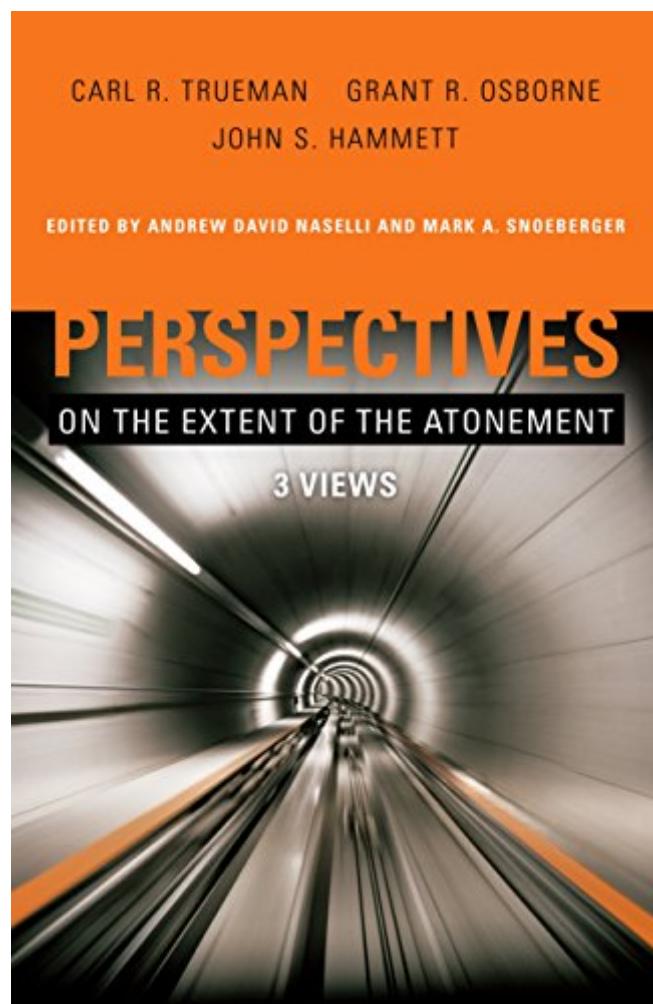


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# Perspectives On The Extent Of The Atonement: 3 Views



## **Synopsis**

Perspectives on the Extent of the Atonement presents a point-counterpoint exchange concerning Godâ™s intention in sending Christ to die on the cross. All three contributors recognize a substitutionary element in the atoning work of Christ, but disagree over the nature and objects of that substitution. Carl Trueman (Westminster Theological Seminary) argues that Christâ™s atoning work secured the redemption of his elect alone. While infinite in value, Christâ™s death was intended for and applied strictly to those whom the Father had elected unconditionally in eternity past. John Hammett (Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary) argues that Christâ™s atoning work had multiple intentions. Of these intentions two rise to the fore: (1) the intention to accomplish atonement for Godâ™s elect and (2) the intention to provide atonement for all mankind. Grant Osborne (Trinity Evangelical Divinity School) argues that Christâ™s atoning work provided atonement generally for all mankind. The application of that atoning work is conditioned, however, on each personâ™s willingness to receive it.

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## **Customer Reviews**

I don't usually gravitate toward multiview books, but what solidified Perspectives on the Extent of the Atonement in my mind as a book I needed to read was a comment made in passing by a friend about how he always likes to engage with the best arguments of opposing positions. I have been a convinced 5-point Calvinist for a long time, and I've read many of the significant tomes defending Reformed soteriology (e.g From Heaven He Came and Sought Her, Salvation by Grace, etc.); but I couldn't remember ever reading a good academic defense of Arminian soteriology. Because this issue is one of the most controversial intra-Evangelical theological debates and one in which both sides are prone to caricature the other, at the very least Perspectives on the Extent of the Atonement helps us see that each of the three views espoused in this book is exegetically and theologically tenable and that this is an in-house, family debate amongst genuine believers who all affirm the essential tenet of penal substitutionary atonement.

**DEFINITE ATONEMENT** Carl Trueman kicks things off with a presentation and defense of definite atonement. He begins with the assertion that "the case for particular redemption, like that for the Trinity, does not depend on the understanding of any single text, nor does any single text explicitly teach it. Instead, it is the result of the cumulative force and implications of a series of strands of biblical teaching" (23). He then mounts his case by first arguing for the particularity of intention in Christ's saving mission and then contending for the objective efficacy of Christ's work.

There are essentially two characteristics of a productive debate dialog: (1) a focused topic of conversation, and (2) a healthy and respectful discussion. Like many of the previous volumes in the Perspectives series, Perspectives on the Extent of the Atonement: Three Views executes this reality masterfully. The discussion begins with a helpful introduction to the debate by Mark Snoeberger, and concludes with a much appreciated summary by Andrew Naselli. Snoeberger ushers the reader into the discussion by detailing the importance of the topic, or lack thereof (p. 1), as well as the primary question of discussion— "For whom was Christ a substitute?" (p. 6). This is an important point to note because the book is narrowly focused upon the substitutional aspect of the atonement within the views of atonement that affirm penal substitution, and thus is limited to a specific vein of the Protestant conversation (p. 6). Naselli closes the book with a brief summary, including helpful charts, and identifies "10 Ways to Create Unhealthy Schism over the Extent of the Atonement" (p. 216–227). This is a helpful and much appreciated reminder as the reader exits the written discussion. Between the introduction and conclusion the reader finds three essays and the corresponding responses by the opposing authors: (1) Definite Atonement, (2) General Atonement, and (3) Multi-Intentions Atonement. First, Carl Truman defends the Definite Atonement (a limited

atonementâ •) position, arguing that the question of the extent of the atonement is merely an inference deduced from its nature and efficacy (p. 21). For Truman the debate rests heavily upon the nature of Christâ ™s mediation, â œspecifically as it relates to the unity of the intention that undergirds his priestly work of sacrifice and intercessionâ • (p.

Atonement. It doesnâ ™t seem like itâ ™s a debated topic, but it most certainly is. It is typically debated between Calvinist and Arminians as to the extent of it. Both sides agree that those saved have been covered by the blood of Christ, there is no doubt about it. However, the debate comes about when it turns to those who are not saved, what about them? Calvinists (this excludes â œfour-pointersâ •) affirm that those who never come to salvation were never covered by the blood of Christ (Limited Atonement, Definite Atonement, Peculiar Atonement), while the Arminians state that even though they are not saved, the blood was still poured out for them (General Atonement). This is some general knowledge. However, you may be surprised that there is in fact a third view of atonement called the â œMultiple Intentions View.â • This view attempts to take a middle ground between Calvinists and Arminians. This book was rather unique in itâ ™s writing as it was set up in a â œdebateâ • form. There was a simple introduction by the â œoverseersâ • - Andrew David Nasally and Mark A. Snoeberger - that provides general information about the topic. Then, they let one person present their view and why they believe it is biblical. Then, the other contributors (in this case, the other two contributors) would provide their responses. Then it would move onto the next view and the process would be repeated until each side could present their view and let the other contributors provide their thoughts. Then, a thoughtful conclusion was provided for the reader. Starting off the debate was Carl R. Trueman of Westminster Theological Seminary arguing for Definite Atonement (which we at Studies in the Scriptures agrees to). He provides a well-thought case for Definite Atonement and addresses several objections to it.

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