

## JAMES HALDANE AND THE EVANGELISTIC POWER OF PREACHING PARTICULAR REDEMPTION<sup>1</sup>

In keeping with the theme of this conference, “Andrew Fuller and His Friends,” let me begin by making a few (necessary) connections between Fuller and Haldane. In 1799, at the request of Robert Haldane, Andrew Fuller visited Scotland for the first time in order to gather funds for the work of William Carey in India.<sup>2</sup> While in Scotland, Fuller met Robert Haldane’s younger brother, James Haldane, the newly appointed pastor of the Circus Tabernacle in Edinburgh. Fuller describes the younger Haldane like this, “His brother James is a simple-hearted, affectionate, good man. He was a captain of an East Indiaman, and relinquished his post for the gospel’s sake. He is pastor of a church on the congregational plan, which meet at the Circus, and amount to near three hundred members.”<sup>3</sup>

Over the next ten years, Fuller visited Scotland four more times, and “developed a very free and edifying friendship with both Haldane brothers.”<sup>4</sup> With approval, “he witnessed their developing biblicism, their dissent from the state church . . . and their embracing of believers’ baptism.”<sup>5</sup> And yet, through the years, he also challenged James Haldane in his

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<sup>1</sup>The earlier, advertised title was “James Haldane and the Particular Efficacy of Global Missions.”

<sup>2</sup>Thomas J. Nettles, *The Baptists: Beginnings in America*, Vol. 2 (Ross-shire, UK: Mentor, 2005), 404.

<sup>3</sup>John Ryland, Jr., *The Work of Faith: The Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope, Illustrated; in The Life and Death of the Rev. Andrew Fuller, Late Pastor of the Baptist Church at Kettering, and Secretary to the Baptist Missionary Society, From Its Commencement in 1792* (Charlestown, UK, 1818), 156.

<sup>4</sup>Nettles, *The Baptists*, 2:405.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

theological convictions.<sup>6</sup> In this way, Haldane and Fuller’s amiable relationship was united around the cause of truth that both men so passionately believed and preached. Theirs was not a relationship of external pleasantries, but earnestly, they spurred one another on towards love and good deeds in the cause of the gospel in the United Kingdom and abroad.<sup>7</sup>

With this backdrop in place, we will set aside the interaction of Fuller and Haldane, to consider the life and legacy of this lesser-known Particular Baptist from Scotland. Similar to Andrew Fuller in many ways, in that Haldane was a theologically-driven pastor and evangelist, my thesis in this paper is this: *James Haldane’s theology of the cross (definite atonement)*<sup>8</sup> *empowered his preaching of the gospel; or to say it the other way around, his evangelistic success was directly related to his belief in particular redemption.*<sup>9</sup> What is too often separated

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<sup>6</sup>Fuller records that while his time with James Haldane was pleasant, and that his Scottish hosts were generous for the causes of Christ (Ryland, *Andrew Fuller*, 192), his meetings with the younger Haldane did include “two or three debates” (191). Chronicling these disputes (cf. 170-72), Fuller records in his journal on October 14, 1808, “Here I saw Mr. James Haldane, and walked home with him, and told him all my heart; entreating him to consider, that he was fallible; that he had been as positive about Paedobaptism, as he now was about exhortation, discipline, and the kiss; that I strongly suspect that it was one of Satan’s devices to draw his attention to these little things, (like the tub which they throw out for the whale), to divert him from attacking his kingdom, . . . He took all well” (190).

<sup>7</sup>One significant difference between Haldane and Fuller in their respective ministries is that Fuller spent much of his time looking to raise money for missions, while James Haldane and his brother spent much of their time looking for ways to give their large estate away. Fuller himself speaks of this point: “They have agreed to sell a large estate, and to live as retired as possible, in order to have the more to lay out for the furtherance of the Gospel” (Ibid., 299; cf. Ryland, *Andrew Fuller*, 156).

Not without notice, Alexander Haldane twice defends his family from some of the charges that these wealthy men were reaping a material harvest from their spiritual endeavors, and in this defense, Alexander attributes some measure of fault to Fuller and his biographer (*Lives*, 326-27, 367-70). Speaking of John Ryland’s work on the ‘Life of Andrew Fuller,’ Alexander writes that the venerable doctor had to append “an apology to his volume, saying ‘I am now convinced that the report there stated (in the ‘Life of Fuller’) is *utterly without foundation*” (Ibid., 369).

<sup>8</sup>In this paper, “definite atonement” and “particular redemption” will be used interchangeably.

<sup>9</sup>While Fuller is more well-known than Haldane, and his work, *The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation*, has received a greater reception, it is arguable that Haldane’s theology and preaching ministry is on par with that of Fuller’s, and is deserving of retrieval. On the superlative nature of his theology, Alexander Haldane quotes “a very distinguished Presbyterian divine,” who intimated that *The Doctrine of Atonement* (1847), Haldane’s most mature work on the cross, “was pronounced to be, in his opinion, not only the most vigorous, acute, and logical of all Mr. James Haldane’s works, *but the best and the soundest work on the atonement he had ever met, having regard to its*

in preachers—evangelistic zeal *and* commitment to doctrine—is united in James Haldane, and accordingly, this paper will consider his life and urge pastors and theologians to imitate the content and exercise of his faith (Heb 13:7). In what follows, I will introduce Haldane’s life, his theological conversion, his remarkable preaching ministry, his atonement theology, and how the latter (definite atonement) relates to and spurred on the former (his preaching).

### **The Life and Labor of James Alexander Haldane (1768-1851)**

James Haldane was born on July 14, 1768, two weeks after his father’s death.<sup>10</sup> His surviving mother would be his earthly companion for only six years, before she went to the Lord.<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, what James and his elder brother Robert were deprived in the care of their immediate parents, the Lord providentially recovered through the care of their extended family.<sup>12</sup>

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*condensation of solid truth as well as to its sound, scriptural theology”* (Alexander Haldane, *The Lives of Robert and James Haldane* [1852; reprint, Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1990], 650). Emphasis mine.

<sup>10</sup>From shortest to longest, you can find biographical information on James Haldane in the following resources: D. W. Lovegrove, “James Alexander Haldane,” in *The Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology* (DSCHT), ed. Nigel M. de S. Cameron (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993), 385; Idem., “James Alexander Haldane (1768-1851)” in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Vol. 24, eds. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (New York: OUP, 2004), 505-06; “James Alexander Haldane,” in *Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. 8, eds. Leslie Stephen and Sidney Lee (London: OUP, 1917), 897-98; William W. Lawson, “Robert and James Haldane,” in *Baptist Quarterly* 8 (1934-35), 276-86; George McGuinness, “Robert (1764-1842) and James Haldane (1768-1851)” in *The British Particular Baptists 1638-1910*, Vol. 2, ed. Michael A. G. Haykin (Springfield, MO: Particular Baptist, 2000), 219-35; Thomas J. Nettles, “Robert and James Haldane,” in *The Baptists*, 2:397-418.

The most comprehensive biography is that of Alexander Haldane, the second son of James Haldane, printed the year after his father’s death (1852). This paper depends most heavily on that large and colorful biography. There is also a collection of personal writings held at the National Library of Scotland (Lovegrove, “James Alexander Haldane (1768-1851)” in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 24:506).

<sup>11</sup>James mother is a true testament to the power of godly parenting: “‘She lived,’ said her eldest son [Robert], ‘very near to God, and much grace was given to her.’ When left a widow, it became her chief concern to bring up her children in ‘the nurture and admonition of the Lord.’ From their infancy she laboured to instill into their impressing minds a sense of the importance of eternity, particularly impressing upon them the necessity of prayer, and teaching them to commit to memory and understand psalms, portions of the Shorter Catechism, and of Scripture” (13). While she departed this world when James was six, and it would be years before her prayers were answered, it is an amazing account of how God’s multiplies the fruit of his saints prayers thirty, sixty, and one-hundred fold (*Lives*, 11-27).

<sup>12</sup>His biography, *The Lives of Robert and James Haldane*, recounts the storied ancestry of the Haldane brothers (1-10).

Born into a family of great means and reputation, their name (Haldane), estate (Airthrey), and vocational interest (sea-faring) set them on a course towards incredible worldly success, which is perhaps what makes their usefulness to God's kingdom all the more noteworthy.<sup>13</sup>

Alexander Haldane, James' second son, records of both brothers: By 1793, "there was nothing in their religious character to distinguish them from the great majority of their friends and associates, who were living in the discharge of what they regarded as their social duties. They were at least as moral and correct in their deportment as their neighbours, but in other respects without any concern about Christ or eternity."<sup>14</sup> At this juncture in his life, James Haldane was enjoying great success following in the footsteps of the father he never knew.<sup>15</sup> But that would all change when James was soundly converted the next year.

While on board the *Melville Castle*, the ship he was commissioned to captain, James had the chance to study the Scriptures. Gradually but forcibly, God's Word turned his mind towards things eternal and his need for a Savior.<sup>16</sup> By 1794, his love for the Lord sunk his love

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<sup>13</sup>"James Haldane was in his seventeenth year when he entered the [naval] service for which he had been intended from infancy" (Ibid., 46).

