
Salvation, Atonement and Accessibility: Towards a Solution of the “Soteriological Problem of Evil”¹

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Introduction

If Christ declares Himself to be the Way of salvation, the Grace and the Truth, and affirms that in Him alone, and only to souls believing in Him, is the way to return to God, what has become of men who lived in the many centuries before Christ came? ... What, then, has become of such an innumerable multitude of souls, who were in no wise blameworthy, seeing that He in whom alone saving faith can be exercised had not yet favoured men with His advent?²

Steering a safe course between the Scylla of particularity and the Charybdis of universality has long posed a Herculean challenge for the Christian theologian.³ While Porphyry’s question suggests that this challenge is not recent in origin, the phenomenon of “empirical pluralism”, that is the seemingly uncontroversible “fact” that in the West we live in an age of ethnic and religious diversity, has brought an intense urgency, theological, philosophical and emotional, to the challenge of mediating particularity and universality. The question of the “unevangelised”, that is those people who have never heard of Christ through no fault of their own, possibly highlights the challenge in its most acute form. John Hick neatly summarises the problem:

We say as Christians that God is the God of universal love, that he is the creator and Father of all mankind, and that he wills the ultimate good and salvation of all men. But we also say, traditionally, that the only way to salvation is the Christian way. And yet we know, when we stop to think about it, that the large majority of the human race who have lived and died up to the present moment have lived either before Christ or outside the borders of Christendom. Can we then accept the conclusion that the God of love who seeks to save all mankind has nevertheless ordained that men must be saved in such a way that only a small minority can in fact receive this salvation? It is the weight of this moral contradiction that has driven Christian thinkers in modern times to explore other ways of understanding the human religious situation.⁴

It is well documented that for Hick and other like-minded individuals, the tension in affirming both an axiom of particularity and one of universality has been unbearable, and that he has found release only in the rejection of the very foundation of particularity, the *solus Christus*. Hence his call for a “Copernican revolution”;⁵ a paradigmatic shift out of “Ptolomaic” exclusivism with its imperialistic notions of Christocentricity, and into pluralism with its inclusive affirmation of “Reality-centricism”.⁶ Somewhat polemically it could be said that for Hick and those like him, the Herculean task has proved too difficult and that faced with twin perils, the dangers of the whirlpool have been less fearsome than that of the monster.

The Question within Evangelical Theology

What about those Christians who still wish to affirm the *solus Christus* and at the same time affirm universality in one form or another? Are such people to be thought of as theological monsters, or perhaps better “dinosaurs” of the past “Ptolomaic” age? Are they living with an unresolvable contradiction which is illogical and incoherent? Or, can they really affirm both particularity and universality at the same time? Can they solve the “soteriological problem of evil”?

In this article I wish to explore some of the issues that arise in affirming both particularity and universality, by focusing on the question of the unevangelised and on two types of responses to the question within “evangelical” theology,⁷ a theological community who not only strongly affirm the *solus Christus* in terms of truth, revelation and salvation, but who have traditionally placed a great deal of emphasis on an explicit confession of Christ: *fides ex auditu* (faith by hearing). These two types of responses are that of “trinitarian openness”,⁸ and traditional Arminianism.⁹ Rather than concentrating on their biblical exegetical responses to the question of the unevangelised, I wish to look at the internal coherence of one of the theological presuppositions or axioms which generate these responses, realising that for an evangelical methodology it is somewhat of a false dichotomy to separate the question of biblical validity from that of internal coherence.

Within evangelical theology in general and particularly within the two evangelical traditions mentioned above, the question of the existence and fate of the unevangelised has been framed around the claim that any viable response must equally uphold two axioms, that of particularity and universality. The particularity axiom asserts the *solus Christus*. The salvation offered through Jesus is final and particular where the term “finality” “refers to the unsurpassability and normativity of both the work (e.g. atonement) and the revelation of Jesus”,¹⁰ and the term “particularity” “refers to the fact that the salvation provided by God is available *only* through Jesus.”¹¹ I believe that all legitimate evangelical theologians would claim to assert this axiom, and it will remain uncontested in this paper.

