SJT 63(1): 1–23 (2010)
doi:10.1017/S0036930609990196
© Scottish Journal of Theology Ltd 2010

Is universalism a problem for particularists?

Oliver Crisp
Theology and Religious Studies, University of Bristol, Bristol BS6 1TB, UK
oliver.crisp@bristol.ac.uk

Abstract

In a previous article entitled 'Augustinian Universalism', I argued that the principles of Augustinianism are compatible with universalism. For those who reason to Augustinianism on the basis of biblical-theological arguments, this may not be terribly troubling. However, if the logic of Augustinianism is consistent with universalism this sets up an Augustinian problem of evil. For if God could have created a world where all would have been saved, but did not, this calls divine benevolence into question. In this article, I set out to rebut Augustinian universalism by arguing that there are good theological reasons for thinking God does not bring about the salvation of all humanity.

Contrary to popular belief, the internal logic of traditional Augustinianism is in fact compatible with a version of universalism.[1] Augustinians usually claim that only a particular group of humanity less than the total number of human beings (the elect) is the object of special divine grace and will be saved. The rest of humanity is only the object of common grace, and will not be saved (the reprobate). But, if Augustinianism is compatible with universalism, then this need not be the case: all human beings could be the objects of special divine grace. In which case, all are saved; none will be rejected. Naturally, most Augustinians will disallow such reasoning on the basis of their understanding of the biblical-theological case upon which their argument stands or falls. However, some in the Augustinian tradition embrace universalism, even claiming it is perfectly in accord with scripture.[2] But for the majority of Augustinians who do reject universalism there is an

[1] For an argument to this conclusion, see Oliver D. Crisp, 'Augustinian Universalism', in *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 53 (2003), pp. 127–45.

[2] The best known historical example of this is, of course, Friedrich Schleiermacher, who argued for theological determinism and universalism. See Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, trans. and ed. H. R. Macintosh and James Stewart (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1928), pp. 550–1. See also Eric Reitan, 'Sympathy for the Damned: Schleiermacher's Critique of the Doctrine of Limited Salvation', *Southwest Philosophy Review* 18 (2002), pp. 201–12. There is a lively discussion in the current biblical, theological and philosophical literatures on the viability of universalism. Representative samples include Richard H. Bell, 'Rom 5.18–19 and Universal Salvation', *New Testament Studies*,

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0036930609990196 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Augustinian problem of evil to face. If God could, on the basis of Augustinian principles, have elected all humanity to salvation and did not, God does not appear to be good.

But is universalism a problem for those who believe that not all of humanity is the object of special (that is, saving) divine grace? In this article, I shall explore two ways in which an Augustinian could rebut the argument of Augustinian universalism, in order to show that God may well have good reason for rejecting some of humanity. One of these rebuttals, which depends upon the idea that faith is a necessary condition for salvation, is unsuccessful; the other is, I think, a successful rejoinder to the Augustinian universalist thesis, although it does require a modification to the traditional understanding of the nature of hell. In closing I suggest that a further modification to, or clarification of, the way in which Augustinians think divine justice is displayed in the created order, may offer an additional, or supporting reason for the traditional Augustinian soteriology. Thus there is at least one good argument against an Augustinian version of universalism.

Some initial distinctions

I shall begin by making clear some of the terms of the argument. Let 'the elect' refer to that group of human beings who are the objects of special divine grace, who will be saved – perhaps all humanity, perhaps only some. The notion of election we shall use does not specify the proportion of humanity that comprises the elect. And let 'the reprobate' refer to those humans who are only objects of common grace, and who will ultimately be rejected by God. Once again, this does not specify the number of reprobates. It is conceivable that no one is numbered among the elect apart from Christ.[3] All humanity could be the objects of common divine grace, but not special divine grace. However, I take it that this is not a live option in Christian theism. For present purposes, 'special grace' refers to the grace conferred on a particular individual by God that ensures their salvation. 'Common grace' refers to that grace supplied by God to all humanity, including such things as being created and sustained by God, having and enjoying the pleasures

48 (2002), pp. 417–32; Keith DeRose, 'Universalism and the Bible' located at: <http://pantheon.yale.edu/~kd47/univ.htm>; Gregory MacDonald, *The Evangelical Universalist* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2006); and Robin Parry and Chris Partridge (eds), *Universalism: The Current Debate* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2003).

[3] This claim should be distinguished from Barth's view that Christ is the Elect One and humanity as a whole is somehow derivatively elect 'in' him. My claim here is just that the set of the elect could comprise one member only: Christ. Then no one else would be elect; everyone else would be damned. See Karl Barth, *CD* II/2, p. 123, and Oliver D. Crisp 'On Barth's Denial of Universalism', *Themelios* 29 (2003), pp. 18–29.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0036930609990196 Published online by Cambridge University Press

and beauty of the created order, and so on. In this way, the elect are the objects of common and special grace, whilst those who are reprobate are only the objects of common grace. In addition, let 'universalism' refer to any one of that family of arguments which maintains that (a) God is essentially good, and (b) as a result of this, will bring about or ensure that all human beings are ultimately saved.[4] Furthermore, let us call the view that salvation is restricted to an elect number of human beings less than the total number of humanity 'particularism' or 'particular salvation', since the idea here is that salvation is effective only for that group of humans (less than the totality of humanity) whom God has elected to be the objects of his special grace. In this way it is particular to these people, and these people only.[5]

In the recent philosophical literature, universalist theories have usually been distinguished as either necessary, or contingent. Necessary universalism is the view that it is not merely true, but necessarily true that all humanity will ultimately be reconciled to God. Contingent universalism is the view that it is merely true as a matter of contingent fact that all humanity will ultimately be reconciled to God.[6] There are problems with contingent universalism. Jonathan Kvanvig claims that contingent universalism fails because it only modally masks the moral problem of hell. That is, contingent universalism means that, as a matter of contingent fact, in the actual world, no one will be damned; all people will be ultimately saved. But, if universalism is merely a contingent fact, a fact that obtains in this world, but might not have obtained had things been different, then there are some possible worlds where not everyone is saved and some people do end up in hell. In which case, the moral problem of hell remains, albeit in a counterfactual form.

