

## **Book IV**

### **"Opinions Concerning the Nature, the Extent, and the Application of the Remedy Brought by the Gospel"**

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#### **Chapter VI**

#### **"Particular Redemption"**

**by**

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By the Calvinistic tenets is meant that system of doctrine with regard to the extent of the remedy, which distinguishes those who embrace all the opinions of Calvin from those Christians who agree with him only as to the divinity of Christ and the atonement. I shall not attempt to open the whole system at once, but I shall go step-by-step through the points of difference between it and other systems in the order which appears to me the most natural. In this way we shall not reach all the parts of the Calvinistic system till we have gone through the third great division of the subjects of theological controversy--I mean the application of the remedy; and we shall then be able, by a short retrospective view of the ground over which we have travelled, to form a precise connected idea of the whole. According to this manner of exhibiting the Calvinistic system, I begin with stating the question concerning universal and particular redemption; in other words, whether Christ died for all men or only for those who shall finally be saved him.

The two sides of this question do not imply any difference of opinion with regard to the sufficiency of the death of Christ or with regard to the number and character of those who shall eventually be saved. They who hold the one and the other side of the question agree, that although the sufferings of Christ have a value sufficient to atone for the sins of all the Children of Adam from the beginning to the end of time, yet those only shall be saved by this atonement who repent and believe in him. But they differ as to the destination [purpose] of the death of Christ--whether in the purpose of the Father and the will of the Son it respected all mankind or only those persons to whom the benefit of it is at length to be applied.

The doctrine of universal redemption is mentioned as one of the distinguishing tenets of the Pelagians. It forms the subject of one of the five points which comprehend the Arminian system. It is held by all the Lutheran churches. It seems to be taught in one of the articles of the church of England and several parts of the Liturgy; and it is avowed by the great body of English divines as the doctrine of Scripture and of their church.

This doctrine will be understood from the second of the five Arminian points, which is thus expressed: "Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world, died for all men, and for every individual, so

as to obtain for all, by his death, reconciliation and remission of sins; upon this condition, however, that none in reality enjoys the benefit of this remission but the man who believes." Dr. Whitby, in his discourse on the five points, thus explains the doctrine:

When we say Christ died for all, we do not mean that he hath purchased actual pardon or reconciliation or life for all; this being in effect to say that he procured an actual remission of sins to unbelievers, and actually reconciled God to the impenitent and disobedient, which is impossible. He only, by his death, hath put all men in a capacity of being justified and pardoned, and so of being reconciled to, and having peace with God, upon their turning to God, and having faith in our Lord Jesus Christ; the death of Christ having rendered it consistent with the justice and wisdom of God, with the honour of his Majesty, and with the ends of government, to pardon the penitent believer.

According to this doctrine, the death of Christ is a universal remedy for that condition in which the posterity of Adam are involved by sin--a remedy equally intended for the benefit of all. It removes the obstacles which the justice of God opposed to their deliverance. It puts all into a condition in which they may be saved, and it leaves their actual salvation to depend upon their faith. The remedy may in this way be much more extensive than the application of it. But even although the offer of pardon were rejected by all, it would not follow that the atonement made by the death of Christ was unnecessary, for the offer could not have been given without it; and whatever reception the gospel may meet with, the love of God is equally conspicuous in having provided a method by which he may enter into a new covenant with all who had sinned.

This doctrine appears to represent the Father of all in a light most suitable to that character as regarding his children with an equal eye, providing without respect of persons a remedy for their disease, and extending his compassion as far as their misery reaches. And it appears to represent the satisfaction which Christ offered to Divine justice, as opening a way for the love of God to the whole human race being made manifest by the most enlarged exercise of mercy.

These views are supported by the general strain of Scripture and by many very significant expressions which occur in the New Testament.<sup>1</sup> It is said that Jesus Christ is the Saviour of the world; that he died for all; that he gave himself a ransom for all; that he tasted death for every man.<sup>2</sup> The extent of the grace of God in our justification seems to be compared with the extent of the effects of Adam's sin in our condemnation.<sup>3</sup> Large societies of persons professing Christianity, all of whom we cannot suppose to be of the number of those who shall be finally saved, are addressed in the Epistles as those for whom Christ have himself; and there are expressions in some of the Epistles which seem to intimate that he died even for those who perish.<sup>4</sup> False teachers, who brought in damnable heresies, are said to have been bought by the Lord (2 Pet. 2:10). All to whom the gospel is revealed are commanded to believe in Christ for the remission of sins, which seems to imply that he has made atonement for their sins, and to give thanks for Christ, which seems to imply that he is a universal Saviour. Jesus marvelled at the unbelief of those among whom he lived, he upbraided them because they repented not, he besought men to

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1 John 1:29, 3:16; 1 Tim. 2:4, 4:10; 2 Pet. 3:9.

