he is immutable

Following on from this, the Bible clearly asserts that God doesn't change.

Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning. (Jm 1:17)

God *is* not a man, that He should lie, nor a son of man, that He should repent. Has He said, and will He not do? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good? (Num 23:19)³

It is, thus, not possible that God loves a man one day and then hates him later.

Everything God does is done perfectly

God cannot do anything by halves; everything he does is perfect. If he loves it is a perfect love; if he hates it is a pure and holy wrath. It is not possible that God loves the elect fully, but the rest of mankind only partially. He doesn't love some more than others.

Some posit that God loves everyone in one way but then loves those who believe more specially. This destroys God's attribute of perfection; it is not possible that God's love is affected by the decision of men - if I do something (such as believe) I am suddenly loved more. God can only love perfectly.

Nothing God decrees ever fails to be fully achieved

Clearly anything less would mean that God is not God. This is because God decrees in eternity forward to eternity. There are no uncertainties in God. If anything failed to be achieved, God could not be perfect, but fallible. Full achievement requires immense power, but God is omnipotent and has all the power needed to attain his desired ends.

³ There are a few passages where God is said to repent or relent, but these are anthropomorphisms where God is spoken of in human terms to accommodate the weakness of men. In cases such as the judgment of the Ninevites (Jon 3:10), God's plan was always for the Ninevites to repent (hence sending a prophet) but it was the threat of imminent judgment that formed the spur to the actual repentance (Jon 3:4). Obscure texts cannot be interpreted in ways that contradict a clearly understood attribute of God.

What is the result of these attributes?

The fundamental outcome of this is that God's attributes drive the particularity of redemption.⁴ Those who are saved are those God loved from eternity. They are loved with a perfect love that never changes. This love continues into eternity future when the elect will fellowship directly with God. This is called the 'foreknowledge' of God, the foreknowing of love, a love that foreordains to eternal fellowship.⁵

Consequently this foreknowledge results in the choices of salvation or the decrees of God in redemption. Because God loves his chosen ones, he ensures that they are atoned for by the sacrifice of Christ. God's sovereign pleasure drives his love, his love drives his choosing, his election of some determines their salvation from eternity; the mission of the Lord Jesus ensures that this will is accomplished while the Spirit ensures it is applied.

The further implications of these doctrines

From man's side, he cannot come to God unaided by divine grace. From God's side, there has been a choosing of only a portion of the human race. From these two foundational doctrines the rest of the doctrines of grace follow logically and Biblically. If God is God, and if he has elected some to life then:

1. The atonement cannot be unlimited to all.

Let's get this clear from the outset; God will not act contrary to his will or inconsistently with his decrees. If atonement is not needed for all, it is not performed for all. God cannot do anything imperfectly, so any atonement for mankind must be complete and effectual, nothing must be wasted or ineffective. The atonement of Christ must save those it is intended for or God has failed his objective.

The notion of an unlimited atonement that is broad enough to cover every human that ever lived or will live is riddled with theological inconsistencies:

1. **THE BLOOD OF CHRIST IS WASTED IN AN UNLIMITED ATONEMENT.** Christ's blood is the most precious matter in the universe. The idea that the Lord could shed his blood for millions of people and then for it to be ignored and wasted is a foul concept. God would never act in such a manner as this implies imperfection, a lack of foreknowledge and inability to achieve desired ends.
2. **SOME SPECIFIC PEOPLE WERE SAID BY THE LORD TO BE DESTINED TO HELL, THESE CANNOT BE REDEEMED.** He said this to their face on occasion (Matt 23:15, 33). Jesus even condemned whole towns such as Chorazin and Capernaum. The apostles clearly taught that some were reserved for condemnation (2 Pt 2:2-9; Jude 3). There can be no universal atonement if some are stated to be destined for wrath. [We have already covered this under 'reprobation'.]
3. **JESUS CANNOT DIE FOR THOSE ELECTED TO DEATH.** If God has predestined some to hell then it is impossible that Jesus can die for such; to do so posits a complete contradiction within the Godhead.

⁴ Some Calvinists prefer the title *particular redemption* instead of *limited atonement*. In one sense the atonement is not limited at all, it does all that it set out to do - to save the elect completely. 'Particular redemption' specifies that the atonement of Christ was for particular, or specific, people only.

⁵ *Prognosis* (translated 'foreknowledge' in 1 Pt 1:2) is of the same root as *proginosko* ('foreordained' in 1 Pt 1:20). Foreordained love is inseparable from God's foreknowledge and both result from the decree of election. Acts 2:23, Rm 11:2 and the 1 Pt texts, show that 'foreknowledge' is foreordination. God's foreknowledge (lit. 'knowing before') is not merely the perception of man's future actions (prescience). Both the Hebrew and Greek words for 'know' include the concept of love, an acknowledgement of relationship. The Hebrew marks the oneness of loving and choosing, by having one word for both, *bachar* (Greek, *hairtizo*, Septuagint). [See Jamieson, Fauset and Brown, *Bible Comm.* in. loc.; Robertson's *Word Pictures* in. loc.]

4. **GOD'S GRACE CANNOT BE UPON THOSE UNDER WRATH.** The atonement of Christ is as broad as grace; atonement is for the elect to ensure that God's will is perfected and the elect are rescued for glorification. If election has determined that some are condemned then they are already under wrath; so it is impossible to conceive that grace can be applied to them as well.⁶
5. **ATONEMENT CANNOT BE BASED ON A DIVINE LOVE FOR ALL SINCE SOME ARE HATED.** If God only loves some and if atonement is intended to save those God loves, then atonement cannot be wide enough to cover the reprobate. Atonement cannot be universal.
6. **WHOLE NATIONS IN THE OT WERE NEVER GIVEN THE CHANCE TO HEAR OF THIS ATONEMENT;** indeed their sin is said to have come to fulness and their condemnation ready when Israel brought God's judgment via warfare. God's atonement could not have been established for these.
7. **WHOLE NATIONS THROUGHOUT HISTORY HAVE NEVER HEARD OF THIS ATONEMENT.** God's providence could have overseen a more swift and widespread progression of the Gospel, but this has been largely restricted. For centuries there were no missionaries active in the world at all. In the OT God clearly tells Israel that she amongst all nations was chosen to hear the message of life and that because she was the smallest of nations. How can Christ's atonement have been engineered for these Gentiles?
8. **SINCE NOT ALL MEN ARE SAVED, ATONEMENT MUST BE LIMITED.** It is a clear fact that hell exists and has a large population. If God's wrath is upon some, then the atonement has limitations: it is either limited in power - it cannot save everyone it intends, or it must be limited in scope - it was never intended to save everyone. Under the Arminian scheme atonement is limited in power - man is able to reject and withstand God. Under the Calvinist / Augustinian scheme it is limited in scope and fully effective for all its chosen recipients.
9. **THE ATONEMENT IS THE DEATH OF JESUS AS A SUBSTITUTE FOR THOSE GOD INTENDED TO SAVE.** If atonement is universal, then the substitutionary death of Christ is applied to all - this is the heresy of universalism, and clearly unacceptable. If the atonement is only a potential paying of the penalty, how can it be a successful redemption for man? How does the potentiality become reality? Certainly not by believing as this would make man the agent of salvation not God.
10. **CHRIST'S ATONEMENT IS MADE EFFECTUAL BY CHRIST'S INTERCESSION.** Yet his intercession was clearly for a select group of people only, those elect that were given to him by the Father (see all of Jn 17, esp. v9). It is impossible that Christ could die for all but only pray for some.
11. **GOD'S PURPOSE IN ATONEMENT WAS TO ACTUALLY REDEEM A PEOPLE,** not to make atonement possible for all, not to provide a potential redemption reliant upon man's decision. (Matt 18:11; Rm 5:10; 2 Cor 5:21; Gal 1:4, 3:13; Eph 1:7) God's purposes in atonement were not conditional upon faith in the recipient; both faith and repentance were purchased by Christ in redemption to ensure the certainty of saving those it was designed for (Rm 2:4; Gal 3:13-14; Eph 1:3-4, 2:8; Phil 1:29; 2 Tim 3:5-6).