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., 93.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., 46-76. While tangential for our discussion here, the account of James Haldane's naval career is fascinating and fast-paced. From miraculous episodes of providence which spared his life (49), to navigating danger on the high seas (54-55), to participating himself in a duel (56-63), something he would later condemn with great gospel urgency (333-43), to quelling mutinies (67-70), it is evident how God used the rugged lifestyle of a sea captain to prepare him for his rugged evangelistic campaigns. His son records of his father's character, "His energies, his courage, his determination, were indeed to remain, but these energies, that courage, that determination, were to be directed into a nobler channel. They were to be consecrated to the service of another and a better Master. They were no longer the attributes of a haughty rebel, but a part of the glorious panoply of the Christian hero, the devoted, self-denying, faithful champion of the cross" (63-64).

God used James Haldane's naval career in another way, too. His willingness to demote himself from the high honor of captaining a ship to enduring the insults of an open-air preacher, caused many to come and hear this oddity. In this way, he became a spectacle, whose unswerving commitment to Christ led men from all stations of life to their Maker and Redeemer.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., 70-76. Haldane writes, "However dark my mind still was, I have no doubt but that God began a work of grace on my soul living on board the *Melville Castle*. His voice was indeed still and small, but I would not despise the day of small things, nor undervalue the least of His gracious dealings towards me. There is no doubt that

for the sea, and against the opposition of his family, he sold his large and profitable share of the *Melville Castle*, and returned home to his wife.<sup>17</sup> While he did not yet know the call God had on his life, hindsight is crystal clear: God was preparing one his choicest servants in these days for a lifetime of gospel ministry. And one of the primary ways in which God prepared James for service was affecting his heart with a love for the doctrines of grace. It is to Haldane's "theological conversion" that we must now turn.

### **Theological Conversion**

While the relationship between Haldane and Andrew Fuller is occasional at best, it is significant that the elder Baptist (Fuller) helped shape Haldane's Christology and soteriology. In 1795, shortly after his conversion, Haldane came across Fuller's *Comparison of Calvinism and Socinianism*, which Alexander describes as "peculiarly useful" to his father because it awakened in him a strong awareness of his sin.<sup>18</sup> Before reading Fuller's work, he was "sensible" to his great sin, but he was unimpressed by the doctrines of grace.<sup>19</sup> However, after reading Fuller's work, his heart was ready to consider "doctrines of which [he] was before satisfied," namely the doctrine of election.<sup>20</sup> On this point, it is necessary to quote him at length. Haldane records,

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I had sinned against more light than many of my companions who have been cut off in their iniquities, and that I might justly have been made a monument of his wrath."

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., 72-73.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., 77. Previous to his theological awakening, Haldane recalls that he "continued to inquire about religion more from a conviction of its importance than any deep conviction of sin" (Ibid., 76). He adds that he was sensible to his sin, "but [his] views of God's mercy were such that I was under no great alarm."

<sup>19</sup>He was also unconcerned for the "controversy respecting the person of Christ." At this point in his theological infancy, he says that the debate concerning Christ's deity "did not seem to me of very great importance" (Ibid., 76). This would soon change

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., 77. Admittedly, these doctrines are not expressly delineated by Haldane, but in context of Fuller's work and Haldane's mention on the next page of election, he is surely referencing the doctrines known as Calvinism.

My thoughts began now to be particularly turned to election, a doctrine which, indeed, was foolishness unto me; it seemed so irrational, that I thought I should never embrace it. . . . I always thought that I had the better argument on this subject. I was well pleased to enter upon it, and although every conversation left me more established in my own opinion, yet they were afterwards of use.<sup>21</sup>

Haldane describes the influence of a particular unnamed minister who shared with him the first chapter of Ephesians, to which Haldane admitted some impression, but still he was filled with “pride,” especially as he applauded himself for his religious views. He continues,

I thought my attainments were great, and had much self-righteousness. Although I professed that my hope was fixed in Jesus Christ, yet my doings were not wholly forgotten. I gradually, moreover, got clearer views of the Gospel; and, in reading the Acts of the Apostles 13:48, “As many as were ordained to eternal life,” my whole system, as to free will, was overturned. I saw that being ordained to eternal life was not the consequence of faith, but that the children of God believe because they were thus ordained. This gave a considerable blow to my self-righteousness, and henceforth I read the Scripture more in a childlike spirit, for hitherto I was often obliged to search for some interpretation of my Scripture which would agree with my system. I now saw more of the freeness of the grace of the Gospel and the necessity of being born again, and was daily looking for satisfactory evidence of this change.<sup>22</sup>

This inward searching for “change” led Haldane to much despair and dissatisfaction with himself. Even as he embraced the doctrine of election, he lacked assurance because he had yet to learn the object reality of Christ’s work. Thus, he compared this searching period to that of Namaan the Syrian, because he was unwilling to simply rest on the “plain and easy” promise of God in Christ. But God prevailed, and Haldane concludes his account,

The Lord gradually opened my eyes; He always dealt with me in the tenderest manner, and kept me from those horrors of mind which, in my ignorance and pride, I had often desired as a proof of my conversion. . . . In short, I now desire to feel, and hope, in some measure, that I do feel, as a sinner who looks for salvation freely by grace; who prefers this method of salvation to every other, because thereby God is glorified through Jesus Christ, and the pride of human glory stained.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>Ibid., 78. The full account can be found on pages 77-79.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., 78.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., 79.

In this testimony, we get a glimpse of Haldane's lengthy, arduous, Scriptural conversion to the doctrines of grace. While Haldane does not connect the dots between his shift in theology and its effects on his pulpit ministrations, it will become evident that one major theme that marks his preaching, especially in Northern Scotland is the freeness of the gospel.

As the Spirit of God wrestled Haldane away from self-reliance and caused him to forget his own works, God prepared a man who would in time offer the free gift of life to the entire country of Scotland.<sup>24</sup> Haldane, in his preaching and writing was a doctrinal (but not doctrinaire) minister of the gospel. This is evident by a number of his written works, which specifically address certain theological errors and their proponents, but it is also witnessed in his evangelistic messages. On more than one occasion, he challenged the message of the parish preacher, and in the same town and on the same day preached a message of salvation by grace through faith to many who had the gospel closed off by the morning sermon.<sup>25</sup>

It could be observed at this point that such polemical preaching and writing could be perceived as argumentative, but Haldane was equally concerned with maintaining a spirit of unity in the bond of peace. He wrote a two pamphlets advocating forbearance, and was found often fellowshiping with men much different than himself, so long as they delighted in the gospel.<sup>26</sup> In this way, for him everything he did and every doctrine he debated was for the sake

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<sup>24</sup>At the end of his third tour, his son records that “[Haldane] had now preached the Gospel in every part of Scotland” (Ibid., 272).

<sup>25</sup>In one episode, Haldane found a parish minister in Thurso (Thor's town) who “seemed much afraid of people abusing the doctrines of grace, and therefore told them that, though they were justified freely by grace, yet that afterwards they must be justified partly by faith and partly by works” (Ibid., 178-79). In response, Haldane “on the evening of the same Lord's-day Mr. James Haldane preached to 3,000 persons, from Ephesians 2:8-10,” taking to task the morning's message with its false teaching (179).

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., 379-81. It is hard to tell if Haldane's desire for forbearance is confirmed or contradicted by Andrew Fuller. Reflecting on his tour to Scotland in 1799, when he spent ample time with the Haldane's, Fuller

of the pure and simple message of God’s grace. James Haldane was a man consumed with the gospel, and two places we see this most are in his fifty-four years of preaching and in his rigorous defense of the nature and extent of the atonement. We will look at these in turn.

### **A Preacher of the Gospel**

When God saved and called James Haldane, it was during “the midnight of the Church of Scotland.”<sup>27</sup> The preaching of the period was ‘moderate’ in doctrine and strategies for mission were resisted.<sup>28</sup> And yet, it would be God’s unique call on his life, along with his brother, to change the spiritual climate in Scotland—especially among Baptists. Within three years of leaving the sea, Haldane was employed by the One who controls the wind and the waves, and to shock of many, he was called to go into the cities and hamlets of Scotland to preach the gospel as an itinerant preacher.

In 1796, Haldane joined Charles Simeon as he passed through Scotland distributing tracts.<sup>29</sup> In his wake, James Haldane followed John Campbell, an ironsmith who later became a pastor, to take one week to distribute tracts around Scotland.<sup>30</sup> The one-week venture bore

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reports the divisive nature of the Scots. Fuller seems to indicate that there was a great need for “forebearance” (Ryland, *Andrew Fuller*, 171).

<sup>27</sup>*Lives*, 130. Added testimony for Scotland’s deplorable spiritual condition comes from the *Quarterly Review* 91, 405, which observed about Scotland during this period: “[W]ith the exception of France, there was not a more infidel county on the face of the earth than Scotland” (231). Most affected were the professors and religious leaders. Alexander Haldane records, “Whilst the field preachers were assailed by Synods and Presbyteries, ‘the common people heard them gladly’” (Ibid.).

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., 130-35.

