

Owen's Christological Use of Acts 20:28: A Foundational Text in His Apologetic for the Intrinsic Sufficiency and Limited Extent of Christ's Satisfaction

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Despite increasing interest in John Owen,¹ scholars have yet to plunge the depth of “quite possibly, the finest theological mind that England has ever produced.”² As affirmed by Ryan McGraw in his recent book, “Scholars are only recently beginning to note the importance of John Owen as a seventeenth-century Reformed Orthodox Theologian.”³ Furthermore, the 2015 *Ashgate Research Companion to John Owen*⁴ opens a wide range of possibilities to embrace Richard Muller’s call for “more detailed approaches to individual thinkers” by using “expanded digital resources, whether printed texts, manuscripts, or catalogues,”⁵ to compare, contrast, and trace aspects of Owen’s thought, theological system, method, and loci.⁶

1. According to johnowen.org there are more than twenty unpublished dissertations on John Owen’s life and thought since the 1990s. Oxford’s Center for Early Modern Studies lists almost the same number of published influential PhD dissertations. I am grateful to Dr. Greg Salazar for his mentorship, Dr. Adriaan C. Neele for the encouragement in the pursuit of this topic, Dr. Ryan M. McGraw for his careful revision of my article and Dr. Crawford Gribben for introducing me to Owen.

2. Carl R. Trueman, “John Owen” in *Biographical Dictionary of Evangelicals*, eds. Timothy Larsen, David Bebbington, and Mark A. Noll (Leicester, UK: Inter-Varsity Press, 2003), 494.

3. Ryan M. McGraw, *John Owen: Trajectories in Reformed Orthodox Theology* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 189. According to Dr. Meyers, concerning the doctrine of justification, “Presently, there are no full-length treatments of Owen’s doctrine.” Stephen Meyers, “God, Owen, and Justification: The Role of God’s Nature in John Owen’s Doctrine,” *Puritan Reformed Journal* 8, no. 2 (July 2016): 1.

4. Kelly M. Kopic and Mark Jones, eds., *The Ashgate Research Companion to John Owen’s Theology*. (Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate Research Companion, 2015).

5. Richard Muller, “Directions in the Study of Early Modern Thought,” *Perichoresis* 14, no. 3 (2016), 12.

6. See Carl R. Trueman, *John Owen: Reformed Catholic, Renaissance Man* (Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate, 2016), 17–33.

Although scholars of Owen have produced secondary literature on his atonement theology, little attention has been given to his use of specific biblical texts, such as Acts 20:28, concerning his Christological apologetic. Though Owen's atonement theology is exegetically grounded in all the Scriptures,⁷ his Christological use of Acts 20:28 renders it a foundational text in his apologetic for the limited extent and intrinsic sufficiency of Christ's satisfaction, over against universalistic and Unitarian atonement theologies, that, in his view, undermined the efficacy and value of Christ's death.⁸ This study proposes to fill in the gap of Owenian scholarship by chronologically assessing his use of Acts 20:28 from 1642–1684. From his earliest publication in 1642 to his more mature post-Restoration works, Owen's Christological use of Acts 20:28 consistently refutes heterodox views of the atonement. Acts 20:28 was his preferred text in countering universal propitiation from 1642–1655, and from 1655–1684 Owen used it contra Socinian Unitarians who denied the intrinsic sufficiency of Christ's death. The relevance of Acts 20:28 in Owen's polemical methodology is evidenced by its ubiquitousness in Owen's thought. The doctrinal content and theological substance of Acts 20:28 renders it an ideal text to advance Owen's lifelong apologetical ambition to defend the limited extent and intrinsic sufficiency of Christ's satisfaction.

Significance of Study

Acts 20:28 is prolifically used by Owen throughout his career, with over 130 written occurrences.⁹ His ecclesiastical use of the passage must be distinguished from its Christological use as a foundational text in his particularist apologetic. His ecclesiastical use of Acts 20:28 is notable given the historical-literary context of the passage (Paul's discourse to the Ephesian elders concerning church governing and pastoring). One would expect

7. In *The Death of Death* alone, Owen's text collation to establish the limited extent and value of Christ's death is exhaustive and scripturally comprehensive. In his discussion of Christ's atonement's original purpose and intention, Owen also highlights Ephesians 5:25–27 and Titus 2:14 (John Owen, *The Works of John Owen*, ed. William H. Goold, vol. 10 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark), 210).

8. This research has been based on searches made via an electronic version of Goold's edition of Owen's *Works*.

9. Although this research is based on this writer's reading and thorough analysis of Owen's Christological works (e.g., *A Display of Arminianisme*, *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ*, *Christologia*, *Of the Death of Christ*, *A Dissertation on Divine Justice*, and *Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews*), having the electronic version of Goold's edition immensely helped to both catalog and identify Owen's Christological use of Acts 20:28.

Owen's use of such a passage for ecclesiastical purposes. In this regard, he exhorts elders to "feed the flock of God";¹⁰ establishes Christ, the founder, and builder of the church, as the sole authority over His body;¹¹ defines elders as polemicists of scriptural truth;¹² and articulates the nature of church government.¹³ However, Owen's most remarkable use of the passage was concerning his Christological apologetic, since, in his theological system, Christ is the *scopus et fundamentum Scripturae*.¹⁴ Exegetically speaking, Acts 20:28 was the definitive proof text for Owen's defense of the intrinsic sufficiency and limited extent of Christ's satisfaction. In exhorting the Ephesian elders, Paul calls their attention to the nature of Christ and the extent of his work by stating that "God purchased his church with his own blood."

Not surprisingly (as will be demonstrated in this work), Owen frequently used Acts 20:28 to avert universalism and unitarianism. Although Owen's Christological use of Acts 20:28 is conjoined to a comprehensive variety of Scriptures, the frequency and singling out of Acts 20:28 in Owen's thought highlights the significance of the passage in the strategy of Owen's Christological apologetic. Albeit many texts are mentioned by Owen in defense of Christ's deity¹⁵ and limited atonement,¹⁶ Owen's use of Acts 20:28 ranks as a preferred scriptural foundation in favor of the intrinsic sufficiency and limited extent of Christ's satisfaction over against formidable opponents to the principal Reformed atonement view. Hence the reasons to single out this text for specific chronological, theological, and exegetical analysis in Owen's Reformed particularist¹⁷ soteriology.

10. *Works*, 3:86; 4:493; 4:508; 9:433; 13:56; 15:159; 16:48;75.

11. *Works*, 8:286; 15:235.

12. *Works*, 1:9; 7:186; 11:36; 13:56; 15:250; 287; 306; 356; 16:108; 22:195.

13. *Works*, 4:449; 15:438; 491.

14. Richard A. Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics: The Rise and Development of Reformed Orthodoxy*, 2nd ed., vol. 2, *Holy Scripture: The Cognitive Foundation of Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 207. See also, John Owen, *Synesis Pneumatikē, Or, the Causes Waies & Means of Understanding the Mind of God as Revealed in His Word, with Assurance Therein and a Declaration of the Perspicuity of the Scriptures, with the External Means of the Interpretation of them* (London: 1678).

15. *Works*, 20:7 (John 1:1; Rom. 9:5; 1 Tim. 3:16; 1 John 3:16, 5:20).

16. *Works*, 10:359 (Acts 20:28 is cited as a proof text in conjunction with John 17:9; Matt. 20:28, 26:26–28; Mark. 10:45; Heb. 6:20; Isa. 53:12; John 10:15; Heb. 13:20; Matt. 1:21; Heb. 2:17; John 11:51, 52; Rom. 8:33, 34).

17. This term is used in this work in contrast to the universalist view adopted by Arminians, who affirmed Christ's sacrifice was for all men, not just the elect.

A Chronological Analysis, Set in Context

The 1640s–1650s are critical decades in the study of British Puritanism. The ascension of Charles I and Laud’s nomination as vice-chancellor of Oxford promoted strenuous conflict between Parliament and the Crown. These circumstances inevitably led to the English Civil War, which culminated in the beheading of the king and promoted the rise of the Cromwellian regime.¹⁸ Owen’s towering politico-religious influence is indisputable during this period. Indeed, he had become the “*primus inter pares*”¹⁹ of the independents and the “preacher-in-chief”²⁰ of Parliament during the civil war years and was designated to preach the day after Charles’s execution.²¹ Before these years of political influence, Owen enjoyed national prestige as a Reformed theologian because of his earliest publication, *A Display of Arminianisme* (1642), followed by his *Salus Electorum Sanguis Jesu*, or *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ* (1647). Owen also published his *Two Short Catechisms* in 1645 as pastor of the parish at Fordham. In these early works, Owen’s principal polemical aim—albeit not exclusive—was to oppose the Dutch Remonstrants heresy. On that account, during these years his use of Acts 20:28 focused on its enclosed exegetical presupposition concerning the efficacy of Christ’s sacrifice.

Acts 20:28 in Owen’s Polemics for the Limited Extent of Christ’s Satisfaction, 1642–1655

In *A Display*, Owen’s apologetical goal was to vindicate the particularist

18. Philip Benedict, *Christ’s Churches Purely Reformed: A Social History of Calvinism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 388–89; See also, John Spurr, *The Post-Reformation: Religion, Politics and Society in Britain, 1603–1714* (Harlow, England: Pearson Longman, 2006), 40–144.