2 John 6:51; 1 Tim. 2:6; Heb. 2:9; 1 John 2:2.

3 Rom. 5:18.

4 1 Cor. 8:11; Rom. 14:15.

come to him, and he bewailed the folly of the Jews, saying, as he wept over their city, "if thou had known in this thy day the things which belong to thy peace."<sup>5</sup>

Even the Almighty, both in the Old and in the New Testament, condescends to use entreaties and expostulations as well as commands. "What could have been done more to my vineyard that I have not done in it? O that my people had hearkened unto me!"<sup>6</sup> "God has given unto us," says the Apostle, "the ministry of reconciliation, to wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God."<sup>7</sup>

The establishment of a gospel ministry continues this ambassadorship in every Christian country, and may be regarded as a standing witness of the universality of redemption because these expostulations, which the servants of Christ are commissioned to use in the name of God, appear to be without meaning unless we suppose that God has done everything on his part and that it rests only with us to embrace the remedy which is offered.

In giving this general view of the arguments by which the advocates for the doctrine of universal redemption support their opinion, I have separated them as much as possible from those more intricate questions of theology which will meet us as we advance. But even from the simple manner in which I have stated them, it is plain that they admit of much amplification. Some of them are susceptible of rhetorical embellishment; others lead into a large field of Scripture criticism; and there are others, the force of which cannot be estimated till after a review of the whole Calvinistic system.

These arguments are spread out at length not only by professed Arminian writers but by many English divines, particularly in Barrow's Sermons upon the doctrine of universal redemption and in the second of Whitby's discourses upon the five points, entitled The Extent of Christ's Redemption. These two writers have given a collection of all the texts of Scripture which appear to establish this doctrine, and a very favourable specimen of the mode of reasoning by which it is commonly supported.

Any person who examines with candour the arguments now stated will acknowledge that they have considerable weight. I mention this because I do not know any lesson more becoming students of divinity than this--not to despise the reasonings of those with whose opinions they do not entirely agree. The longer they study theological controversy with that sobriety and fairness of mind which is essential to the character of every inquirer after truth, they will perceive the more clearly how little acquainted with the weakness of the human understanding and with the intricacy of many of the points that have divided the Christian world are those who state their opinions in the petulant dogmatical manner often assumed by smatterers in knowledge, as if there were not a shadow of reason but upon their own side.

In the question which we are now treating, it requires a thorough acquaintance with the Calvinistic system, and much compass of thought, to apprehend the full force of the answers that may be given to the arguments for universal redemption. And I warn you rather to wait for the

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5 Mark 6:6; Matt. 11:20,28; Luke 19:41,42.

6 Isa. 5:4; Psa. 81:13.

7 2 Cor. 5:18-20.

conviction which will arise from a view of all the parts of that system than to expect that arguments equally plausible in favour of particular redemption are immediately to be stated. The following observations, however, will upon reflection open the sources of these arguments.

1. Those who hold that the destination [purpose] and intention of the death of Christ respected only such as shall finally be saved by him, appear to be warranted by many expressions which occur in the New Testament, such as the following: John 10:11, 15, "I lay down my life for the sheep;" that is, as the expression is explained in the context, for those who "hear and follow me;" John 11:52; 15:12, 13, 14; Eph. 5:25.

2. As the persons, to whom the intention of Christ's death appears in such expressions to be restrained, are found in all places of the world, there is a propriety and significancy in the general phrases employed elsewhere to denote them. And when some of the texts commonly urged in proof of universal redemption are examined particularly, there will be discovered in the context circumstances which indicate that the general expressions there used were intended to mark [point out] the indiscriminate extension of the blessings of the Gospel to men of all nations. Thus, because the benefit of the Jewish sacrifices was confined to that nation, John the Baptist, when he saw Jesus coming to him, marked [pointed] him out to the people as "the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:19; that is, of all those in every place who are forgiven. St. John in his first epistle, speaking as a Jew, says of Jesus, "he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only," that is, not for the sins of us Jews only, "but also for the sins of the whole world" (1 John 2:2). So the apostle Paul says of Jesus, he "gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time" (1 Tim. 2:6).