<sup>29</sup>Simeon was well-pleased with traveling partner, and kept up correspond for many years (*Lives*, 136-46). “In James [Haldane], . . . Charles [Simeon] found one with whom quite happily and naturally he could pray on top of a mountain or distribute tracts in the lanes through with they rode” (Hugh Evan Hopkins, *Charles Simeon of Cambridge* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977], 138).

<sup>30</sup>Haldane would write tracts and distribute tracts throughout his years of preaching.



incredible fruit,<sup>31</sup> and it prepared the heart of Haldane for what would be a pioneering missionary endeavor the following year.

In 1797, lay preaching was much debated, but taking “their commission from the obligation imposed on every believer to proclaim to others the Gospel of salvation,”<sup>32</sup> Haldane accompanied by John Aikman<sup>33</sup> struck out on an incredible journey to northern Scotland, where they preached over three hundred sermons and addressed upwards of 200,000 people in only three months.<sup>34</sup> The details of this mission are well known, because Haldane and Aikman journaled as they went and their reports were printed in *Missionary Magazine* and later published as the *Journal of a Tour through the Northern Counties of Scotland and the Orkney Isles, in Autumn 1797*.<sup>35</sup> Let me bullet-point a few incredible anecdotes recorded in *The Lives of Robert and James Haldane*.

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<sup>31</sup>Ibid., 145-48. Alexander quotes from Campbell’s personal journal, “In three months afterwards we heard that the result of this one week’s exertion was the formation of *sixty* Sabbath-evening schools! The Christian zeal that had been excited in Scotland by the lately-formed Missionary Society of London, greatly helped to the success of our week’s experimental journey” (*Lives*, 148).

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 155. Many who opposed itinerant preaching at first were persuaded by the number of men and women gathered into the kingdom of God through Haldane’s ministry of preaching.

<sup>33</sup>Aikman co-labored beside James Haldane for more than a decade (1797-1808), in lay preaching and at the Circus Tabernacle, until differences in baptism divided them (D. W. Lovegrove, “John Aikman” in *DSCHT*, 7).

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., 157-90. Callum G. Brown (*The Social History of Religion in Scotland since 1970* [New York: Methuen, 1987]), records the energy expended by the Haldane brothers when he records, “Between 1797 and 1808 the Haldane brothers’ Society for the Propagation of the Gospel at Home sent dozens of lay preachers, divinity students and visiting English evangelicals like Charles Simeon and Rowland Hill into the highlands preaching an open evangelical gospel . . . On the first tour, James Haldane and two companions delivered 308 sermons and distributed 20,000 tracts to over 200,000 hearers” (121).

<sup>35</sup>James A. Haldane, *Journal of a Tour through the Northern Counties of Scotland and the Orkney Isles, in Autumn 1797* (Edinburgh, 1798). The opening lines of the introduction reveal the heart of James Haldane and his burden for bringing the gospel to the lost. He writes, “The general attention which has been excited amongst Christians to the miserable state of the heathen world, must give pleasure to every one who, knowing the worth of his own soul, has been taught to value the souls of his brethren. If a Howard be admired for travelling to distant countries to alleviate temporal distress, to ease the pain of the prisoner, whom death shall ere long deliver from his dungeon; how much more should we prize the labours of those, who, having forsaken their country and friends, are gone to publish the name of that Saviour who alone can deliver from eternal misery. Surely Christians can have but one wish on the subject, that their labours may be abundantly blessed, and that by their means thousands may be brought out of darkness into the marvellous light of the gospel.

- Haldane and Aikman “travelled in a light open carriage purchased for the occasion. They were largely provided with religious tracts, and pamphlets, which they had also printed at their own expense; and fresh supplies were forwarded to different stations on their route” (157). On their way, they preached “in chapels, in town-halls, and covered places, or in the open air, on village-greens, at market-crosses, by the sea-shore, or by the river’s side” and they preached to gatherings as large as six thousand people at a time (189).
- Traveling to the remote islands of Northern Scotland, they often faced rough seas and primitive communications. The number of islands they visited was twenty-nine (175), and instance, “in the Orkney Islands, the people, . . . summoned their more distant neighbors by lighting beacon fires on the mountains” (159).
- In Aberdeen, the Magistrates aimed to keep him from preaching at a certain outdoor meeting place. With a boldness that he learned in the navy, he stood his ground, and preached to his first large audience: “It might be said that the whole population of Aberdeen turned out by the thousands to hear an East India Captain” (162-63). In Kirkwall, the average size of the audience ranged from three to six thousand people (173).
- Braving the wild seas of north of Scotland, Haldane took a gospel message to a people who were living in darkness. In Evie, no sermon has been heard for eight or nine years (174). Describing the Orkney Islands, Haldane observed that the condition of the islanders were were as barren as those in the “Pacific Ocean” (169). In his journal, he records how “many of the people see their pastor but seldom in the course of a year”—and he is not talking about visitation but preaching—and “the great body of the people were utter strangers to the doctrine of justification by faith in the death and resurrection of Christ without works.” Yet, “it pleased God, . . . to look down with tender compassion upon the deplorable situation . . . and to send them help out of his holy heaven” (168-70).
- As to what you might have seen if you were there, a young lady who attended and was deeply impressed by Haldane and his message recalls, “In the summer of 1797, Captain

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Experience has proved, that the propagation of the gospel abroad is intimately connected with similar exertions at home. It is lamentable to observe, that, highly favoured as this country has been, so many are ignorant of the first principles of religion. There are indeed established teachers, and others supported by various classes of dissenters, throughout the country; but the prevalence of unbelief and iniquity daily admonishes us, that something more is necessary. Good men must be expected to differ as to those means which mould be employed; but that something ought to be done, seems to be generally allowed. Even this diversity of opinion may be overruled for good. Men, according to their various opinions, pursue different plans to attain the same object, and what one cannot accomplish is effected by another.

The persons who undertook the journey of which the following pages give an account, believed that this scheme afforded the greatest prospect of usefulness in their particular situation. They found they had leisure and other means to carry the plan into execution; and while they knew that different opinions would be formed respecting their conduct, they remembered it was to their own Master they must stand or fall. The unanimous approbation of their brethren would indeed have been highly gratifying, but this they were not so sanguine as to expect” (3-4).

Haldane, as he was then called, visited my native town, . . . By the usual mode of advertisement, the tuck of drum, a sermon was announced, . . . Captain Haldane arrived on horseback at the place where the people were assemble to hear him. . . . He was then a young man, under thirty years of age, and had on a blue great-coat, braided in the front, after the fashion of the times. He also wore powder, and his hair tied behind, as was then usual for gentlemen. And I can never forget the impressions which fell on my young heart, as [Haldane], in a distinct, clear, and manly tone began to address the thoughtless multitude that had been attracted to hear him. . . . I cannot be quite sure what was [his] text, but; but from the frequent and pointed repetition of the words, '*Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish,*' I have reason to believe that these must have been the subject of discourse" (164-65). This lady wrote this account more than fifty years after that remarkable day, such an impression did Haldane's preaching have on her. In his biography, her account is one of many.

- Still, the most favorable season on this incredible journey was at Thurso (Thor's Town). In only six weeks, uninterested crowds soared to thousands of hearers, deeply affected by the message of free grace. It was in this period, that Haldane attended a Sunday morning service and in the same afternoon rebuked the preacher's deplorable abuse of the doctrines of grace. In a letter written shortly after Haldane's death, another testimony is given of the power of Haldane's ministry in 1797. The lady writing it blesses God for Haldane's efficacious ministry which brought salvation to her family, saying "The good done by those godly men was remarkable. Under God, they were the means of bringing the Gospel to Wick and Thurso" (183).

And so it was, in the providence of God that this naval-captain-turned-itinerant-preacher brought the message of the gospel to two-hundred thousand people that summer, preaching upwards of 300 sermons. In his biography, his son records that the mission concluded in 1797 due to physical exertion. Yet, with time to recover in the colder months, the fruit born in 1797 prompted Haldane to strike out on this kind of summer tour eight more times (1797-1806).<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>36</sup>His return from Northern Scotland as emboldened him to establish "The Society for Propagating the Gospel at Home" (December 1797-January 1798). A nineteenth century precursor to today's Gospel Coalition, the founders declare, "It is not our design to form or to extend the influence of any sect [i. e. denomination]. Our sole intention is to make the Evangelical Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. In employing itinerants, schoolmasters, or others, we do not consider ourselves as conferring ordination upon them, or appointing them to the pastoral office. We only propose by sending them out, to supply the means of grace wherever we perceive a deficiency" (*Lives*, 193).