19. “first among equals” (John Coffey and Paul Chang-Ha Lim, *The Cambridge Companion to Puritanism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 77.

20. Christopher Hill, *The Experience of Defeat: Milton and Some Contemporaries* (N.Y.: Viking, 1984), 172.

21. *Works*, 8:133. Though distancing himself from fifth monarchists (Peter Toon, *The Correspondence of John Owen 1616–1683*, (Cambridge: James Clarke, 1970), 1516–1518, Kindle; Liu Tai, *Discord in Zion: The Puritan Divines and the Puritan Revolution 1640–1660*, Series Archives internationales d’histoire des idées 61 (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1973), 154–58), Owen had a millenarian bent. For the Independents’ parliamentary influence from 1640–1641, see Liu, *Discord in Zion*, chap. 1; Hill, *Experience of Defeat*, 50–52. For the biographical information of this research, I owe credit to Gribben’s recent intellectual biography, unless cited otherwise. Crawford Gribben, *John Owen and English Puritanism: Experiences of Defeat*, Oxford Studies in Historical Theology (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

doctrine of satisfaction “contained in divers of the Thirty-nine Articles.”²² Certainly, Owen’s opposition to the Arminian menace—against which he proclaimed “a holy war”²³—had some relation to his disappointment at Oxford.²⁴ In the university, he was exposed to the dangers of institutional heterodoxy, which resulted in his abandonment of the university in 1637. Owen graduated BA in 1632 and MA in 1635. His discontentment with the university began in the summer of that year, “when Laud imposed forms on the university that he could not accept,” and for Owen, “the rejection of Reformed orthodoxy was personal.”²⁵ Not surprisingly, five years later, Owen’s first publication, *A Display of Arminianisme*, was entirely dedicated to the opposition of Arminian doctrine. For Owen, universalism implied the demerit of Christ’s death since it denied sovereign grace and attributed to fallen sinners a cooperative and definitive role in salvation.²⁶ Hence, his Christological use of Acts 20:28 in 1642, outlined in *A Display*, articulates the value of Christ’s blood concerning the efficacy of His atonement. Albeit the “blood of God,” says Owen, “was so exceedingly precious, of that infinite worth and value, that it might have saved a thousand believing worlds... Christ giveth life to every one for whom he gave his life; he loseth not one of them whom he purchased with his blood.”²⁷ The rhetorical frame of Owen’s polemical reasoning aligned him with mainstream Reformed particularists such as “the mastermind of Puritanism”²⁸ and the Puritans’ principal

22. *Works*, 10:9.

23. *Works*, 10:7.

24. Gribben, *John Owen*, 38–40. See also, Nicholas Tyacke, “Oxford University and Arminianism” in *Anti-Calvinists: The Rise of English Arminianism, c. 1590–1640* (England: Oxford University Press, 1990).

25. Gribben, *John Owen*, 35–36. Gribben further explains that although Owen, a year later, would be ordained a priest by John Bancroft—a committed Arminian and friend of Laud—Owen did not vow obedience and loyalty to their anti-Puritan prescriptions. Scholars have commonly acknowledged a more predominant Calvinistic uniformity in England before “the Arminian insurgency of the late 1620s.” Deborah Shuger, *Religion in Early Stuart England*, (Texas: Baylor University Press, 2012), 231; Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists*, 8. For Lake’s challenge of this assumption, see Peter Lake, “Serving God and the Times: The Calvinist Conformity of Robert Sanderson,” *The Journal of British studies* 27, no. 2 (1988): 82. Sarah Mortimer states that “through the 1620’s the Remonstrants were accused of Socinianism; their enemies were determined to show that their theology lay well beyond the boundaries of acceptability.” Sarah Mortimer, *Reason and Religion in the English Revolution: The Challenge of Socinianism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 39.

26. *Works*, 10:13; 53–57.

27. *Works*, 10:89.

28. Andrew Woolsey, *Unity and Continuity in Covenantal Thought: A Study in the*

voice in the “Elizabethan glory days of high Calvinism,”²⁹ William Perkins (1558–1602). Perkins’s employment of a similar scholastic argument in his Christological apologetic uses strikingly homologous language to that of Owen. Christ’s atonement is “sufficient to redeem everyone...albeit there were a thousand worlds of men,”³⁰ says Perkins in *Armilla Aurea* (1592).³¹ Or, as stated in *Reformed Catholike*: “And considering it was the obedience of God, as Paul signified when he said, ‘feed the church of God, which he purchased with his blood’ (Acts 20:28), it was sufficient for many thousand worlds.”³² Indeed Perkins acknowledged that “Christ’s death is sufficient to save many thousand worlds” though he denied that was God’s *ad intra* determination, “for if it were thus effectual...Christ’s righteousness should be imputed for the justification and sanctification of all and every man.”³³ For Perkins—as for Owen—“predestination had two parts: Election and reprobation.” Christ, the foundation of the decree of election, was “called of his Father from all eternity, to perform the office of the Mediatour, that in him all those which should bee saved might be chosen.”³⁴ Perkins’s Chris-

Reformed Tradition to the Westminster Assembly (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2012), 461.

29. Shuger, *Early Stuart England*, 274.

30. Cited by Jonathan D. Moore, *English Hypothetical Universalism: John Preston and the Softening of Reformed Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 31. See also, William Perkins, *A Golden Chaine* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge, 1595) 325–28.

31. According to Jonathan D. Moore, the importance of *A Golden Chaine* “is clear when it is realized that ‘the basic document of Arminianism,’ namely Jacobus Arminius’ *Examen Modestum Libelli*, was in fact a response to this very treatise.” Moore, *English Hypothetical Universalism*, 31. Historian Carl Bangs has described Arminius’s *Examen Modestum Libelli* (written in response to Perkins’s *Golden Chaine*) as a foundational document of the Remonstrants’ religion, in which he denounces Perkins’s doctrine of absolute predestination. Carl Bangs, *Arminius: A Study in the Dutch Reformation* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1971), 209. Tyacke argues that the work was symptomatic of the ascendancy of Calvinism in Cambridge University during the late sixteenth century. Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists*, 29. See also, Richard A. Muller, “Arminius and the Reformed Tradition,” *The Westminster Theological Journal* 70, no. 1 (2008): 19–48.

32. *The Works of William Perkins*, ed. Joel R. Beeke and Derek W. H. Thomas, vol. 7, ed. Shawn D. Wright (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2018), 7:133. In his *A Godly Exposition of the Sermon of the Mount*, Perkins states, “It is the righteousness of that person, who is both God and man; and therefore is an infinite righteousness, of merit sufficient to save a thousand worlds.” *The Works of William Perkins*, ed. Joel R. Beeke and Derek W. H. Thomas, vol. 1, ed. J. Stephen Yuille (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2014), 261.

33. *The Works of William Perkins*, ed. Joel R. Beeke and Derek W. H. Thomas, vol. 5, ed. Ryan Hurd (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2017), 361–62.

34. Perkins, *A Golden Chaine*, D3.

tological use of Acts 20:28 in *A Golden Chaine* is more similar to Owen's in the mid-1650s when Parliament commissioned him to disprove the Socinian heresy, which resulted in the writing of *Vindiciae Evangelicae*. In conjunction with John 17:19 and 2 Corinthians 5:19, Acts 20:28 functions as an apologetical proof text to defend the dual nature of Christ rather than the extent of His atonement.³⁵ Certainly, Perkins was aware that the case for the dignity of Christ's atonement based on His theanthropic nature lies more heavily in Acts 20:28. John 17:19 and 2 Corinthians 5:19 speak of the fruits of Christ's death but not concerning His nature as the basis of His merits. Perkins pursues the same line of argumentation in his catechetical work *Foundations of Christian Religion*. In answer to the question, "Could the sufferings of Christ, which were but for a short time, countervail everlasting damnation and so appease God's wrath?" Perkins answers, "Yea; for, seeing Christ suffered [Acts 20:28; 2 Cor. 5:15], God suffered, though not in His Godhead. And that is more than if all men in the world had suffered forever and ever."³⁶ Proof that, in Christ, the fact that "God suffered" lay not in 2 Corinthians 5:15 but in Acts 20:28. In 2 Corinthians, Paul affirms the fruits of Christ's death, but the complete statement about the intrinsic sufficiency of His death based on the dignity of His person is given by the latter passage. Similarly, in his exposition of Revelation 1:5, Perkins asks, "How can blood wash away filthiness?" He answers that it is not the substance of Christ's blood that cleanses the elected sinner by faith, for

that substance of blood which was shed is lost..., but the merit thereof remains still...because His blood was the blood of God (not of the Godhead) but of Him who was both God and man. For the manhood of Christ was received into the union of the second person, and so it may be called the blood of God, as Paul says, 'God redeemed his church by his blood' [Acts 20:28].³⁷

The rhetorical and theological similarities seen in Owen's Christological use of Acts 20:28, and noted in Perkins's polemical strategy, is striking. Owen's predecessor drew Christological parallels in his defense of Reformed Christology that are emulated by Owen, such as the unified nature of Christ's priestly actions of oblation and intercession, or as in Perkins's taxonomy—satisfaction and intercession. Perkins's influence on

35. Perkins, *A Golden Chaine*, chap. 18. See also, *The Works of William Perkins*, 5:130.

36. *The Works of William Perkins*, 5:498.

