

The Objection: Particular Redemption Rules Out the Free Offer

Particular redemption means there can be no free offer; since Christ died only for the elect, salvation cannot be offered to all; Christ can be offered to all only if he died for all; since he died only for the elect, there is nothing to offer the non-elect. Or so it is said.

Take hyper-Calvinists: ‘The universal offer cannot be supported without supposing universal redemption; which those who are fond of, and yet profess particular redemption, would do well to consider’.¹⁸⁴ The free offer denies ‘the doctrine of special redemption’.¹⁸⁵ ‘Another Arminian footprint of the well-meant offer is the teaching of universal atonement’.¹⁸⁶ ‘Those that preach a well-meaning offer of God to all men, must and will ultimately embrace the doctrine of universal atonement also... God’s well-meaning offer of salvation cannot possibly be wider in scope than the objective satisfaction and justification of the cross of Christ’.¹⁸⁷ In ‘the “free offer”... the saving work on the cross is seen as a universal action on the part of Christ who so loved every man that he atoned for all their sins. This atonement is thus there for all men everywhere... Christ died to save everyone... Christ has died for all’.¹⁸⁸ ‘All free-offer preachers... generally ignore anything to do with... the purposely limited extent of the atonement’.¹⁸⁹

Amyraldians, in their turn, say the free offer requires a universal provision: ‘If you define “particular redemption” as “Christ died for the elect alone”, then how can the “offer” be wider? You have nothing to offer to the world in general. If “Christ and salvation” are “on offer”, then he died (with intent) for those to whom he made it available. Therefore, why not simply accept the Amyraldian position... Can’t you accept this...?’¹⁹⁰

And Owenites say the free offer requires – or, at least, is based upon – a universal sufficiency: ‘So great was the dignity and worth of [Christ’s] death and blood-shedding, of so precious a value, of such an infinite fullness and sufficiency was this oblation of

The Objection: Particular Redemption Rules Out the Free Offer

himself, that it was [in] every way able and perfectly sufficient to redeem, justify, and reconcile and save all the sinners in the world, and to satisfy the justice of God for all the sins of all mankind, and to bring them every one to everlasting glory. Now, this fullness and sufficiency of the merit of the death of Christ is a foundation unto... the general publishing of the gospel... If there were a thousand worlds, the gospel of Christ might, upon this ground, be preached to them all... This... is a sufficient basis and ground for all those general precepts of preaching the gospel unto all men, even that sufficiency which we have described... This sufficiency is the chief ground of the proposing it unto them... The sufficiency of the death of Christ for the saving of everyone, without exception that comes unto him, is enough to fill all the invitations and entreaties of the gospel unto sinners, to induce them to believe'.¹⁹¹

These, then, are the three basic ways in which the free offer is denied on the basis of particular redemption (as defined with no reference to universal sufficiency) – by the hyper-Calvinist, the Amyraldian and the Owenite, respectively.¹⁹²

All are wrong. I will make my case by first setting out the general principles, then applying them, in turn, to each of these three particular forms of the objection.