What I do want to focus on in this article is the construal of the second axiom, the “universality” axiom and its relationship to the particularity axiom. The universality axiom contains three linked presuppositions: firstly, the belief in God’s universal salvific will (that God desires the salvation of everyone), secondly, the notion of unlimited atonement (that Jesus’ salvific provisions are for everyone); and finally, and most controversially, the notion of universal accessibility (that everyone must be personally eligible to receive God’s provision of salvation in Christ). In what follows I wish firstly to outline the systematic lines of argument which lead some evangelicals to affirm universal accessibility; secondly, to indicate briefly how they have attempted to prove universal accessibility and why I believe these attempts to be unsatisfactory; and finally, to point to a third evangelical tradition, the Reformed evangelical tradition, which rejects this construal of the universality axiom. As a result, this third tradition is, in terms of internal coherence, better equipped to deal with the soteriological problem of evil in the shape of the unevangelised.

God's Universal Salvific Will and Universal Accessibility

One evangelical who has done more than any other to highlight the problems surrounding the unevangelised as well as presenting the most detailed and nuanced argument concerning their salvation, is the Baptist theologian Clark Pinnock.¹² Pinnock's analysis of the problem is one part of his broader theological framework and it is here where I will start my analysis of the universality axiom. Pinnock works within a theological paradigm which he calls the "trinitarian openness of God."¹³ Placing itself between the "biblical-classical synthesis" model of God (which is accused of being heavily influenced by Neo-Platonism and which exaggerates God's transcendence), and process theology (which stresses a radical immanence), Pinnock summarises his model thus:

Our understanding of Scripture leads us to depict God, the sovereign Creator, as voluntarily bringing into existence a world with significantly free personal agents in it, ... In line with his decision to make this kind of world, God rules in such a way as to uphold the created structures and, because he gives liberty to his creatures, is happy to accept the future as open, not closed, and a relationship with the world that is dynamic and not static ... Our lives make a difference to God – they are truly significant.¹⁴

In order to maintain his belief in mutuality and conditionality between God and humanity, Pinnock has deemed it necessary to redefine the divine attributes and especially those concerning God's sovereignty. He rejects not only the Calvinist belief in foreordination but also the Arminian doctrine of simple foreknowledge, believing both to be incompatible with libertarian freedom. Indeed in general, one can view Pinnock's "new" paradigm as a logical extension of traditional Arminianism. Like Hick's call for a "Copernican revolution", Pinnock regards traditional Arminians as having only gone half-way in their theological development, as many still seem content to add more and more artificial "epicycles" which attempt to uphold libertarian freedom and a traditional view of God's sovereignty. Pinnock calls Arminians to be logically consistent in their theology and make the paradigm shift into "trinitarian openness".

Pinnock states that it is a challenge of theological interpretation to mediate the tension which holds that God loves the whole world (universality) and that Jesus is the only way to God (particularity). Specifically the problem concerns access to God's grace. Here Pinnock makes the following claim:

If God really loves the whole world and desires everyone to be saved, it follows logically that everyone must have access to salvation. There would have to be an opportunity for all people to participate in the salvation of God. ... God's universal salvific will implies the equally universal accessibility of salvation for all people.¹⁵

But is there a logical link between God's universal salvific will and a universally accessible salvation? Like Carson¹⁶ and Nash,¹⁷ I believe this implication to be problematical for two reasons both of which relate to Pinnock's trinitarian openness. Firstly, Pinnock holds to a qualified definition of a "universal salvific will" because he believes that God's will can be frustrated by human libertarian freedom. Hence, soteriologically speaking, God may desire everyone to be saved, but such a desire can be frustrated by a rejection of God's grace. Could not though the same argument be used concerning universal accessibility? God may desire everyone to hear the gospel, but this desire for everyone to hear can be frustrated. At this point we must note that

this has indeed been the view of many evangelical Arminians: God may desire the salvation of all men, but getting the gospel to those people is our task, and this task can succeed or fail. One of the primary motivations for two thousand years of mission and evangelism has been the belief that Christian men and women are the means by which the unevangelised hear the gospel and the fact that many have not heard is their responsibility. That people never hear the gospel is a “risk” God takes in deciding to create a world of conditionality and mutuality.