37. *The Works of William Perkins*, ed. Joel R. Beeke and Derek W. H. Thomas, vol. 4, ed. J. Stephen Yuille (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2017), 342.

Owen's thought is identifiable. A seventeenth-century revised edition of *The workes of that famous and worthy minister of Christ in the Universitie of Cambridge, Mr. William Perkins*³⁸ was published in London seven years before Owen's *A Display*. Owen may have referred to this work when recounting the debate between Perkins and Arminius, "the sophistical heretic."³⁹ For Owen, Perkins was to be named amongst towering figures who opposed universalism, such as "Piscator...Twisse...Rutherford" and the "Synod of Dort" divines.⁴⁰ Perkins's remarkable popularity and outstanding reception amongst British Reformed divines precludes Owen's monopoly on the use of Acts 20:28 in favor of Reformed particularism. Certainly, one is able to trace parallels not only in relation to Perkins and Owen, but also from Owen to Bunyan, who was acquainted with Owen's writings.⁴¹ Owen's formidable predecessor also seemed to emphasize many of Owen's principal Christological themes, such as the inseparability of oblation and intercession as unified priestly actions, presented as an argument against the universality of redemption.⁴² Thus, it is proven how, in diverse instances, the Elizabethan father of Puritanism used Acts 20:28 as his exegetical basis in favor of the intrinsic sufficiency of Christ's death.

Irrefutable argumentations against general ransom theory were not sufficient for Owen to root out the "poison contained in the Arminian doctrine."⁴³ Ironically, under the Cromwellian regime, the Remonstrants' heresy found fertile soil to grow and expand, due to Cromwell's religious liberty and toleration policies. Britain had grown to accept all kinds of

38. *The workes of that famous and worthy minister of Christ in the Universitie of Cambridge, Mr. William Perkins*, (John Legatt: London, 1635).

39. *Works*, 10:66.

40. *Works*, 10:409. Although this was Owen's interpretation, many would deny that the Synod of Dort is strictly particularist. The extent of Christ's atonement was widely debated amongst the Dortian delegates of King James I. The view of John Davenant and Samuel Ward, the two prominent Hypothetical Universalistic deputies, eventually prevailed and won over the other delegates (George Carelton, Walter Banlcanqual, and Thomas Goad). See Lynch, *Davenant*, 72; Anthony Milton, *The British Delegation and the Synod of Dort (1618–1619)*. Church of England Record Society (Series); v. 13. (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2005), 218–22; Richard A. Muller, *Calvin and the Reformed Tradition: On the Work of Christ and the Order of Salvation*. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 534.

41. *The Miscellaneous Works of John Bunyan*, ed. T. L. Underwood and Roger Sharrock, vol. 1, *Some Gospel-Truths Opened, A Vindication of Some Gospel-Truths Opened, A Few Sighs from Hell* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), 67.

42. Perkins, *A Golden Chain*, chap. 18. See also, Moore, *English Hypothetical Universalism*, 38–54; Gribben, *John Owen*, 401.

43. *Works*, 10:21.

Protestants, and “hundreds of General Baptist churches preaching rank Arminianism to one other, were left undisturbed.”⁴⁴ Hence, in 1647, *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ* appeared. Owen's central argument in *The Death of Death* upholds the immutability of God's decree of election and the covenant of redemption as the basis of Christ's unified priestly work of oblation and intercession.⁴⁵ The objectors to his doctrine defend a general mediation theory to which Owen responds by stating that “it was his Church which he *redeemed with his own blood*, Acts 20:28...not one word of mediating for any other in the Scripture.”⁴⁶ John Goodwin (1594–1665), a prominent Arminian theologian, published in 1651 his *Redemption Redeemed*,⁴⁷ which was followed by another attack on Reformed particularism with the publication of *An Exposition of the ninth chapter of Romans* (1653).⁴⁸ In *Redemption Redeemed*, he seeks to establish

44. Coffey, *Companion to Puritanism*, 81–83.

45. *Works*, 10:245, 10:464, 10:187. Conclusion revised and expanded from Helio Carneiro, “John Owen's Theology of Particular Redemption: A Study of the Basis and Efficacy of Christ's Priestly Work,” (Paper for CH/ST860, PRTS, 2019).

46. John Owen, *Salus Electorum, Sanguis Jesu, Or, the Death of Death in the Death of Christ...* (London: 1648), 38. See also, *Works*, 10:213; 10:272–10:273; 10:223–10:224; 10:281; 10:290–10:294.

47. John Goodwin, *Redemption Redeemed, Wherein the Most Glorious Work of the Redemption of the World by Jesus Christ is Vindicated* (London, 1651).

48. In this treatise, Goodwin attempted to disprove God's double decree of predestination, wherein He freely chooses from eternity, on the sole basis of His good pleasure, some to salvation and others for damnation. Goodwin's goal was to assert “the true understanding of the Apostle in the chapter” since the Reformed defended “a peremptory election and reprobation of a determined number of men.” Goodwin, *An exposition of the ninth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans* (London, 1653), to the reader. According to him, there is “*nec vola nec vestigium* (not a fly or trace)...of any such election and reprobation in it,” but Paul's goal was to vindicate *sola fide*. Albeit Goodwin attempts to disassociate his interpretation with Arminius, he acknowledges that “there be some streins and turnings here and there which sympathize with the principle of that way.” Goodwin, *An exposition*, to the reader, S.6. His interpretation of “Jacob have I loved, and Esau have I hated” is that God had “shewed respects of love to Jacob and his posterity partly and giving unto them the land of Canaan, whereas Esau received only the “rough, craggy and incult Mountain of Idumea.” (Goodwin, *An exposition*, A Paraphrase of the Ninth Chapter. Although Goodwin affirms that there is no unrighteousness in God's punishment of the wicked, His judicial action must be executed only after the sinner has made his impentence and rejection clear—such as with Pharaoh. For Goodwin, as for Arminians of his time who deny God's sovereign intent and design in Christ's sacrifice, it lays in sinful men's power whether to be dissolved or condemned. Election and reprobation are not from eternity based on God's free choice but in time based on man's response. God only has the liberty to destroy based on “an abundance of guilt contracted by a long-continued course of sinning...Neither is that will of God, by which men

an exegetical basis for a universal atonement theory, which he believed to be “a most ancient and divine truth.”⁴⁹ First, he relies on texts “which present the gift and sacrifice of Christ as relating indifferently unto the world” (John 1:29; 3:16; 5:51; 1 John 1:22; 2 Corinthians 5:19; 1 Timothy 2:6; 2 Peter 3:9)⁵⁰—all of which are explained by the Reformed to reference peoples of every kind, not every person in particular. His explanations of these texts are followed by others of a similar kind where universal calls of repentance are proclaimed (John 6:37; Mark 16:16; Romans 3:22–23). Goodwin’s strongest associations of Scripture are those he believes imply Christ has died for the reprobate (Romans 14:15, 1 Corinthians 8:1, 2 Peter 2:1 and Hebrews 5:29).⁵¹ Though extensive justification is given against the particularist view,⁵² Goodwin does not directly answer the Reformed objection raised by Owen’s Christological use of Acts 20:28; namely, that if God bought the church with His blood and not the non-elect, how can it be said that Christ’s death propitiated for the sins of those He did not actually redeem? Goodwin argued that the infinite sufficiency of Christ’s death necessitated His universal intention of spilling His blood to propitiate all men.⁵³ Goodwin defended the notion that if God decreed the infinite value of Christ’s death, He also intended “his death itself for all men; and consequently Christ died not sufficiently only, but intentionally for all men.”⁵⁴ All men, he states, are “simply and absolutely, after the same manner, and upon the same terms that all Other men, yea, the elect themselves, are bought by him.” Goodwin’s only interaction with Acts 20:28 in *Redemption Redeemed* is to mention it in passing as a central biblical text used by the Reformed to defend limited atonement.⁵⁵ According to Goodwin,

are hardened, irresistible...but conditional upon a supposition of his own voluntary neglect or contempt, of the gracious application made by God unto him.” Goodwin, *An exposition, A Paraphrase of the Ninth Chapter. In his exposition of Romans 9:17*, Goodwin plainly states that “here is not in least intimation of any end propounded by God to himself from eternity about pharaoh” for he was not “under any absolute impossibility of declining this obedience” unto God’s command. “He that is not willing that any should perish,” says Goodwin, “but that all should come to repentance...could not be willing...that pharaoh should perish, or persist in impenitency.” (Goodwin, *An Exposition*, 183).