2. The effectual calling of men by God in the Gospel must be applied to a limited number.

When God sends his grace for men to believe and repent, it is an irresistible force that actually converts and changes men to be new creatures. There is no such thing in scripture as a partial grace, a prevenient grace⁷ for all that does an incomplete work, requiring man's

⁶ Regarding the elect before conversion: they are seen as in Christ from eternity, loved by God (Eph 1:4-5). In their natural Adamic state they are deserving of wrath and condemnation, as being ungodly and enemies of God, but heaven looks at them as awaiting the impact of grace. For this reason they are divinely protected until they are converted (Heb 1:14).

⁷ Literally, 'a grace that comes before'. Evangelical Arminians teach that a universal prevenient grace is given to men, in the Gospel message, to enable them to exercise faith and then be regenerated. Regeneration is thus the result of faith, not the cause of it. Believing thus becomes the province of unregenerate men. For

co-operation to exercise faith. Man is totally depraved and unable to believe or repent, he is dead in sins and at enmity with God, his mind is set against God and cannot submit to God's law or please him (Rm 8:7-8). Man must be changed into a new creature in order to believe, a creature that has received God's graces of faith and repentance.

So, the doctrine of total depravity means that man can do nothing to achieve salvation alone (unlike the ideas of Pelagianism) or achieve salvation through co-operation with God (Arminianism). Man's will is bound and must be divinely set free, and grace must be received to exercise repentance and faith. This is the work of God's Spirit to apply salvation. Without the Spirit creating new spiritual faculties, man cannot respond to the Gospel. Grace means that salvation is God's free gift; faith is the gift that is given to believe the Gospel, and faith is given only to the elect, the seed of promise. Not all believe because faith is not given to all. Only those of the line of promise receive grace to believe.

Therefore *it is* of faith that *it might be* according to grace, so that the promise might be sure to all the seed ... to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all. (Rm 4:16; see also Paul's argument in Gal 3-4)

God has elected only a portion of the human race to salvation, therefore, those who are given grace to believe must be the same people who are decreed to believe. The divine act of creating new spiritual faculties in men cannot be applied to those who are elected to reprobation, who are destined for condemnation.

When the Gospel is preached, the result is twofold:

1. When it is heard by reprobates, they are hardened in their sin and rebellion (Rm 9:18).
2. When it is heard by the elect, they are given power by the Spirit to believe and repent by being regenerated into new creatures that have spiritual faculties to do so (Jn 3:6-8).

This further means that:

- **GOD CANNOT OFFER SALVATION TO THOSE CONDEMNED TO HELL AND STILL REMAIN TRUE.** The Gospel call includes an unlimited command to repent (Acts 17:30), everyone is condemned if they do not believe; but it is not a universal promise of life. It promises life to all those who come, but only those who are drawn by God will actually come (Jn 6:44, 65). The Gospel message is not an offer of life to all, but a means of fishing for elect people. Those who are destined to condemnation are not promised salvation in the Gospel.
- **GOD CANNOT BE WILLING TO SAVE ALL THEN FAIL TO SAVE THEM.** The Gospel call cannot be universally effectual if God is not willing to save all. If God did declare that all can be saved, that he desires the salvation of all, then God would have failed his mission if all were not saved.
- **IF ONE ASPECT OF GOSPEL PREACHING IS TO HARDEN CERTAIN PEOPLE (Rm 9:18; 2 Thess 2:10-12; Matt 13:14-15; Lk 10:21; Isa 63:17), HOW CAN IT BE A UNIVERSAL, GENUINE OFFER OF MERCY?** Since God has declared I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion (Rm 9:15) it is clear that those not chosen for life are vessels of wrath prepared for destruction (Rm 9:22). If there is no prospect of mercy for such, no mercy can actually be available in the Gospel, even if they hear it. If the message of the Gospel is twofold (to one a means of power to another a hardening in rebellion), then, not only is there no offer of life to the reprobate, but there is a hardening of their hearts when they hear the message; He has blinded their eyes and hardened

Roman Catholics, prevenient grace is necessary to receive the benefit of the grace that comes from sacraments. [Evangelical Arminianism is the theology founded by John Wesley that differs from continental Arminianism on total depravity. Wesley was closer to Reformed theology on total depravity. Mainstream Arminians believed that Adam's sin was not imputed to his descendants and that man's depravity was not total; he could incline his will towards God unaided (as in Pelagianism). However, Wesley's idea of prevenient grace overturned this so that men can respond without regenerating grace. For Wesley, human will is one of the causes of regeneration. Later extreme Arminians, such as the Pelagian Charles Finney, made it the prime cause.]

their hearts, Lest they should see with *their* eyes, Lest they should understand with *their* hearts and turn, So that I should heal them (Jn 12:40; Isa 6:10).⁸ This hardening is seen in the natural desire of men to sin, God does not make men sin, but leaves them in their own rebellion (Rm 1:24-28). The hardening to judgment does not twist man away from his desires, reprobates desire iniquity; God's condemnation is due to the sin men want to commit (Hos 13:9).

