

THE ATONEMENT

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## **Introduction**

The atonement makes multiple provisions and is not simplistic or confined to singularity in its extensiveness. God the Father was seeking a way to reconcile sinful mankind to Himself. This method, atonement, is beyond the boundaries of our human comprehension and encompasses spiritual characteristics that are seldom considered when making definition. My goal is to make this infinite subject of “atonement” as vivid as I possibly can to the finite, limited, and sin ridden minds of humanity. To delineate this broad subject we will comment on: the necessity, why was it needed; the nature, what exactly does it accomplish; the perfection, the thoroughness; and the extent, or application, of the atonement. If this word “atonement” was definable in a short concise paragraph the following excerpt from the Synod of Dort would be a fraction of its complete meaning:

This death of the Son of God is the only and most perfect sacrifice and satisfaction for sins, of infinite value and worth, abundantly sufficient to expiate the sins of the whole world. This death is of such great value and worth because the person who submitted to it is not only a true and perfectly holy man, but also the only-begotten Son of God, of the same eternal and infinite essence with the Father and the Holy Spirit, for these qualifications were necessary for our Savior. Further, this death is of such great value and worth because it was accompanied by a sense of the wrath and curse of God, which we by our sins had deserved, (Second Head, Articles 3 & 4).<sup>1</sup>

Now let us endeavor to gain a voluminous understanding towards the atoning work of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit!

## **The Necessity**

There are copious reasons why the atonement became of absolute necessity: mans sin; God’s love; God’s holiness; the sake of the elect; for remittance and satisfaction of God’s ceremonial, judicial and moral laws.

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<sup>1</sup> Theopedia.com. “*Theopedia, An Encyclopedia of Biblical Christianity, Atonement of Christ,*” [http://www.theopedia.com/Atonement\\_of\\_Christ](http://www.theopedia.com/Atonement_of_Christ).

Sin is a damnable thing. Sin has temporal consequences with an eternal abode in hell as it's final demise. This horrendous demise is what initiates unquestionable need for atonement between humanity and God. As I have alluded to in the concluding remark of my thesis statement; the atonement is a work of the trinity. The Father sent, the Son made provision and the Holy Spirit illuminates. The atonement meets and satisfies the demands, which degenerate humanity was unable to accomplish, of a Holy and incorruptible God. "Therefore, as the perfect God-Man, the blood He shed has abiding efficacy, and it satisfies the righteous demands of the holiness and justice of God. Indeed God is satisfied!"<sup>2</sup> "It is because of man's sin that God originated atonement, so it is in the NT. The atonement for sin provided by the death of Christ has its source in God."<sup>3</sup>

God's love is not an extension of a particular characteristic inhabited within God; in 1 John 4:8, 16, God's word tells us that he "is" love. God does not choose whether He wants to love or not; it is an essential, inherent and eternal essence of Him. "When God loves it reflects His whole being. Therefore, Love is not just a virtue of God. It is God Himself. Also, love is not something God begins, nor does He extend His energy to maintain. The love of God is as eternal as the nature of God. Therefore, the love of God is self existing."<sup>4</sup> God's love does not have any limitations, frailties or imperfections, it has always existed and always will; God is the purest form of love that could ever possibly exist. We see how wonderful God's love is, let's apply it to atonement. When we last left humanity, it was groping in sinful darkness, totally separated from a holy, righteous and loving Creator. "Why did God become man? Why, having

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<sup>2</sup> Bible.org. "The Atonement of Christ, Strauss, Lehman," [http://www.bible.org/page.php?page\\_id=658](http://www.bible.org/page.php?page_id=658).

<sup>3</sup> Paul Jewett. *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible, Vol 1, Atonement* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1976) 410.