The next year, he ventured south and west from Edinburgh,<sup>37</sup> and in 1799, he returned north to some of the same places he visited in 1797.<sup>38</sup> That same year (1799), against his immediate impulses, Haldane was called to pastor the Circus Church in Edinburgh where he assumed an “active and useful” gospel ministry.<sup>39</sup> For fifty-two years, Haldane preached the gospel and according to Rev. Christopher Anderson “numbers were awakened or converted by almost every sermon.”<sup>40</sup>

In the decades following Haldane’s mobile ministry, his feet became more stationary in Edinburgh, but his heart remained firmly committed to missions and evangelism.<sup>41</sup> William Brackney records how James, with his brother, worked to “significantly transform” the theological landscape of “Baptist and evangelical life in Scotland” at the turn of the nineteenth century.<sup>42</sup> In a joint venture with Robert, James participated in the training of three hundred gospel ministers. Funded by his brother, this “church-based and practical” training center for

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<sup>37</sup>As before, Alexander Haldane reports a number of interesting anecdotes. While “multitudes flocked to hear the Gospel” in the west and south, they also encountered more opposition. In Ayr, “Haldane was interrupted in preaching . . . and summoned before the magistrates.” After a few minutes of wrangling over the legality of preaching out of doors, his accuser threatened, “Depend upon it . . . you will be arrested.” To which Haldane replied, “And depend upon it, Sir, I shall be punctual to my appointment” (Ibid., 200-01). Such was the makeup of a man who was immovably confident in the sovereignty of God and the call to preach the gospel.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., 262-73.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., 234-35. As a matter of chronology, the 310-member Circus Tabernacle called and ordained James Haldane before he went travelling that summer (237-43).

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., 244.

<sup>41</sup>Robert and James “were among the earliest supporters of the London Missionary Society (Congregationalist), and they both became involved in a variety of benevolent projects in Scotland” (William H. Brackney, *A Genetic History of Baptist Thought: With Special Reference to Baptists in Britain and North America* [Atlanta: Mercer University Press, 2004], 135).

<sup>42</sup>Ibid.

pastors, produced a crop of 300 gospel-minded ministers in the first decade of the nineteenth century.<sup>43</sup>

In Edinburgh, Haldane established a preaching ministry that lasted until his death (1851). It was during this time that he became a congregationalist and baptist.<sup>44</sup> Known as a friend of sinners and those in need,<sup>45</sup> he delighted in taking the gospel individuals and his preaching drew thousands every week.<sup>46</sup> And because of his personal wealth, he “declined to receive any salary.” Instead, “the whole of the income of the Edinburgh Tabernacle, after payment of expenses, was devoted to the Society of Propagating the Gospel.”<sup>47</sup>

### **The Doctrine of the Atonement**

James Haldane wrote at least four major works on the atonement. In addition to his commentaries on Galatians and Hebrews,<sup>48</sup> he wrote, in 1829, a *Refutation of Edward Irving’s*

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<sup>43</sup>Ibid., 135-36.

<sup>44</sup>Influenced by John Young’s *Thoughts on Baptism* (1801), Haldane submitted himself to believers baptism in 1808 “after protracted personal study on the subject.” Interestingly, even Haldane’s decision to adopt believer’s baptism was influenced by his evangelistic zeal. Instead of focusing narrowly on the word *baptizo*, he “preferred to emphasize the thing signified, namely the welfare of souls.” (Ibid., 136-37). It is likely that Andrew Fuller had a significant influence on Haldane during this period, as well.

<sup>45</sup>The pastoral life and character of James Haldane is recorded among other places on pages 392-412 of Alexander’s biography.

<sup>46</sup>“The Circus first, and then the Tabernacle, were crowded by thronging multitudes, hanging upon the preacher’s lips, joining with earnestness in the prayers, singing the praises of the Lord with their whole hearts, remaining during long services without wearying, and retiring in solemn silence, afraid, as it were, to desecrate the lace where the Lord himself was present, and that presence was felt. Those tokens of a work of grace, extended far beyond the narrow limits of a sectarian inclosure. The impulse vibrated throughout Scotland, and served to reanimate the expiring flame of that noble Church, whose chosen emblem is still the bush that burns, but never is consumed” (*Lives*, 244).

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., 245.

<sup>48</sup>*An Exposition of the Epistle to the Galatians* (Edinburgh: Williams White and Co., 1848); *Notes Intended for an Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews* (London: James Nisbet and Co., 1860).

*Doctrine Respecting the Person and Atonement of Christ*;<sup>49</sup> in 1831, he challenged Thomas Erskine's atonement theology in *Observations on Universal Pardon*;<sup>50</sup> in 1842, he wrote *Man's Responsibility. The Nature and Extent of the Atonement, in Reply to Mr. Howard Hinton*; and in 1847, at the age of seventy-nine, he addressed the most widely published advocate of modified Calvinism, Ralph Wardlaw<sup>51</sup> in a book simply entitled *The Doctrine of Atonement*.<sup>52</sup> For sake of space, only *The Doctrine of the Atonement* will be considered.<sup>53</sup>

From the preface to his first edition, it is clear that Haldane intends to take on the errant views of modified Calvinism espoused by many in the first-half of the nineteenth century. Yet, Haldane's concern is not theology alone. As his preaching ministry has evinced, he is anxious for the cause of missions, and rightfully argues that the a-theological spirit of his day would have a stifling effect on missionary zeal.<sup>54</sup> Thus, Haldane lifts his pen in order to show

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<sup>49</sup>Irving maintained, . . . that the Saviour's humanity was identical with that of all other men since the fall, including innate sinful propensities" (N.R. Needham, "Edward Irving," in *DSCHT*, 436) thus bringing into question his incarnation and his ability to save.

<sup>50</sup>Along with John Macleod Campbell, Thomas Erskine promoted the doctrine that "through Christ's death, all are in a state of forgiveness" (N.R. Needham, "Thomas Erskine" in *DSCHT*, 303). Though, Erskine would later deny unconditional election, Haldane's response addressed the errors promoted by Erskine in *The Unconditional Freeness of the Gospel* (Edinburgh: Waugh and Innes, 1828).

<sup>51</sup>Ralph Wardlaw's works on the atonement are numerous. In 1814, he addressed the errors of Socinianism; in 1830, he an essay on the extent of the atonement; and in 1843, he published his most comprehensive treatment of the nature and extent of the atonement. *Discourses on the Principal Points of the Socinian Controversy* (Glasgow, UK: 1814); *Two Essays: (I) On the Assurance of Faith, (II) On the Extent of the Atonement, and Universal Pardon, in which the Views of T. Erskine are Particularly Examined* (New York: Jonathan Leavitt, 1830); *Discourses on the Nature and Extent of the Atonement of Christ* (Glasgow, UK: James MacLehose, 1843); cf. William Lindsay Alexander, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Ralph Wardlaw, D. D.* (Edinburgh, UK: Adam and Charles Black, 1856).

<sup>52</sup>James Haldane, *The Doctrine of the Atonement* (Edinburgh, UK: 1847; reprint, Choteau, MT: Old Paths Gospel, n. d.). The 1847 edition of *The Doctrine of the Atonement* follows a previous edition in 1845, and a tract concerning the same subject, published in 1843.

<sup>53</sup>While these works make Haldane look like theological pugilist, D. W. Lovegrove describes Haldane as "a practical Church leader rather than a controversialist" ("James Alexander Haldane" in *DSCHT*, 385). Cf. Tom Nettles, *The Baptists*, 2:416-18.

<sup>54</sup>Commenting on the ministerial union of the churches in Scotland, Haldane writes, "While the new born zeal for the propagation of the Gospel had the happy effect of promoting union among believers, who had

from Scripture how particular redemption guards the gospel and promotes evangelism. Totalling 368 pages, Haldane's second edition combines theology, biblical exposition, and critical commentary on Wardlaw and Thomas W. Jenkyn,<sup>55</sup> as well as an appendix responding to George Payne's rejoinder to the first edition of *Doctrine of the Atonement*.<sup>56</sup> Throughout his work, Haldane limits himself to the text of Scripture. Whereas, William Cunningham, another contemporary, expounds the Westminster Confession to advocate the orthodox Reformed view of the cross,<sup>57</sup> Haldane depends only on the Bible.<sup>58</sup> His stated method of theological investigation even rejects the Common Sense Realism of his day.<sup>59</sup> He laments that theologians too often "resort to the metaphysics of the schools, and to the deductions of fallible reason, for

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hitherto been separated . . . it led many to undervalue the importance of those differences respecting the doctrine of Christ" (*The Doctrine of the Atonement*, vii). Turning his attention to Wardlaw, he specifies his charges, "From not attending to the doctrine of Scripture, many erroneously supposed that the universal proclamation of the Gospel, implied Universal Atonement; for how, as Dr Wardlaw asks, could pardon of unatoned sin be preached? so [*sic*] the more zealous such men became in the cause of missions, the more were they confirmed in this unscriptural doctrine. This notion, however erroneous, appears to have great weight with many; so that in a variety of ways, the unscriptural doctrine of Unlimited Atonement has received support from missionary exertions" (ix).

<sup>55</sup>A Welsh theologian and college president, Jenkyn (1794-1858) published the third edition of *On the Extent of the Atonement in Its Relation to God and the Universe* in 1842, which advocated a governmental view of the atonement (London: Crocker and Brewster).

<sup>56</sup>George Payne (1781-1848) was a congregational minister who defended "the role of reason in expounding natural theology and in establishing the credentials of scripture" (*Protestant Nonconformist Texts: The nineteenth century*, eds. David W. Bebbington with Kenneth Dix and Alan P. F. Sell [Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2006], 98).

<sup>57</sup>William Cunningham, *Historical Theology*, vol. 2 (1862; reprint, Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1960), 326-31.