There are other problems in the neighbourhood of this one. For instance, it would appear that the contingent universalist cannot ensure the consequence

[4] Compare Trevor Hart who cites with approval Richard Bauckham as saying, 'Only the belief that ultimately all men will be saved is common to universalists. The rationale for that belief and the total theological content in which it belongs vary considerably.' *Themelios* 4 (1979), p. 49, cited in Hart, 'Universalism: Two Distinct Types', in Nigel Cameron (ed.), *Universalism and the Doctrine of Hell* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1992), p. 2. It is true that there are numerous arguments for the conclusion of universal salvation. But my interest is in the logical form of these arguments, not in the variety of arguments themselves. Different arguments for universalism share a common logical form.

[5] Of course, universalism is 'particularist'. A universalist could claim that salvation is particularly and effectively applied to all humanity. But theologians usually reserve the term 'particularist' for those who maintain that salvation refers to an elect less than the totality of humanity. This theological convention governs the way the term is used in what follows.

[6] See Jonathan L. Kvanvig, *The Problem of Hell* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 74, for these characterisations of necessary and contingent universalism.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0036930609990196 Published online by Cambridge University Press

of his or her position. It simply does not follow from a contingent matter of fact that all people will, *inevitably*, be saved. For how can this outcome be assured if it is contingent on, say, the libertarian free choices of human beings? And if the inevitable salvation of all cannot be guaranteed, then I fail to see how contingent universalism is truly a version of *universalism*. As John Hick, himself a contingent universalist, admits:

> The customary proof of universalism runs as follows: The God whom we worship is a God of love, whose gracious purpose is to save all men. God's relation to the universe, as its creator and ruler, is such that he is able to fulfil his purposes. Therefore all men will in the end be saved. However, confronting this reasoning is an equally perspicuous disproof. This does not deny the premises that it is God's loving purpose to save all men. But it adds another premise that apparently prohibits us from drawing the universalist conclusion. This additional premise is that God has endowed us with a genuine freedom, so that we cannot be saved without our own positive and voluntary response to him.

From which argument, Hick draws the following conclusion:

> It therefore remains possible that some will fail to co-operate and will instead become so hardened in a self-enclosed blindness as never to respond to God. Accordingly, we are not entitled to make the positive affirmation that all *will* eventually be saved.[7]

If this is right, then it counts against contingent universalism being a version of universalism at all.[8] Perhaps it would be better if those who espouse contingent universalism were referred to by some other designation that makes the non-universalism of this position clear. I suggest optimistic particularism. It seems to me that necessary universalism is not subject

[7] John Hick, *Death and Eternal Life* (London: Collins 1976), pp. 242–3, author's emphasis.

[8] Some theological libertarians argue that God can foreknow the libertarian choices of human creatures, and bring about a world wherein his creatures make only those choices he foresees will fit with his divine plan. Were this true, the theological libertarian could respond to Hick that God can be sure of the foreseen outcome of creaturely choices even when those choices are contingent. But Michael Rea has recently called this reasoning into question. He argues that libertarians who are presentists about the nature of time (as most theological libertarians are) are faced with a dilemma: either the future is open (God does not know the future choices of free creatures) or no one is free in the way libertarians understand freedom. See Michael C. Rea, 'Presentism and Fatalism', *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 84 (2006), pp. 511–24. Whether Rea is right or not, a theologically libertarian contingent universalist is still subject to the problem of modal masking, enunciated by Kvanvig. And this counts against a theologically libertarian universalism being truly universalist.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0036930609990196 Published online by Cambridge University Press

to these problems. Augustinian universalism is a species of necessary universalism. It is to this sort of argument that I shall address myself in the remainder of this article.

The argument against particularism

Let us begin the argument proper by laying out the case against particularism. For present purposes, I shall be dealing with particularists in the Augustinian tradition. The phrase 'Augustinian tradition' is a term of art. Nevertheless, I think it represents the majority of western classical Christian theologians who have been (a) compatibilists on the question of free will (God determining what comes to pass is compatible with human moral responsibility for their actions), and (b) particularists with respect to salvation. Such Augustinians have traditionally claimed that God restricts the number of elect to some number less than the total number of humanity. Let us call this the *restricted elect view*. It has three parts:

(a) The need for an infinite retributive punishment to be meted out for the sin of those human agents who are fallen.
(b) The need for sin to be atoned for (in Christ's death on the cross) for sinful human agents to be counted among the elect.
(c) The need for the display of both God's grace and mercy and his wrath and justice in his created order.

A few brief comments on each of these three conditions seem to be in order. First, Augustinians claim that divine justice as it bears upon human sin is essentially retributive, rather than reformative in nature, although it may have incidental reformative consequences.[9] A central moral intuition here is that the punishment must fit the crime. Let us say that God is a being of infinite worth and honour. Then a single sin against an infinite being incurs an infinite demerit that is worthy of an infinite punishment. (This sort of argument, found in Anselm and Jonathan Edwards, has been rehearsed in greater detail elsewhere in the literature.[10]) So the fit between

[9] For Augustinians in the Reformed tradition, this is only one aspect of what is called distributive justice, that is, divine justice as it bears upon human sin. The other aspect of distributive justice is renumerative justice, which has to do with the fixing of desert, by God. For standard recapitulations of this point, see William G. T. Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology*, 3rd edn, ed. Alan Gomes (Philipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 2003), pp. 293 ff., and Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1958 [1939]), p. 75.

[10] For more on this and the other comments on the three parts of the restricted elect view, compare Oliver D. Crisp, 'Augustinian Universalism' and 'Divine Retribution: A Defence', *Sophia* 42 (2003), pp. 35–52.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0036930609990196 Published online by Cambridge University Press

crime and punishment means that all human beings are worthy of an infinite punishment by virtue of being sinners. Second, Christ's work (in particular, although not exclusively his work on the cross) is the only means by which human sin can be dealt with. The idea here is that God cannot simply forgive sin, or ignore it, or pretend it never happened, or pass it by.[11] His nature as a holy and just God requires that he deal with sin by punishing sin. Third, both the divine mercy and divine justice must be displayed to all creation in order that the divine nature is vindicated and God is seen to be a good and just being, both gracious and merciful and a just judge of all wrongdoing.

The problem with the constituents of a restricted elect view is that each component can be met on a version of necessary universalism that is compatible with traditional Augustinianism:

(1) God decrees to create and elect all humanity.
(2) God decrees that the mechanism by which the sin of all human agents is atoned for is the death of Christ.
(3) The sin and guilt accruing to all sinful human agents is transferred to Christ, who is punished on their account on the cross.
(4) Thus, all human agents are saved; none are lost, and none are in hell.