Secondly, the linking of God’s universal salvific will to universal accessibility seems problematic in view of Pinnock’s denial of exhaustive divine foreknowledge. As Carson states:

Since Pinnock’s God ... is necessarily ignorant of the outcome of future free human decisions – including, presumably, the decision to have children, where they will live, what they will eat and read and so forth – it is far from clear what Pinnock means by insisting that God must give access to all of them. He cannot even know how many will exist. Or is the universal provision of access effected by general revelation and/or by the *imago Dei*, regardless of how many human beings there are, what they are like, where they live, and so on? If so, Pinnock’s argument needs much more substantiation.¹⁸

These two reasons alone would seem to prove that while God’s universal salvific will and universal accessibility may compliment one another, there is no necessary link from the former to the later. If universal accessibility is to be theologically proved, then it must be on other grounds.

Universal Atonement and Universal Accessibility

However, Pinnock does not only link a universal salvific will to universal accessibility, but he also links unlimited atonement to universal accessibility: “If Christ died for all, while yet sinners, the opportunity must be given for all to register a decision about what was done for them. They cannot lack the opportunity merely because someone failed to bring the gospel of Christ to them.”¹⁹ If the notion of a universal salvific will proves a dead-end in proving universal accessibility, then what about the notion of unlimited atonement, the belief that Christ’s death includes everyone in its scope. Strangely, neither Carson nor Nash mention this link in their critiques of Pinnock.

There seems to be a close connection between God’s universal salvific will and unlimited atonement as the saving will of God is revealed in Christ’s sacrifice. However there would also appear to be some important differences between the two concepts because in the atonement, we are not dealing with an abstract “wish” that can be frustrated, but in the making of this wish come true, a reality that has occurred in history: Christ died for all. Is there a necessary link between Christ dying for everyone, and everyone hearing about Christ dying for everyone? This is certainly the view of the apologist Stuart Hackett:

If every human being in all times and ages has been objectively provided for through the unique redemption in Jesus, and if this provision is in fact intended by God for every such human being, then it must be possible for every human individual to become personally eligible to receive that provision – regardless of his historical, cultural, or personal circumstances and situation, and quite apart from any particular historical information or even historically formulated theological conceptualisation – since a

universally intended redemptive provision is not genuinely universal unless it is also and for that reason universally accessible.²⁰

The question therefore is not whether a universal redemptive provision is universal in its efficacy, for Pinnock and the Arminians admit that man's freedom to resist salvific grace limits the efficacy. Rather the question is whether a universal redemptive provision can be limited in its scope in some way or another, for example the failure of Christian mission to take the gospel to certain parts of the world. All the treatments of unlimited atonement that I have looked at (apart from Pinnock's), do not answer this question. I would briefly like to offer what I think must be the response.

Let me describe in a little more detail the contours of the doctrine of unlimited atonement. Here I want to focus on the scope or extent of the atonement rather than on its purpose and meaning, of course realising that both areas impinge on the other. At the heart of this doctrine are two sets of linked ideas: objective accomplishment and subjective application, and universal possibility and particular actuality. Whatever Jesus' death accomplished (and for evangelicals some model of substitutionary atonement is emphasised), only Jesus could pay the penalty for anyone and everyone, but each individual must still accept that free gift:

It is clear...that Christ's death is universal in sufficiency and intention, but it is limited in its application. This limitation is imposed not by God but by Man. The individual human being, created in the image of God with free will, must accept the benefits of the atonement.²¹

Therefore one sees a mutual reciprocity between objective and subjective sides in Arminian soteriology: a positive subjective response is needed to make effective the objective accomplishment, but there could not be the possibility of a subjective response without the objective provision. Because there is a degree of conditionality in this schema, an objective universalism is avoided, for unlimited atonement only leads to universalism if "God's sovereignty means that every act of God must be 'efficacious' and 'cannot be frustrated by man', thereby negating any possible human freedom as being consistent with divine sovereignty."²² There is enough biblical evidence to suggest that not everyone has accepted God's free gift in Christ. Conversely while there is the possibility that no one would accept Christ's free offer of grace, this is only a logical possibility since the Bible suggests that many do indeed accept this offer.