- **IF GRACE FOR SALVATION IS IRRESISTIBLE, HOW CAN MEN REJECT IT?** We have seen that the call of the Gospel to life is an effectual call by the Spirit with power to change men: you received the word of God which you heard from us ... the word of God, which also effectively works⁹ in you who believe (1 Thess 2:13). One can thus explain Gospel preaching as comprising of a *universal call* setting out God's demands for repentance and faith, and a restricted, *effectual call* to the elect that actually changes them. If there was only one type of calling to all men to give equal chance to all, that call would have to be effectual to certainly save the elect, since only that call results in faith. An effectual call must be an irresistible call since depraved men cannot exercise faith. So a universal effectual call could not be resisted - yet the call is resisted since many reject the Gospel and go to hell; therefore, the effectual call cannot be universal.
- **THE WILL TO BELIEVE AND BE SAVED COMES FROM GOD NOT MAN, MAN'S WILL IS DEAD TOWARDS GOD.** The will to be saved cannot arise from a spiritually dead man (Eph 2:1), God must actually change our wills when he regenerates us. Man, by nature chooses sin and himself, not obedience to God. Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth. (Jm 1:18) A man can receive nothing unless it has been given to him from heaven. (Jn 3:27). 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 given to us in Christ Jesus before time began. (2 Tim 1:9).

⁸ Regarding this hardening, Romans 9 and parallel texts show that the hardening arises both from God's activity and man's choice to harden his own heart against God. [Re: Pharaoh, Ex 8:15, 32, 9:34, 10:1, 14:17.

⁹ The Greek verb is derived from the noun **evnerge,w** (*energeo*) meaning 'power in exercise', 'to be active', 'at work', and is used only of supernatural activity.

3. There are not two wills in God.

Inconsistent Reformed theologians often realise that their idea of potential universal redemption (Christ died for everyone) poses problems of contradiction within the Godhead. If God elects only some, why would he initiate an unlimited atonement? Amyraldism accepts this full on by teaching that there is a hypothetical, potential atonement for all but an actual election of only some, since men do not come to Christ unaided. Most potential universalists try to defend universal grace by positing two contradictory wills in God, but this is merely Amyraldism again.

In Reformed tradition there is a genuine distinction between God's preceptive will (will of command) and decretive will (God's eternal plan); but there is no contradiction. God's decree sets out God's eternal purpose about what he will do, for instance, to save the elect only; but he commands all men to repent. There is no contradiction, what God commands is what men ought to do - repent; but only the elect will repent since men will not obey without grace. The obligation (the command to believe) does not imply ability (faith). God's will is that murder is forbidden, but God's counsel (decree) allows murder to take place in history. God forbids adultery, and yet he predestined Bathsheba to be Solomon's mother. This can be pictured as:

THE BIBLICAL DISTINCTION IN GOD'S WILL

Type of will	What is it?	Example	Result
God's decretive will	Will of plan & purpose	The elect will believe	Only the elect are saved
God's preceptive will	Will of command	All must repent & believe	All men under obligation

Under the modern Amyraldian, Four-Point Calvinism scheme, it is claimed that there is a difference between God's preceptive will (the will of command as a visible, revealed will) and God's decretive will (God's counsel or God's invisible, hidden will) as follows:¹⁰

1. God's will of precept is that all men should be saved, he desires the death of no man and wants everyone to respond to the Gospel. Therefore, the death of Christ was sufficient for all. This is sometimes referred to as God's visible will, he commands all men to repent and loves the world.
2. God knows that man will not respond and so the decree of election ensures that those chosen from mankind will be secured and have everlasting life. This is sometimes called God's hidden or invisible will since we do not know those who are elected.

The motivation is to be able to say that God loves everybody and that Jesus died for all. This can be formulated as:

THE ABSURD DISTINCTION IN GOD'S WILL IN SALVATION

Type of will	What is it?	Result
God's hidden will	Will of purpose and plan to save only the elect and abandon the rest.	The reprobate are left in their sins.
God's revealed will	Will of desire to save all mankind.	God wants to save the reprobate in time.

The problem this causes to one's concept of God has such serious ramifications that it is hard to see why such nonsense is tolerated for even a moment. It teaches that there is a deep contradiction and inconsistency within the Godhead: part of God wants to save everyone and yearns for the salvation of all, while another part has already damned the reprobate in eternity. If God's word states that a double-minded man is unstable in all his ways, what does this do to God himself?

¹⁰ In fact the idea of two contradictory wills in God is not modern, but was contested by true Reformed theologians since the Reformation. For example see Francis Turretin, *Inst. Of Eceleptic Theol.* P&R Pub., Vol. 1, p395-430, esp. p413-4. ; A. Kuyper, *Particular Grace*, RFP, p76ff.

Furthermore it asserts that God's will is not achieved. Part of God's will is that all men should be saved, he wills the salvation of all - yet this does not occur; many from mankind end up in hell. God's will has been thwarted; worse still, thwarted by mere men who rejected his kind offer!

The references to God's will as hidden and visible/revealed are also unhelpful in this particular context. God's will of election is not hidden, but exposed clearly in scripture. Repeatedly the Bible tells us that God saves only those chosen in eternity. God's precepts and commands fall right in line with this decree: all men are commanded to repent and believe, but men will not come to Christ for life, so God draws those he has chosen.

I should add that many modern Amyraldian Reformed, or semi-reformed, folk have decided not to accept the doctrine of reprobation ('double predestination'). They accept that God has chosen the elect in eternity, but insist that the rest are not elected to damnation, but are merely left in their sins to damn themselves.¹¹ This is both illogical and unscriptural. These still posit a contradiction within the Godhead, namely, that God loves everyone and desires the salvation of everyone, but God only actively saves the elect. Since only those who are given grace by God can be saved, to withhold that grace from some is effectively damning them anyway. [See earlier section on Election.]

4. If salvation is all of grace, God must preserve the elect to the end.

Since man has no power to spiritual good, and must receive grace in order to repent and believe; and since God gives man a new life in Christ to live as a Christian, constantly supplying grace for every type of need (Heb 4:16), it is clear that God must also preserve his elect saints unto the end. Without divine aid man would fall aside.

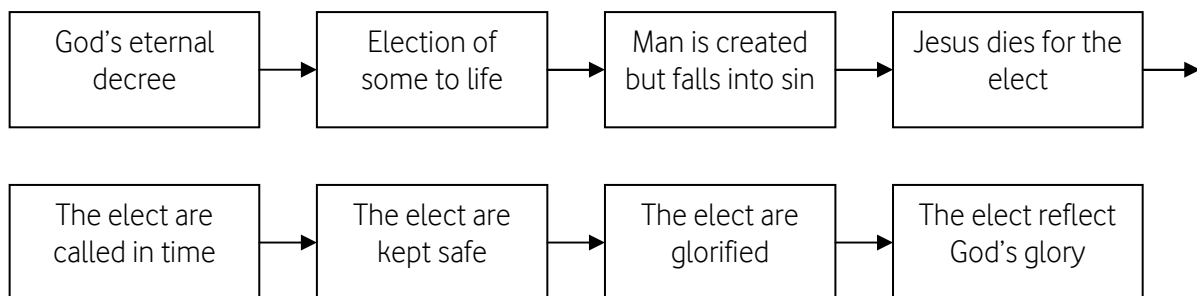
This is the uniform testimony of the scriptures, that God secures his believing people to the end. Even under the Old Testament dispensation, keeping going was the work of God in the faithful remnant:

But now, thus says the LORD, who created you, O Jacob, and He who formed you, O Israel: 'Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called *you* by your name; you *are* mine. When you pass through the waters, I *will be* with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, nor shall the flame scorch you.' (Isa 43:1-2)

'For the mountains shall depart And the hills be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from you, nor shall my covenant of peace be removed,' says the LORD, who has mercy on you. (Isa 54:10)

And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from doing them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts so that they will not depart from me. (Jer 32:40)

Perseverance is the final logical link in the chain begun by unconditional election:



¹¹ This is called 'preterition' - the passing over of some to be left in their self-determined sinfulness. Preterition doesn't make anyone a sinner, condemnation is based upon the actual sins a man chooses to commit. The true doctrine of reprobation includes preterition, the reprobate being left in sin, but this passing by is in itself an ordaining to wrath (Westminster Confession, 3:7). So, reprobation is preterition and condemnation from eternity.