This argument is compatible with the restricted elect view for the following reasons. First, all sin is dealt with in an infinite punishment (or a punishment of infinite worth), namely, the punishment Christ suffers on the cross. Assuming that Christ's death has an infinite worth, or at least a worth equal to the atonement of all human agents, Christ's death can atone for the sin of all. But this means that divine justice is meted out: to Christ. God's justice and mercy are displayed in the created order and his name is vindicated, via the death of his Son, whose sacrifice displays the divine wrath against all sin, dealt with by Christ's work. Moreover, Christ's sacrifice also displays divine mercy to all humanity. Thus sin is dealt with and atoned for by Christ's work, and no violence is done to the divine nature in the process.

This seems to be a very serious argument against traditional Augustinian particularism. Without a response to it, Augustinians are left with three possible options. First, they admit defeat, and become necessary universalists. This is, of course, possible. A number of theologians who claim to be in the Augustinian tradition have embraced universalism, although none that I

[11] A qualification: some Augustinian theologians have claimed God could have forgiven sin according to his absolute power (roughly, his power, all things considered), but not according to his ordained power (roughly, his power given his decree to create the world). The early John Owen, and William Twisse, prolocutor to the Westminster Assembly, both held this view.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0036930609990196 Published online by Cambridge University Press

know of have done so via this sort of argument. Almost all who have done so have abandoned one or more constituent of the restricted elect view. My point is that an Augustinian can remain entirely orthodox in their Augustinianism and embrace universalism.[12]

Alternatively, Augustinians could fall back upon a biblical argument in favour of particularism. And this is what Augustinians usually do. However, as was pointed out above, this generates an Augustinian problem of evil: if God could have created a world where he saved all humanity, and he has not done so (because the Bible says he has not), why has he not done so?[13]

A third option is for traditional Augustinians to abandon Augustinianism for some version of theological libertarianism, in which case the problems raised by the restricted elect view do not arise, since, I take it, libertarianism is not consistent with the notion that God ordains and brings about (i.e. ensures) the salvation of anyone.[14] (There is a fourth option: embrace the contradiction. But I take it that this is not a live option for traditional Augustinians who wish to *remain* traditional Augustinians.)

The argument for particularism

So what is the poor Augustinian particularist to do? There are at least two possible ways in which the Augustinian particularist could rebut the argument of Augustinian universalism without giving up either their Augustinianism or their convictions about particularism (convictions which seem to me to be rooted in scripture[15]). Of these two arguments I shall argue that the first fails, but the second succeeds in counteracting the argument of Augustinian universalism. (There may well be other arguments for this

[12] It is sometimes thought that Augustinians believe only a mere remnant of humanity will be saved. This is not true of all Augustinians. Some are much more sanguine about the scope of election, believing the vast majority of humanity will be saved. See, for example, Benjamin Warfield, *The Plan of Salvation*, rev. edn (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1975), pp. 97–8. Compare Paul Helm's essay 'Are they Few that be Saved?', in Cameron (ed.), *Universalism and the Doctrine of Hell* for more on this question.

[13] This point is made in Crisp, 'Augustinian Universalism'.

[14] Some Augustinians, particularly some Calvinists, have claimed to be libertarians. But I shall not discuss this possibility here. Interested readers should consult William Cunningham's essay 'Calvinism and the Doctrine of Philosophical Necessity', in his *The Reformers and the Theology of the Reformation* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1967 [1862]).

[15] I realise that some philosophers and theologians claim that the Bible does not espouse particularism. Most recently, Thomas Talbott has made this claim. However, I do not think that this is terribly plausible. For an example of a New Testament scholar who agrees with me in this matter, see I. Howard Marshall's essay, 'The New Testament does Not Teach Universal Salvation', in Parry and Partridge (eds), *Universal Salvation*.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0036930609990196 Published online by Cambridge University Press

conclusion that I have not encountered or thought of. That is all to the good. My claim is merely that there are two such arguments, one of which seems to be cogent.)

The 'necessity of faith for salvation' argument

The first argument in favour of Augustinian particularism was suggested to me upon reading through book 3 of John Owen's *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ*, although I am not primarily concerned to expound Owen here, and the argument has merit independently of whether or not Owen actually espoused it.

The central requirement of this argument for particularism depends on the notion that faith is a necessary condition for salvation. If salvation cannot be had without faith and many human beings never have faith in Christ, then many human beings are not saved by Christ's work. (Owen uses this reasoning against the Arminian view of the atonement, but I think we may also usefully appropriate it here.) For Augustinians, it would be useless to say that God could effectually procure the salvation of all human beings through the work of Christ, but then not ensure that they all had faith in order to make that effectual salvation effective in the life of the individual human being.[16] So, on this way of thinking, there is a requirement of faith for salvation. God cannot be said to 'save' anyone without ensuring that such a person has appropriated that salvation through the exercise of faith.

Let us call this the *Requirement of faith condition for salvation*, or RF condition for short. The idea here is that faith is a necessary, though not sufficient, condition for salvation that is supplied by God acting upon, or concurrently with, the human agent in choosing salvation. According to most Augustinians, saving faith is regarded as a gift of God's grace, not an action that originates with human choice (see e.g. Ephesians 2:8–9). Even where the gift of saving faith is committed to human beings in a way that involves human action in concurrence with divine action (rather than the divine agent acting upon a passive, or receptive human agent), the point is that human choice alone is insufficient for saving faith. At the very least, on an Augustinian model of salvation, God and the human being in question are both necessary but

[16] Compare John Owen, *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ*, in *The Works of John Owen*, vol. 10, ed. William H. Goold (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1967 [1850–3]), p. 242: 'In brief; an intention of doing good unto any one upon the performance of such a condition as the intender knows is absolutely above the strength of him of whom it is required, – especially if he know that it can no way be done but by his concurrence, and he is resolved not to yield that assistance which is necessary to the actual accomplishment of it – is a vain and fruitless flourish'.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0036930609990196 Published online by Cambridge University Press

only jointly sufficient conditions for saving faith. Some Roman Catholic Augustinians seem to take a view similar to this one (some Thomists, for instance). Other Augustinians advocate a stronger position than this. In fact, Owen's view, in common with other Calvinists, is considerably stronger than this, denying that the human will is able to choose divine grace without the interposition of prevenient divine grace to enable that choice. Be that as it may, my point here is simply to show that, even if an Augustinian were to take the weaker view and allow a concurrence between human choice and divine choice (however that might come about), the human choice is not sufficient for saving faith without the divine will acting upon it.