It is the inextricable link between the objective and subjective sides of the Arminian soteriology, which seems to tie universal atonement to universal accessibility. For although Christ's death has achieved something objectively independent of the believer (i.e. a possibility of salvation which did not exist before Christ's death), in terms of its salvific potential, the subjective offer of this objective achievement would seem to be necessary to make the provision truly "universal". It would appear that to make a genuine "universal" offer one needs every recipient to be in position to accept or reject the offer. For example, if I, in my benevolence, was to offer everyone in the world a copy of this paper but some do not hear about my offer, then in what sense is my universal offer, universal? These people have neither accepted or rejected my paper and surely must be in a position to accept or reject my paper for the offer to be universal. But can my universal offer be genuine yet frustrated? It can in terms of

efficacy (acceptance or rejection) but what about scope? Or to return to the topic, one can say that the atonement is potentially universal in efficacy but can it be only potential in scope? To affirm this would appear to disrupt the delicate balance between objective and subjective with the subjective totally defining the objective. I do not think that this is what Arminians mean when they claim that Christ's death is objectively unlimited and universal, for without the universal possibility to accept or reject Christ, Christ death becomes limited to those who hear about it and of no use to those who don't.

I would like to suggest, then, that whereas a belief in God's universal salvific will does not necessarily imply universal accessibility, a belief in universal atonement does. I do not think that the argument I have put forward is a new one and I believe that the problem of universal accessibility has always been an issue for those who believe in universal atonement. However, I do believe that what has been implicit and has lain dormant, has recently become explicit and active. While the unevangelised were thought of as a small minority of people, the issue of universal accessibility could remain on the periphery of systematic thinking. However, as I have already noted, in today's pluralistic climate, the importance of the question has increased significantly as we realise that possibly the majority of people who have ever lived have not heard about Christ or his work. The idea of universal accessibility would appear to be a central doctrine both logically (in that it is inextricably linked to universal atonement) and emotionally. As Pinnock states, though, "This raises a difficult question. How is salvation within the reach of the unevangelised? How can anyone be saved without knowing Christ? The idea of universal accessibility, though not a novel theory, needs to be proven. It is far from self-evident, at least biblically speaking. How can it best be defended?"²³

Theories on Universal Accessibility

The last ten years has seen a number of theories proposed by evangelical theologians all of which propose some theory of universal accessibility.²⁴ The problem is that no one theory has come close to universal acceptance and all appear to raise more questions than they answer.

Firstly there is the position of post-mortem evangelism or divine perseverance. Believing that an explicit confession of Christ is needed for salvation but that many have never heard of Christ, they propose that the unevangelised will meet Christ after death and be able to accept or reject him at that point. This is not to be confused as a "second chance" theory, but rather the universality of a first chance. Supporters of this position include, Gabriel Fackre, Stephen Davis, Donald Bloesch and from among non-evangelicals, George Lindbeck. The main problems surrounding this position are firstly, the long Christian tradition which believes that our human destiny is fixed before death; and secondly, the problem of defining what constitutes a genuine "chance" in this life. Somewhat perversely it can be argued that it would be better not to ever evangelise since people are more likely to accept Jesus himself after death than by an over zealous missionary in this life. This latter objection highlights a fundamental problem I have chosen not to mention so far in this paper: defining who exactly are the unevangelised. Many theologians include in their definition those who have heard only a perverted form of the gospel, and those who have been presented

“historically” with the Gospel, but not existentially, for example missionaries who have taken the Gospel to an unreached people and have proceeded to preach the Gospel in their own language. It is conceded that only God knows who has heard a full and adequate presentation of the Gospel.

William Lane Craig uses his belief in “middle-knowledge” to argue that there is no one among the unevangelised who would ever respond positively to the gospel, for in every world that feasibly exists, they freely reject his grace. He calls this “transworld damnation”:²⁵

If there were anyone who would have responded to the gospel if he had heard it, then God in his love would have brought the gospel to such a person....God in His providence has so arranged the world that....all who would respond to his gospel, were they to hear it, did and do hear it. Those who only respond to general revelation and do not respond to it would also not have responded to the gospel had they heard it. Hence, no one is lost because of lack of information due to historical or geographical accident. All who want or would want to be saved will be saved.²⁶

Of course, the main weakness of Craig’s position is the philosophical viability of “middle-knowledge”.

