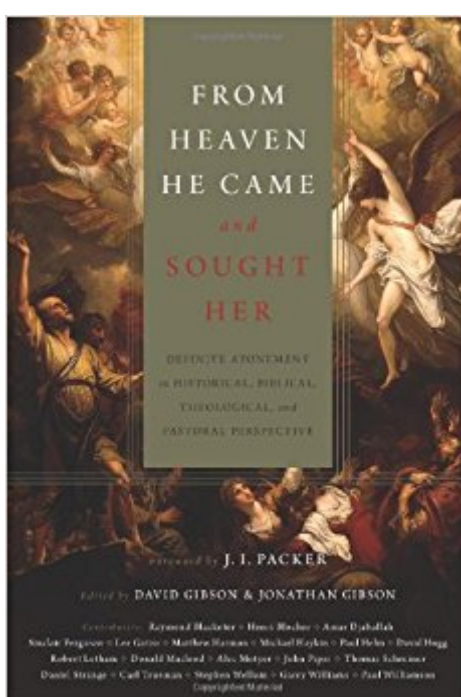


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# From Heaven He Came And Sought Her: Definite Atonement In Historical, Biblical, Theological, And Pastoral Perspective



## Synopsis

There is a palpable sense of confusion—and sometimes even embarrassment—with regard to so-called limited atonement today, pointing to the need for thoughtful engagement with this controversial doctrine. *From Heaven He Came and Sought Her* stands as the first comprehensive resource on definite atonement as it examines the issue from historical, biblical, theological, and pastoral perspectives. Offering scholarly insights for those seeking a thorough and well-researched discussion, this book will encourage charitable conversations as it winsomely defends this foundational tenet of Reformed theology.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

“A massive product of exact and well-informed scholarship . . . with landmark significance. . . I give this book top marks for its range of solid scholarship, cogency of argument, warmth of style, and zeal for the true glory of God. I recommend it most highly.”  
—J. I. Packer, Board of Governors’ Professor of Theology, Regent College  
“I cannot imagine that this book could have been published twenty-five years ago: there were not at that time enough well-informed theologians working in the Reformed heritage to produce a volume of such clarity and competence. Whatever side you hold in this debate, henceforth you dare not venture into the discussion without thoughtfully reading this book, which, mercifully, makes argument by stereotype and reductionism a great deal more difficult. Above all, this book will elicit adoration as its readers ponder afresh what

Jesus achieved on the cross. — D. A. Carson, a research professor of New Testament, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School; cofounder, The Gospel Coalition — “The topic is worthy enough. Yet the lineup of contributors to this volume makes this, in my view, the most impressive defense of definite atonement in over a century. Beyond rehearsing traditional arguments, first-rate historical, biblical, and systematic theologians bring fresh angles and exegesis to bear. From Heaven He Came and Sought Her is a gift that will no doubt keep on giving for generations to come. — Michael Horton, J. Gresham Machen Professor of Systematic Theology, Westminster Seminary California; author, A Core Christianity: Finding Yourself in God’s Story — “This is the definitive study. It is careful, comprehensive, deep, pastoral, and thoroughly persuasive. — David F. Wells, distinguished senior research professor, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary; author, The Courage to Be Protestant: Truth-Lovers, Marketers and Emergents in the Postmodern World — “There is a conventional wisdom that seems to believe definite atonement is the weakest of the five heads of doctrine confessed at the Synod of Dort. But you may come away from this book believing it is the strongest, in its historical attestation, biblical basis, and spiritual blessing. Written by first-rate exegetes and theologians, this book covers all the difficult issues and emerges with a highly persuasive and attractive case. Highly recommended! — John M. Frame, professor of systematic theology and philosophy emeritus, Reformed Theological Seminary, Orlando — “For whom did Christ die? This volume makes a fresh and impressively comprehensive case for definite atonement as the answer true to Scripture. It shows convincingly, through multi-authored contributions, (1) that the issues of the extent of the atonement and its nature cannot be separated — penal substitution, at the heart of why Christ had to die, stands or falls with definite atonement; and (2) how definite atonement alone provides for a gospel offer of salvation from sin that is genuinely free. In engaging various opposing views on this much-disputed topic, the editors seek to do so in a constructive and irenic spirit, an effort in which they and the other authors have succeeded admirably. — Richard B. Gaffin Jr., Professor of Biblical and Systematic Theology, Emeritus, Westminster Theological Seminary — “This book is formidable and persuasive. Those familiar with the terrain will recognize that the editors know exactly the key issues and figures in this debate. And none of the authors who follow disappoint. The tone is calm and courteous, the scholarship rigorous and relentless, the argument clear and compelling. This penetrating discussion takes into account the major modern academic criticisms of definite atonement (Barth, the Torrances, Armstrong, Kendall, and others) as well as more popular critiques (Clifford, Driscoll and Breshears). An impressive team of scholars adorns this subject and aims to help Christians toward