So, let us assume for the sake of argument that faith in Christ is necessary, but not sufficient for salvation that is supplied by God acting upon, or concurrently with, the human agent in choosing salvation as per the RF condition. Then either God gives faith to all, and all are saved, or he gives faith to some and they are saved, or to none. Owen, and Augustinians who hold the RF condition, say God does not give faith to all, because all are not saved. Many human agents are born and die without any knowledge of Christ and without faith in him. So, according to the logic of his position, these individuals cannot be saved. Perhaps this is true. But how does this rebut Augustinian universalism? Recall that Augustinian universalism says merely that God *could* save all people and that this is consistent with the tenets of Augustinian thinking. The problem Augustinian universalism raises is that God could have brought about a world both Augustinian and universalist, not that he has done so. For the idea here is that if God *could* have done this, he *should* have done this.

In fact, aspects of Owen's argument (or an argument inspired by Owen's thinking) can be incorporated into a version of Augustinian universalism – although, I am sure Owen himself would be appalled at this prospect. We could say God creates an Augustinian universalistic world, and ensures that all human beings attain salvation by faith in Christ. Naturally, not all will do so in this life, because not all people will hear about Christ or have the chance to trust in him. But God could surely ensure that all have such a chance post-mortem. Presumably, God could ensure that all those who have not believed in Christ during this life do so in some post-mortem existence, and are acted upon by divine grace in such an irresistible way that they all (eventually) choose Christ and are saved. There is no element of contingency here as there is with contingent universalism, because God ensures all have a saving faith, as per Ephesians 2:8–9. If a follower of Owen were to respond by saying that, whether God could have done this or not, God has not done this, so such reasoning is idle, then they have missed the point of the Augustinian

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0036930609990196 Published online by Cambridge University Press

universalistic argument. The point is this: if God could have done this, and there is no moral impediment to him doing this, why has he not done so? Hence, the addition of the RF condition to traditional Augustinianism does not rebut Augustinian universalism.

But we might take this Owen-esque argument in a different way. Perhaps saving faith is not a condition of salvation because knowledge of this salvation is not a prerequisite of salvation. In which case, the RF condition is false. We might put it like this: a particular salvific event could be *ontologically necessary* for salvation but not *epistemically necessary* for salvation. Then, Christ's saving work is ontologically necessary for my salvation (his death has to be efficacious for me). But it does not follow from this that I have to know that it is efficacious for me. Famously, Karl Rahner maintained something like this in his 'Anonymous Christianity' version of inclusivism:

> If, however, he [the righteous pagan] has experienced the grace of God – if, in certain circumstances, he has already accepted this grace as the ultimate, unfathomable entelechy [realisation of what was previously only potential] of his existence by accepting the immeasurableness of his dying existence as opening out into infinity – then he has already been given revelation in a true sense even before he has been affected by missionary preaching from without.[17]

Let us call this second line of reasoning the *Inclusivist-Universalist Augustinian argument*, or IUA argument. Perhaps an Augustinian universalist could say that those who do not know and trust Christ may yet be saved via Christ's work, even if they are ignorant of that work.[18] It may be thought that if I do not know that some event is salvific for me, it cannot be salvific for me, since I would not know I was saved. But this is false. Let us say that my wife will treat

[17] Reprinted in David Peterson et al. (eds), *Philosophy of Religion: Selected Readings* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 511. I say Rahner endorsed something like this in his version of inclusivism because it is not clear that his 'Anonymous Christianity' doctrine actually entails that those with no knowledge of Christ will be saved. He seems to think that there is a sort of subconscious or non-conscious knowledge of Christ that means some righteous pagans will be saved, even if that knowledge is never exercised in conscious faith in Christ in this life. I thank Revd Dr Richard Fermer and Dr Karen Kilby for pointing this out to me in conversation.

[18] Objection: Karl Rahner's doctrine is hardly the same as the sort of Calvinism espoused by someone like Owen, and no Calvinist would espouse such a doctrine. Response: consider the case of the nineteenth-century American Presbyterian divine, William G. T. Shedd, who in his book *Calvinism Pure and Mixed* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1986 [1893]), ch. 12, states that a person might have a purely dispositional faith and yet be saved. This sounds remarkably similar to Rahner's suggestion, and Shedd is certainly a doctrinally orthodox Calvinist. He is also not a universalist.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0036930609990196 Published online by Cambridge University Press

me to a special birthday meal at a local restaurant this evening. I, however, am blissfully unaware that she has arranged this. Clearly, my present ignorance of a future birthday treat has no bearing on whether or not my wife will actually treat me to this meal. She will take me out for a meal although I do not know this now, and will not know it until we walk into the restaurant foyer. In a similar fashion, a person's current ignorance of some future salvation has no bearing upon whether he or she is amongst those who will be saved or not.

Transpose this thinking onto the Christian scheme of salvation: A cannibal from Papua New Guinea does not know the great things of the gospel. He eats every missionary sent to him before the poor creatures manage to utter a word about the gospel. And, lacking any other means by which he might come to believe in Christ (he is illiterate, so unable to read the Bibles that the missionaries bring with them), the cannibal dies ignorant of the gospel. Is he damned? According to proponents of the RF condition he is, because he cannot fulfil the RF condition. But why should we concede this? Assume with Augustinian universalism that the cannibal is, like the whole of humanity, amongst the elect, saved via Christ's work. Although he does not know this now, and will not know it in this life, he is one of the elect. To be sure, his salvation will be a great surprise to him when he discovers it. But it could be that he is saved via the salvific event of Christ's work, even if he is ignorant of that work. The point of the proponent of the RF condition is that the only effective way in which a person can be in a position to benefit from the work of Christ is if one is given the faith to participate in the benefits of that work. And, it would seem, he or she does not think a purely dispositional faith will do (that is, a faith that is somehow given to an individual who may be ignorant of the object of faith, and who may never be in a position to exercise that faith – a view that can be found in the writings of several doctrinally orthodox Calvinists[19]). But that need not apply if God actualises a world where the work of Christ just is automatically applied to each individual person whether they are aware of it or not (that is, where conscious faith in Christ is not a requirement of salvation).