Finally, there is a wide spectrum of positions which can be labelled as “inclusivist”. The main evangelical proponents of this theory are Clark Pinnock and John Sanders. Inclusivists believe that the unevangelised can be saved ontologically by Christ whilst being epistemologically unaware of him. Clark Pinnock argues that there is enough information, for example, in God’s general revelation in creation and the *imago Dei*, for salvation and he draws an analogy between the way chronologically pre-messianic believers were saved and those today who are “informationally” pre-messianic. Recently, and influenced by both Vatican II and Karl Rahner, Pinnock has developed this argument further by arguing that implicit faith, as evidenced in a Christ-like attitude, are signs of the Spirit’s saving grace in a person’s life. The main areas of contention surrounding this position revolve around the nature of saving faith, the purpose and sufficiency of general revelation and the means of saving grace. While this is the most sophisticated argument concerning the unevangelised, it is by far the most controversial as it appears to call for a redefinition of the *solus Christus*.

To be fair, all the above arguments have their strengths and weaknesses and are becoming more and more nuanced as evangelicals realise the importance of the issue. What I have tried to demonstrate in this article is that if universal atonement is true then universal accessibility is true. If universal accessibility is true then one is “forced” to propound some kind of theory which includes the possibility of salvation for the unevangelised. However no one argument is wholly convincing and the retreat into agnosticism over the unevangelised remains the most popular option for many evangelicals. Yet as the acuteness of the question grows, this retreat seems more and more untenable emotionally and theologically. There appears to be a troubling disparity between the enormity of the question and the inadequacy of the responses given. One can begin to see why Hick regards all such theories as “epicycles” tagged onto the old “Ptolemaic worldview”.²⁷ Without a lot more work from evangelicals, the question of the unevangelised will continue to be a painful thorn in the side, and a major tension in their theology.

Another Option?

Rather than live with the tension caused by both axioms or take the more drastic step of denying the *solus Christus*, I would like to suggest that in terms of internal coherence, there is a third theological community within evangelical theology, the Reformed/Calvinist community, which has the theological framework to deal more ably with the “soteriological problem of evil” by rejecting the universality axiom and so deny its existence as a problem. This is not to say that this community does not believe that the unevangelised theoretically can be saved (although many do not), but rather they are under no necessary logical pressure to develop any theory concerning their salvation. Here I can only outline one type of Reformed theology, realising that there are many variations on the one theme.

The notion of God’s sovereignty is the hub of Reformed theology. As Packer writes, Calvinism is a unified philosophy of history which sees the whole diversity of processes and events that takes place in God’s world as no more, and no less, than the outworking of His great preordained plan for His creatures and His Church.²⁸

The Reformed doctrines of predestination and unconditional election are all generated by this view of sovereignty. Concerning the relationship between the three presuppositions of the universality axiom, Reformed theologians deny that there is universal accessibility to salvation, and offer a host of theological reasons why God’s justice is not impugned by the particularisation of accessibility. Our interest lies in how this limited offer relates to the scope of the atonement and the divine salvific will. The relationship is a very strong one as the majority of Calvinists deny that Christ died for all (the doctrine of particular redemption) and that God desires all to be saved. With their views of sovereignty, had God desired all people to be saved, all would be saved, because God’s will can never be frustrated. Similarly because Christ’s death accomplishes salvation and does not merely make salvation possible, had Christ died for all, then all would be saved. Here there is seamless unity in the work of the three Persons of the Trinity: the Father wills the salvation of some, the Son accomplishes the salvation of some and the Spirit applies this salvation to some.

How do the unevangelised fit into this framework? Donald Lake claims that the doctrine of unconditional election solves the problem for Calvinists in the following way:

The doctrine of election has served to solve the problem of those who have died without ever hearing the gospel: if they were part of the elect, they were saved without hearing; if not numbered among the elect, their not hearing was of no consequence.²⁹

I believe that such an argument unnaturally divides the ends and the means to that ends, that is the decree of election and the implementation of that decree. It seems more natural to see election together with the scope of Christ’s death and with providence. This appears to be Calvin’s own view on the unevangelised as explained by G. Michael Thomas:

God’s providential deprivation of such people is to be viewed as an expression of the predestination which has destined salvation for only a part of the human race: “The covenant of life is not preached equally among all men ... This variety ... also serves the decision of God’s eternal election.” It must be a matter of causal determination of individual destinies revealed by effects (the conversion of some and the nonconversion

of others. Scope is thereby given for understanding God's intention concerning the scope of redemption in terms of its effects in time. ... Calvin was capable of sometimes measuring the scope of Christ's death by observable effects.³⁰

