

For Whom Did Christ Die?

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Introduction

Here the student undertakes the discussion of a question which for many centuries has divided and yet divides some of the most orthodox and scholarly theologians. On the one hand, those who according to theological usage are known as *Limited Redemptionists* contend that Christ died only for that elect company who in all dispensations were predetermined of God to be saved; and, on the other hand, those who according to the same theological usage are known as *Unlimited Redemptionists* contend that Christ died for all men who live in the present age, which age is bounded by the two advents of Christ, and that His death has other and specific values in its relation: to the ages past as well as the ages to come. The issue is well-defined, and men of sincere loyalty to the Word of God and who possess true scholarship are found on both sides of the controversy. It is true that the doctrine of a limited redemption is one of the five points of Calvinism, but not all who are rightfully classified as Calvinists accept this one feature of that system. It is equally true that all Arminians are unlimited redemptionists, but to hold the doctrine of unlimited redemption does not necessarily constitute one an Arminian. There is nothing incongruous in the fact that many unlimited redemptionists believe, in harmony with, all Calvinists, in the unalterable and eternal decree of God whereby all things were determined after His own will, and in the sovereign election of some to be saved (but not all), and in the divine predestination of those who are saved to the heavenly glory prepared for them. Without the slightest inconsistency the

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unlimited redemptionists may believe in an election according to sovereign grace, that *none* but the elect will be saved, that *all* of the elect will be saved, and that the elect are by divine enablement alone called out of the estate of spiritual death from which they are impotent to take even one step in the direction of their own salvation. The text, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him" (John 6:44), is as much a part of the one system of doctrine as it is of the other.

It is not easy to disagree with good and great men. However, as they appear on each side of this question it is impossible to entertain a conviction and not oppose those who are of a contrary mind. The disagreement now under discussion is not between orthodox and heterodox men; it is within the fellowship of those who have most in common and who need the support and encouragement of each other's confidence. Few themes have drawn out more sincere and scholarly i...

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