[19] See, for example, Shedd, *Calvinism Pure and Mixed*, ch. 12, and Jonathan Edwards, Miscellany 393 in *The 'Miscellanies' (Entry Nos, a–z, aa–zz, 1–500)*, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 13, ed. Thomas A. Schafer (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994). There is considerable scholarly dispute over how to interpret Edwards on this matter. For representative examples of both sides of the dispute, see Anri Morimoto, *Jonathan Edwards and the Catholic Vision of Salvation* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995) and John J. Bombaro, 'Jonathan Edwards' Vision of Salvation', *Westminster Theological Journal* 65 (2003), pp. 45–67.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0036930609990196 Published online by Cambridge University Press

This IUA argument may be stretching the 'Augustinian' component of Augustinian universalism somewhat. It might be thought that someone who takes such a view ceases to be an Augustinian because Augustinians maintain that faith is a necessary condition of salvation. Well, perhaps something like that is right. But then again, perhaps not – at the very least, there are minority voices in the Augustinian tradition, like Jonathan Edwards and William Shedd, who seem to think faith that is exercised (as opposed to dispositional) might not be necessary for salvation. Maybe a weaker version of the IUA view can be made compatible with the biblical claims that faith is a prerequisite of salvation for human beings, adding that this is the normal or conventional, but not necessarily the *only* way in which human beings are saved. Maybe some human beings, like the Old Testament saints, have no saving knowledge of Christ (no conscious faith in Christ), and yet are saved via Christ's work.[20] It seems to me that many Christian theologians would accept this. But this does not denigrate faith. Faith, or rather, a faith that is exercised not merely dispositional, is still the normal means to salvation if one accepts this particular version of IUA universalism. Nor does it mean that, on the basis of such an argument as this, Christians have no reason to proselytise those who are ignorant of salvation since they will be saved whether or not they hear of the gospel. Surely it is better to know you are saved than to be in ignorance of the fact? Surely it is better to know where one is bound rather than to go there blindly? If I was worried about an uncertain future, although, in point of fact and unbeknown to me, my future was secure – and you knew this but did not tell me, though you could have – would we not consider your inaction to be immoral? Yet this is the state of those ignorant of their salvation, according to the IUA argument. And you and I are those able to relieve them of their ignorance.

The point I am making here is that a person could be saved irrespective of whether they knew they were saved or not, not that there is a moral equivalence between being in a state of ignorance about one's salvation and being in a state where one is aware of it.

So, although this IUA argument does require the Augustinian to give up the necessity of the RF condition for human salvation beloved of Augustinians like John Owen, this need not be so great a concession, provided some argument can be mounted to show that those who never hear the gospel and die in ignorance of it might be sufficiently like the Old Testament saints, or

[20] This is just what Shedd claims. Of course, there are other limit cases too. How can severely mentally handicapped people be saved, or children who die in childbirth? If the Augustinian believes that (at least some) such persons will be amongst the elect, then conscious faith in Christ cannot be a requirement for salvation, *contra* Owen.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0036930609990196 Published online by Cambridge University Press

those incapable of conscious faith (e.g. the severely mentally handicapped) who are in just this sort of position with respect to salvation. Thus, for example, William Shedd:

> The Scriptures and the Confession [namely The Westminster Confession] teach that the Divine Spirit exerts his regenerating grace, to some extent, within adult heathendom, making use of conscience . . . as the means of convicting of sin preparatory to imparting the new divine life . . . . This felt need of mercy and desire for it is potentially and virtually faith in the Redeemer. For although the Redeemer has not been presented to him historically and personally as an object of faith, yet the Divine Spirit by the new birth has wrought in him the sincere and longing *disposition* to believe in him.[21]

Owen is not unaware of the sorts of responses that might be made to his position (although he does not respond to exactly the sorts of arguments I have mounted here – and, of course, Shedd postdates Owen in this matter). On the question of the requirement of faith as a necessary condition for salvation, Owen has this to say:

> That unbelief, is it a sin, or is it not? If it be not, how can it be a cause of damnation? If it be, Christ died for it, or he did not. If he did not, then he died not for the sins of all men. If he did, why is this an obstacle to their salvation? Is there any new shift to be invented for this? Or must we be contented with the old, namely, because they do not believe? That is, Christ did not die for their unbelief, or rather, did not by his death remove their unbelief, because they would not believe, or because they would not themselves remove their unbelief; or he died for their unbelief conditionally, that they were not unbelievers. These do not seem to me to be sober assertions.[22]

This passage is rather compressed, so I shall unpack it a little in order to make its structure clear. First, Owen's reasoning depends on the claim that unbelief is a sin and is a cause of damnation. It is a sin because it involves not giving due honour and regard to God. Presumably, unbelief is not the only cause of damnation. Possession of a corrupt moral nature supplied by original sin would be another cause, in fact the very thing that gives rise to unbelief in the first place.

Second, either Christ died for the sinful unbelief of all humanity, or he did not. If, according to Owen, Christ did not die for the sinful unbelief of

[21] Shedd, *Calvinism Pure and Mixed*, pp. 128–9, emphasis original.
[22] Owen, *Works*, vol. 10, p. 249.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0036930609990196 Published online by Cambridge University Press

all humanity, then he did not die for all the sins of all humanity and all are not saved. The reason being that, if Christ had died for the sinful unbelief of all humanity, he would have atoned for the unbelief of all humanity as one of the sins of all human beings, and all humanity would have been saved. But, says Owen, the evidence of scripture and experience show that not all are saved. So Christ did not atone for the sinful unbelief of all humanity.

Alternatively, if Christ did die for the sinful unbelief of all humanity, then all humanity would be saved because he would have atoned for all the sin of humanity, unbelief included. But then, reasons Owen, unbelief would not be an obstacle to salvation, and (presumably) all would be saved (irrespective of their unbelief and whether they continued in their unbelief during this life). But of course, Owen has already said that all are not saved according to scripture and experience. So it cannot be that Christ died for the sinful unbelief of all humanity, irrespective of whether or not all human beings are aware of this fact.

Owen thinks that this counts against the sort of reasoning mounted by his Arminian opponents.[23] But it might also be applied to universalism of an Augustinian kind. Let us do just that.