<sup>4</sup> Elmer Towns, *Theology for Today* (Belmont CA: Wadsworth: 2002) 114.

become man, did he die? Why, having died, did he die the accursed death of the cross? This is the question of the necessity of the atonement.”<sup>5</sup> We have gone to rather lengthy efforts to establish God “as love” because this is crucial to the atonement. “The atonement is infinitely the most illustrious exhibition of mercy ever made in the universe. The mere pardon of sin, as an act of sovereign mercy, could not have been compared, had it been possible, with the merciful disposition displayed in the atonement itself.”<sup>6</sup> God, the greatest expressive existence of love, chose to reconcile humanity to himself through the means of a sacrificial death on the cross. It is extremely important that we note the method of the cross. “The cross of Christ is the supreme demonstration of the love of God (cf. Rom. 5:8; I John 4:9, 10). But would it be a supreme demonstration of love if the end secured by it could have been achieved without it?”<sup>7</sup> When meditating upon the ascendancy of God we should carefully acknowledge: the horrific sinfulness of humanity; the wonderment of his love; the righteous demands for penal retribution; and the infiniteness of his impeccable holiness. “The cross is a fitting symbol of the atonement, for it represents the intersecting of two attributes or facets of God’s nature. Here it is that the love of God meets the holiness of God. The holiness requires payment of the penalty, and the love provides that payment.”<sup>8</sup>

Holiness is, has, and finds its irradiations from God, the source of all holiness. “God did not will Himself to be pure; He is pure. God did not attain holiness, nor does He need to make an effort to retain it.”<sup>9</sup> Holiness is moral purity without the tainted-ness of attributes such as:

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<sup>5</sup> John Murray. *Redemption Accomplished and Applied* (Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans: 1955) 11, 12.

<sup>6</sup> Charles Finney. “*Systematic Theology [1878], 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Lecture xxvi, Extent of the Atonement, pg 277, Lecture xxvi; pg 279:*” Whittier CA: Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 1944. <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/finney/theology.iv.xxv.html>.

<sup>7</sup> John Murray. “*The Atonement,*” [http://www.the-highway.com/atonement\\_murray.html](http://www.the-highway.com/atonement_murray.html).

<sup>8</sup> Milliard Erickson. *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids MI: Baker Academics: 1998) 835.

envy, hatred, malice, pride, arrogance, bitterness etc. Thomas Watson describes God's holiness as, "his very being is made up of holiness, as light is of the essence of the sun."<sup>10</sup> Because God is holy, as we have been clarifying, it is impossible for him to overlook sin without having a holy, justified and righteous wrath towards sin with its moral impurities. John Gill in his book, *Doctrinal Divinity* gives us many reasons why God's holiness necessitates "remunerative justice" upon humanity: the light of nature; the word of God; the nature of God, who is pure and cannot behold iniquity; the law of God, the veracity that God must punish transgression; these reasons oblige the punishment of Christ for our sin.<sup>11</sup> The wrath of God, unlike mans uncontrolled excitement is a holy and justified fury towards disobedience.

Election of salvation is a Biblical concept and therein it becomes imperative for God to provide an atonement and way of reconciliation between him and his elect. The certainty that there is "elect" means that for appropriation of their election to salvation; God would, by virtue of the veracity of his word, make a way of atonement for them. Failure to provide the surety of election would make the sovereignty of God questionable and nullify his divine attributes of omniscience and foreknowledge. Here, we are not talking about predestined and elected in a scope or the extent of application towards either Calvinism or Arminianism; we will deal with this subject later in the paper.

Lastly, we look at the necessity for remittance and satisfaction of the ceremonial, judicial and moral laws; required by the holy exaction, nature and essence of God. I think it is important

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<sup>9</sup> Elmer Towns. *Theology for Today*, 112.

<sup>10</sup> Thomas Watson. "Body of Divinity, #3; God and his Creation, Chapter 7; The Holiness of God," Christian Classics Ethereal Library. <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/watson/divinity.vi.vii.html>.