<sup>58</sup>Haldane reveals his epistemological commitments when he says, "True philosophy consists in our sitting at the feet of Jesus, and receiving truth as He has been pleased to reveal it. The Scriptures teach us, that the understanding of fallen man is darkened, and that the Holy Spirit alone can illuminate its inmost recesses with the light of truth" (*The Doctrine of the Atonement*, 22). This statement could be taken as a slur against the practice of philosophy or the use of tradition. This is not Haldane's purpose; rather, he intends to make Scripture first order and the arbiter of doctrinal truth.

<sup>59</sup>He writes, "All the force of human intellect is feebleness, when it attempts, in its own strength, to comprehend the things which pertain to the kingdom of God. This is a fundamental truth which we are ever prone to forget; and, as a preliminary to the consideration of the Atonement, it may be well for a moment to contemplate the weakness of unaided reason, and its inability to unveil the mysteries of the gospel of Christ" (*Ibid.*, 18). Based on these sentiments, it is clear that he stands against the Common Sense Realism of his day.

the elucidation of the truth as it is in Jesus.”<sup>60</sup> This skeptical posture has earned him disdain,<sup>61</sup> but for those who are persuaded with him that Scripture is first order, his foolishness is the beginning of wisdom.

### **The Seminal Argument of James Haldane**<sup>62</sup>

Leaving the prolegomena behind, Haldane wastes no time separating the wheat and chaff, the sheep and goats, elect and non-elect, those for whom Christ died and those for whom he did not. He introduces his first material chapter stating,

To redeem, means to repurchase, to recover, to ransom. Man was the property of his Creator, who gave him being. He sold himself to Satan; and all mankind are naturally captive by the devil at his will. But the seed of the woman—those whom Christ is not ashamed to call brethren—are ransomed from the cruel bondage in which they were held; while the rest of mankind—the seed of the serpent—remain the bond slaves of Satan. *Redemption is always limited to the people of God, and is synonymous with salvation.*<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>60</sup>Ibid., 18.

<sup>61</sup>Tom Nettles interprets the negative treatment of the Haldane brothers in the *New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia* as a testimony to their regulative commitment to Scripture (*The Baptists*, 2:416).

<sup>62</sup>As will be demonstrated, ‘the seminal argument’ is a biblical-theological argument that stems from Genesis 3:15. In his biography, it is striking that his son, Alexander, in back to back sentences puts Genesis 3:15 with John 3:16. Speaking of God’s plan of salvation from Abel unto Christ, he writes, “From that hour down to the present, the question of an atonement has been one that has divided the tow families into which the children of Adam were from the first divided. The seed of the serpent [Gen 3:15] rejects the idea that a merciful and benevolent God requires to be propitiated by blood; while the seed of the woman, with child-like simplicity, received the Gospel, that ‘God *so* loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that *whosoever* believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (*Lives*, 641). For clarity, the terminology (the ‘seminal argument’) is mine, not Haldane’s.

<sup>63</sup>Haldane, *Doctrine of Atonement*, 32.



This argument derived from Genesis 3:15 recurs throughout his book, and it serves as a unifying principle in his argument for definite atonement.<sup>64</sup> In what follows, Haldane’s “seminal argument” for particular redemption will be delineated under four headings.<sup>65</sup>

**Particular Redemption Foretold By God.** Genesis 3:15 is an important verse for Haldane, and for good reason. It is the first redemptive promise in the Bible, and one that is developed throughout both Testaments.<sup>66</sup> Yet, more than just a general promise of salvation, Haldane finds in the *protoevangelium* a salvific divide that runs through the human race. He writes, “Not only did God, by the division of mankind into two families, plainly show that salvation was to be limited to a part of the human family, but He declared that He would put enmity between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman.”<sup>67</sup> This seminal fault-line supplies an interpretive key to understanding God’s work in redemptive history. Moreover, it is a necessary factor in formulations concerning the extent of the atonement, one that is often

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<sup>64</sup>It should be noted that Haldane’s “seminal argument” is different than that of Daniel Parker, who also posited a “two-seeds” theology (*Views on the Two Seeds* [Vandalia, IL: Robert Blackwell, 1826 (on-line); accessed 10 Nov 2011; available from <http://pbl.oldfaithbaptist.org/Theology/Treaties%20on%20the%20Two%20Seeds%20-%20Parker.pdf>; Internet). The difference between these two men is important because many historians have assumed that Parker’s “two-seeds” theology led to his anti-missions view. For a revision of this view based on Parker’s own words, see O. Max Lee, “Daniel Parker's Doctrine of the Two Seeds” (Th. M. thesis, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1962). While Parker, a pioneering pastor in Illinois and Texas, advocated anti-missions in the early nineteenth century, his two-seeds theology arose after his anti-missions efforts. Moreover, in his heterodox view, he developed a view of the non-elect that conceived of Satan as a self-existent being who literally sowed his “non-elect” seed among the human race. While at points, his views sound similar to the Scottish Baptist, the dualistic metaphysics of his system is completely different, as is the way that these men approached missions. As noted earlier, Haldane was an active promoter of missionary efforts, *contra* Daniel Parker.

<sup>65</sup>These headings are not Haldane’s but they do aim to synthesize his stream of conscious style. Haldane employs a number of other biblical arguments for definite atonement, in which he shows a keen ability to explain the text of Scripture. However, space does not permit us to consider all of them.

<sup>66</sup>For an excellent survey of this biblical theme, see James M. Hamilton, “The Skull Crushing Seed of the Woman: Inner-Biblical Interpretation of Genesis 3:15” in *The Southern Baptist Theological Journal* 11, no. 2 (Summer 2006): 30-55.

<sup>67</sup>Haldane, *Doctrine of the Atonement*, 96.

overlooked. Yet, as Haldane demonstrates, attention to this biblical reality sides with definite atonement, as Christ died for his own seed and against the seed of the serpent.

**Particular Redemption Exhibited in the Old Testament.** Particular redemption was not only “foretold” in Genesis, it was also plainly “exhibited.”<sup>68</sup> He observes God’s particularity twice in the first eleven chapters of Genesis. The blessing of God travels from Adam to Abel not Cain;<sup>69</sup> and then from Noah to Shem not Ham.<sup>70</sup> For Haldane, against the historical skepticism of Gotthold Lessing and his ilk, these accidents of history have universal significance because they are the outworking of God’s divine decree. Haldane takes an entire chapter to repudiate the notion of universal atonement on the basis that God’s revealed mercy is not universal.<sup>71</sup> In all cases, God’s saving mercy is restricted to “the heirs of promise.”<sup>72</sup> Moving from Old Covenant to the New, he concludes, that Christ “is represented as taking on him not the seed of *Adam*, the father of mankind, but of *Abraham*, the father of God’s peculiar people.”<sup>73</sup> In other words, Abraham’s true seed only dies in the place of the woman’s seed.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>68</sup>Ibid.

<sup>69</sup>“The separation of mankind into two classes was not only foretold, but exhibited in Adam’s sons, Cain and Abel. The former was the seed of the serpent—he was ‘of that wicked one;’ the latter was the seed of the woman, an heir of promise, justified by faith; and the enmity which God had put between the two families, was manifested by Cain slaying his brother” (Ibid.).

<sup>70</sup>“Very shortly after the flood, the two families into which mankind had been divided, were again brought to view in the curse pronounced on Ham, while Shem and Japhet were blessed. Soon afterwards, Abraham was taken out from his kindred, . . . while all other nations were plunged in ignorance and idolatry, and suffered to walk in their own ways” (Ibid., 97).

<sup>71</sup>This is the singular argument of chapter 11, which is entitled, “Universal Atonement Inconsistent with the First Intimation of Mercy, and with God’s Dealings with Mankind, both before and since the Appearance of Christ” (Ibid., 95-101).

<sup>72</sup>Ibid., 98. Haldane explains, “Thus we see that, in the limitation of the Atonement to the heirs of promise, the Lord only followed out that system of separation which had been coeval with the revelation of his purposes of mercy to sinners of mankind; and, in leaving the far greater part of the human race in darkness and ignorance, he is pursuing the same plan on which he has acted from the beginning.”

**Particular Redemption Explained in the New Testament.** What was seen in type and shadow in the Old Testament, namely God’s particular mercy towards his covenant people and the gift of a sacrificial system that brought atonement to Israel alone, is fully realized in the New Testament. Speaking of God’s knowledge in covenantal fashion, Haldane limits the efficacy of the atonement to those whom the Father “knew.”<sup>75</sup> Citing Jesus’ words about his particular relationship with his sheep (John 10), Haldane describes the sheep in the language of Genesis 3: “[T]hey hear his voice, and follow him, and are thus distinguished from the goats, the seed of the serpent, for whom he did not lay down his life, because he never knew them.”<sup>76</sup> In the same chapter, Haldane considers the idea of “eternal redemption” found in Hebrews 9:12. He asks, “For whom was the redemption made?” And he answers, “[F]or the true Israel.”<sup>77</sup> From which, he explains the significance of such a privileged title, and once again, he limits the effects of Christ’s work to the “heirs of the promise.”