This is in accord with apostolic teaching:

For whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to be* conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified. What then shall we say to these things? If God *is* for us, who *can be* against us? ... Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? *Shall* tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written: 'For Your sake we are killed all day long; We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.' Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Rm 8:29-31; 35-39)

ELECTION: For whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to be* conformed to the image of His Son.

IRRESISTIBLE GRACE (EFFECTUAL CALLING): these He also called.

LIMITED ATONEMENT (PARTICULAR REDEMPTION): whom He called, these He also justified (**he only saves those whom he called**).

PRESERVATION OF THE SAINTS: If God *is* for us, who *can be* against us? ... [nothing] shall be able to separate us from the love of God.

Conclusion

If you believe in the Biblical doctrine of election to life of a portion of the human race under God's sovereignty, the logical outcome of this is that:

- atonement is limited to only save those chosen;
- grace is irresistible to the elect;
- not everyone is called effectually;
- not everyone is loved by God;
- the reprobate are hardened by the Gospel preached;
- and the elect are preserved to the end.

The alternative is to be deeply inconsistent in theology and to have false views on key Biblical texts. It is impossible for a person to be truly Biblical, or Reformed, in terms of election and also to teach a universal grace and a genuine offer of life to all in the Gospel. God's purpose is selective, the atonement is particular, the Gospel message is preached to all but the effectual call of the Spirit is specific to a few.

True Gospel preaching: what it is and what it is not.

It is not Hyper Calvinism

There are mistakes on both sides of this argument, leading to factions within historic Calvinism. Firstly, historic Hyper-Calvinists correctly reject the idea of a universal free offer of the Gospel but they also decline to witness universally. Seeing that faith is a gift given by God, they refuse to preach that men must believe. They call this idea 'duty-faith'; i.e. it is an absurd idea to tell men dead in sin to believe and it implies that man's will is free. Only those who show existing evidences of regeneration (reveal themselves to be elect with faith) can be exhorted to follow Christ.

Such folk make two mistakes:

1. We are commanded by the Lord to preach universally; all men must be reached with the Gospel (Mk 16:15).
2. The Gospel message does not imply ability in its responsibility. All men are commanded to repent by God (i.e. repentance is the duty of all men), but all men do not have the grace to repent. All men are responsible to believe (i.e. faith is the duty of the ungodly), but not all men will be able to believe.

The ministry of Jesus illustrates the point. The Lord commanded many people to do things that were totally impossible for them: blind men were told to see, the lame were told to walk and the dead were told to rise. All such people responded to the command of Jesus even though they were unable; the command included power to be changed. The same is true of the Gospel: it commands repentance and faith and those who are elect will receive power to repent and believe in the call of the Gospel as the Spirit gives grace. The reprobate will remain dead in sins.

Hyper-Calvinists miss the point of effectual calling and err in disobeying God's command to preach indiscriminately. [It should be noted that this charge is levelled against many good saints who are not Hyper-Calvinists, but are strictly consistent Calvinists. Modern Hyper-Calvinism is maintained by Gospel Standard Baptists in the UK, and some US Baptist groups.]

It is not Amyraldism

Then we have the modern four-point Calvinists and Amyraldians who want to be Calvinists but cannot accept reprobation and seek to uphold a universal love of God for all and unlimited atonement. These teach a universal, sincere, free offer in the Gospel; i.e. God loves everyone, seeks the salvation of everyone, Jesus died for everyone and the choice is down to man's free will. This paper has already shown that such a position is Biblically untenable and neither does it represent historic Calvinism.

True Gospel preaching:

1. ADDRESSES ALL MEN (Mk 16:15). It is indiscriminate and reaches out to all sorts of people in every corner of the world. The Gospel has missionary zeal embedded in it.
2. SPEAKS TO PEOPLE WHERE THEY ARE. In the Acts we see Paul use two separate approaches (Acts 17). To Gentiles he starts with explaining God's role as creator and that all men are responsible to worship him correctly, submitting to his saviour Jesus. To Jews he starts with the law, explaining that Jesus is the Messiah and that they must submit to him as Lord. The Gospel must be communicated effectively.
3. DOES NOT INVOLVE A UNIVERSAL FREE OFFER. We have no right to tell everyone we speak to that God loves them (he may not), that Christ died for them (how do we know that?) or that God desires their salvation (he may not).
4. DOES INCLUDE A COMMAND TO REPENT AND BE BAPTISED (Matt 28:19; Acts 2:38). Men must be told that they must submit to God, grieve for sin, turn from their sins and follow Christ as Lord. If the Spirit is working in them, there will be a conviction of sin (Jn

- 16:8). They must also be commanded to be baptised as soon as possible. All denominations fail on this latter point. If a person believes with their whole heart in Christ, baptism should immediately follow (Acts 8:37).
5. DOES INCLUDE A COMMAND TO BELIEVE ON THE LORD JESUS CHRIST (Acts 19:4; Rm 3:22; Gal 3:22; 1 Tim 1:16). This is the irreducible minimum statement of the Gospel, all the rest is included in it (Acts 16:31; 1 Jn 3:23).
 6. NOTE: IN THE ACTS WE NEVER SEE THE APOSTLES BASE THEIR GOSPEL MESSAGE ON GOD'S LOVE FOR MAN. The word 'love' does not appear in Acts at all.

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Difficult Questions to be faced

Q. Your argument is just logical and rational deductive reasoning, resulting in a hard scholastic system that does not express the universality and love of God.

All people follow some kind of system, even if they refuse to call it by a name. It is foolish to believe otherwise. There are only four or five essential systems to delineate salvation:¹²

1. **UNIVERSALISM:** everybody gets saved by one means or another.
2. **PELAGIANISM:** man basically saves himself, he is not ruined and can achieve spiritual good, if he wants to.
3. **ARMINIANISM OR SEMI-PELAGIANISM:** Man co-operates with God. God provides a potential salvation and man chooses to be saved.
4. **AMYRALDISM:** God hypothetically provides a universal salvation (loves everyone) but man does not choose God, so God elects a portion of the human race to salvation.
5. **CALVINISM OR AUGUSTINIANISM:** God is sovereign in salvation. He elects some to life and provides a full atonement for them; then he gives grace to the elect to receive the benefits of a particular redemption.