49. Goodwin, *Redemption Redeemed*, 129.

50. Goodwin, *Redemption Redeemed*, 131.

51. See also, Goodwin, *Redemption Redeemed*, 186–226.

52. Goodwin, *Redemption Redeemed*, 131–158.

53. Goodwin, *Redemption Redeemed*, 204–206.

54. Goodwin, *Redemption Redeemed*, 156. For Goodwin’s full argument, see 153–58.

55. Goodwin, *Redemption Redeemed*, 207.

if an estimate be made of the intentions of God in the death of Christ, concerning the salvations of men, by this rule it will be found that he bare more gracious intentions in the death of Christ towards many reprobates and their salvation, than towards many of the elect, or of those who in the end come to be saved. For nothing is more evident, than that many perish under greater and more excellent means of salvation than are vouchsafed unto many others, who yet are saved thereby. So that it is a reasoning of no value which concludeth that 'Christ died not equally for all and every man, because all and every man have not the same means of salvation granted unto them.'⁵⁶

Similarly, Hugo Grotius in his *Annotationes in Novum Testamentum: Acta Apostolorum*, evades the question of the extent of Christ's atonement and simply states that God's "acquirendi modus"⁵⁷ was that "por mortem cruetam Christos illam postestatem colligendae sibi ecclesia adeptus est secumdem vaticinium." His interaction with Acts 20:28 (including cross-referencing it with Ephesians 1:14 and Isaiah 53:10) is superficial and does not articulate any precise conclusion concerning the nature of Christ's satisfaction.⁵⁸

Owen was adamant in affirming that Christ's blood is sufficient to propitiate the Father on behalf of all men, but it accomplishes only that which was agreed upon from all eternity in the intra-Trinitarian compact.⁵⁹ As stated by Perkins in *A Golden Chaine*, "It cannot be that he should be a propitiation for them, for whom he doth not vouch to pray."⁶⁰

Hence, from his earliest publication in 1642 to the *Death of Death* in 1647, Owen's Christological use of Acts 20:28 served the purpose of disproving Arminian universalism and asserting particular redemption. Owen's principal apologetical aim in his early years was to defend the atonement's value by proving its limited extent and efficacy—that Christ sought to redeem "his church" only, and not the reprobate. However, the intrinsic

56. Goodwin, *Redemption Redeemed*, 219.

57. "Method of acquisition" was that "By the bloody death of Christ, the church obtained for itself the prophecy, of gathering that afterlife." This author is not proficient in the Latin and has used Whitaker's "Dictionary of Latin Forms" (William Whitaker, *Dictionary of Latin Forms* (Bellingham, Wa.: Logos Bible Software, 2012); <https://latin-words.com>). (Hugo Grotius. *Annotationes In Novum Testamentum: Continens Annotationes Ad Acta Apostolorum*. (Zuidema: 1828), 189).

58. Grotius, *Annotationes*, 189.

59. *Works*, 10:345–10:347.

60. Perkins, *A Golden Chaine*, chap. 52.

sufficiency of Christ's satisfaction — albeit not forefront to his argument — is always a Christological presupposition in Owen's apologetical use of Acts 20:28. For the Reformed orthodox, the value of Christ's death is inexorably dependent upon Christ's theanthropic nature.⁶¹ As stated by Thomas Aquinas (whose scholasticism highly influenced Owen),⁶² Christ's sacrifice was of sufficient dignity to save all men "propter dignitatem vitae suae... quae erat vita Dei, et hominis."⁶³ Though Arminians demerited the efficacy of Christ's particular atonement, it was the Socinians — by their denial that Christ was "θεὸν ἀληθῶς καὶ ἄνθρωπον"⁶⁴ — who denied Christ's substitution altogether. According to John Biddle (1615–1662), Christ did not accomplish atonement on the cross, since Biddle denies the necessity of divine propitiation.⁶⁵ His interpretation of Hebrews 9:14 — which speaks of the blood of Christ being an offering unto God for our sins through

61. See Canons of Dort, II.4; Gerald Lewis Bray, *Documents of the English Reformation: United Kingdom*: (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994), 453.

62. Christopher Harold Cleveland, *Thomism in John Owen*, (New York: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2016).

63. "on account of the dignity of his life... which was the life of God and Man." (Thomae Aquinatis, *Summa theologica*, Editio altera Romana. (Romae: Forzani et Sodalis, 1894), III q.48 a.2 resp).

64. "truly God and truly man" (Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom: The Greek and Latin creeds, with translations* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1890), 2:62.

65. John Biddle, *The Faith of One God, who is Only the Father; and of One Mediator Between God and Men, who is Only the Man Christ Jesus; and of One Holy Spirit, the Gift (and Sent) of God; Asserted and Defended: In Several Tracts Contained in this Volume*. (United Kingdom: 1691), 31. A year after Biddle's publication, a book entitled *Mr. John Biddle's Strange and New Trinity of a God, a Man and an Angel* was published by John Brayne, in which he upheld "the Apostolical and true opinion concerning the Trinity." John Brayne, *Mr. John Biddle's Strange and New Trinity of a God, a Man, an Angel, and faith therein, proved to be untrue*, (United Kingdom: Edward Blackmore, 1654), 1. He interacts with Biddle's interpretation of Hebrews 9:14 and is consistent with Owen's interpretation, asserting that the eternal Spirit is indeed "the divine nature or being in Christ, and therefore not called the Holy Spirit" Brayne, *New Trinity of a God*, 17. This interpretation is not apparent. Prominent church fathers such as Ambrose of Milan and John Chrysostom attributed the reference to "the eternal Spirit," to the Holy Spirit. Owen follows the Athanasian interpretation. According to Athanasius, "The Lord is that Spirit." Athanasius of Alexandria, *Four Discourses Against the Arians*, in *Select Works and Letters*, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. John Henry Newman and Archibald T. Robertson, *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, Second Series* (New York: Christian Literature Company, 1892), 4:312. See Ambrose of Milan, *Three Books of St. Ambrose on the Holy Spirit*, in *Select Works and Letters*, 10:106. John Chrysostom even translated that Christ "through the Holy Spirit offered Himself." John Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Gospel of St. John and Epistle to the Hebrews*, ed. Philip Schaff, *A Select Library*, 14:440.

the "Eternal Spirit"⁶⁶—is that the eternal spirit must be "Christ's spiritual body," and that Christ "made his offering for our sins, when, after the resurrection, he entered into heaven, and being endued with a Spiritual and Immortal body, presented himself before God."⁶⁷ These interpretive distortions explain why Owen used the text of Acts 20:28 so frequently against the Socinians in order to reassert the deity, and thereby infinite value, of Christ's sacrifice.

Owen's *Two Short Catechisms* (1645) proves how his Christological use of Acts 20:28 had already served the apologetical purpose of supporting Chalcedonian orthodoxy⁶⁸ against "the blasphemous Socinians"⁶⁹ by demonstrating that the immediate effect of Christ's death is inseparably related to His hypostatic union. In this work, Acts 20:28 is used by Owen once to affirm the deity of Christ, then to affirm its efficacious ransom paying.⁷⁰

Owen's subsequent publication, *Of the Death of Christ* (1650), in which his Christological use of Acts 20:28 strengthened his apologetical aims, was written to refute another crypto-Arminian universalistic view of the atonement,⁷¹ expounded by "Mr. Baxter, a learned divine."⁷² Richard Baxter

66. For Biddle's discussion on the personhood and deity of the Spirit, see John Biddle, *The Apostolical and true option Concerning the Holy Spirit revived and asserted* (London, 1653).

67. Biddle, *The Faith of One God*, 16.

68. For Owen's use of the Chalcedonian Creed in his orthodox Christological apologetics, see John Owen, *Christologia Or, A Declaration of the Glorious Mystery of the Person of Christ, God and Man: With the Infinite Wisdom, Love and Power of God in the Contrivance and Constitution Thereof...* (United Kingdom: N. Ponder, 1679), 301.

69. John Owen, *Dr John Owen's Two Short Catechisms Wherein the Principles of the Doctrine of Christ are Unfolded and Explained: Proper for all Persons to Learn before they be Admitted to the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, and Composed by Him for the use of all Congregations in General* (London: 1700), 35.

70. Owen, *Two Short Catechisms*, 27,35.

71. Baxter did not believe in limited atonement. His identification with hypothetical universalist theology is because he affirmed the universality of the atonement while not denying God's decree of predestination. Baxter's atonement theology was heavily influenced by the famous Dortian delegate John Davenant. See: Lynch, John Davenant's Hypothetical Universalism (Oxford Studies in Historical Theology) 2021. For an analysis of Hypothetical Universalism in the Westminster Standards see: Lee Gatiss, "A Deceptive Clarity?: Particular Redemption in the Westminster Standards." *Reformed Theological Review* 69, no. 3 (2010): 180–96.

72. *Works*, 10:435. See Tim Cooper, "Why Did Richard Baxter and John Owen Diverge? The Impact of The First Civil War," *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 61, no. 3 (July 2010).

considered Owen to be rigidly “over-orthodox.”⁷³ Indeed, “the Calvin of England”⁷⁴ was “more logical and consistent in his Calvinism than most.”⁷⁵ They disputed the immediate results of Christ’s death, or “the satisfaction and merit of Christ.”⁷⁶ Essentially, in *Of the Death of Christ* (1650), Owen was interested in clarifying “about the payment made for sin in the blood of Christ, of what sort and kind it is,”⁷⁷ whether it was *idem* or *tantundem* to the debt incurred by the elect. Consistent with his view of Christ’s efficacious satisfaction, Owen defended the payment was *idem*. “This for Owen constitutes the perfection of Christ’s sacrifice,” says Jonathan Moore.⁷⁸ Baxter’s soteriology was more associated with eccentric Puritans such as John Preston (1587–1628)⁷⁹ than with the strict high Calvinists like Perkins.⁸⁰ Baxter defended the efficacy of Christ’s death as originally determined by God’s *ad intra* decrees, albeit the Son’s blood was spilled in propitiation for the sins of the elect and reprobates alike, provided they repent and believe. Hence, for Owen, this kind of *via-media* universalism must still be refuted as demeriting to the efficacy of Christ’s death. “A man that holds to the moderation of the Synod of Dort,” Baxter affirmed, “need not say that Christ did

73. Richard Baxter, *Reliquiae Baxteranae*, (London, 1696) 2:199, cited by Simon J. G. Burton, *The Hallowing of Logic: The Trinitarian Method of Richard Baxter’s Methodus Theologiae* (Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh, 2011), 27.