This redemption was prefigured by the deliverance from Egypt, which was peculiar to Israel after the flesh. It was a temporal redemption, a shadow for the time then present. The temporal redemption was obtained though the sprinkling of the paschal lamb. . . . The Egyptians had no fellowship with the people of God in the Passover. The blood was exclusively sprinkled on behalf of Israel, and they alone kept the feast; so the blood of the

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<sup>73</sup>Ibid., 99-100. To bolster his argument in this section, Haldane reiterates the point that “eighteen hundred years after the ascension of Christ, the Gospel has reached but a small portion of the world” (99). He sees this as modern-day confirmation of the ongoing division in the human race, a division that is no longer according to the flesh (i. e. Jew/Gentile), but according to the Spirit (i. e. elect/reprobate).

<sup>74</sup>Further support for Haldane’s argument is found in the imprecatory Psalms, which regularly condemn the serpent’s seed. Psalm 137 even pronounces a blessing on the one who takes the children of Babylon “and dashes them against a rock.” While Haldane does not make this connection, the imprecatory Psalms fit much better with his view than the contradictory notion that Christ dies for the serpent’s seed, who will inevitably be destroyed by the very instrument that was supposed to save them (1 Cor 1:23; 1 Pet 2:6-8).

<sup>75</sup>Ibid., 242-43.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid., 243-44.

<sup>77</sup>Ibid., 263-64.

Lamb of God was exclusively shed for heirs of promise, and thus was their deliverance effected.<sup>78</sup>

Without citing seed-language, this typological explanation of Hebrews 9 shows how God's work in Christ divides humanity (cf. Matt 10:34ff).

**Particular Redemption and the Gospel.** For Haldane, the reality of the two-seeds is so great that on multiple occasions, he even defines the work of the gospel as a means of separating the sheep and the goats,<sup>79</sup> the wheat from the chaff,<sup>80</sup> thus effecting God's purpose stated in Genesis 3:15. Defining the work of the gospel in this way corrects the "erroneous supposition that God commands sinners to believe that an Atonement has been made for their sins."<sup>81</sup> Rightly, Haldane argues that "the Gospel merely invites sinners to trust in Christ, with the assurance that in doing so they will be saved."<sup>82</sup> The corollary truth is that "the Gospel is the touchstone by which the elect are distinguished from the those who die in their sins."<sup>83</sup> The seed

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<sup>78</sup>Ibid.

<sup>79</sup>Haldane states, "The Gospel is Christ's voice, by which his blood-bought sheep are conducted into his fold, and are thus separated from the goats. It [the gospel] is the rod of his power, by which he guides his flock, while to others it is a stumbling-block and foolishness" (Ibid.,113).

<sup>80</sup>Drawing on a multitude of Scriptures, Haldane explains, "By the *gospel*, the wheat is separated from the chaff; as both are put into the fan, so the Gospel is addressed equally to the seed of the woman and to the seed of the serpent. To the one, it is savour of life—to the other, the savour of death; hence it is represented as a two-edged sword, proceeding out of the Redeemer's mouth." Once again employing Old Testament typology, he furthers his case, "[The gospel] resembles the pillar interposed between the Egyptians and Israel—'It was a cloud and darkness to them, but it gave light by night to these.' If our Gospel, says the apostle, be hid, it is hid to them that are lost; if men receive not the Atonement made upon Calvary, . . . there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour them as the implacable adversaries of God" (Ibid., 86-87). While Haldane's description of the gospel may sound a little violent, I take him to be saying something similar to James Hamilton, who argues that salvation comes through judgment (*God's Glory in Salvation through Judgment: A Biblical Theology* [Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010]).

<sup>81</sup>Haldane, *Doctrine of the Atonement*, 117. The error to which Haldane alludes is not in the command for all people to repent and believe; the error is located in the belief that a sinner outside Christ must believe that Jesus died personally for them in order for them to come to faith. Nowhere in Scripture does the gospel message include the supposition that I must believe in Christ's personal atonement for me in order to come to faith; such a personal knowledge of the atonement is subsequent, not antecedent, to justifying faith.

<sup>82</sup>Ibid.

of the serpent “stop their ears, and will not listen to the voice of charmer” but the seed of the woman hear their master and come to him in faith.<sup>84</sup> In this way, the word of God always accomplishes what God designs (Isa 55:10-11), salvation for the elect and judgment for the non-elect (Matt 13:10-17; 2 Cor 2:15-16). And with supreme confidence in God’s word, Haldane preached the gospel to the whole nation of Scotland.

### **Universal Love**

Another query that Haldane tackles in *The Doctrine of the Atonement* that may sound strange in our ears is the way he handles the universal love of God. Today, it is commonly assumed, that God’s love is the greatest motivator for missions. Because God’s love moves him to save the world (John 3:16; 1 John 4:8, 16), and love in the bosom of men compels them to become God’s ambassadors (2 Cor 5:14, 20), it must be the case that the mightier the love, the mightier the mission(ary). But we would do well to ask a question: What kind of love are we talking about? It is without debate that love motivates missions, but as James Haldane’s life illustrates, his *denial* of God’s “universal love” does in no way slow missions. Therefore, we need to see what he is arguing and why.

Denying God’s universal love can and should receive the swiftest and severest reproach, *if and when they are denying or distorting Scripture*. But this is worlds apart from defining God’s love with the polyvalent terms of Scripture. This, I believe, is what James Haldane is doing in his chapter on the love God. While some of his statements are shocking because they could be read to deny the universal love of God, they are problematic *only when*

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<sup>83</sup>Ibid.

<sup>84</sup>Ibid.

they are extricated from the whole of his biblically-saturated chapter.<sup>85</sup> When his context and conversation partner are taken into consideration, it becomes evident that Haldane knows his Bible well and is unwilling to let one attribute of God dominate the rest.

Thus, when Haldane denies universal love, it is the universal love of Ralph Wardlaw that he denies, not the universal love of John 3:16.<sup>86</sup> That he is opposing Wardlaw is clear from the outset. Postponing his exegesis of John 3:16, he begins his chapter saying, “Dr Wardlaw insists much upon God’s love to ‘the world, to mankind, to the race,’ ‘the world of mankind,’ ‘to men generally considered’ . . . at present, we shall consider the proposition so confidently maintained, that the love of God extends to each individual of the race.”<sup>87</sup> He then begins to explain from Scripture why Wardlaw’s depiction of God’s love is an unbiblical “chimera.”<sup>88</sup>

First, without using the term “love” he affirms what D. A. Carson has described as “God’s providential love over all he has made.”<sup>89</sup> In this way, Haldane makes space in his doctrine of God for a general love for all people (Deut 10:18; Ecc 9:12).<sup>90</sup> Next, he observes two competing ways in which God works in history. First, he describes how the dealings with the nations are subordinated to his special relationship with Israel (Isa 43:3-4). Quoting Psalm

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<sup>85</sup>By my count, in his thirteen page chapter on “God’s Love to All Mankind,” he quotes Scripture at least twenty times and references thirty other passages. While counting texts does not prove his case, it does muzzle the charge that he is not being biblical. He is defining his understanding of God’s love in accordance with all that God says (cf. Acts 20:27).

<sup>86</sup>In fact, in the following chapter, he gives his interpretation of John 3:16, an interpretation that does not read *kosmos* as “the elect” a la John Owen; instead, with very precise attention to the context in John 1-4, he defines *kosmos* as the world of the Gentiles (quote).

<sup>87</sup>*The Doctrine of the Atonement*, 138-39. For clarity, it should be added that Wardlaw asserts the special love of God for all men (148).

<sup>88</sup>*Ibid.*, 144.

<sup>89</sup>D. A. Carson, *The Difficult Doctrine of the Love of God* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2000), 16-17.

<sup>90</sup>Another argument he employs to show God’s goodness is that the other nations are often more prosperous or materially blessed (Ps 73:2-3, 17-19; 92:7; Prov 3:33; Jer 12:1)

147:19-20 and Amos 3:2, he writes, “All God’s dealings with other nations were subservient to his purposes toward Israel, whether of correction or of mercy.”<sup>91</sup> This is not just a general idea in Scripture either. Haldane shows from both testaments how God’s judgment hangs over the nations.

Did God love Pharaoh?—Rom 9:17. Did he love the Amalekites?—Exod 17:14. Did he love the Canaanites, whom he commanded to be extirpated without mercy?—Deut 20:16. Did he love the Ammonites and Moabites, whom he commanded not to be received into the congregation for ever?—Deut 22:3. Does he love the workers of iniquity?—Ps 5:5. On the other hand, he loves his people when dead in trespasses and sins—Eph 2:4-5. Does he love the vessels of wrath, fitted to destruction, whom he endures with much longsuffering?—Rom 9:22. Did he love Esau?—Rom 9:13. He tells us he will have mercy on whom he will have mercy; does he love those on whom he will have no mercy, nay, whom he hardeneth? No!<sup>92</sup>

Each of these proof-texts requires careful exegesis,<sup>93</sup> but with that caveat in place, the collection of these kinds of verses, does present a very real problem for Calvinistic universalists like Wardlaw. Proponents of God’s undifferentiated love (i. e. special love to all people—elect and reprobate) do not take into consideration a significant corpus of texts which speak of God’s wrath resting on the non-elect.