This reduces down to:

<p>Universalism Everybody is saved automatically; or can be saved by their own will.</p>	<p>Synergism Salvation is a joint enterprise between God & man.</p>	<p>Monergism Salvation is by the power of God alone.</p>
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All Christians reject universalism, so this is not in the picture. What remains is either a synergistic salvation (man co-operates with God) or a monergistic salvation (God does it all). Some try to join these two systems (which cannot be united), such as Amyraldism and four-point Calvinists. The argument for blending Arminianism and Calvinism is logically inconsistent and cannot hold water (hence this paper), while Arminianism itself is clearly unbiblical on many fronts (see earlier). What remains is the system known as Calvinism or Augustinianism, but a better term is Biblical salvation.

Now this is just the simple fact of the matter. There is nothing unduly rational or scholastic about this in a negative sense. All doctrines must be logically deduced from Biblical study - this is normal. Would you prefer an illogical, irrational theology that was inconsistent?

Q. Many scriptures teach that God loves all men.

Actually there aren't any at all. John 3:16 states that God so loved the world, but the word 'world' here cannot mean everyone for many reasons. To mention but a few:

1. The word is restricted by the context and often means a relatively few people, such as a few thousand Israelites, at most, in Jn 12:19.
2. If 'world' means everyone in v16, it means everyone in v17 - this would then teach universalism and hell would not exist.
3. It can't mean everyone or it would include the people Jesus said were destined to hell and those condemned by God to condemnation in the OT, such as the Canaanites or Sodom (see earlier).
4. The word 'world' is used to show to Nicodemus that salvation is wider than the Jewish nation, a concept that shocked Jews.
5. The meaning is: God loves the world that he created and so will rescue a select group of people, from all nations, and rebuild the world to perfectly manifest his glory.

¹² This ignores other religious / philosophical systems that teach there is no salvation at all, there is just reincarnation, or that man merges with a cosmic, divine force / principle, or annihilationists who teach that this life is all there is, enjoy life now, afterwards is destruction.

There are no other scriptures that state God loves all people. Psalm 145:9 says this in the NIV translation, but the word 'love' is not in the best Hebrew manuscripts and therefore does not appear in most translations (e.g. KJV, NKJV, ASV, NAS, RSV, Darby, Young's Literal, Bible in Basic English). The Hebrew word *racham*, 'tender mercies', means compassion. The point of the Psalmist is to show the goodness of God in providentially caring for all he has made, supplying sun and rain for food (See later on 1 Jn 2:2).

Q. Many scriptures show that God *does* want everyone to be saved.

There are some scriptures that seem to imply this and these must be looked at.

'For I have no pleasure in the death of one who dies,' says the Lord GOD. 'Therefore turn and live!' (Ezekiel 18:32)

"Say to them: 'As I live,' says the Lord GOD, 'I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn, turn from your evil ways! For why should you die, O house of Israel?' (Ezekiel 33:11)

What are these saying?

1. Death means separation. What is in view in these texts is the death that leads to condemnation and hell.
 2. God has no pleasure in people dying in condemnation. This is absolutely true, why would the Lord of life feel anything else. Death gives him no pleasure (Lam 3:33). What does give him pleasure is the salvation of the elect (Eph 1:5, 9; 2 Thess 1:11-12; Phil 2:13). The judge that sentences a criminal to death is not a sadist, he is merely executing justice; delight does not come into the act of righteous judgment.
 3. While God derives no happiness from condemnation and hell, it does glorify him. God is the judge of all and the administrator of universal justice. The entrance of sin into the cosmos must be judged, there must be an expression of divine wrath against sin, both against heavenly beings and humans. For this reason, hell is the testimony of God's justice, wrath and holiness. The suffering of men in hell gives God no pleasure, but the righteousness of it glorifies his justice.
 4. Since this is the case, God urges the men addressed here to repent and be converted. The final end of man is the result of man's desire to follow his passions. If a man ends up in hell, it is because he has loved sin rather than the worship of God.
 5. All who turn and live, who repent, will be saved. In doing so they show themselves to be elect.
-

Q. There are clear scriptures that state that Jesus died for everyone.

There are very few that even imply this. Amongst these are the following:

Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, *and* giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence. For this *is* good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For *there is* one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time. (1 Tim 2:1-6)

As with many Arminian proof texts, they make it prove too much. If Jesus is a ransom for everyone, the result is universalism and no hell. We know that Paul did not believe or teach this, so this is out of the question. The question hinges on the meaning of the Greek word 'all' (*pas*).

Pas has a wide range of meanings and the context must determine which of these suits the writer's point. It can mean -

- 1) Individually: each, every, every kind of, any, full, all, the whole, everyone, all things, everything, absolute, greatest.
 - 2) Collectively: some of all types, some of all kinds, all of some kinds, all sorts of.
- So, 'all' can mean representatives of all types of men.

This is what is meant by Jn 12:32

And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all *men* unto me. (KJV)

And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all *peoples* to Myself. (NKJV)¹³

It is clear that Jesus has not drawn every single person to himself, most of the world abhors or ignores Christianity. The cross draws all that Christ chooses to draw: people from all types, characters, stations and nationalities. The context also tells us two things: 1) Jesus said this specifically to prophesy how he would be killed (v33) and, 2) the act of lifting up is to do with judgment of the world (v31). This statement was not focused on the salvation of every person. The drawing power of Jesus must equate to the drawing power of the Father, mentioned earlier in John's letter (Jn 6:44, 65), which is of some - not all.¹⁴ Jesus draws all types of people, not every single person.

So also here, (1 Tim 2) Paul is saying that prayer must be made for all men. Can he mean everyone? Obviously not, the local church cannot pray for every person on earth and everyone who ever lived; this is nonsense. He means we must pray for all sorts of people.

Then he selects kings and those in authority, to emphasise that even those who may persecute the church must also be prayed for so that the church may have peace to minister more effectively. He does this to show that enemies of the church are not to be excluded from prayer for all types of men. Just as all types of men are to be prayed for, Jesus died for all types of men and God desires all types of men to be saved. Paul emphasises this to show that church enemies can actually be favoured by God and redeemed, just as Paul himself was. He is stimulating believers to pray for all sorts of folk, since anyone can be saved, even persecutors of the church.

For to this *end* we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is *the* Saviour of all men, especially of those who believe. (1 Tim 4:10)

A simple but careful look at what is said here will show that redemption is not universal in scope. Again, Paul would not teach something he opposes elsewhere, so he is not saying that Jesus is the redeemer of every man. Then, Paul draws a distinction between 'all men' and 'those who believe'. If all men are saved, how are those who believe *especially* saved? How can there be a salvation without faith?