<sup>11</sup> John Gill. "Doctrinal Divinity, Book I. of God, His Word, Names, Nature, Perfections, and Persons, Chapter 20, of the Holiness of God," <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/gill/doctrinal.ii.xx.html>.

to re-enforce some of the basic aspects of God's law: perfect obedience, Gal. 3:10; its inability to justify humanity, Gal. 2:16, man's sin transgresses it, 1 Jn. 3:4; the law gives knowledge of sin, Rom 3:10; it works wrath, Rom 4:15; and it was a schoolmaster designed to lead one to Christ, Gal. 3:24. Christ's atoning sacrifice did two things in regards to the law: fulfillment of the law, Matt 5:17; and redemption from the curse of the law, Gal. 3:13. With the importance of the law being duly noted we see a problematic trend. If God offered forgiveness outside of the law: the law was wrong and unimportant; God's penal requirement is unjust; God was not sincere and his threat of punishment was just that "a threat." If God forgave, without a substitutionary atonement, his whole moral system of honest integrity, honor, holiness, love, and the authority of the law would be in question. So we see the uncompromising importance of the law, its demands, and Christ's atoning work for reconciliation. "In other words, he took care of the guilt and sin and perfectly fulfilled the demands of righteousness. He perfectly met both the penal and the preceptive requirements of God's law."<sup>12</sup>

### **The Nature**

The atonement attains more than could ever be conceived in the human mind or documented in this paper. When we speak of the nature of the atonement we are asking this question: what exactly does it accomplish? Because of the limitations of this paper as well as the author's finite mind we will minimize our focus to: sacrifice, propitiation, reconciliation, substitution, redemption and satisfaction. Keeping in mind that there are other multitudinous things the atonement accomplishes that are not mentioned in the scope of this paper.

We will look at Christ as the superior sacrifice, the sacrifice that was offered but "one time" and it satisfied the obligations of God. Before we begin, we should keep in mind that

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<sup>12</sup> John Murray. *Redemption Accomplished and Applied*, 21, 22.

Christ had multiple roles in Scripture but three of the workings that Christ is well noted for are: Mediator, High Priest and Eternal Sacrifice. “That Christ’s work was to offer himself a sacrifice for sin implies, however, a complementary truth too frequently overlooked. It is that, if Christ offered himself as a sacrifice, he was also a priest.”<sup>13</sup> Sacrifices in the Old Testament had many requirements, stipulations and limitations: perfection without blemish, Lev. 22:19; inability to take away sins, Heb. 10:1-11; and ultimately, they were types of Christ’s substitutionary and atoning sacrifice, Heb 10:1, 10, 11. “In this connection we must also keep in view what we have reflected on already that the Levitical sacrifices were patterned after the heavenly exemplar, after what the epistle to the Hebrews calls “the heavenly things”.... We must interpret the sacrifice in terms of the Levitical patterns because they were themselves patterned after Christ’s offering.”<sup>14</sup> What makes Jesus’ sacrifice unique is that it is both eternal and it was singular; it was only offered “one time.” In John 10: 17, 18, Jesus tells us, “I lay down my life, that I might take it again” and “No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.” “The will is important and we should not overlook the contrast between Christ’s willing sacrifice of himself and the uncomprehending, involuntary sacrifices that necessarily occurred when animals were offered.”<sup>15</sup> So we see the superiority of Christ’s atoning sacrifice and how it met all God’s requirements; thus, making an eternally satisfying atonement and provisional reconciliation between sin infested humanity and a faultless God!

Propitiation is a much debated term in today’s theological community. Many modern

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<sup>13</sup> John Murray. *Redemption Accomplished and Applied*, 28.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, 27.

<sup>15</sup> Leon Morris. *The Atonement, its Meaning and Significance* (Downers Grove IL: Inter-Varsity Press: 1983) 64.