Next, God’s exclusive love is made more evident by Haldane’s observation in history that God’s promises of love are made to a people who are often steeped in greater sin than the nations. Speaking of God’s elect nation Israel, Haldane observes,

All the wickedness of Jerusalem, although it exceeded that of Sodom (Ezek 16:47-52) and of the heathen whom the Lord had destroyed before the children of Israel (2 Chron 33:9), has not alienated his love. The Lord concludes the black catalogue of the sins of Jerusalem,

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<sup>91</sup>146. Even those who deny God’s unconditional election must admit that in Old Testament history, Israel had a unique relationship with YHWH, that resulted in the spiritual (read: eternal) salvation of some of Israel. But at the same time, his special relationship with the Jews—as weak as it was (cf. Heb 8:13)—required that other nations were passed over to their eternal doom.

<sup>92</sup>143-44.

<sup>93</sup>For instance, elements of God’s grace are present in Romans 9:22, and other verses in Scripture—the story of Ruth, for instance—demonstrate the complexity of interpreting Deuteronomy 22:3 at the level of the canon.

not with the denunciation of utter destruction, as he does in regard to Edom, but by declaring that He will establish his covenant with her, and be pacified toward her, for all that she had done (Ezek 16:60-68).

This, Haldane concludes, is evidence that God has a particular love for his own (cf. John 13:1). In the Old Testament, God's *hesed* is reserved for Israel according to the flesh, but now his love is poured into (Rom 5:5) and his covenant law is "written on the heart of every child of the new covenant."<sup>94</sup> In this way, God's covenant people become a "parable" for the New Testament church.<sup>95</sup> Thus, the proper way to move from Old Testament promises to New Testament fulfillment is not to generically widen the scope of God's love from Israel to the nations, but to observe the particular love for Israel as continuing in the particular people of the new covenant, drawn in from every nation.<sup>96</sup>

This is Haldane's understanding of God's covenantal love, and hence the reason why he is so insistent to reject Wardlaw's sub-biblical "universal love." For Haldane, God's love for the elect is as Isaiah and Jeremiah promised, an everlasting love (Isa 54:8; Jer 31:3), one that will

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<sup>94</sup>148.

<sup>95</sup>"That dispensation is now at an end; no man is known after the flesh. The Gospel is commanded to be preached indiscriminately to all, and every believer is acknowledged as a child of Abraham—a member of the righteous nation which keepeth the truth. *The history of Israel after the flesh is a parable.* On account of their descent from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and their consequent relation to Christ, they were brought into covenant with God, were the objects of his special love. The true Israel, who are 'circumcised with the circumcision made without hands,' in whom Christ is formed the hope of glory, and in whose heart he dwells by faith, are now the objects of God's love; all things for their sakes (2 Cor 4:15); all things are theirs, life or death, things present, or things to come (1 Cor 3:21-23). God no more loves all mankind now than he did formerly: He then loved a particular nation on account of their carnal relation to Christ, and He now loves those who are spiritually related to his Son. . . . Israel of ole were beloved, not as individuals, but as a nation; but every individual of the righteous nation is an object of the love of God. God led the nation of Israel out of Egypt, and brought them into a covenant with himself. The true Israel are gathered one by one, (Isa 27:12). It must be so, for the law is written on the heart of every child of the new covenant, while the national covenant was written on tables of stone (2 Cor 3:3)" (147-48). Emphasis mine.

<sup>96</sup>"It is evident that the messages addressed to Israel, and God's professions of love towards them, cannot justly be considered as warrant to use the same language indiscriminately under the new dispensation" (142). For recent support of this covenantal argument for definite atonement, see Peter Gentry and Stephen Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), and my chapter in *Whomever He Wills*, ed. Matthew Barrett and Thomas J. Nettles (Cape Coral, FL: Founders).



bear certain fruit when the gospel is preached in the hardest places. And unlike so many theoreticians, Haldane's doctrinal views took him to some of the hardest places on earth during his fifty-four year preaching ministry.<sup>97</sup> In this way, love compelled him to go, but it was a love defined and refined by God's word, which leads us to his reading of John 3:16.

### **John 3:16**

After defending God's special love to his elect, he devotes ten pages to John 3:16, a verse typically employed to argue against definite atonement. Always a careful exegete, Haldane pays attention to both the individual words in the text and the epochal shift that is taking place as the New Covenant replaces the Old. Moreover, unlike John Owen and others, he does not redefine "world" as "elect" or "the world of the elect." His interpretation pays more attention to the surrounding context and the Jew-Gentile relationship that would have been front and center in his debate with Nicodemus. In many ways, his approach to the text is a model of exegesis that relates the part to the whole, and the big picture with the individual words.

He begins by citing the ministry of John the Baptist (John 1 and 3) and the midnight conversation with a teacher of the law, and observes that Jesus' words in John 3:16 should be understood as broadening the scope of salvation from the Jews—which is what Nicodemus would have expected—to all the nations. He writes, "Here the Lord gives the explanation of *whosoever*, which the Jewish ruler would undoubtedly have understood to refer to Israel, but [Nicodemus] was taught [by Jesus] that it included men of all nations."<sup>98</sup> And later after Haldane outlines the various meanings of *kosmos*, Haldane continues,

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<sup>97</sup>*The Lives*, 148.

<sup>98</sup>*The Doctrine of the Atonement*, 151.

[W]hile the term *world* includes men of all nations, Jews and Gentiles, it particularly refers to the latter. The Jews connected the privileges which they expected under Messiah's reign with the judgements of God upon the Gentiles; but the Lord informed Nicodemus that the Son of God had come, not for the condemnation, but the salvation, of men of all nations, whether Jews or Gentiles. The middle wall of partition was to be broken down, and peace proclaimed to them that were afar off, as well as to them that were nigh.<sup>99</sup>

Haldane's interpretation focuses on the individual words of the text, but the strength of his interpretation is not in thin lexicography; it is found—to borrow a term from Kevin Vanhoozer—in a thick reading of Scripture.<sup>100</sup> He writes, “The use of the term *world*, . . . cannot then be a proof of God's universal love to mankind, a sentiment opposed to the whole tenor of Scripture.”<sup>101</sup> Reading John 3:16 in light of the covenantal shift, what Richard Lints calls the “epochal horizon,” Haldane rightly discerns how to relate the particular and the universal.<sup>102</sup>

For two thousand years, the knowledge of God had been confined to Israel; during that period preparations had been going forward for the manifestation of the Son of God. The day was now about to break, and the shadows to flee away; the kingdom of God was to be preached, and ‘*every man*’ was to press into it. ‘*All flesh* was to see the salvation of God.’ Jesus was to be lifted up, and was to ‘draw *all men* unto him.’ God's love to the world is evidently contrasted with the love with which had loved Israel (Deut 33:3).<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>99</sup>*The Doctrine of the Atonement*, 155.

<sup>100</sup> *Is There a Meaning in This Text? The Bible, the Reader, and the Morality of Literary Knowledge* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 303-35, esp. 309-15. Haldane's commitment to Scripture and opposition to abstract metaphysics is asserted in the beginning of *The Doctrine of the Atonement*, 17-27, and observed by his biographer, “In attempting to meet the cavils of objectors, or to smooth away difficulties, at which unbelief stumbles, many true Christians have been seduced to leave the beaten path of Scripture, and enter on the fields of abstract reasoning. The consequences might easily be foretold by those who remember the warnings of our Lord and his apostles. It is venturing on the wings of speculation into the realms of infinite space, where there is nothing to guide, to support, or to direct. All is darkness, uncertainty, and gloom. The attempt to blend the conclusions of metaphysical theories with the authoritative declarations of the Bible, have uniformly ended in confusion. *Against such a method of dealing with Christianity both of the Haldanes earnestly contended from the beginning to the end of their career. ‘How readest thou?’ and not ‘what thinkest thou?’ was the shibboleth of their child-like spirit and scriptural theology*” (*Lives*, 642-43). Emphasis mine.

<sup>101</sup>*The Doctrine of the Atonement*, 153.

<sup>102</sup>Richard Lints, *The Fabric of Theology: A Prolegomenon to Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 300-03.

<sup>103</sup>*The Doctrine of the Atonement*, 156.

For all the attention to the larger structures of the biblical narrative, Haldane is not force-fitting John 3:16 into a theological system. Rather, he is moving from the text of John to the whole of Scripture and back again—what we might call the “hermeneutical spiral.”<sup>104</sup> And thus to explain exactly how John conceives of the word *kosmos* and Christ’s death for the world, Haldane cites Revelation 5:9-10, another text which speaks of Christ’s death and its effect on the world. This thick reading of Scripture supplies Haldane with a biblically-perceptive argument for John 3:16 which supports definite atonement and will at the same time serve as the link between particular redemption and the free offer of the gospel.

### **The Free Offer of the Gospel**

In his biography, Alexander Haldane spends ample room describing the atonement theology of James Haldane, and the four works which he wrote in the last decade of his life.<sup>105</sup> Decades removed from his missionary endeavors, it might be surmised that his doctrinal views at the end of his life were different than at the beginning; after all, in the beginning he took nine tours of Scotland preaching the gospel to crowds numbering in the thousands, and later in life, his ministry became more stationary and his pen became more polemical. However, a letter to the editor, written in 1846 for *Evangelical Magazine* makes it plain that Haldane’s doctrine remained the same in all seasons of his ministry.<sup>106</sup> With this context in place, it is worth noting

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<sup>104</sup>Grant Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation, Revised and Expanded* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006).