74. Peter Toon, *God’s Statesman: The Life and Work of John Owen*, (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1971), 173.

75. Hill, *Experience of Defeat*, 178.

76. *Works*, 10:435–436. Owen acknowledged that the nature of the controversy with Baxter was rather a matter of “ways of delivering things than the doctrines themselves” *Works*, 10:435. The same acknowledgment is made by Baxter when both divines disputed the essentialness of the creeds and the sole necessity of Scripture for salvation. Albeit Baxter held firmly to his view of the absolute necessity of Scripture for the knowledge of God in salvation, he acknowledged that “our difference is not de doctrina tradita; but de modo tradedi,” Baxter, *Reliquiae Baxteranae*, 200.

77. *Works*, 10:437.

78. Jonathan Moore, “English Hypothetical Universalism and Reformed Confessions,” in *Reformed Historical Theology*, vol. 17, *Drawn into Controversie: Reformed Theological Diversity and Debates Within Seventeenth-century British Puritanism*, ed. Michael A. G. Haykin and Mark Jones (Oakville, Conn.: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2011), 133. In Owen’s own words, “I affirm that he paid *idem*, that is, the *same thing* that was in the obligation, and not *tantundem*, something equivalent thereunto, in another kind.” *Works*, 10:438.

79. Shuger notes Preston’s “predestinarian framework” but associates him with the “softer’ Calvinism expounded by the British delegation at Dort,” which “abandons the limited atonement of Elizabethan Calvinism.” Shuger, *Religion in Early Stuart England*, 273. Cf. 278, 281–83.

80. Moore, *English Hypothetical Universalism*, 94–111.

not dye or satisfie for all men.”⁸¹ “Christ suffered in the stead of all mankind having that punishment on him which all mens sins deserved,” says Baxter.⁸² He further states, “All mankind immediately upon Christ’s satisfaction, are redeemed and delivered from the legal necessity of Perishing... they are given up to the Redeemer as their owner and ruler, to be dealt with upon the terms of mercy which have a tendency to their recovery.”⁸³ Baxter is in line with hypothetical universalist theology in this respect.⁸⁴

Furthermore, albeit Baxter denied any association with Remonstrance theology, there are notable similarities with their soteriology in his thinking.⁸⁵ Arminius could not accept that God’s “*nudo & absoluto decreto*” was to elect some and “*reliquam autem hominum multitudinem eodem decreto rejecisse quibus Christum non dedit & quibus christi mortem utilem.*”⁸⁶

81. Richard Baxter, *Confession of Faith*, (London: 1655), 21. For a summary of the credal toleration of hypothetical universalism in the Synod of Dort (1618–1619), and the Westminster Assembly (1643–1649), see Haykin, *Drawn into Controversie*, 124–56; Moore, *English Hypothetical Universalism*, 173–75.

82. Richard Baxter, *Universal Redemption of Mankind by the Lord Jesus Christ*, (London: 1694), 17.

83. Baxter, *Universal Redemption*, 36.

84. Amar Djaballah’s presentation of Moise Amyraut’s theory of universal redemption—based on his analysis of *Brief Traitté de la Predestination*—proves how Amyraut did not see his doctrine as heterodox, but rather as “faithful to Calvin and the first Reformers, and indeed compatible with the Cannons of Dort.” See Amar Djaballah, “A Historical Survey of Moise Amyraut’s *Brief Traitté de la Predestination*,” in *From Heaven He Came and Sought Her: Definite Atonement in Historical, Biblical, Theological, and Pastoral Perspective*, ed. David Gibson and Jonathan Gibson (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2013), 172; Brian G. Armstrong, *Calvinism and the Amyraut Heresy: Protestant Scholasticism and Humanism in Seventeenth-century France* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969). According to Turretin, Amyraut believed that there were two types of redemption, limited and universal. The particularity of redemption is established in connection with God’s immutable decree of election and its universality from the perspective of the non-elect equal disposition to believe. Turretin’s analysis of Amyraut’s *Traité de la Predestination* in Francis Turretin, *The Substitutionary Atonement of Jesus Christ*, 2nd ed. (Crossville, Tennessee: Puritan Publications), 1633–1656 (Kindle).

85. Jacobi Arminii, *Opera theologica*, (Netherlands: Godefridus Basson, 1629), 737. See also, Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists*, 39; *Reformed Historical Theology*, v. 14, *God’s Twofold Love: The Theology of Jacob Arminius (1559–1609)*, ed. William den Boer, trans. Albert Gootjes (Oakville, Conn.: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2010), 120–34.

86. “Bare and absolute decree” was to elect some and “The rest of the multitude of men by decree to whom he did not give Christ and to whom Christ’s death was not beneficial.” Iacobi Armini, *Examen modestum libelli, quem D. Gulielmus Perkinsius apprime doctus theologus, edidit ante aliquot annos de prædestinationis modo & ordine, itemque de amplitudine gratiæ diviniæ. Addita est propter argumenti convenientiam Analysis cap. 9. ad Roman. ante*

If God commanded all to repent and determined the elect and reprobate before the fall, “this command is vain” and “useless,” argued Arminius, “for in no way can it be performed by him to whom the promise as made does not belong.”⁸⁷ As demonstrated by Arminian theologian William den Boer, Arminius’s theology of *duplex amor Dei* (namely that God loves supremely His justice and subordinately, all humans) did not allow for a supralapsarian soteriology.⁸⁸ Simply put, Arminius asserted that “Nam mortis Christi universalitas latius se extendit obiecto praedestinationis.”⁸⁹

The Arminians also maintain that God’s acceptance of Christ’s atonement was based on His gracious propensity, not in the inherent completeness of His sacrifice or actual and objective satisfaction of His justice. If the application of Christ’s merits were based on the efficacy of His work, and according to Arminius, His death “efficax fuit ad peccatum abolendum et Deo satisfaciendum,” universal salvation would be the obvious result.⁹⁰ Hence, Baxter’s universalism was equally refuted by Owen in the 1650s as an atonement theory that Acts 20:28 did not allow for.

Scholars well document the longstanding soteriological controversies between Baxter and Owen.⁹¹ For the present chronological analysis, suffice it to say that in *Of the Death*, Owen’s polemical use of Acts 20:28 served

multos annos ab eodem ipso D. Arminio delineata (Netherlands: ex officina Godefridi Basson, 1612), 100.

87. Carl Bangs, ed., James Nichols and William Nichols, trans., *The Works of James Arminius: The London Edition* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1986), 3:307.

88. Boer, *God’s Twofold Love*, 80–166.

89. “the universality of Christ’s death extends broader than to the object of predestination.” Jacobi Arminii, *Opera theologica*, 672.

90. “was effective in abolishing sin and satisfying God.” As noted by William den Boer, Arminius distinguishes among the “procurement, exhibition and application of the atonement... Christ can be the Mediator only for those in whose place He went to the cross; Christ’s sacrifice, the procurement of the atonement, must be distinguished from the result of that procurement, which is the actual atonement itself.” “What remains undiminished,” he goes on to say, “is God’s right to grant all the benefits earned by Christ that are distributed freely according to God’s mercy in Christ to those whom it pleases Him to grant them.” Boer, *God’s Twofold Love*, 120. This notion is what Francis Turretin denounced as being a “Nominal Atonement” (Turretin, *Substitutionary Atonement*, 1088–1100, Kindle). Turretin argued that if Christ’s death did not pay the exact price of the elect’s redemption but was instead accepted by the Father as a gracious act, He was not truly satisfied, given the due penalty of the law; the atonement was not actual.

91. Jonathan David Lindell, “*John Owen and Richard Baxter: A Conflict Concerning the Nature of Divine Satisfaction*” PhD diss. (Dallas Theological Seminary, 2010); Tim Cooper, *John Owen, Richard Baxter, and the Formation of Nonconformity* (Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate, 2012); Trueman, *John Owen*, 106–18.

an identical purpose as seen in *A Display and Death of Death*, since, for Owen, both the hypothetical and actual universalist devalued the absolute efficacy of Christ's ransom paying. For Owen, Christ's atonement was only efficacious insofar as the payment of the debt He incurred was exact in relation to His original intent. However, a substantial development is seen in Owen's thought concerning his use of Acts 20:28 in his Christological polemics in relation to justification. He argued Christ's efficacious atonement gave the objects of His merits the immediate right to the benefits He procured on their behalf. For Owen, the efficacy of Christ's sacrifice, the perfection of His death, the nature of justification, and the application of Christ's benefits were all existentially inseparable salvific realities. Owen postulated that "that which is merited and procured for any one, thereunto he for whom it is procured certainly hath a right. That which is obtained for me is mine in actual right...He obtains for them eternal redemption, Heb. 9:12; purchasing them with his own blood, Acts 20:28."⁹² Owen was adamant in his belief that what Christ procured through His death could not contradict the atonement's original predestinarian purpose, lest His blood were spilled on behalf of those He did not intend to save. All universal ransom claims—whether hypothetical or actual—contradict Owen's robust particularist polemic displayed in his Christological use of Acts 20:28 from 1642 to the mid 1650s.⁹³ Against the proponents of general ransom, Owen was in good company not only in Britain but also on the Continent. Prominent Reformed orthodox contemporaries in Owen's time set forth identical arguments on the Continent against universalist soteriology. One such Calvinist contemporary was Francis Turretin (1623–1687), a towering representative of Genevan Reformed theology.⁹⁴ In his famous *The substitutionary Atonement of Christ*, he utilizes the traditional scholastic distinction "that Christ died sufficiently for all, but efficiently for the elect only."⁹⁵ "This is perfectly true" he goes on to state,

92. *Works*, 10:467.