First, we will presume, in common with Owen (and the majority voice in the Christian tradition) that all of humanity are not saved, so Christ cannot have died to save all of humanity from their sinfulness, including their sinful unbelief, otherwise they would be saved from their sinful condition, including, as one of the constituents of this condition, their unbelief. Then, presumably, Christ dies for their unbelief conditionally, that is conditional upon their accepting Christ, or something of that nature. However it is that Christ does atone for the unbelief of those that do believe in him, and only those (not the whole of humanity), our question is whether or not Owen is correct about this Augustinian form of the problem. And I think he is not correct in this matter. For on Augustinian universalism Christ does atone for unbelief because he atones for all sin. How is it that some human beings go to the grave without knowledge of Christ and are saved? Perhaps because, like the Patriarchs, they go to some post-mortem existence where

[23] The problem for Arminianism as Owen sees it is that if unbelief is a sin (as Arminians would suppose), Christ must atone for it. But then, his atonement is effective for all he came to save. There is not metaphysical room, so to speak, for the Arminians to say that Christ's death is potentially but not actually effective, because this equivocates on whether or not Christ has actually died for the sin of unbelief or not. If he has died for unbelief, as well as all the other sins of those for whom he came to die, then either all are saved (irrespective of whether they believe or not), or only some are saved – and this is brought about by faith. Hence, Owen retains the RF condition and a particular (limited) atonement.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0036930609990196 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Christ is revealed to them in a saving fashion, consistent with theological compatibilism (I am assuming Augustinianism is consistent with theological compatibilism). Or, perhaps conscious faith is not a requirement for salvation and the work of Christ can be applied to all human beings irrespective of whether or not they have conscious faith in Christ (as per Shedd, and, perhaps, Edwards[24]). So, it seems, Owen's case does not offer a convincing argument against Augustinian universalism and in favour of an Augustinian account of particularism.

A new argument for particularism

In the last section of this article, I want to offer a new argument in defence of an Augustinian account of particularism that succeeds where Owen's account does not. The question of whether or not God must create the best possible world is a hoary old chestnut in the philosophy of religion. Philosophers have been divided over the question of whether or not the notion of a best possible world even makes sense, and if it does, whether God has to create the best anyway. I side with Richard Swinburne on this question. He maintains that there can be no best possible world because, for any optimal world we care to imagine, it can always be made better by the addition of one more person (or one less person in some cases), or one more planet, such that the overall objective moral worth of that particular world is greater than the previous world, and so on *ad infinitum*.[25] Swinburne is not alone is his denial of a best possible world thesis. Thomas Aquinas famously denied that there was a single optimal sort of world that God had to create. There are, Thomas argued, an infinite number of possible worlds all compatible with divine goodness, and God could have chosen to bring about any one of them:

> God, in willing his own goodness, wills things other than himself to be insofar as they participate in his goodness. But, since the divine goodness is infinite, it can be participated in, in infinite ways, and in ways other than it is participated in by the creatures that now exist. If, then, as a result of willing his own goodness, God necessarily willed the things that participated in it, it would follow that he would will the existence of an infinity of creatures participating in his goodness in an infinity of ways. This is patently false, because, if he willed them, they would be, since

[24] Neither Shedd nor Edwards maintain that dispositional faith is given to all humanity; they are Augustinian particularists, like Owen. But that does not prevent us from using the notion of dispositional faith in support of Augustinian universalism.

[25] See Richard Swinburne, *The Existence of God*, rev. edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), pp. 113ff.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0036930609990196 Published online by Cambridge University Press

his will is the principle of being for things, as will be shown later on. Therefore God does not necessarily will even the things that now exist.[26]

This sort of argument seems plausible to me. In setting out this new argument for an Augustinian particularism, let us assume that it is plausible. And let us also suppose, with classical theism, that God is essentially good, that is, he is essentially morally and metaphysically good. Thomas thinks God is not merely good but goodness itself, as is well known.[27] But we need not make that assumption in addition to the idea that God is supremely morally and metaphysically good. (It may be that being morally and metaphysically good in the relevant sense are compatible with being goodness itself, but I do not propose to explore these matters here.) I take it that God is supremely or maximally metaphysically good, provided he has, as Thomas Morris puts it, 'ontological completeness'. That is, he has all those compossible great making properties requisite for being the one ontologically 'complete' being, as per Anselmian perfect being theology. And God is supremely morally good provided he is the most exalted and morally pristine being, who acts in accordance with all moral principles relevant to his actions.[28] To this rough-and-ready conception of divine goodness we may join Thomas' reasoning that there is no single best possible world God could and should have created. In fact, there are an infinite number of worlds he could have created consistent with his goodness.

To these three assumptions let us add several others that fit with the Augustinian way of thinking. The fourth is that the actual world, and worlds very similar to this one, is among the set of worlds that God could have created because they are worlds consistent with divine goodness. This seems plausible. Fifth, a theologically commonplace principle that Augustinians share with a number of other Christian theologians: divine grace is necessarily not part and parcel of divine distributive justice.[29] The two notions are distinct. God may act in a gracious manner towards his creatures, but he need not act in this way, and there can be no requirement

[26] Thomas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, I. 81. 4. Katherine Rogers' discussion of this issue is helpful. See *Perfect Being Theology* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), pp. 103–4.

[27] *Summa Contra Gentiles*, I. 38.

[28] For this way of thinking about divine metaphysical and moral goodness, see Thomas Morris, 'The Necessity of God's Goodness', in *Anselmian Explorations: Essays in Philosophical Theology* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1987), p. 43.

[29] There are other aspects to divine grace that are morally relevant here. For instance, Robert Adams says that grace means 'a disposition to love which is not dependent on the merit of the person loved': 'Must God Create the Best?' repr. in *The Virtue of Faith* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 56.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0036930609990196 Published online by Cambridge University Press

for him to do so, because it is of the nature of an act of grace that it is free and not obligatory. By contrast, divine justice is inexorable and must be satisfied on an Augustinian way of thinking. It cannot be set aside, passed over, or abrogated. So there is an important distinction between the nature of a gracious act and the nature of a just act that bears upon the present concern.

Our sixth and final assumption is this. It may be that God is under no moral obligations until and unless he places himself under such obligations, e.g. he ordains that he will create a particular world where sin occurs and that, as a result of this, he will freely provide a means of salvation in the person of Christ. If this were the case, then 'prior' to this decision to create the world (i.e. the actual world) God is under no obligation to create a world, or the particular world he does create. Nor is he under any obligation to provide a means of salvation for human sinners once he has ordained to create a world where human beings freely rebel and sin. (I shall return to this matter presently.)

