

Universal Atonement Doctrine Dishonors God

by John Gill - "Body of Divinity, Book 6, Chapter 3"

The first set of arguments shall be taken from hence, that universal redemption reflects highly on the perfections of God; and what is contrary to the divine perfections, cannot be true; for God cannot deny himself, nor do anything contrary to his nature and attributes.

1. The universal scheme greatly reflects on the love of God to men: it may, at first sights, seem to magnify it, since it extends it to all; but it will not appear so; it lessens it, and reduces it to nothing. The scriptures highly commend the love of God, as displayed in the death of his Son, and in redemption by him; but what kind of love must that be, which does not secure the salvation of any by it? It is not that love which God bears to his own people, which is special and distinguishing; when, according to the universal scheme, God loved Peter no more than he did Judas; nor is it that love of God, which is immutable, invariable, and unalterable; since, according to this scheme, God loves men with so intense a love, at one time, as to give his Son to die for them, and wills that they all should be saved; and afterwards this love is turned into wrath and fury; and he is determined to punish them with everlasting destruction. What sort of love must this be in God, not to spare his Son, but deliver him up to death for all the individuals of mankind, for their redemption; and yet, to multitudes of them, does not send them so much as the gospel, to acquaint them with the blessings of redemption to them; nor give them faith to lay hold upon it for themselves? Such love as this is unworthy of God, and of no service to the creature.

2. The universal scheme, highly reflects on the wisdom of God: it is certain, God is "wonderful in counsel" in contriving the scheme of redemption; and is "excellent in working", in the execution of it; he the wise God, and our Saviour; and is wise as such. But where is his wisdom in forming a scheme, in which he fails of his end? There must be some deficiency in it; a want of wisdom, to concert a scheme, which is not, or cannot be carried into execution, at least as to some considerable part of it. Should it be said, that the failure is owing to some men's not performing the conditions of their redemption required of them; it may be observed, either God did know, or did not know, this ascribes want of knowledge to him; which surely ought not to be ascribed to him that knows all things: if he did know they would not perform them, where is his wisdom, to provide the blessing of redemption, which he knew beforehand, would be of no service to them? Let not such a charge of folly, be brought against infinite Wisdom.

3. The universal scheme, highly reflects on the justice of God: God is righteous in all his ways and works; and so in this of redemption by Christ; and indeed, one principal end of it is, "To declare the righteousness of God, that he might be just," (or appears to be just) "... and the justifier of him which believeth in

Jesus.” (Romans 3:26) But if Christ died for the sins of all men, and the punishment of their sins is inflicted on him, and bore by him, and yet multitudes of them are everlastingly punished for them, where is the justice of God? It is reckoned unjust with men, to punish twice for the same act of offense: if one man pays another man’s debts, would it be just with the creditor to exact, require, and receive payment again at the hands of the debtor? If Christ has paid the debts of all men, can it be just with God to arrest such persons, and cast them into the prison of hell, till they have paid the uttermost farthing? Far be it from the Judge of all the earth to do so, who will do right?

4. The universal scheme, reflects on the power of God; as if he was not able to carry his designs into execution; whereas, “The Lord’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save”; but, according to this scheme, it seems as if it was; for if Christ has redeemed all men, and all men are not saved, it must be either from want of will in God to save them, or from want of power: not from want of will; for, according to this scheme, it is the will of God that every individual man should be saved; it must be therefore for want of power; and so he is not omnipotent. Should it be said, that some men not being saved, is owing to evil dispositions in them, obstructing the kind influences and intentions of God towards them; to the perverseness of their wills, and the strength of their unbelief. But, what is man mightier than his Maker? Are the kind influences of God, and his gracious intentions, to be obstructed by the corrupt dispositions of men? Is not He able to work in them, both to will and to do, of His good pleasure? Cannot he remove the perverseness of their wills, and the hardness of their hearts? Cannot he, by his power, take away their unbelief, and work faith in them, to believe in a living Redeemer? Far be it to think otherwise of him, with whom nothing is too hard, nor anything impossible.

5. The universal scheme reflects on the immutability of God, of his love, and of his counsel; God, in the scripture, says “I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed”, (Malachi 3:6). But, according to this scheme, it should be, rather, I am the Lord, I change; and therefore the sons of men, or at least some of them, are consumed, are lost and perish, though redeemed by Christ; for the love of God, as has been observed, is changeable with respect into them: one while he loves them, so that he wills their salvation; at another time his love is changed into hatred, and he is resolved to stir up his wrath to the uttermost against them. He is said to be “in one mind, and who can turn him?” (Job 23:13) and yet, according to this scheme, he is sometimes in one mind, and sometimes in another; sometimes his mind is to save them; and at another time his mind is to damn them. But let not this be said of him, “with whom there is no variableness, nor shadow of turning.” (James 1:17)

6. The universal scheme disappoints God of his chief end, and robs him of his glory. The ultimate end of God, in the redemption of men, as has been observed, is his own glory; the glory of his rich grace and mercy; and of his righteousness, truth, and faithfulness: but if men, any of them who are redeemed, are not saved, so far God loses his end, and is deprived of his glory;

for should this be the case, where would be the glory of God the Father, in forming a scheme which does not succeed, at least with respect to multitudes? And where would be the glory of the Son of God, the Redeemer, in working out the redemption of men, and yet they not be saved by him? And where would be the glory of the Spirit of God, if the redemption wrought out, is not effectually applied by him? But, on the contrary, the "glory of God," Father, Son, and Spirit' "is great in the salvation" of all the redeemed ones, (Psalm 21:5).