English translations have replaced the Greek word for propitiation with the English term expiation. Though very similar in meaning there is an important difference that should not be overlooked! Propitiation is a personal term that is used in reference to the turning away of God's indignation and wrath; while, expiation is an impersonal term used to describe negation. It is one thing for our sin to be annulled and a whole different consideration for someone to experience wrath in the stead of the guilty party. In 1 John 2:2, propitiation gives us this idea; Christ took upon himself the wrath of God on behalf of our sins as well as the sins of the world. "The consistent Bible view is that the sin of man has incurred the wrath of God. The wrath is averted only by Christ's atoning offering. From this standpoint his saving work is properly called propitiation."<sup>16</sup> We find the word "propitiation" being used three times in the New Testament; twice in 1 John, 1 Jn. 2:2; 4:10, and once in Romans 3:25. "Propitiation means *satisfaction* or *appeasement*, specifically towards God. Propitiation is the work of Jesus Christ on the cross by which He appeases the wrath of God who would otherwise be offended by our sin and demand that we pay the penalty for it. The concept of propitiation is often associated with the idea of a substitutionary atonement."<sup>17</sup> So we conclude that the immeasurable work of propitiation was satisfactorily completed by the atoning work of Jesus Christ.

Throughout this paper we have been concentrating upon the essences: love, holiness, sacrificial work, and propitiation; these are all interwoven into a central theme of reconciliation. Hebrews 2:17 tells us that Christ as our High Priest makes, "reconciliation for the sins of the people," while 2 Corinthians develops on the idea of imputation, "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." So what exactly is

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<sup>16</sup> Walter J. Elwell. ed. *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids MI: Baker Academics: 2001) 962.

<sup>17</sup> Theopedia.com. "*Theopedia, An Encyclopedia of Biblical Christianity, Propitiation,*" <http://www.theopedia.com/Propitiation>.

reconciliation and how can we make definition to this term? Erickson defines reconciliation as: “The death of Christ also brings to an end the enmity and estrangement that exists between God and humankind.”<sup>18</sup>

When we fixate upon the substitutionary death of Christ the doctrine of justification is inseparable. Justification can be defined as: “to be declared righteous. It is a divine act where God declares the sinner to be innocent of his sins. It is not that the sinner is now sinless, but that he is "declared" sinless. This justification is based on the shed blood of Jesus, "...*having now been justified by His blood...*" (Rom. 5:9).”<sup>19</sup> Christ was obedient unto death and fulfilled the law completely and perfectly; yet, he was put to death resulting from the demands of the law. Both, Jesus’ fulfillment of the law and the sacrificial death under the penalty of the law were reckoned, or imputed, towards the account of believing sinners. It is the vicarious substitutionary death of Christ, that makes atonement in the stead of sinners; this ultimately satisfies God’s punitive requirements. We often hear Christ’s death being referred to as the *vicarious* sufferings of Jesus. “The word *vicar* refers to an agent or deputy who has been authorized to act in the place of another.”<sup>20</sup> The Apostle Paul makes a clear reference to a double imputation which is made possible by Christ’s atoning death as a substitutionary vicar. In 2 Corinthians 5:21 we note; “For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” So we see the atoning substitutionary death makes reconciliation possible!

Redemption involves a payment, or a ransom, that became necessary because of God’s

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<sup>18</sup> Milliard Erickson. *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids MI: Baker Academics: 1998) 832.

<sup>19</sup> Carm.org. “*Christian Apologetics and Research Ministry, Dictionary of Theology, Justification,*” [http://www.carm.org/christianity/dictionary-theology/idol-kingdom-god#\\_1\\_98](http://www.carm.org/christianity/dictionary-theology/idol-kingdom-god#_1_98).