<sup>105</sup>In 1842, he published *Man’s Responsibility: The Nature and Extent of the Atonement, and the Work of the Holy Spirit; in reply to Mr. Howard Hinton and the Baptist Midland Association*. The following year, he authored a tract on the nature and extent of the atonement. And then in 1845 and 1847, he published two editions of *The Doctrine of the Atonement*, with an added appendix in the second edition responding to the teaching of Dr. Payne (*Lives*, 638-53).

<sup>106</sup>Alexander Haldane describes his father’s theological views, “In the letter he alludes to his first preaching tour, undertaken in 1797, with the view of calling attention to the Gospel,” and then Alexander quotes,

how Haldane conceived of the free offer of the gospel, and most importantly how his boldness to preach the gospel was not just held in loose association with particular redemption, but rather how his evangelistic zeal resulted from his atonement theology.

Alexander Haldane's description of his father's method of preaching is threefold. First, he indicates that those, like his father who held to particular redemption, did so because they put as much weight on the passages calling for a universal offer, as they did on the ones defending definite atonement.<sup>107</sup> In other words, Haldane and pastor-theologians like him were committed to the whole counsel of God.<sup>108</sup> Second, Alexander Haldane quotes from Robert Smith Candlish, another Scotsman who gained the elder Haldane's respect, to argue for the way someone like Haldane would call people to faith. Citing Candlish's *Scripture Characters*, Alexander Haldane supplies a model of preaching that takes seriously the definite nature of the atonement.

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“whilst I hope I have learned something by studying the Scriptures for almost fifty years, if I were asked in what respect my present views of any great doctrine of the Gospel differ from my sentiments in 1797, I could not specify on one particular . . . It may be a reproach, in the opinion of your correspondent, that I hold ‘the doctrines of the Westminster Confession,’ but I am still willing to bear it, and to this day I prefer it to the improvements made upon it by writers, either in America, Scotland, or England. And I am confirmed when I witness the fruits of a deviation from some of these doctrines, both in the Secession and Congregational Churches in Scotland” (*Lives*, 652).

<sup>107</sup>“It is enough to know that the command is plain, ‘Preach the Gospel to every creature,’ and that the promise of salvation is secure to ‘whosoever believes.’ For ‘whosoever’ will believe, there is an ample provision; for all who will enter in, the door stands open; for all who will drink, the fountain flows. But at best it is surely nothing better than presumption to inquire whether there be the same provision for those who reject as for those who receive the Gospel, for those who turn away from the water of life as from those who drink, for those who spurn at the door of mercy as for those who meekly enter in. Vague and general statements of Christ’s mediation and work are not necessary to justify the freest proclamation of pardon to every sinner who comes to Christ. The Gospel does not consist in declaring such abstract propositions, as that all are pardoned, or that Christ’s precious blood was shed not merely for the sheep of which he is the Shepherd, but for those who have ‘no part or lot’ in the mansions he has gone to prepare” (*Lives*, 648-49).

<sup>108</sup>Describing the atonement theology of nineteenth century Scotland, Donald Macleod writes lays out ten characteristics, including “a belief in limited atonement, but stated very carefully.” Describing men like William Cunningham, Robert Smith Candlish, and James Haldane, he continues, “The cross was not limited as to its intrinsic value of sufficiency. If it had been God’s purpose to save each and every person, no other sacrifice would have been required. Scottish divines also accepted that many benefits accrued to the reprobate from the death of Christ and did so by God’s conscious intention . . . And they had no hesitation whatever about the universal offer of the gospel.” (Macleod, “The Atonement,” in *DSCHT* [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993], 39).

We tell you of no salvation contained in a proposition, but of salvation treasured up in a person. We proclaim no general amnesty or indiscriminate jail delivery, purchased for men at large by Christ himself, and we assure all that come to him of pardon, peace, and eternal life. We do not merely tell you of the infinite amount or merit and atoning virtue which there is in the obedience and death of Jesus. But we tell you of Jesus himself, who will clothe you—any of you—all of you—who will only come unto Him, with a robe of perfect righteousness, and wash you in a fountain that will make you all clean. *And we tell you further, that with any questions as to what there may be in Christ—for you or for any—while not coming unto him you have no concern. It is presumption to ask such questions: it would be vain and useless to have them answered.* This is his present call; this is your present duty; admitting of no evasion and of no delay. Come ye to Christ, and he will make all clear to you. Come unto him, and he will give you rest.<sup>109</sup>

This powerful appeal, Alexander says, is the kind issued by his father, who then comes to his father saying,

[Candlish’s method] was exactly Mr James Haldane’s practical mode of inviting sinners to come as babes in Christ, to believe and be saved; without assuming the proud character of ‘the wise and prudent,’ puzzling themselves with abstract questions about the reconciliation of God’s sovereignty and man’s responsibility, or the bearings of the Christ’s work on the impenitent. But in his work on the atonement [James Haldane] forcibly observes, that ‘If it be admitted that the work of the Spirit is an essential to salvation as the work of Christ, an atonement for all brings no one nearer to the kingdom of God, for without the sovereign efficacious work of the Spirit, there is an absolute impossibility of a sinner’s salvation, so that your opening a door of hope for all is only uncovering a grace that the dead may come forth; it is a lighting a candle that the blind may see; it is opening a door for a man without legs to walk out of prison.’<sup>110</sup>

This was the power of his preaching—he preached a cross that truly saved, a message that “declare[d] to all who hear it, a Savior in whom God is well pleased; with the blessed assurance that he is *able* to save unto the uttermost all that come unto God by Him; and not only able but *willing* to save all that come, for ‘whosoever cometh unto him he will in no wise cast out.’”<sup>111</sup>

This was his method. He proclaimed an atonement for sin that was totally efficacious, and then he called any and all to place faith in that Savior. But at the same time that he opened

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<sup>109</sup>*Lives*, 649.

<sup>110</sup>*Ibid.*, 649-50.

<sup>111</sup>*Ibid.*, 649.

the floodgates to any who were willing, “[h]e never called upon each and every sinner to believe that Christ died or offered up a sacrifice for him in particular, because he was convinced that Christ, in his priestly character, ever offered a sacrifice for those on whose behalf he did not pray, and never presented to the Father an atonement which was not for ever complete.”<sup>112</sup> For Haldane, such sentimental appeals were unscriptural and formed out of vain speculations.

To many this denial of the personal, individual love of God cripples the evangelistic appeal,<sup>113</sup> but it is hard to make that case to James Haldane. Under God, James Haldane was the singular cause of tens of thousands of Scotsman coming to faith in Christ. To reiterate what was outline in detail earlier, in the first ten years of his ministry, Haldane literally preached in every city and every hamlet in Scotland. And for the rest of his pulpit ministry, his church was full to overflowing with thousands. He was well respected throughout Edinburgh, and his biography is filled with testimonies of the power of his preaching, and how in a gospel-starved Scotland he was the voice that brought the message of salvation near. And all this from a man who loved the doctrine of definite atonement, and who preached the gospel with lively appeals to repent and believe, not based upon sentimental propositions but on the grace and glory of Jesus Christ.

### **A Life of Death-Defying Mission Grounded in Definite Atonement**

What should we make of this man’s life? How might we imitate his faith? I want to present James Haldane as the best kind of Calvinist, the kind that unashamedly loves the doctrines of grace and whose entire preaching ministry was impelled by his doctrinal conviction mined from the Word of God. In this way, he and Andrew Fuller have much in common.

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<sup>112</sup>Ibid., 651.

<sup>113</sup>For instance, David Allen in his chapter “The Atonement” (*Whosoever Will: A Biblical-Theological Critique of Five Point Calvinism*, eds. David Allen and Steve Lemke [Nashville: B & H Academic, 2010], 94-96), makes the case that unless a preacher can say “Christ died for you” to all men without exception, he cannot—by definition—make a “bold offer” of the gospel.

Both were self-taught theologians, whose effective preaching was filled with the gracious words of truth. In all of his years, Haldane preached the efficacious power of the cross, and he made its fruits available to all who would believe. It was not up to him, nor any preacher to discern, the elect as they declared the sufferings and glories of Christ. Rather, convinced that the blood of Christ purchased people from every tribe, tongue, language, and nation (Rev 5:9-10), Haldane went into the hills and along the highways proclaiming the message that Jesus saves. And the rest, as they say, is history!

All of Scotland benefitted from his faithfulness to the gospel, a gospel that was particular in scope and definite in its effect. In a word, he preached Christ and him crucified to a nation dead in their sins, and just as God's Word promised, it created the new life of faith and repentance that the gospel also demands (Ezekiel 37). In this way, it was a word that came with power (1 Thess 1:4-5), power to save the sheep to whom the Shepherd called (John 10:16, 26-30). May we who preach the gospel do so with such conviction and confidence that God will call his sheep who hear his voice, as we declare the message of the crucified and risen Christ.