If God wishes to save the unevangelised (and in this theological framework it is now difficult to know what the term "unevangelised" means), he will provide the means for them to be saved. As the ordinary means was traditionally thought to be *fides ex auditu* through the human messenger, then those who never hear must lie outside God's salvific will and Christ's atoning provisions. At this point I want to note two caveats. Firstly there are exceptions to this rule and some Reformed theologians like Zanchius, Baxter, Zwingli, Shedd and Helm want to speak of *extraordinary* means of grace as well as *ordinary* means. Certainly this is believed to be the case of children who die in infancy (Westminster Confession of Faith 10/3). Secondly, it should be noted that a Reformed particularism does not necessarily lead to a *Heilspessimismus* (a parsimony in salvation). For example B.B Warfield and Charles Hodge, whilst still holding to a strongly particularist position, maintained that in terms of the numbers of redeemed, the lost would be insignificant to the redeemed. How is this possible considering that billions of people have never come into contact with the gospel of Christ? The answer is fashioned as part of their eschatological beliefs. As Sanders comments, "Warfield and Hodge appeal to the Postmillennial doctrine that a tremendous surge of evangelism and conversion will occur in the future. Since the future population of the earth will be greater than the total population throughout history, more will be saved than lost."³¹ However these caveats do not invalidate my central point: that in Reformed soteriology, universal accessibility is not theologically necessary and theologians are under no obligation to develop a soteriology which includes those who have never heard the gospel.

For Reformed theology this particularisation of the universal would appear to turn the problem of the unevangelised into a pseudo-problem, thus leading to the denial of the soteriological problem of evil. For the non-Reformed evangelical the problem remains all too real as it is inextricably linked to and generated by the presupposition of unlimited atonement, a defining doctrine for evangelical Arminianism. In terms of internal coherence, the Reformed position appears more satisfactory. Whether it is biblically or emotionally satisfactory is, of course, another issue altogether, and critics from both within evangelicalism and from without are not slow to point to what they see as the monstrous implications of such a position for the nature, justice, and love of God. Of course such a debate is only but a microcosm (albeit a very apposite one) of long running theological disputes. To try to demonstrate that the Reformed position has not veered off course and been devoured by the Scylla, and that it is a faithful reflection of the biblical data, lies outside the scope of this particular paper.

The Universality of Mission

Finally, I wish to conclude by re-affirming a defining tenet of evangelicalism: the necessity of evangelism and missions. In this paper, I have purposefully not dealt with the missiological implications of the question of the unevangelised.³² All I want to say is that from a Reformed evangelical perspective, a perspective that I have been advocating in this paper, rather than succumbing to a predestinarian paralysis which is sometimes levelled at the Reformed position,³³ one must take with utmost seriousness

the belief that God has not only ordained the way of salvation through the Gospel, but also the means for this Gospel to be proclaimed: through the human messenger. It is at this point that one must embrace a belief in universality, a universal vision for disseminating the Word of God. As the Canons of Dordt state, “The command to repent and believe ought to be declared and published to all nations and to all persons promiscuously and without distinction, to whom God out of his good pleasure sends the Gospel”(II/5). Commenting on Rom. 10:14,15³⁴ John Piper writes the following:

Charles Hodge is right that “the solemn question, implied in the language of the apostle, “HOW CAN THEY BELIEVE WITHOUT A PREACHER? should sound day and night in the ears of the churches.” It is our unspeakable privilege to be caught up with him in the greatest movement in history – the ingathering of the elect “from all tribes and tongues and peoples and nations”.³⁵

As an evangelical, I fervently believe that God commands all evangelicals to take this *evangel* into all the world, just as the king says to his servants in Jesus’ parable of the wedding banquet, “Go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find.”(Matt. 11:9). That it has pleased God to bring His salvation through the instrumentality of the preached Word, is at the same time an “unspeakable privilege”, and an awesome responsibility, a responsibility which is truly universal in its scope.