<sup>20</sup> Bible.org. “*The Atonement of Christ*, Strauss, Lehman,” [http://www.bible.org/page.php?page\\_id=658](http://www.bible.org/page.php?page_id=658).

righteousness and humanity's sinfulness. Redemption carries the ancient idea of when slaves were to be purchased for a price! "Our English word Redemption, is from the Latin tongue, and signifies, buying again; and several words in the Greek language, of the New Testament, are used in the affair of our Redemption, which signify the obtaining of something by paying a proper price for it."<sup>21</sup> John Gill gives several Biblical examples that demonstrate the diverseness of the term "redemption" and how aptly application towards the atoning work of Christ can be surmised: deliverance of Israel from Egyptian and Babylonian Captivities; ransom of the people of Israel; buying back the poor and afflicted; delivery of a debtor confined to prison; and ransoming of person in slavery.<sup>22</sup> Looking at the previously listed examples we note just what the atonement and substitutionary death of Christ delivers and provides towards believers in Christ. Believers were once: in captivity, poor and oppressed, debtors to the law of God, and confined to the prison and slavery of sin! Surely the necessity and nature of the redemptive atonement is blatantly obvious. Romans 6:11 states, "Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

The last area we will examine, in relation to the nature of the atonement, is the subject of satisfaction. It cannot be overemphasized, that there is nothing that man can do, that could possibly bring about satisfaction and pardon for sin. Gill gives an extensive list of things that cannot obtain pardon and several of these items were superficially obvious well others quite surprising: gold and silver; repentance (only the exercise of it is influenced by pardon); sorrow;

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<sup>21</sup> John Gill. "A Body of Doctrinal Divinity, Book VI. of the Blessings of Grace and the Doctrines of it, Chapter 1, Redemption by Christ," Christian Classics Ethereal Library, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/gill/doctrinal.vii.i.html>.

<sup>22</sup> John Gill. "A Body of Doctrinal Divinity, Book VI. of the Blessings of Grace and the Doctrines of it, Chapter 1, Redemption by Christ," Christian Classics Ethereal Library, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/gill/doctrinal.vii.vii.html>.

faith; and water baptism. A qualifying statement needs to be provided for further clarity as to why faith does not obtain pardon. "Faith does not obtain it by virtue of its own, but receives it as obtained through the blood of Christ."<sup>23</sup> Pardon is something that only God, the Lawgiver, can apply and it is found only in the blood sacrifice of His Son, Jesus Christ, and made known to man through the illuminating power of the Holy Spirit! This payment of Christ's blood is complete and can never be rescinded from the believing sinner. "In any study of the Atonement; the sinless, perfect and holy character of Jesus Christ is a truth of the first magnitude. The secret of God's satisfaction lies in the character of the One Who paid the debt for sinners."<sup>24</sup>

### **The Perfection**

The Canons of Dort, historical statement of the so-called "five points of Calvinism" formulated at the Synod of Dort (1618-1619), state:

This death of the Son of God is the only and most perfect sacrifice and satisfaction for sins, of infinite value and worth, abundantly sufficient to expiate the sins of the whole world. This death is of such great value and worth because the person who submitted to it is not only a true and perfectly holy man, but also the only-begotten Son of God, of the same eternal and infinite essence with the Father and the Holy Spirit, for these qualifications were necessary for our Savior. Further, this death is of such great value and worth because it was accompanied by a sense of the wrath and curse of God, which we by our sins had deserved, (Second Head, Articles 3 & 4)<sup>25</sup>

Historically, Catholics and Protestants have been divided in regards towards the completeness of Christ's atoning and sacrificial work. Catholics practice many ordinances that presuppose one to question just how complete they believe the sacrificial work of Christ to be.

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<sup>23</sup> John Gill. "A Body of Doctrinal Divinity, Book VI. of the Blessings of Grace and the Doctrines of it, Chapter 1, Redemption by Christ," Christian Classics Ethereal Library, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/gill/doctrinal.vii.vii.html>.

<sup>24</sup> Bible.org. "The Atonement of Christ, Strauss, Lehman," [http://www.bible.org/page.php?page\\_id=658](http://www.bible.org/page.php?page_id=658).

<sup>25</sup> Theopedia.com. "Theopedia, An Encyclopedia of Biblical Christianity, Atonement of Christ," [http://www.theopedia.com/Atonement\\_of\\_Christ](http://www.theopedia.com/Atonement_of_Christ).