93. See Carl R. Trueman's chapter in *From Heaven He Came and Sought Her*.

94. Turretin, *The Substitutionary Atonement*, 316, Kindle; Post-Reformation Digital Library, accessed November 4, 2020, http://www.prdl.org/author_view.php?a_id=50.

95. As noted by some Reformed historical theologians such as William Cunningham and Louis Berkhoff, the scholastic distinction that Christ died *sufficienter pro omnibus, efficaciter pro electis* has been revised by the Reformed since Calvin to avoid the misunderstanding that Christ intended universal redemption in his death. William Cunningham, *Historical Theology: A Review of the Principal Doctrinal Discussions in the Christian Church Since the Apostolic Age*, vol. 2 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1864), 332; Louis Berkhof, *Vicarious Atonement through Christ* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1936), 176. The relation between

if it be understood of the dignity of Christ's death.... The pivot on which the controversy turns is, what was the purpose of the Father in sending the Son to die... It is said that Christ 'hath purchased the church [or his flock] with his own blood' (Acts 20:28; Ephesians 5:26–27). If Christ died for every one of Adam's posterity, why should the Scriptures so often restrict the object of his death to a few?⁹⁶

Acts 20:28 in Owen's Polemics for the Intrinsic Sufficiency of Christ's Satisfaction, 1655–1684

Despite the sharp soteriological disagreements that characterized Baxter and Owen's relationship, their arguments were considered within the confines of Reformed orthodoxy.⁹⁷ However, Owen's engagement with the Socinian heresy had another tone,⁹⁸ as seen in his subsequent Christological publication *Vindicae Evangelicae* (1655). Thus, a radical development is noticed in Owen's Christological use of Acts 20:28 from 1655 to his most mature polemical literary activity in the 1680s. After Owen was commissioned by Parliament to disprove the Socinian heresy, his Christological use of Acts 20:28 served a more fundamental polemical goal due to the severity of the Unitarian heresy. The Socinians denied Christ's theanthropic composition, and thus His death's intrinsic sufficiency, whereas universalists attributed inefficacy to Christ's atonement by asserting a general ransom theory.⁹⁹ Owen's apologetic against universalists from 1642–1655 aimed to defend the value of Christ's blood for the exact fulfillment of its original intent. The Socinian question was whether His blood had any redemptive

the universal propitiation and universal intrinsic sufficiency has been debated since the Reformation between Lutherans, Semi-Pelagians, Arminians, and Calvinistic universalists. See Cunningham, *Historical theology*, 300–60; Berkhof, *Vicarious Atonement*, 151–79. In Medieval times, Aquinas was already answering objections raised by some who rejected the efficacy of Christ's sacrifice based on the damnation of the non-elect. Aquinas answers by stating that "Christ's Passion was sufficient and superabundant satisfaction for the sins of the whole human race," albeit it "works its effect in them to whom it is applied." Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, STh., III q.49 a.3 resp-STh., III q.49 a.3 ad 1. For Owen's discussion on the subject, see *Works*, 10:295–96.

96. Turretin, *Substitutionary Atonement*, 1664–1689, Kindle. See Turretini, *François. De satisfactione Christi disputationes* (Netherlands: Fredericum Haring, 1696), 7.

97. See Jonathan Moore's discussion on English hypothetical universalism and Reformed confessions in *Drawn into Controversie*, 143–48.

98. See *Works*, 4:249; 7:27–28; Toon, *The Correspondence of John Owen*, 132.

99. Owen mentions a "division and separation" of Socinianism "from the reformed churches" in Poland in 1562. *Works*, 12:20–21.

value at all, for, according to Owen, Socinians make "the cross of Christ of none effect."¹⁰⁰

What was the role of the intrinsic sufficiency of Christ's satisfaction in Owen's Christological apologetic against Socinian Unitarianism? Was Christ's humiliation a mere moralistic venture or the fulfillment of a redemptive intra-Trinitarian covenant? How did the Socinians' rejection of Christ's dual nature distort the salvific teleology of the atonement? Moreover, what were the fundamental counterarguments of British and Continental Reformed orthodox representatives? These questions have been answered satisfactorily by scholars elsewhere.¹⁰¹ However, for the present chronological analysis of Owen's use of Acts 20:28, it is proper to chart his answers to these questions from his Christological particularist apologetic. Major works such as *Vindiciae Evangelicae* (1655), *The Doctrine of Justification* (1677), and *Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews* (1668–1684) must receive special attention; other works that follow the same line of apologetical argumentation will also be cited. Owen's apologetical arguments must also be compared with prominent Reformed orthodox predecessors and contemporary scholars to improve the framework with which one understands his arguments' intellectual context. One such scholar was the Puritan divine John Prideaux (1578–1650), Regius Professor of Divinity at Oxford¹⁰² from 1615 to 1642, who vehemently opposed Socinianism.

100. *Works*, 23:314. According to Jan Rhols, Socinian Unitarianism received credal denunciation as early as 1618–1619 at the Synod of Dort. Martin Mulso and Jan Rhols, *Socinianism and Arminianism: Antitrinitarians, Calvinists and Cultural Exchange in Seventeenth-Century Europe*, Brill's Studies in Intellectual History 134 (Netherlands: Brill, 2005), 44; Mortimer, *Reason and Religion*, 44–50. This denunciation came a decade after the first Latin publication of the Racovian Catechism—by its relation to Arminianism. Earl Morse Wilbur, *A History of Unitarianism: Socinianism and its Antecedents* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1945), 171. In 1614, James I had already burned a copy of the Racovian Catechism in London, though his act of repulsion did not prevent Socinianism's rapid spread. Mortimer, *Reason and Religion*, 39.

101. Richard W Daniels, *The Christology of John Owen*. (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2004), 97–146; H. John McLachlan, *Socinianism in Seventeenth-Century England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1951); Carl R Trueman, *The Claims of Truth: John Owen's Trinitarian Theology* (Kiribati: Paternoster Press, 1998).

102. John Prideaux, *A Synopsis of Counsels*, Oxford (printed by A. and L. Lichfield, printers to the university, 1671), Title-page; Matthew, H. C. G., Brian Harrison, and British Academy, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography: In Association with the British Academy: From the Earliest times to the Year 2000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 343. There is not much secondary literature published on Prideaux (All manuscripts related to Dr. Prideaux are obtained from PRDL database, accessed from October 17–23, 2020

Almost all of Prideaux's sermons conclude with a Trinitarian doxology to "pater in Filio per Spiritum Sanctum, Cui Individue Trinitati sit Regnum, potentia & gloria in sacula seculorum."¹⁰³ He believes Christ to be the Creator and God "to whom all the types and sacrifices of the law made reference."¹⁰⁴ Like in Owen's Christological apologetic, Acts 20:28 is referenced as a definitive text in favoring the Reformed view of the atonement. Prideaux states, "The Incarnation was most agreeable to the second person in the Trinity... This only is Sufficient to make good these harder speeches in appearance. God hath purchased the Church with his owne blood!

(http://www.prld.org/author_view.php?a_id=467). The available manuscripts of his surviving works point to his high Calvinism. According to Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, he was a prominent Reformed scholar, chaplain to King James and Charles I (though vehemently opposing Laud's Arminian innovations; Prideaux, ONDB, 343–44). For a survey of Prideaux's influence in Oxford during the 1630s, see: Charles Edward Mallet, *A History of the University of Oxford*, (England: Methuen, 1927), 1: 259–65. Prideaux preceded the more famous Calvinist Conformist Robert Sanderson (1587–1663; ONDB, 344). Peter G. Lake, "Serving God and the Times: The Calvinist Conformity of Robert Sanderson," *The Journal of British Studies* 27, no. 2 (April 1988): 81–116. Sanderson taught at Oxford during the years of the Civil War (1642–1648). (http://www.prld.org/author_view.php?a_id=488, accessed 11/20/2020). According to Peter Lake, Sanderson was a Calvinist who "also hated Puritanism" and "cooperated enthusiastically with the Laudian regime" in the 1630s. Lake, *Serving God and the Times*, 81. According to Shuger, Sanderson was seized by parliamentary forces in 1644 and released in 1646, in which year he retook his professorship at Oxford. Shuger, *Stuart England*, 230–31. Lake proves that, more towards the end of his life, Sanderson seemed to have repudiated his "long-lasting commitment to Calvinist Orthodoxy." Lake, *Serving God and the Times*, 113. However, Lake describes him as "a moderate Calvinist." *Serving God and the Times*, 114. Despite his Royalism, Laudian ties, and post-Restoration allegiance to Charles II, scholars such as Peter Lake have asserted Sanderson's subscription to essential Calvinistic doctrine. Lake, *Serving God and the Times*, 103–108.