But if we attend to the scope of the discourse of which these words make a part, which is an exhortation to pray for all men and a command to all men in every place to pray, it will be perceived that the apostle's argument does not necessarily require any farther meaning to be affixed to these words than this: that Christ gave himself a ransom not merely for that peculiar people who are sometimes called in the Old Testament the "ransomed of the Lord," but for all in every place who shall obtain redemption.

3. Although deliverance from the evils of sin (the great blessing purchased by the death of Christ) is peculiar to those who shall finally be saved by him, yet there are blessings which the publication of the Gospel has imparted to others. And there is strict propriety in saying that the love of God to mankind (which appears in creation and providence, and by which God is good to all) has produced the manifestation and the death of Christ, although the benefits intended by that event for those who shall finally be saved are very much superior to the benefits which it may be the instrument of conveying to the whole human race.

To a great part of the world the Gospel has communicated the most valuable knowledge. It has delivered many nations from gross superstition and idolatry. It has explained the duties of men more clearly than any other method of instruction. It furnishes restraints upon vice and incentives to virtuous exertion that are unknown to civil legislation. And by all these methods it contributes to the prosperity of society and to the welfare of the individual. These common benefits of Christianity are sufficient to explain many expression in the epistles addressed to Christian societies, without our being obliged to suppose that all the members of these societies were in the end to inherit eternal life.

In respect of these common benefits, we understand the following passages: Heb. 6:4, Heb. 10:29, and 2 Peter 2:1. For all who had an opportunity of hearing the Gospel had tasted the good word of God and the powers of the world to come; they were sanctified through the blood of the covenant; and, in the language of Peter in his first epistle, they were "redeemed with the blood of Christ from their vain conversation which they had received by tradition from their fathers." Among the number thus redeemed were the false teachers of whom he speaks in his second epistle. They had relinquished the errors in which they were educated; they had professed themselves the servants of Jesus and were bound to him as their Lord. But by bringing in damnable heresies, they denied the Lord that bought them. The apostle Paul seems to refer to this distinction between the common benefits which all professing Christians derive from the death of Christ and the complete salvation of those who are called his sheep and his friends when he says, "God is the Saviour of all men" (1 Tim. 4:10); not only in respect of his persevering providence but in respect of that *χαζις σωτηζιος* which, through the kindness and love of God our Saviour, has appeared to all men--"specially of them that believed." That is, he is in a much more eminent sense the Saviour of them that believe than of other men.

4. It should be considered that although the advocates for universal redemption do not allow that there is any weight in the two preceding observations, yet they are obliged--upon their own principles--to admit that many of these expressions, from which they infer that Christ died intentionally for all men, require a limitation. For if faith in Christ be the condition upon which men become partakers of the propitiation which he offered to God, it seems to follow that all who have not the means of attaining this faith are excluded from the benefit of the propitiation. But it is certain that the ancient heathen world did not know the nature of that dispensation, the promise of which was confined to the Jews. And it is manifest that a great part of the world at this day have never heard of the Gospel. Were the offer of pardon that is contained in the Gospel actually made to all the children of Adam, there would be an appearance of truth in saying that all men were thereby put into a condition in which they might be saved, and that it depended upon themselves whether or not they embraced the offer.

But if the efficacy of the remedy is inseparably connected with its being accepted, it cannot be--in the intention of the Almighty--a universal remedy, since he has withheld the means of accepting it from many of those for whom it was said to have been provided. The words of the apostle, then, "God will have all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth," must receive from the event [result] an interpretation different from that which is the most obvious. And all the other texts urged in favour of universal redemption are in like manner limited by the imperfect publication of the Gospel.

The Arminians themselves acknowledge that there is a secret which they cannot penetrate, a deep and unsearchable counsel in leaving so many nations without the possibility of attaining to the truth. And all their attempts to reconcile an intention in God to save the inhabitants of these nations (with the grossness of the superstition in which they are involved and the insuperable obstacles which education, example, habit, and situation oppose to their believing in Christ) are unsatisfying and defective. [And this is] because they either proceed upon the principles of the Socinian doctrine, that men may everywhere be saved by acting up to the light of nature, or they approach to some parts of the Calvinistic system respecting the effectual and irresistible operation of the grace of God upon the soul, which the Arminians profess to renounce.