One rite, the sacrament of mass, is the belief that the bread and wine are transubstantiated into the actual body and blood of Christ thereby suggesting a reoccurring necessity for sacrifice. Secondly, the need for post-baptismal sins, being dealt with in either purgatory or through penance, speaks again of the potentiality for incompleteness in the sacrificial atoning work of Christ. Hebrews 7: 27; 9:12, 26; 10:10, 14 and 1 Peter 3:18 tell us; that Jesus having obtained eternal redemption for us when he entered the holy place but once! Jesus the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world offered a perfect and complete atonement for those who are sanctified. In conclusion, we see nothing but sufficiency, completeness and totality when the atoning work of Christ is mentioned in Scripture. This concept is stated strongly in the following definition:

The deity of Christ establishes the infinite intrinsic value of his person. Since Jesus Christ is the God-man, truly God and truly man, his death is also of infinite intrinsic value and all-sufficient as a sacrifice. The book of Hebrews clearly says that the sufficiency of Christ's death negated the need for additional sacrifices. The biblical word translated *once for all* (Greek *ephapax* in Rom. 6:10; Heb. 9:26, 28; 10:10) is clearly a contrast with the Old Testament yearly sacrifice on the Day of Atonement and declares the complete sufficiency of Christ's death.<sup>26</sup>

### **Extent**

Now we will look at probably the most polemical areas with regards to the doctrine of the atonement of Christ. We have covered the necessity, nature and perfection of the atonement; but, just to what is the extent of it! Is it limited in extensiveness, known as particularism, (Calvinism) or unlimited, known as universal (Arminianism). Though these are the two most prominent views there are many variations within each group; plus, other views that are totally different altogether. Let me say from the onset that I do not claim to have a completely

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<sup>26</sup> Theopedia.com. “*Theopedia, An Encyclopedia of Biblical Christianity, Atonement of Christ,*” [http://www.theopedia.com/Atonement\\_of\\_Christ](http://www.theopedia.com/Atonement_of_Christ).

satisfying answer to this ever encompassing question. Tremendous scholarly theologians have spent lifetimes studying and propagating their view and in the end result they are differing from one end of the spectrum to the other.

Calvinism derives its name from the great 16<sup>th</sup> century reformer and theologian John Calvin who laid out a five point system called “TULIP” for his theological system of Calvinism. Calvinism has eventually evolved into the more modern system known as Reformed Theology. The “L” in tulip, the third tenant of the 5 points in Calvinism, would represent the view of limited atonement. Limited, in the sense, to those who are elected by an irresistible grace for salvation; void of any freedom of self will in the matter. “Most Calvinists believe that the purpose of Christ’s coming was not to make possible the salvation of all humans, but to render certain the salvation of the elect.”<sup>27</sup> Boettner believes, “The Arminian limits the atonement as certainly as does the Calvinist. The Calvinist limits the *extent* of it in that he says it does not apply to all persons (although as has already been shown, he believes that it is efficacious for the salvation of the large proportion of the human race); while the Arminian limits the *power of it*, for he says that in itself it does not actually save anybody.”<sup>28</sup> Calvinist’s are often accused of limiting the extent but by the proceeding argument given by Boettner; the Arminians could be accused of limiting the power of the atonement, which is a limitation as well!

Arminianism, birthed in the United Netherlands, derives its name from pastor of the Amsterdam congregation and professor at the University of Leiden, James Arminius. The basic tenants of the Arminian Doctrine can be summarized in what is known as the Remonstrance. “The peculiar tenets are contained in the five points or articles which the Arminians in their

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<sup>27</sup> Milliard Erickson. *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids MI: Baker Academics: 1998) 843.

<sup>28</sup> Loraine Boettner. “*The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination, Section II, Chapter XII, Limited Atonement,*” Christian Classics Ethereal Library, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/boettner/predest.iv.iv.html>.