The word 'saviour' here also means 'preserver'. Paul is encouraging Timothy in the hard, thankless work of an apostle; he is to be diligent in preaching and suffer reproach because he can trust God. Why? Because God preserves everyone; he gives rain and sunshine to ensure man has food; he controls nations and sin under his sovereignty; his providence preserves mankind and upholds creation. God is thus the preserver of everyone, but he is especially the preserver of Christians, keeping them secure in this world and the next.

And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world. (1 Jn 2:2)

¹³ Neither the word 'men' or 'peoples' appears in the Greek text.

¹⁴ The context of Jn 6 shows that some do not believe; even amongst the disciples one did not (v70-71). The force of Jesus' words actually drove many followers away from him (v66).

And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son *as* Saviour of the world. (1 Jn 4:14)

The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, 'Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!' (Jn 1:29)

I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is my flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world. (Jn 6:51)

The comments on Jn 3:16 apply generally here.

1 Jn 2:2

Does John teach a universal redemption elsewhere? No! He believes in reprobation and effectual calling, defending this position by quoting Jesus as saying, 'The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit [i.e. believing is originated by the Spirit] ... he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him' [those who are not born of the Spirit] (Jn 3:8, 36). John, therefore, cannot be teaching that there is a propitiation for every man.

Many believe that John is writing to Jews and traditionally to believing Jews in Parthia. The book was originally called, 'The Epistle of John to the Parthians' according to Augustine.¹⁵ It may, however, have been written after his return from exile to Ephesus, to encourage his home church.

The phrase, *but also for [the sins] of the whole world*, is usually taken to mean, for those who are not Jews; John was a Jew and his audience were most likely Jews. Thus the 'us' here is Jewish believers, the 'whole world' equals Gentile believers.

There was a very real problem with Jews converting to Christ, since they had been taught from birth that there is no propitiation for Gentiles; that only Jews could be saved. Jews commonly called Gentiles 'the world', 'the whole world' and 'the nations of the world'. The phrase thus applies to those who believe in Gentile nations. Jews frequently spoke in this manner (see Jn 12:19): 'the "whole world" has left the Misna, and gone after the "Gemara"' (i.e. the majority of learned Jewish teachers);¹⁶ 'R. Simeon ben Gamaliel entered (the synagogue), "the whole world" stood up before him' (i.e. the people in the synagogue).¹⁷ John Gill lists many such examples from Rabbinic writings in his commentary on 1 John. Sometimes the phrase, 'all the men of the world' only applies to the Jewish inhabitants of a certain city with a synagogue.

As mentioned before, the word 'world' must be qualified to make sense in the context. It may mean Jews of a certain place (Jn 12:19), the Roman Empire (Lk 2:1), the churches in the world (Rm 1:8), believers (Col 1:6), all the inhabitants of the world at that time (Rev 3:10), a part of humanity etc. etc.

John speaks of a world lying in wickedness and contrasts it with elect saints in the church, his concept of 'world' clearly does not mean every human inhabitant here. In 3:1 he shows the cause of this dichotomy, the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. The world of people outside the church has nothing to do with believers because it knows nothing of God.

Even in this verse (2:2) he distinguishes between the existing church ('our sins') and the 'world', the church is not part of the wider world. Indeed, for whomever Christ is a propitiation, that person is forgiven, justified, changed into a new creature and glorified (Rm 8:29-30); this is never true of the whole world. Scripture does not teach that this is true for every individual. To benefit from Christ's propitiation faith is necessary, and this

¹⁵ Augustine, *apud Grotium*.

¹⁶ T. Bab. Bava Metzia, fol. 33. 2. Quoted by Gill, Comm. in. loc.

¹⁷ T. Bab. Horayot, fol. 13. 2. Quoted by Gill, Comm. in. loc.

faith is only given by God to the elect. This propitiation is never applied with faith to every man; clearly not everyone is a believer. John also teaches that Christ is an advocate for those for whom he is a propitiation (1 Jn 2:1), and Christ is not an advocate for every man and does not even pray for the world (Jn 17:9). If Christ does not pray for the whole world of humans, and is not an advocate for every man, then he is not the propitiation for all people.¹⁸ Finally, John explains that the source of propitiation is the love of God to the elect; the Son is sent to be the propitiation for their sins alone, not everyone's (1 Jn 4:10).

John's purpose in this letter is to encourage the church, especially the Jewish church under persecution, that Christ is the believer's advocate and propitiatory sacrifice. The sin problem is dealt with for the Christian, failures of conscience can be cleansed by the blood of Christ. This being so, what comfort is there for a sin-sick, distressed believer to be told that Christ was a propitiation for every human being, even those in hell? Seeing that this propitiation left people in hell, what security would there be for a believer with a wounded conscience? This destroys everything the apostle is arguing for. Such a propitiation would be a rank failure. Thankfully, this is not the case. Christ's propitiation secures those it is intended to save.

These arguments equally apply to John 1:29 and 6:51. If Jesus was a sacrifice that took away the sins of the every single person in the world, how can anyone be condemned to hell without any sins, without any reason to be condemned. John does not say that these sins were potentially taken away, but that Jesus actually takes them away. If 'world' means 'everyone', again we have universalism.

1 Jn 4:14

John's letter continually distinguishes between two groups of people: a) the wicked who sin and who do not have the love of God and b) those who love God and the brethren, who have God's Spirit. After distinguishing between these through three chapters, John explains that Jesus came to the world as a saviour, his role in coming was to save, the Father sent him to be the saviour of his elect ones. Those who understand this role are the 'we', and the 'us' in the immediate surrounding verses, i.e. elect believers; those who 'confess that Jesus is the Son of God' v15.

The verse simply means that Jesus was sent to the world as a Saviour. Anyone in the world who is saved is saved by Christ and no one else. Those saved are the elect alone. If the verse meant that everyone in the world is included in the saving of this Saviour, then why do people end up in hell? Christ would thus have failed to save, could not be a Saviour for them. Dare anyone suggest this? The verse does not teach that Christ is a potential saviour for all, but that actually he is the Saviour of the world.

The Lord is not slack concerning *His* promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. (2 Pt 3:9)

Firstly, Peter does not believe that everyone is saved or that there is a potential universal salvation; indeed he believes and teaches divine election, reprobation and the effectual calling of some (1 Pt 2:9; 2 Pt 1:3, 10, 2:9-12). Even in this very letter he can say that some men are, 'made to be caught and destroyed', that God knows how to 'reserve the unjust under punishment for the Day of Judgment'. He cannot be implying that there is a universal salvation in God.

Like John, Peter is referring to 'us' (v9), the 'beloved' (v8); when he says that God is not willing for any to perish he means the 'us' of the elect. His letter is addressed to a specific group: 'To those who have obtained like precious faith with us by the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus

¹⁸ I am grateful to some thoughts from John Gill here.