References

- ¹ The contents of this paper are a reworking of a small section of my doctoral thesis at the University of Bristol under Dr Gavin D’Costa, and entitled: *The Possibility of Salvation Among the Unevangelised: An Analysis of “Inclusivism” in Recent Evangelical Theology*. This paper has been presented in various forms to the University of Bristol Post-graduate Conference, and the Whitefield Institute Grantees Seminar.
- ² Porphyry, quoted by Augustine in a letter to Deogratias, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* Series 1, vol.1, ed. Philip Schaff (1866; reprint, Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1974), p. 416, quoted from John Sanders, *No Other Name* (London: SPCK, 1994), p. 11.
- ³ In Greek mythology, an infamous stretch of the Sicilian Sea contained two dangers which terrified sailors: the Scylla was a sea-monster, and Charybdis a whirlpool. Hercules had to steer a course through these straits when he brought back Geryon’s herd.
- ⁴ John Hick, *God and the Universe of Faiths* (Oxford, 1993), p. 122f.
- ⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 120-133.
- ⁶ For a brief description and critique summary of Hick’s position and its relation to other positions in the theology of religions see Gavin D’Costa, *Theology of Religions* in ed. David F Ford, *The Modern Theologians* Vol. II (Oxford, 1993), pp. 274-291.
- ⁷ For the purpose of this paper I wish to adopt broad definition of evangelicalism, realising that for many such a definition may be too inclusive.
- ⁸ See below for a brief description of this position.
- ⁹ By Arminian, I am referring broadly to a range of positions which stress an indeterministic view of human freedom especially in the area of soteriology. Jacob Arminius (1560-1609) was a Dutch theologian who disagreed with Calvin’s doctrines on predestination and election.
- ¹⁰ John Sanders, *No Other Name: Can Only Christians Be Saved?* (London, 1994), p. 26.
- ¹¹ *Ibid.*
- ¹² Pinnock (b. 1937) is currently professor of theology at McMaster Divinity College, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada. Biographical and bibliographical details can be found in Robert M Price, “Clark H. Pinnock: Conservative and Contemporary” in *Evangelical Quarterly* 88.2 (1988), pp. 157-183; Robert V. Rakestraw, “Clark H. Pinnock: A Theological Odyssey” in *Christian*

- Scholars Review* 3 (1990), pp. 252-270; Ray CW Roenfeldt, *Clark H Pinnock on Biblical Authority: An Evolving Position* (Michigan, 1993), pp. 71-79; Daniel Strange, "Clark H Pinnock: The Evolution of an Evangelical Maverick" in *Evangelical Quarterly* (forthcoming).
- ¹³ See ed. Clark H. Pinnock, *The Openness of God: A Biblical Challenge to the Traditional Understanding of God* (Carlisle, 1994).
- ¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 103f.
- ¹⁵ Clark H. Pinnock, *A Wideness in God's Mercy: The Finality of Christ in a World Of Religions* (Grand Rapids, 1992, p. 157.
- ¹⁶ Don Carson, *The Gaggling of God: Christianity Confronts Pluralism* (Leicester, 1996), p. 289.
- ¹⁷ Ronald Nash, *Is Jesus the Only Saviour?* (Grand Rapids, 1994), pp. 130-135.
- ¹⁸ Carson, op. cit., p. 289 n. 53.
- ¹⁹ Pinnock, *Wideness*, op. cit., p. 157.
- ²⁰ Stuart Hackett, *The Reconstruction of the Christian Revelation Claim* (Grand Rapids, 1984), p. 244.
- ²¹ Terry L. Miethe, "The Universal Power of the Atonement" in ed. Clark H. Pinnock, *The Grace of God and Will of Man* (Minneapolis, 1989), p. 75.
- ²² *Ibid.*
- ²³ Pinnock, *Wideness*, op. cit., p. 157.
- ²⁴ The best survey is by John Sanders. See his *No Other Name*, op. cit; & ed. Sanders *What About Those Who Have Never Heard? Three Views on the Destiny of the Unevangelised* (IVP, Downers Grove, 1995).
- ²⁵ See William Lane Craig, "'No Other Name': A Middle Knowledge Perspective on the Exclusivity of Salvation through Christ" in *Faith and Philosophy* Vol.6 No.2 April 1989:172-188; p. 184.
- ²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 185
- ²⁷ See Hick, op. cit., pp. 124-130.
- ²⁸ JI Packer, "Introductory Essay" to John Owen's *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1959), p. 5.
- ²⁹ Donald M. Lake, "He Died for All: The Universal Dimensions of the Atonement" in Clark H Pinnock (ed.), *Grace Unlimited* (Minneapolis, 1975), pp. 31-51, p. 43.
- ³⁰ G Michael Thomas, *The Extent of the Atonement: A Dilemma for Reformed Theology from Calvin to the Consensus* (Carlisle, 1997), p. 15f.
- ³¹ Sanders, "Is Belief in Christ Necessary for Salvation?" in *Evangelical Quarterly* 60: 1988, pp. 241-259. See B. B. Warfield, "Are They Few That Be Saved?" in *Biblical and Theological Studies* (Philadelphia, 1952), pp. 334-350; and Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology* 3 Vols. (Grand Rapids, 1940), 3:879-80. Commenting on Warfield. Helm notes, "In Warfield's view God's saving purposes widen through history, rather as a ripple in a pool. By a process of development, first Israel and then the Christian Church, which is the 'internationalised' Israel of the New Testament era, enlarge the circle of God's saving grace until it embraces the vast majority and women, 'the world'. The lost are 'the prunings' as Warfield put it." Paul Helm, "Are They Few That Be Saved" in ed. Nigel M. de S. Cameron, *Universalism and the Doctrine of Hell* (Edinburgh, 1992), p. 267. Warfield himself writes, "It must be borne well in mind that particularism and parsimony in salvation are not equivalent conceptions; and it is a mere caricature of Calvinistic particularism to represent it as finding its centre in the proclamation that there are few to be saved." BB Warfield, *The Plan of Salvation* (1915), p. 97. quoted in Helm, op. cit., p. 268.
- ³² This area has been tackled ably elsewhere. See John K. Barrett, "Does Inclusivist Theology Undermine Evangelism?" in *Evangelical Quarterly* 70/3 (1998), pp. 219-245; John Piper, *Let*