103. "The Father in the Son through the Holy Spirit, to whom the Trinity is the Kingdom, power and glory for ever and ever." John Prideaux, *Concio habita Oxoniae ad artium baccalaureos in die Cinerum* (Iohannes Lichfield & Gulielmus Turner academiae typographi: 1626), 40, <https://books.google.com/books?id=nvpAVXENF2gC&printsec=frontcover#v=onepage&q&f=false>. For other examples, see John Prideaux, *The Great Prophets Advent—sermon on John 6:14*, 28; John Prideaux, *Reverence to Rulers*, 29. All other sermons of Dr. Prideaux cited in this work are part of a collection included in *Christ's Counsell For Ending Law Cases: as it has bene delivered in two sermons upon the five and twentieth verse of the fifth of Matthew* (Oxford: Imprinted by Leonard Lichfield, 1636). Digitalized by Princeton Theological Seminary, accessed through *Early English Books Online*.

104. Prideaux, *A Christmas Free Will Offering as it was Delivered in a Sermon on Christmas day at Christ's Church in Oxford*, 7. For Prideaux's defense of Calvin's threefold offices of Christ, see Prideaux, *A Christmas Free Will Offering*, 1–2; Prideaux, *The Draught of the Brooke*, 18.

Acts 20:21" (Prideaux quotes Acts 20:28 but cites it as Acts 20:21).¹⁰⁵ Prideaux's defense of Christ's person is far from being an exclusive Christological claim that had no bearing on his doctrine of salvation. Like Owen, Prideaux understood how the Socinian's denial of Christ's deity rendered the atonement a mere example of messianic humiliation, which accomplished no merit or satisfaction on behalf of the elect. Hence, Prideaux warns of "how dangerously doth *Socinus* take vantage by affirming, that Christ so meriting for himselfe, served his own turne only, and not ours, in that behalfe, and therefore his doings, and sufferings were only exemplary for our imitation, not satisfactory for our redemption."¹⁰⁶

Owen was in the early years of his adolescence when Prideaux aimed to dismantle "some Heretiques that opposed our Savior's deity...which by the Arians heretofore, and now by the Socinians is eagerly and perfidiously opposed."¹⁰⁷ Prideaux's efforts in the 1620s–1630s obtained some success, albeit not sufficient to eradicate the Polish anti-Trinitarian sect. "In 1654 the commands of the Council of State were laid upon Owen to undertake the refutation of Socinianism...in the following year the '*Vindiciae Evangelicae*' appeared."¹⁰⁸ Owen writes *Vindiciae* as an apology against those "who of old opposed the doctrine of the Trinity, especially of the deity of Christ, his person and natures."¹⁰⁹ In the preface, Owen refers to "our Doctor Prideaux,"¹¹⁰ citing his *Lectiones de Justificatione*, where he endorses Harmanus Ravenspergerus's work written against Hugo Grotius's *Defensio Fidei Catholicae de Satisfactione Christi, adversus Faustum Socinum Senensem*.¹¹¹ Not surprisingly, in *Vindiciae*, Acts 20:28 is used seven times: three times in defense of the intrinsic sufficiency of Christ's death—denouncing

105. Prideaux, *A Christmas Will Offering*, 8–9.

106. Prideaux, *The Draught of the Brooke*, 16. The influence of Calvin on Prideaux is evidenced by his frequent quotation of the Magisterial Reformers. Here, he references Calvin's exposition of Christ's satisfaction "in the 17. Chap. Of the 2d of his Institutions" to strengthen his case against Socinians. The human nature of Christ alone, argued Prideaux, "falls short of the infinite reward...Our men rightly ascribe all the merit to the person, consisting of both natures, where the humane is advanced to that pitch of dignity, by union with the God-head, which makes the merit infinite." Prideaux, *The Draught of the Brooke*, 17.

107. Prideaux, *The Great Prophets Advent*, 26.

108. *Works*, 12:3–4.

109. *Works*, 12:12.

110. *Works*, 12:27.

111. "Defence of the Catholic faith on the Satisfaction of Christ against Faustus Socinus of Senene," *Works*, 12:27. PRDL.org does not list this work to which Owen refers (http://www.prdl.org/author_view.php?a_id=441, accessed October 25, 2020).

“Mr. B’s” (Biddle) denial of Trinitarian doctrine, the eternal generation of the Son, His incarnation, and the hypostatic union¹¹²—and three other times showing the efficacy of Christ’s satisfaction by virtue of His merits as the God-man.¹¹³ “Because he did it who was God and man,” says Owen, “and as God and man, God is said to ‘redeem his church with his own blood’ Acts 20:28.”¹¹⁴

An additional development in his Christological use of Acts 20:28 is seen in Owen’s apologetic for the essentialness of Christ’s dual nature as the foundation of His efficacious sacrifice. In *The Doctrine of Justification* (1677), Christ’s intrinsic sufficiency was evoked as an essential component of the believer’s justification by the imputation of Christ’s righteousness. Owen writes against Socinians who “destroy the merit of Christ”¹¹⁵ by denying His deity and, consequently, His right and ability as the mediator of the covenant to impute His active obedience to those for whom He substitutes.¹¹⁶ Owen mentions Acts 20:28 to defend the Reformed orthodox position that the value of justification by the imputation of Christ’s righteousness depended on His hypostatic union. Indeed, “the mediators obedience was the obedience of his person; for ‘God redeemed his church with his own blood,’ Acts 20:28... his acts who was that person, and whose power of operation was a property of his person. Wherefore, the obedience of Christ, which we plead to have been for us was the obedience of the Son of God.”¹¹⁷ The same Christological apologetic, exegetically based on Acts 20:28, appears in all of Owen’s other major Christological publications, such as *A Brief Declaration* (1669),¹¹⁸ *Cristologia* (1679),¹¹⁹ and *Meditations and Discourses on the Glory of Christ* (1684).¹²⁰

For the purpose of this research, Owen’s life project, “which marked the climax of his post-Restoration writing career,”¹²¹ and became “one of the

112. *Works*, 12:74–75; 12:210; 12:249. The seventh instance is in 12:338.

113. *Works*, 12:432; 12:556; 12:627.

114. *Works*, 12:432.

115. *Works*, 5:165.

116. Meyers, *God, Owen, and Justification*, 79–82.

117. *Works*, 5:255.

118. *Works*, 2:382; 2:416; 2:430. For Owen’s ecclesiological use of Acts 20:28, see *Works*, 15:88; 15:128–129; 15:159; 15:235; 15:250; 15:276; 15:280–281; 15:306; 15:355–356; 15:438; 15:483; 7:186; 16:45; 16:75, 16:105; 16:106; 4:447; 4:493; 4:508; 22:107; 22:195.

119. *Works*, 1:47–48; 1:99; 1:224–225; 2:51.

120. *Works*, 1:327.

121. John W. Tweeddale, “John Owen’s Commentary on Hebrews in Context,” in *The*

most exhaustive... polemical and pastoral treatises of seventeenth century Puritanism,"¹²² deserves special attention. Given its status as the most voluminous Reformed commentary in Early Modern history,¹²³ Owen's most mature Christological treatise,¹²⁴ *Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews*, must be set apart from his other works for analysis. Crawford Gribben notes how in Owen's first manuscript entitled *Tractatu de sacerdotio Christi*—which he never published—he developed “what appear to be its principal themes through much of his later writing—including the Reformed view of the work of Christ.”¹²⁵ Indeed, the masterpiece of Owen's Christological apologetic is displayed in his only biblical commentary.

The first volume of *Hebrews* came out in 1668, and the last was published posthumously in 1684. The subject matter of Owen's most notable exegetical achievement was—as described in the subtitle—“the doctrine of the person, office and work of the Messiah.” To the end of his publishing career, he believed “the greatest opposition that ever was made among Christians unto the doctrine of the priesthood of Christ, or rather unto the office itself, is that which at this day is managed by the Socinians.”¹²⁶ Hence one of his principal aims in all four volumes is to discredit Socinian Unitarian heresy, which distorted the whole of Christian doctrine, particularly the value and merits of Christ's satisfaction. At this point in his publishing career, Owen's sharp polemical astuteness and exceptional literary skill come together in a careful selection of arguments and texts to defuse opponents of Reformed particularism.

Ashgate Research Companion to John Owen's Theology, ed. Kelly M. Kapic and Mark Jones (Farnham, Surrey, England; Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate, 2012), 52.

122. Tweeddale, “Hebrews in Context,” 55.

123. Robert Keith McGregor Wright, *John Owen's great high Priest: The Highpriesthood of Christ in the theology of John Owen, (1616–1683)* (Denver: University of Denver, 1989), 177–78.