Christ'. The 'us', the 'beloved', is the believing elect Christians under his care, a part of the body of God's complete elect people in Christ; he is not writing universally to all men.

God is patient during history to ensure that the full number of the elect are born and saved. Peter's purpose in this letter, and particularly this chapter, is to encourage suffering saints that God has not forgotten them, even though the Lord has not yet returned; that his purpose is continuing, the divine promise will be fulfilled, therefore, they must be diligent in godliness.

These are the most common texts thrown at those who believe in the sovereignty of God in salvation. Many articles and books have been written over the last five centuries to demonstrate that they do not mean what Amyraldians and Arminians want them to mean, and much more could be said on these passages; but there is not space in this paper.

Q. The Old Testament offerings were meant universally for everyone in Israel, and these were types of Christ's sacrifice. God's atonement is always universal in scope.

God's covenant was only ever with Abraham and his true seed, the line of promise and faith. Israel was established as a theocratic nation for God, to be a representative to the world. She signally failed in this and the story of her rebellion is now a warning for all. Those who were truly of Abraham's seed appropriated the symbolic and prophetic truth of the offerings and lived obedient lives; at one point there were only 7,000 true followers of Yahweh (1 Kg 19:18). God's interest has always been with the remnant.

The benefits of atonement in the OT were always appropriated by faith in the offerer, not in the act of the offering up of an animal (Jude 5). Many people offered up sacrifices but were rejected from inclusion in God's covenant (Deut 2:15; Ps 106:21-26; Heb 3:16-19); indeed only a remnant of Israel was saved (1 Cor 10:5; Isa 1:9; 37:32). The offerings themselves were frequently repudiated by God as being useless without faith and righteousness (Isa 1:11,13; 58; Heb 11:4).

But further than this, those who use this argument completely forget that the offering system was instituted only with Israel, the smallest of nations in the world. No other nation had a covenant relationship with God and thus were lost in their sins.

The LORD delighted **only in your fathers**, to love them; and He chose their descendants after them, you above all peoples, as *it is* this day. **(Deut 10:15)**

The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the least of all peoples ... Therefore know that the LORD your God, He *is* God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and mercy for a thousand generations with those who love Him and keep His commandments; and He repays those who hate Him to their face, to destroy them. He will not be slack with him who hates Him; He will repay him to his face. **(Deut 7:7-10)**

Look to Abraham your father, and to Sarah *who* bore you; for I called him alone, and blessed him and increased him. **(Isa 51:2)**

Q. The Passover Lamb was for all Israel; yet many Israelites perished without faith. Similarly Christ's blood was for the whole world, even though many perish. It is not wasted if only some believe.

This argument misses the point of the type. The Passover Lamb did actually save *all* those God intended to save - the company of Israel. There were no Israelites left isolated in Egypt, all were delivered. The Israelites were here a type of God's elect people, even though in reality Israel contained many who would perish in the rebellion in the wilderness. The

benefits of the symbolic slain lamb saved everyone from the destroying angel and the judgment of Egypt. The *nation* was the key type here as a corporate unit that represented the holy nation of the elect.

The type is that:

- God has a holy nation separated unto him - Israel symbolically.
- This nation is as a chosen son to God, of the seed of Abraham according to the flesh.
- This chosen (elect) group are in bondage to Egypt, a type of the world, and under a hard taskmaster (Pharaoh as a type of Satan).
- God delivers all his people from Egypt by a blood sacrifice.

All this equates to the elect believers under the Gospel:

- The elect are a holy nation.
- They are chosen and are the true seed of Abraham in Christ, the line of promise and faith.
- They are delivered from the world and the devil by the blood sacrifice of Christ.

Symbolically, the Passover Lamb signifies that God saves his whole elect people, rescued to be a holy nation. None are lost, all are saved from Egypt and Pharaoh. This has nothing to do with the fact that historically at a later time many in Israel rebelled. Similarly, the tabernacle was a type of the presence of God dwelling with his people; the fact that many in Israel at that time rebelled against God, proving that they were not God's people at all, is irrelevant. The type stands within the restrictions of the symbol.

Q. The key element, in the decision about salvation, is not God's predestination of certain people but the willingness of men. Man has free will and can accept or reject Christ.

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under *her* wings, but you were not willing! (Matt 23:37; Lk 13:34)

And the Spirit and the bride say, 'Come!' And let him who hears say, 'Come!' And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely. (Rev 22:17)

On the last day, that great *day* of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, 'If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink.' (Jn 7:37)

To avoid lengthy doctrinal and Biblical argument, I will make short, specific points.

FREE WILL

1. We have already established that the Bible clearly shows that man cannot accept Christ by his own will alone. Man is dead in sins and by nature hates God's sovereignty; must be drawn by God to Christ; must be born again by the Spirit; and must be granted the gift of faith. Man cannot accept the Gospel without divine aid.
2. Man's will is not free in any superlative sense. Man chooses according to his prior dispositions, environment, peer pressure, upbringing, education etc. etc. A man who hates porridge is not free to eat it; one man may hate a certain colour and not be free to wear it; a wise man is not free to put his fingers in an electrical socket. This is the trivial side of free will, but true nonetheless. The serious side is that no man is free to choose spiritual good because he is dead in sin, enslaved to sin, not able to do good - no not one. Man, therefore, cannot choose the good. The Gospel is good, and man cannot choose it unaided.
3. Adam was our pre-eminent ancestor, equipped with the highest intelligence and pre-fall qualities far superior to ours in all ways. He was the representative head of mankind and was on trial for humanity. Despite his superior intellect, he chose sin rather than the good. How can we lesser mortals think we can be different?

COMING TO CHRIST

1. It is entirely true that anyone can come to Christ at any time, in the sense that there is no bar on them doing so. If any man hears the Gospel, he may respond if he desires. If any man thirsts after Christ, that man can find the water of life. If any man seeks Christ he will find him.
2. The problem is that no sinner desires to do this. The natural state of sinners is to avoid God, avoid facing the guilt of sin and avoid becoming anyone's lifelong servant. Natural man does not thirst after God and does not seek Christ.
3. A thirst for Christ, a desire to find Christ, a desire to hear the Gospel all come from the grace given by the Holy Spirit to those he selects (Jn 3:6-8). No one wills to come to Christ unless God has first given him that will.
4. The truth is not that God stops people believing; rather, no one believes, no one naturally wants to deal with sin and get right with God. So God sovereignly gives some the desire to hear the Gospel, empowers them to believe it and aids them to repent from sin and follow the Lord.