the Nations Be Glad: The Supremacy of God in Missions (Leicester, 1994), pp. 115-167; Nash, *op. cit.*, pp. 165-169; William V Crockett & James G Sigountos, "Are the 'Heathens' Really Lost?" in eds. William V Crockett & James G Sigountos, *Through No Fault of Their Own?* (Grand Rapids, 1991), pp. 257-265; John D Ellenberger, "Is Hell a Proper Motivation for Missions?" in eds. William V Crockett & James G Sigountos, *Through No Fault of Their Own?* (Grand Rapids, 1991), pp. 217-227; Charles VanEngen, "The Uniqueness of Christ in Mission Theology" in eds. Edward Rommen & Harold Netland, *Christianity and the Religions: A Biblical Theology of World Religions* (Pasadena, 1995), pp. 183-217.

³³ For example John Sanders writing on the importance of missions for restrictivists states "An example of restrictivists who do not subscribe to this argument would be those in the Reformed tradition, who have traditionally not evidenced much interest in missions despite their belief that the unevangelised are damned to hell." *No Other Name*, *op. cit.*, p. 48, n. 24. For a refutation of Sanders claim, see William Travis, "William Carey: The Modern Missions Movement and the Sovereignty of God" in eds. Thomas R Schreiner & Bruce A Ware, *The Grace of God, the Bondage of the Will. Volume 2: Historical and Theological Perspectives on Calvinism* (Grand Rapids, 1995), pp. 323-336. For a strong Calvinist position which stresses the importance of mission over and against hyper-Calvinists who do not, see David J. Engelsma, *Hyper-Calvinism and the Call of the Gospel* (Grand Rapids, Reformed Free Publishing Association), pp. 67-127.

³⁴ "How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!'"

³⁵ Piper, *op. cit.*, pp. 158. Piper is quoting from Charles Hodge, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (New York, 1893), p. 553.

Suggested Reading:

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Book Brief

WEC International is producing, in partnership with OM Publishing, a series of booklets profiling different areas of mission around the world where Christians are a minority. Written by Glenn Myers, the first three in the series cover the Arab world, the Malay-speaking Muslim world and the peoples of the West African Sahel region. Within 63 pages you get a concise and up to date overview of the mission situation among those peoples along with some points for prayer. These booklets are a step on from *Operation World* without being full-length books. Busy pastors and others need such helpful and easily digestible material to keep their missionary vision fresh on both the local and global levels. **KB.**