'Remonstrance' laid before the estates of Holland in 1610. They relate to predestination, the extent of the atonement, the nature of faith, the resistibility of grace, and the perseverance of saints."<sup>29</sup> The subject of the atonement and the extent of it is addressed in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Article of the Remonstrance, Universal Atonement: "Christ, the Saviour of the world, died for all men and for every man, and his grace is extended to all. His atoning sacrifice is in and of itself sufficient for the redemption of the whole world, and is intended for all by God the Father. But it's inherent sufficiency does not necessarily imply its actual efficiency. The grace of God may be resisted, and only those who accept it by faith are actually saved. He who is lost, is lost by his own guilt (John iii. 16; 1 John ii. 2)."<sup>30</sup> We can see from this statement that the atonement is considered universal in sufficiency but not in application.

This differentiation on atonement would lead us to the differing thoughts on "irresistible grace" (Calvinism) and "resistible grace" (Arminianism); unconditional election (Calvinism) and conditional election (Arminianism). So, we can see that the atonement is certainly a watershed doctrine and thus, ones view on atonement will affect other areas of doctrinal interpretation.

### **Conclusion**

We have looked at four vital areas of atonement: necessity, nature, perfection and extent. Learning a great deal about the atonement, many important questions seem to have no clear cut answers. While the majority of Evangelical Christians hold common agreement to the necessity,

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<sup>29</sup> Philip Schaff. "*The Creeds of Christendom with a History and Critical Notes. Volume 1, 6<sup>th</sup> ed. Chapter Seven, Subtitle 66, The Remonstrance, Pg. 516,*" Christian Classics Ethereal Library, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/creeds1.ix.iii.v.html>.

<sup>30</sup> Philip Schaff,. "*The Creeds of Christendom with a History and Critical Notes. Volume 1, 6<sup>th</sup> ed. Chapter Seven, Subtitle 66, The Remonstrance, Pg. 518,*" Christian Classics Ethereal Library, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/creeds1.ix.iii.v.html>.

nature and perfection the extent remains a highly debated area within the scope of atonement. Though I have attempted to show how the schools of thought; Calvinism and Arminianism, are doctrinally intertwined within themselves; I have found that taking each of the five points in comparison with Scripture, prayer and meditation; each individual believer should diligently seek an answer based on Scripture and the leading of the Holy Spirit! For instance, I do not consider myself a pure Calvinist or Arminianist for there are points in each thought that I agree with! This is why each position has continued to change dynamically as history presents the necessity for reformation. One can say, I believe in total depravity (Calvinism) and hold to unlimited atonement (Arminianism); or, preservation of the saints (Calvinism) and hold to resistible grace (Arminianism). What better way to conclude this paper then with two contrasting analogies:

Arminian Analogy:

The Atonement was just as necessary for one sinner as it was for one million sinners. If only ten percent of the human race accepts Jesus Christ as Saviour, He did not die in vain. There could be no waste. The *number* who receive or reject Christ has nothing to do with the preparation of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. Belief in God's foreknowledge in no wise demands belief in His arbitrary condemnation of certain of His creatures. Such is an extreme view on limited atonement.<sup>31</sup>

Calvinistic Analogy:

The Calvinist limits it quantitatively, but not qualitatively; the Arminian limits it qualitatively, but not quantitatively. For the Calvinist it is like a narrow bridge which goes all the way across the stream; for the Arminian it is like a great wide bridge which goes only half-way across.<sup>32</sup>

This as with many other Biblical Doctrines will probably never be universally agreed upon by the Christian Body in whole; but, one day, we shall all know the true, complete answer

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<sup>31</sup> Bible.org. "*The Atonement of Christ*, Strauss, Lehman," [http://www.bible.org/page.php?page\\_id=658](http://www.bible.org/page.php?page_id=658).

<sup>32</sup> Loraine Boettner, *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination, Section II, Chapter XII, Limited Atonement*: Christian Classics Ethereal Library, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/boettner/predest.iv.iv.html>.

in its entirety. May we all prepare for that particular day with all soberness!

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