5. To those who hold the doctrine of particular redemption, it appears that the event [result] in those countries where the gospel has been published clearly indicates that there was not in the Almighty an intention of saving all men by the death of Christ; for it is plain that many of those who have every opportunity of believing in Christ either reject his religion, or show by their conduct that they do not possess that faith which entitles them to partake in the benefits of his death. With regard to them, therefore, his death is in vain. And if God intended that they should be saved, his intention fails of its effect.

But it seems when we hold such a language, that we speak in a manner unbecoming our circumstances and inconsistent with those views of the Almighty, which are suggested by reason and are clearly taught in Scripture. "Known to God are all his works from the beginning" [Acts 15:18]. The whole scheme of the universe, which derived its existence from his pleasure, was present to the Creator at the instant when he said "Let there be light." The actions of his creatures, which form a most important part of that scheme, were to him the object of a foreknowledge infinitely more clear and certain than our knowledge of that which is before our eyes. The perfections of his nature exclude the possibility of any change in the divine mind, and those events which to us appear the most unexpected and irregular fulfil "the purpose of Him who works all things after the counsel of his will" [Eph. 1:1].

If these views of the Almighty are just, and if our minds are able to follow out the consequences which necessarily result from them, we cannot conceive him susceptible of that disappointment, regret, and alteration of measures which we often experience by the failure of our schemes; but we must admit that the original intention of the Creator and Ruler of the universe always coincides with the event [result] which takes place under his administration.

Since many, therefore, to whom the gospel is published appear, as far as we can judge from our own observation and from the complaints of Scripture, to remain under the wrath of God, we do not seem to draw an unwarrantable conclusion when we infer from the event [result] that it was not a part of the intention of the Almighty to deliver them from wrath by the death of his Son. In the same manner, as many who have the means of improvement do not attain knowledge or skill, and some who have talents and opportunities for rising to wealth and honour pass their days in obscurity and indigence, so many to whom the offer of eternal life is made through Jesus Christ put it far from them. In both cases the blessings of God are abused and men do not reap the temporal and spiritual benefits which, had it not been for their own fault, they might have reaped. But in neither case is the intention of God disappointed; for he foresaw the use which they would make of his blessings, and all the consequences of their conduct entered into the plan of his government.

These views of the Almighty seem to correct that desire of magnifying the love of God to mankind which has led many to ascribe to him an intention of saving all men, although he knew that a great part of the human race were not to be saved. They seem to suggest, in place of this defective intention, a destination [purpose] more worthy of the sovereignty of the Creation--a destination of saving those who shall in the end be saved. And there are many places of Scripture in which the destination that we are led in this manner to deduce from the perfection of the divine nature seems to be intimated.

I refer at present only to John 6, where our Lord says repeatedly that he gave his life for the world, and where he speaks also of those whom the Father has given him. "The bread of God is he who comes down from heaven, and gives life unto the world. The bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. All that the Father gives me shall come to me. This is the Father's will, that of all which he has given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day." Here are the doctrines of particular and of universal redemption seemingly taught in the same discourse. The expressions of the one kind must be employed to qualify the expressions of the other kind. And it cannot be said that we pervert Scripture when, adhering to the particular destination [purpose] of saving those who shall be saved (which reason teaches and Jesus Christ declares) we give the other expressions such an interpretation as renders them consistent with that destination.

This fifth observation has conducted us to the threshold of those intricate questions in theology which arise out of the different conceptions formed by Christians of the nature and the manner of the divine foreknowledge. To the views entertained of this attribute, we may trace the different opinions concerning the doctrine of predestination. And therefore from this point I shall begin, under a deep sense of the difficulty of the subject and of the reverence and humility with which it becomes us to speak of the counsels of the Almighty, to state these opinions.

Chapter VI from Book IV of *Lectures in Divinity*, 2nd ed., by George Hill (New York: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1854). **Note:** The text has not been modified, except that punctuation and KJV-era pronouns and verb forms have been modernized and long paragraphs have been divided.