THE JERUSALEM LAMENT

This is part of a longer passage of outright condemnation and woes against the scribes and Pharisees. It is not saying that God desires the salvation of everyone in Jerusalem but that they (the unbelieving religious leaders who represented the city, Jn 7:48) resisted him with their stubborn wills. What it actually says is:

1. Jerusalem was always filled with rebellion to God; its leaders killed the prophets sent by God.
2. Jesus says that he had wanted to gather *the children* of Jerusalem, not all of it. In other words, to gather the scattered elect, true children who had heard the Gospel preached by Christ in several previous visits.
3. The rebellious leaders of Jerusalem, were not willing to let these people be gathered by the Lord and resisted this, because they opposed Christ.
4. During previous visits of the Lord to the city, they had:
 - Threatened persecution and excommunication from religious fellowship to anyone believing in him (Jn 9:22, 12:42).
 - Excommunicated his followers from the synagogue (Jn 9:34).
 - Publicly condemned Jesus (Matt 12:2, 24; Jn 9:16).
 - Tried to kill Jesus himself (Jn 5:16, 18, 7:1, 25, 11:53).
 - Encouraged the crowds to stone him (Jn 8:59).
5. Jesus was, thus, often forced into the wilderness (Mk 3:7, Jn 10:39, 11:54), away from his urban flock. He could not gather them to himself as other rabbis did.

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Appendix One

A few sample texts to support Biblical monergism

New King James Version

Total depravity

- Gen 6:5** Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man *was* great in the earth, and *that* every intent of the thoughts of his heart *was* only evil continually.
- Ps 51:5** Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, And in sin my mother conceived me.
- Ps 58:3** The wicked are estranged from the womb; They go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies.
- Eccles 9:3** Truly the hearts of the sons of men are full of evil; madness *is* in their hearts while they live, and after that *they go* to the dead.
- Isa 64:6** But we are all like an unclean *thing*, and all our righteousnesses *are* like filthy rags; We all fade as a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.
- Jer 17:9** The heart *is* deceitful above all *things*, And desperately wicked; Who can know it?
- Jn 3:5-7** 'That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, "You must be born again".'
- Rm 3:9-12** As it is written: 'There is none righteous, no, not one; There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God. They have all turned aside; They have together become unprofitable; There is none who does good, no, not one.'
- Rm 8:7-8** Because the carnal mind *is* enmity against God ... those who are in the flesh cannot please God.
- Col 2:13** And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh ...
- 1 Jn 1:8-10** If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

Unconditional election

- Deut 10:15** The LORD delighted only in your fathers, to love them; and he chose their descendants after them, you above all peoples, as *it is* this day.
- Ps 65:4** Blessed *is the many* you choose, and cause to approach *you*, *that* he may dwell in your courts.
- Isa 43:21** This people I have formed for myself; they shall declare my praise.
- Mt 11:27** All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and *the one* to whom the Son wills to reveal *Him*.
- Mt 22:14** For many are called, but few *are* chosen.
- Acts 13:48** And as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed.
- Rm 8:28-33** For whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to be* conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.
- Rm 9:10-13** And not only *this*, but when Rebecca also had conceived by one man, *even* by our father Isaac (for *the children* not yet being born, nor having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works but of Him who calls), it was said to her, 'The older shall serve the younger.' As it is written, 'Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated.'
- Rm 9:23** ... that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory.
- Eph 1:4-5** Just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will.
- 1 Thess 5:9** For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.
- 2 Thess 2:13** But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth.
- 2 Tim 1:9** [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 given to us in Christ Jesus before time began.

Reprobation

- Job 21:30** For the wicked are reserved for the day of doom; they shall be brought out on the day of wrath.
- Prov 16:4** The LORD has made all for Himself, Yes, even the wicked for the day of doom.
- Jn 17:12** While I was with them in the world, I kept them in your name. Those whom you gave me I have kept; and none of them is lost except the son of perdition [Judas], that the Scripture might be fulfilled.
- Rm 9:22** *What* if God, wanting to show *His* wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction.
- 2 Cor 4:3** But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing.
- 2 Tim 2:20** But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honour and some for dishonour.
- 1 Pt 2:8** 'A stone of stumbling and a rock of offence.' They stumble, being disobedient to the word, to which they also were appointed.
- 2 Pt 2:3** By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber.
- 2 Pt 2:9** The Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the Day of Judgment.
- Jude 4** For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ.
- Jude 13** ... wandering stars for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever.

Limited atonement

- Mt 1:21** And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call his name JESUS, for he will save his people from their sins.
- Mt 20:28** The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many [not all].
- Mt 26:28** For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins [not all].
- Lk 1:68** Blessed *is* the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed His people.
- Jn 10:14-15** I am the good shepherd; and I know my *sheep*, and am known by my own. As the Father knows me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep.
- Acts 20:28** Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.
- Rm 1:6-7** ... among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ; To all who are in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
- Rm 8:30** Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.
- Heb 9:28** ... so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation.

Irresistible Calling

- Jn 1:12-13** ... those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.
- Jn 3:27** John answered and said, 'A man can receive nothing unless it has been given to him from heaven.'
- Jn 5:21** For as the Father raises the dead and gives life to *them*, even so the Son gives life to whom He will.
- 1 Cor 12:3** Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed, and no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit.
- 2 Tim 1:9** [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 given to us in Christ Jesus before time began.
- Heb 9:15** And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.
- Jm 1:18** Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures.
- 1 Jn 5:4** For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world -- our faith.

- Jude 1** Jude, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, To those who are called, sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ:
- Rev 17:14** These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those *who are* with Him *are* called, chosen, and faithful.

Perseverance of the saints

- Jer 32:40** And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from doing them good; but I will put My fear in their hearts so that they will not depart from Me.
- Jn 3:16** For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.
- Jn 3:36** He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.
- Jn 5:24** Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.
- Jn 6:35-37** And Jesus said to them, 'I am the bread of life. He who comes to me shall never hunger, and he who believes in me shall never thirst. But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe. All that the Father gives me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out.'
- Jn 10:27-29** My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given *them* to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch *them* out of My Father's hand.
- Rm 5:8-10** But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.
- Rm 8:1** *There is* therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.
- Rm 8:35-39** Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? ... [nothing] shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.
- Jude 1** Jude, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, To those who are called, sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ:

The gift of faith

- Jn 6:29** Jesus answered and said to them, 'This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent.'
- Acts 14:27** Now when they had come and gathered the church together, they reported all that God had done with them, and that He had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles.
- Acts 18:27** And when he desired to cross to Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him; and when he arrived, he greatly helped those who had believed through grace.
- Eph 2:8-9** For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; *it is* the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.
- Phil 1:29** For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake.

The gift of repentance

- Acts 5:31** Him God has exalted to His right hand *to be* Prince and Saviour, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.
- Acts 11:18** When they heard these things they became silent; and they glorified God, saying, 'Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life.'
- 2 Tim 2:25** ... correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth.
- Heb 12:17** For you know that afterward, when he [Esau] wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought it diligently with tears. [I.e. man cannot find repentance without divine help.]

Appendix Two

Table of Grace & Condemnation