a deeper gratitude to God for his grace, a greater assurance of salvation, a sweeter fellowship with Christ, stronger affections in their worship of him, more love for people and superior courage and sacrifice in witness and service, and indeed to propel us into the global work of missions with compassion and confidence.

• J. Ligon Duncan III, Chancellor and CEO, Reformed Theological Seminary, Jackson, Mississippi

“Whether you are sympathetic to or suspicious of definite atonement, this book will surprise you. Here are historical details, exegetical links, theological observations, and pastoral perspectives that are fresh and fascinating, even though there is also plenty that will prove controversial. From Heaven He Came and Sought Her offers the fullest and most nuanced treatment on definite atonement I know, and will richly add to the substance and quality of future conversations about the intent of the atonement. Whether you think that you agree or disagree with the authors, wrestling with these essays is well worth your time.”

• Kelly M. Kapic, professor of theological studies, Covenant College, Lookout Mountain, Georgia

David Gibson (PhD, University of Aberdeen) is minister of Trinity Church in Aberdeen, Scotland. Previously he served as a staff worker for the Religious and Theological Studies Fellowship (part of UCCF) and as an assistant minister at High Church, Hilton, Aberdeen. Gibson is also a widely published author of articles and books such as *Rich: The Reality of Encountering Jesus* and *Reading the Decree: Exegesis, Election and Christology in Calvin and Barth*.

Jonathan Gibson (PhD, Cambridge University) is associate minister at Cambridge Presbyterian Church and assistant professor of Old Testament at Westminster Theological Seminary. He is the author of historical and biblical articles in *Themelios* and *Journal of Biblical Literature* and regularly speaks at conferences in Australia and South Africa. Jonathan and his wife, Jackie, have two children.

J. I. Packer (DPhil, Oxford University) serves as the Board of Governors Professor of Theology at Regent College. He is the author of numerous books, including the classic best-seller *Knowing God*. Packer served as general editor for the English Standard Version Bible and as theological editor for the ESV Study Bible.

Sinclair B. Ferguson (PhD, University of Aberdeen) is professor of systematic theology at Redeemer Seminary in Dallas, Texas, and the former senior minister of the First Presbyterian Church in Columbia, South Carolina. He is the author of several books, the most recent being *By Grace Alone: How the Grace of God Amazes Me*. Sinclair and his wife, Dorothy, have four grown children.

Paul Helm (MA, Worcester College) is a teaching fellow at Regent College in Vancouver. He previously taught philosophy at the University of Liverpool and was the J. I. Packer Chair of Theology at Regent College. He also publishes online at Helm's