With these provisos in mind, let us consider an argument in defence of particularism: if salvation is a work of divine grace, then God could create a world where no one is saved and this would be a world consistent with his divine goodness. Call this world, W1. In such a world, all human beings would be damned because of their sinfulness, and God would be acting according to his just nature if he were to damn all of fallen humanity. Not only would he be acting according to divine justice, he would also be acting in a way consistent with his goodness. For we are working on the assumption that it is good for God to create a world, and the particular world he does create (in this hypothetical case, W1), and that God is not obligated to save any human sinner who exists in the world he does create, provided the sinner has freely sinned against God – for salvation is a matter of divine grace, which is gratuitous. Hence, in W1 God saves no one, which is consistent with his goodness. However, W1 does have a significant disadvantage for the Augustinian. It is this: in such a world divine benevolence and divine grace are not both displayed, because divine grace is not offered to any of the human agents God has made in W1. But, as we have already seen, it is an important constituent of traditional Augustinianism that both divine justice and divine mercy are displayed in the creation in order that God's name is vindicated (namely, the third constituent of the restricted elect view). Thus, although such a world would be consistent with exercise of divine goodness and justice taken in abstraction, as it were, from the particular concerns of Augustinianism, it would not be consistent with the way in which God exercises his goodness and justice – indeed, *must* exercise these attributes – according to traditional Augustinianism.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0036930609990196 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Now, consider a different world. This second sort of world is a particularist world, where some but not all of humanity are saved. Call this, W2. If God were to create W2 then we might think he would have created a better world than the previous one, a world that is consistent with his moral nature, as seen through the lens of Augustinianism. For W2 would be consistent with the requirement of the restricted elect view that both divine justice and divine mercy are displayed to the creation. Such a world would better comport with divine metaphysical goodness, which is the aspect of goodness that has to do with ontological completeness. For, according to the Augustinian way of thinking, God's nature is such that he must display his justice and mercy in his creation and it is a good thing that both of these aspects of the divine nature are displayed in the created order. The reason given for thinking this on the restricted elect view was that this arrangement somehow vindicates the divine character by displaying both his justice and mercy to his creatures, provided that (at least some of) those upon whom this distributive justice is visited are sinners, in the sense outlined previously. Then, W2 might be thought to be an objectively morally better sort of world than W1 because it is a world where some human beings are saved, rather than no human beings. Of course, a world where some people are saved rather than no people will only seem to be an objectively morally better world if we think that, for any world God could create where n number of people are saved, a world where n+1 people are saved is an objectively morally better world.[30] Whilst such a principle may not be unassailable, it seems plausible.

Now, here is the question: *need God do more than this?* That is, must he create a world better than any of this infinite number of particularist worlds like W2, consistent with his goodness, where his justice and mercy are shown forth to all creation in the work of Christ? In other words, for our purposes, must God create an Augustinian universalist world? The answer is clear: given the logic of the Augustinian view, he need not do so. The fact that God *could* do so does not mean he *must* do so. All that God has to do is act in accordance with his divine nature. Creation of a particularist sort of world rather than a universalist world is consistent with his divine nature (where particularism is the notion that God saves some number of humanity less than the total number of humanity). But is God obliged by his own nature to create a

[30] I assume this for the sake of argument and because it seems that a number of writers in this area have similar sorts of intuitions about the number of people saved in a given possible world. But it might be that this intuition is false. For what does 'objectively morally better' consist in? Perhaps a world where there are n+1 people saved and some damned has comparable moral worth, or, at least, is of equal moral worth to a universalist world since such a world would be glorifying to God and this is what gives a particular possible world its objective moral worth in the first place.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0036930609990196 Published online by Cambridge University Press

universalistic world because it is objectively morally better than all other, particularist worlds (given our caveat about what, in matters of salvation, makes a world of greater objective moral worth than another world)? No he is not obliged to do more than act in a way that is consistent with his divine nature. (In fact, as I have already indicated, I do not think language of obligation applies to God at all, apart from the extended sense in which God may place himself under a *prima facie* obligation through promising or ordaining to do a particular thing.[31]) In any case, as Robert Adams has shown, God has no obligations to creatures he has not created. One can only have obligations to things that exist. If God eternally decrees to create a particularist sort of world consistent with his goodness, he cannot be said to have an obligation to bring about better worlds because he cannot have an obligation to worlds and creatures that do not exist. The reasoning behind this claim is as follows:

> A merely possible being cannot be (actually) wronged or treated unkindly. A being who never exists is not wronged by not being created, and there is no obligation to any possible being to bring it into existence.[32]

At this point it would be helpful to distinguish between God having obligations to himself, that is, his own nature, and his having obligations to some non-existing but possible persons. I am claiming that God may have obligations of the first sort, which are really nothing more than God's acting in a way consistent with his own metaphysically good character, but that he does not have obligations of the second sort. It might be thought that on the Augustinian way of thinking God could have an obligation to his own nature to redeem (at least some) human beings ruined by sin. For consider this analogy: I might not be obligated to let you stay the night in my house – yet I consent to do so. Once I have agreed to have you stay overnight, I place myself under an obligation to provide you with a place to stay for the night. Having promised this to you, I must see it through. I am suggesting that it is this sort of reasoning that applies to God. Once he has decreed that he will create a world that will be populated by sinful creatures he appears to have placed himself under certain moral constraints. If that is right, then it looks like God does have obligations to possible but uncreated creatures after all, in this limited sense: for any world that God creates, if that world is populated

[31] For a defence of the claim that God has no obligations, see Thomas V. Morris, 'On Duty and Divine Goodness', in *Anselmian Explorations*. Morris claims that God is in a state of maximal 'axiological goodness' (p. 40), a state according to which an agent necessarily acts in accordance with moral principles and freely engages in acts of grace.

[32] Robert Adams, 'Must God Create the Best?' in *The Virtue of Faith*, p. 53.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0036930609990196 Published online by Cambridge University Press

by sinful creatures whose sin is the result of morally free rebellion, God is under a moral constraint generated by the internal configuration of his own divine nature to redeem (at least some of) these sinful creatures, in order that his justice and mercy be displayed in the created order. But clearly this generates a problem for the Augustinian particularist.

There are several possible responses to this difficulty consistent with the Augustinian way of thinking outlined thus far. First, the Augustinian could simply deny that God has any such obligations. This would mean tinkering with the notion that God must display his justice and mercy in the created order, which, even if this can be made to work on a revised version of Augustinianism, seems like an unnecessary complication to the argument, if there is some simpler solution. Second, one could concede that God does have such an obligation to his own nature once he has decreed to create the world he does create, because it is a requirement of the Augustinian view that God displays both his justice and mercy in the creation. This need not mean God is required to create an Augustinian universalist world, only that he is required to create a world where these two attributes or predicates can be displayed. This is consistent with either Augustinian universalism or the Augustinian particularism developed thus far. But it might be thought to tell against Augustinian particularism if this requirement means God is not free in his act of creation. However, there is no reason to think this restricts divine freedom in a way that is damaging to the case for Augustinian particularism. On this way of thinking, God is still free to create or not, and to create the particular world he does create, or not, as he pleases. What he is not free to do is to create a world where his justice and mercy are not displayed, because this would be inconsistent with his divine nature. But this is true on Augustinian universalism and Augustinian particularism.