124. John W. Tweeddale's comment that Owen “is generally not remembered as a biblical exegete” is striking given his authorship of *Hebrews*—the most extensive British biblical commentary of the early modern period. John W. Tweeddale, *John Owen and Hebrews: The Foundation of Biblical Interpretation*, T&T Clark Studies in English Theology (London: T & T Clark, 2019), 2. Dr. Tweeddale affirms the need for a reappraisal of Owen's theological legacy. He seeks to review his work from the lenses of his commentary on Hebrews. Tweeddale, *John Owen and Hebrews*, 27–52. As stated by Tweeddale, “The history of biblical interpretation, particularly in the seventeenth century, is a growing but still relatively uncultivated field of research.” Hence, the need to assess Owen's interpretation of Acts 20:28 in light of his pre-critical exegetical methodology and epistemological presuppositions.

125. Gribben, *John Owen*, 42–43.

126. *Works*, 18:17; 20:305–306.

Not surprisingly, Acts 20:28 has five occurrences in his exposition of Hebrews 1:1–2 alone.¹²⁷ We find another four occurrences in chapters 2 and 3, eight occurrences from chapters 4–7, seven occurrences in chapter 9, and three occurrences in chapter 13. Albeit Acts 20:28 is sometimes conjoined to other texts, in many cases, Owen singles out the passage as an essential proof text in his case for the intrinsic sufficiency of Christ's satisfaction. In his exposition of Chapter 2:2–4, many texts are mentioned to describe the character of the death of Christ (Philippians 2:8; Hebrews 2:10; 1 Peter 1:18–19). Owen uses Acts 20:28 to conclude and sum up the main idea of all the other texts. "And therein," says Owen, "God redeemed his church with his own blood," Acts 20:28.¹²⁸

In his exposition of Hebrews 2:9, Owen contrasted and compared available variants and Syriac copies to establish the most reliable translation of ὅπως χάριτι Θεοῦ ὑπὲρ παντὸς γεύσεται θανάτου (so that by the grace of God for everyone he might taste death). Owen argued that some copies read, "For God himself by his grace tasted death." He indicates how some take his version to be a Nestorian distortion since it reads that Jesus "by the grace of God might taste of death for all." The Nestorians "would not grant that God might be said to die, contrary to Acts 20:28."¹²⁹ This is the only text Owen mentions to affirm that God's blood was spilled by virtue of Christ's oblation. In the words of Herman Witsius, it was "not the blood of a mere man, but 'the blood of God' was shed."¹³⁰ Similarly, Matthew Poole's exegesis of Acts 20:28 in his famous *Annotations Upon the Holy Bible* demonstrates how the dignity of Christ's sacrifice is dependent upon His nature. He defends that the blood of Christ can be "called truly the blood of God there being in Christ two natures in one person, and a communion of the properties of each nature." "If Christ had not been man," Poole states, "he could have had no blood to shed: had he not

127. John 1:1 is mentioned numerous times (*Works*, 18:217; 19:60; 20:7) as a proof text for Christ's deity (as in the case of 1 Tim. 3:16), but not as proof of the dignity and value of Christ's sacrifice (21:258; 21:355; 23:402). Other texts Owen frequently employed throughout his career in favor of limited atonement, such as Mark 10:45 (20:360; 23:402), Heb 2:17 (19:202; 20:360; 21:403), and Isa. 53:12 (22:288; 3:231) do not qualify as a proof-text of the intrinsic sufficiency of Christ's death, based on the dignity of His nature.

128. *Works*, 20:36.

129. *Works*, 20:322. See also 21:415, 422; 21:528–529; 22:340; 22:452–453; 22:534.

130. Herman Witsius and Donald Fraser, *Sacred Dissertations, on What is Commonly Called the Apostles' Creed*, vol. 1 (Edinburgh: A. Fullarton & Co, 1823), 271.

been God, the blood which he shed could not have been a sufficient price of redemption."¹³¹

Owen's use of this text communicates a mystery in his mind. He acknowledges that only the flesh is capable of suffering, "but he suffered who *was the Son of God*, and as he was the Son of God, or God could not have 'redeemed the church with his own blood,' Acts 20:28."¹³² Owen's argument in his exposition of Hebrews 4:14 is similar. He states that since "every high Priest... is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices to God," Jesus must have something to offer. "The Divine nature or Person are not to be offered," says Owen, for "God cannot be a sacrifice, though he who is God was so to be."¹³³ After explaining how all other temporal options for the atonement of the elect would "have been a provocation unto God," Owen justifies Christ's incarnation through His exclusive qualification as the atoning sacrifice for the elect. "Wherefore, this Son of God became Jesus" Owen argues, "this by its *oneness* with our nature... was meet to be offered for us; and by its union with his person was meet and able to make atonement with God for us; and so 'God redeemed his church with his own blood,' Acts 20:28."¹³⁴ Owen singles out this text to make the same argument repeatedly in the book of Hebrews: that though His death was not of the whole person, "the Son of God died, whence God is said to 'redeem his church with his own blood,' Acts 20:28."¹³⁵ Owen also consistently singles out Acts 20:28 in Hebrews as the authority for his doctrine of the efficacy of Christ's work, based on the dignity of His person. Owen states,

The excellency and efficacy of his sacrifice is hereby demonstrated, that through him our faith and hope may be in God. He who offered

131. Matthew Poole, *Annotations upon the Holy Bible. Wherein the Sacred Text is Inserted, and various Readings Annex'd, Together with the Parallel Scriptures...* / by the Late Reverend and Learned Divine Mr. Matthew Poole (London: 1696), at Acts 20:28. For Augustine's view, see Novatian, "A Treatise of Novatian concerning the Trinity", in *Fathers of the Third Century: Hippolytus, Cyprian, Novatian, Appendix*, ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, e A. Cleveland Coxe, trans. Robert Ernest Wallis, vol. 5, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* (Buffalo, N.Y.: Christian Literature Company, 1886), 636.

132. *Works*, 21:528–29.

133. John Owen, *Exercitations on the Epistle to the Hebrews, Concerning the Priesthood of Christ Wherein the Original, Causes, Nature, Prefigurations, and Discharge of that Holy Office, are Explained and Vindicated: With a Continuation of the Exposition on the Third, Fourth, and Fifth Chapters of Said Epistle to the Hebrews* (London: 1674), 309.

134. *Works*, 21:414–15; see also, 21:422.

135. John Owen, *Exposition on the Third, Fourth, and Fifth Chapters of Said Epistle to the Hebrews*, 309.

this sacrifice was “the only-begotten of the Father,” the eternal Son of God. That which he offered was “his own blood.” “God purchased his church with his own blood,” Acts 20:28. How unquestionable, how perfect must the atonement be that was thus made! how glorious the redemption that was procured thereby.¹³⁶

In his exposition of Hebrews 3:3–6, Owen founded the church’s existence upon the work of Christ as God based on two texts. Though 1 John 3:16 is referenced, the weight of the argument is made on the basis of Acts 20:28, since 1 John 3:16 mentions the death of Christ but is not a proof-text for His deity. Hence, we see the notable use of this text as an encapsulation of Owen’s robust atonement theology in his Christological apologetic. Indeed, a chronological analysis of Owen’s Christological use of Acts 20:28 in his apologetic against Socinians from 1655 to his last publication points unambiguously to

the true excellency and efficacy of the blood of Christ in his sacrifice was from his divine person, whereby “God purchased his church with his own blood,” Acts 20:28... The dignity of his person gave efficacy unto his office and offering. No other person, in the discharge of the same offices that were committed unto him, could have saved the church; and therefore all those by whom his divine person is denied do also evacuate his offices. By what they ascribe unto them, it is impossible the church should be either sanctified or saved. They resolve all into a mere act of sovereign power in God; which makes the cross of Christ of none effect.¹³⁷

Conclusion

Owen’s life-long zeal to defend the intrinsic sufficiency and limited extent of the atonement through his Christological use of Acts 20:28 is thus proven. From 1642 to the mid 1650s, Owen’s primary apologetical task concerning Christ’s atonement was to root out the influence of Arminian universalism from British soil; thus, his Christological use of this Scripture in these early years reinforced his strict Reformed particularism, even against hypothetical universalists such as Richard Baxter in the 1650s. After Parliament named Owen as the polemicist *par excellence* against Socinians in 1655, Owen employed the same Scripture to uphold the value of Christ’s death based on his theanthropic nature, until the very end of his

136. *Works*, 23:281. For other examples, see 23:314; 23:273; 23:392.

137. *Works*, 23:273; 23:314. See also, 23:369, 392.

publishing career in 1683. Thus a chronological analysis of Owen's Christological use of Acts 20:28 charts a polemical development that reinforced his defense of limited atonement from 1642 to the mid 1650s, and the intrinsic sufficiency of Christ's death from *Vindicae* (1655) to his publication of *Hebrews* in 1684. Owen's arguments are echoed by towering British and Continental Reformed orthodox representatives. It was "God's own blood, Acts 20:28," says Owen. "The Lord Jesus, out of his incomprehensible love unto his people, would spare nothing, avoid nothing, deny nothing, that was needful unto their sanctification, their reconciliation, and dedication unto God.—He did it 'with his own blood.'"¹³⁸ Owen's Christological use of Acts 20:28, in his particularist apologetic, effectively refuted the universalist's and Socinian's opposition to the Reformed particularistic view of Christ's sacrifice. From his earliest publication to his more mature post-Restoration works, Owen's Christological use of Acts 20:28 consistently reaffirms his apologetic for the limited extent and intrinsic sufficiency of Christ's satisfaction.

138. *Works*, 24:445–46.