Deep. Paul is married to Angela, and they have five children. John Piper (DTheol, University of Munich) is the founder and teacher of [desiringGod.org](http://desiringGod.org) and the chancellor of Bethlehem College & Seminary. He served for 33 years as the senior pastor of Bethlehem Baptist Church in Minneapolis, Minnesota, and is the author of more than 50 books, including *Desiring God*, *Don't Waste Your Life*, *This Momentary Marriage*, *Bloodlines*, and *Does God Desire All to Be Saved?* Thomas R. Schreiner (MDiv and ThM, Western Conservative Baptist Seminary; PhD, Fuller Theological Seminary) is the James Buchanan Harrison Professor of New Testament Interpretation and associate dean of the school of theology at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Carl R. Trueman (PhD, University of Aberdeen) is the Paul Woolley Professor of Church History at Westminster Theological Seminary and pastor of Cornerstone Presbyterian Church (OPC) in Ambler, Pennsylvania. He was editor of *Themelios* for nine years, has authored or edited more than a dozen books, and has contributed to multiple publications including the *Dictionary of Historical Theology* and *The Cambridge Companion to Reformation Theology*. Lee Gatiss (PhD, Cambridge University) is the director of Church Society, a lecturer in church history at Union School of Theology, and a research fellow of the Jonathan Edwards Centre Africa at the University of the Free State, South Africa. He also serves as a member of the editorial board of *Themelios* and editor for the internet journal *Theologian*. Lee and his wife, Kerry, have three children. Matthew S. Harmon (PhD, Wheaton College) is professor of New Testament studies at Grace College and Theological Seminary in Winona Lake, Indiana. He was previously on staff with Cru for eight years and is the author of several books. Matthew and his wife, Kate, live in Warsaw, Indiana, and have two sons. Michael A. G. Haykin (ThD, University of Toronto) is professor of church history and biblical spirituality at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and director of the Andrew Fuller Center for Baptist Studies. He has authored or edited more than twenty-five books, including *Rediscovering the Church Fathers: Who They Were and How They Shaped the Church*. Stephen J. Wellum (PhD, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School) is professor of Christian theology at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, and editor of the *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology*. Stephen lives in Louisville, Kentucky, with his wife, Karen, and their five children. Garry Williams (DPhil, Oxford University) serves as the director of the John Owen Centre for Theological Study at London Theological Seminary in the United Kingdom, which provides theological teaching for pastors after their initial training. He is also a visiting professor of historical theology at Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Garry and his wife, Fiona, have four children.

The doctrine of Limited Atonement is truly one of the most overwhelming declarations of God's love for His people and sadly one of the most avoided and misunderstood declarations of The Bible. I cannot begin to express the detail and precision with which this teaching has been expressed and defined in this book. I have not often been challenged and driven to know what I know and why I know it as I have by reading this work. It took me nearly a year to truly dig into and digest *From Heaven He Came and Sought Her*, but I have grown richly in Christ from plowing through this masterpiece. I pray that many will find and read this insightful and delightful work. I want to personally thank the contributing author's for this timeless treasure, and will without hesitation place it on the top shelf of my library.

Romans 11:36

This was "definitely" a wonderful compilation on the very specific topic of definite atonement. Its strengths include the historical perspective on the topic of atonement especially including an efficient treatment of subtle doctrinal competitors like Amyraldianism. Also, I value the biblical exegetical analysis which acts almost as a commentary on the many universalized "proof" texts as well as particularized texts emphasizing the need to see any of them in the light of the whole Biblical revelation on the character of God and His work of redemption. Its weaknesses--if forced to choose--would be some degree of discontinuity between the varied authors. There is some degree of disagreement on the very points of subtlety being discussed among the authors and it is reflected in their emphases and explanation of Scriptural teachings such as "God desires all men to be saved". Also, the degree of danger or lack therein inherent in universal atonement or hypothetical universalism is obviously shared differently between the authors. They address the different arguments with varying degrees of militancy or understanding. In general, the book makes a fine study appropriate for a read through and was very helpful. It will find a place among my references in future thinking on this topic.

This is a treasure trove of ideas around definite atonement that are surprisingly easy to understand. The collection of theologians that produced this book include writers who desire to be firmly rooted in Scripture before making statements. Definite atonement will probably always be a controversial doctrine within the Christian global church, but the tone of these essays and their arrangement offer a great entry point for those seeking more understanding from proponents.

Excellent book and persuasive defense of definite (prev., limited) atonement. As with any book, there are spots that were a chore and spots that were brilliant (esp. Williams', Williamson's, and

Blocher's chapters). But be warned, it may alter your view of, not only the atonement, but Christ, the covenants, and his church. I highly recommend spending a couple weeks working through it.

A truly excellent collection of essays. This volume covers the full spectrum of the doctrine. The new gold standard.

The book gives a historical, biblical and theological treatment of the doctrine wrongly called "limited atonement". This is a must read if you want to understand this doctrine. I highly recommend this book.

One of my top 5 favorite books in my library

What is delivered for the reader is an almost exhaustive handling of the subject of definite atonement. A must read for clarification on this issue.

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