With this made tolerably clear, we can return to Robert Adams and the notion that God has no obligations to possible but uncreated creatures. Suppose, with Adams, that the following conditions apply to the world God does create (call it W3 for the sake of clarity):

(1) None of the individual creatures in W3 would exist in an Augustinian universalistic world.
(2) None of the creatures in W3 has a life that is so miserable on the whole that it would be better for that creature if it had never existed.
(3) Every individual creature in W3 is at least as happy on the whole for the period it exists, as it would have been in any other possible world in which it could have existed.[33]

[33] Ibid., p. 53, slightly adapted for present purposes.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0036930609990196 Published online by Cambridge University Press

To which we need to add:

(4) Each member of the elect is transworld elect and each member of the reprobate is transworld reprobate. That is, there are no possible worlds at which a W3 human creature exists and is among the elect that exists and is among the reprobate in W3.[34]

This is a strong modal claim, but I think it is consistent with the Augustinian notion that God elects certain individuals and reprobates others. Augustinians commonly claim that what grounds election and reprobation is the divine will (*arbitrium*) and nothing else (e.g. foreknowledge of creaturely actions). In which case, it would appear that what God wills for the eternal destiny of a particular individual in one world would apply, other things being equal, to the destiny of that individual in any other possible world in which they might have existed. This acts as a safeguard against the objection that some W3 human creatures might be reprobate in W3 but elect in another Augustinian particularist world, which would seem to vitiate Adams' third claim ((3) above). The addition of this fourth claim blocks this sort of objection.

There is one other objection to this modified Adamsian argument for Augustinian particularism. It concerns the second claim ((2) above) that no creature in W3 has a life that is so miserable on the whole that it would have been better had that creature never existed. The plausibility of this claim seems considerably diminished on a particularist way of construing it, given that some such creatures end up in hell, where they are punished everlastingly. This, I concede, is a difficult matter. One potential solution would be to argue that in W3 the reprobate are not punished everlastingly in hell, but annihilated. This need not be inconsistent with an infinite punishment thesis, if, with Peter Geach, we allow that an infinite punishment could take place in a finite time (where time itself is a densely ordered continuum).[35] But even if this turns out not to be compatible with an infinite punishment

[34] In other words, each member of the elect is elect at every possible world in which they exist, hence *transworld* election or reprobation. The notion of 'transworld' depravity (and election) is borrowed from Alvin Plantinga's discussion of the Free Will Defence in *The Nature of Necessity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974), ch. 9. This notion has been taken up by libertarian philosophical theologians in dealing with the soteriological problem of evil. See, for instance, William Lane Craig, '"No Other Name": A Middle Knowledge Perspective on the Exclusivity of Salvation through Christ', *Faith and Philosophy* 6 (1989), pp. 172–8. The use made of the notion here is, of course, different from Craig's account, which is non-Augustinian in nature.

[35] See Peter Geach, *Providence and Evil* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), pp. 148–9.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0036930609990196 Published online by Cambridge University Press

thesis, the addition of an annihilation doctrine might be worth the cost to Augustinianism if it makes the second Adamsian claim more plausible. For a life that ends in annihilation rather than everlasting punishment may not be so miserable on the whole that it would be better for that creature to have never existed.

With these caveats, I suggest that creating a W3-type world does not wrong any of the creatures contained in it. Nor can God be said to be obliged to create a better world (i.e. a universalistic world), if, in addition to these conditions (for the purposes of our argument), the world created is consistent with divine goodness and is a world where some number of human beings less than the total number of human beings are the object of special divine grace and are saved (which is not specified in (4) above). In fact, I have argued that God could create a world where no one is saved and all are damned because of their sinful natures and that this is also consistent with divine goodness. (Though such a world would not be consistent with traditional Augustinianism.) It may well be that this world (that is, the actual world) is a particularist world. And it seems to me that such a world is consistent with divine goodness.

Of course, both this argument for particularism and the argument that depends upon the RF condition concede to the Augustinian universalist all three conditions of the restricted elect view. But this need not be the case. The Augustinian could adopt another approach, involving revision of one (or more) of these conditions. The obvious candidate is condition (c), which had to do with 'The need for the display of both God's grace and mercy and his wrath and justice in his created order'. But, the Augustinian might argue, it is important that the display of divine justice has some connection to desert. Were Christ to be the only human person upon whom divine justice was visited, as a vicarious substitute for sinners (as per Augustinian universalism), this would not have the right connection to desert because Christ does not *deserve* to be punished – he acts vicariously (and sinlessly) on behalf of sinful human beings deserving of punishment. There has to be some connection between the display of divine justice and the idea that (at least some of) those upon whom divine justice is visited are deserving of punishment. In order to reflect this, we could rephrase condition (c) as follows:

(c*) The need for the display of both God's grace and mercy and his wrath and justice in his created order *for some number of deserving humanity.*

Let us call this *the strict justice condition*. There seems to be a good independent theological reason for thinking the strict justice condition is true. Unlike the Augustinian universalist argument outlined earlier, the strict justice condition

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0036930609990196 Published online by Cambridge University Press

requires that at least some of those upon whom divine justice is visited deserve to be recipients of that justice, which Christ is not. So the strict justice condition promises to deliver another reason for the Augustinian to resist universalism.[36]

Applied to the foregoing, this would mean that any world that God creates that includes creatures that are sinners must have provision for the display of divine justice to some number of deserving humanity. Taken together with the modified Adamsian argument, either as a supplement to the Adamsian argument, or an additional, independent reason for particularism, this constitutes a strong case in favour of non-universalistic Augustinianism. In which case, God has good reason to create a particularist world, and no obligation to create an Augustinian universalist world instead. And this rebuts the necessity of an Augustinian version of universalism.[37]

[36] Is this revision of condition (c) a departure from traditional Augustinian particularism? I do not think so. It is, if anything, a clarification of the nature of distributive justice on the Augustinian way of thinking. Some Augustinians may dissent from this revision. If so, they may still avail themselves of the modified Adamsian argument outlined above.

[37] Thanks to Daniel Hill, Robin Parry and especially Paul Helm for comments on earlier drafts of this article. An ancestor of this article was read at a conference on eschatology held under the auspices of the Research Institute for Systematic Theology, King's College, University of London, in 2004. I am grateful to those present who commented on that version of the article, particularly Stephen Williams.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0036930609990196 Published online by Cambridge University Press