

# THE ATONEMENT.

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BY

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## TO THE READER.

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THE atonement of Jesus Christ is an unspeakably important branch of gospel truth ; and every scriptural, intelligent, and godly exposition and defence of it ought to be welcomed by the living church of God. Mr. Atkinson has placed this subject before us in the following pages, in a thoughtful, interesting, and edifying manner. Some parts are treated with an originality, which is one of the writer's characteristics, that will generate thought, and expand the reader's view of this great subject. Such a work is required at the present time ; for by some the holy mystery of Christ's sacrifice is wholly ignored, and in the minds of others it takes no definite form and its solemn glories are lost amidst a multitude of vague generalities. I therefore cordially recommend this work to our churches, and to all that may be seeking information concerning " Jesus Christ, and him crucified."

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## INTRODUCTION.

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BEFORE directing attention to the subject of this treatise, a few preliminary remarks seem to be required.

In the greater part of the works extant on sacred subjects, the doctrine of the Atonement is more or less dwelt on; and this is so of necessity, because the subject is interwoven with the whole fabric of the truth relating to the salvation of sinners; and, besides, there are also not a few treatises written specially on the subject. These facts may be considered as a sufficient reason why the writer, unless he can pretend to give some quite original information on the subject, should be content to be quiet, or to exercise himself in other directions. But what has been well said on another matter may be repeated here: "A publication is not rendered improper or needless, because works of a similar nature have preceded it."

It might be urged, if not in justification of the act, yet in mitigation of an objection, that if several treatises on the same subject are extant, another may have some valuable quality peculiarly its own. If it were not a presumption to compare things so insignificant with things so supremely important, the question might be asked, Who complains that we have four Gospels? Besides, erroneous publications, or what at least we deem such, are ever teeming from the press; and although the errors they contain may have been repeatedly refuted, it ought not to be regarded as killing the dead to refute them again. It may also be urged that some who receive the doctrine of the atonement seem to be "neither cold nor hot" in the interest they take in it. Others again are confessedly confused in their judg-

ments about some of its qualities, such for, instance, as its extent and efficacy, with their grounds. Some again, it may be hoped, are beginning to make earnest enquiries about the atonement. We therefore venture to advance our opinion. If hereby some may obtain a more correct view of the matter, if the interest of others is quickened, and if some who are at present personally unconcerned about the matter shall come to ask, "Wherewith shall I make the atonement?" and shall find a satisfactory answer to their enquiry in the precious truth of the atonement made, the publication will be justified, and the writer will feel abundantly rewarded.

Strange as the fact may appear as seen from one point of view, it is certainly impossible for a man to state his opinions on hardly any single part of divine truth without contradicting some other men's, and so, by consequence, without entering into controversy. But whatever opinions of other men may be incidentally or purposely contradicted in the statement of our own on this subject, controversy, be it understood, is not the object sought, but edification. Some of the questions which have arisen in connection with this subject, and which have been vigorously debated, will be taken for granted. For instance, the necessity of an atonement, the proper divinity of Christ, the vicariousness of his sufferings, and the sacrificial and expiatory character of his death. Whoever may be in doubt on these points, and may require proof of them, must be referred to the labours of those who have wrought so nobly and successfully in refuting arguments which, for their subtlety and perniciousness might justly, without offence, be regarded as prompted by him who unites in himself at once the character of a deceiver and a destroyer.

In entering upon the consideration of this subject, it seems particularly necessary that we should clearly define, and that it should be clearly understood, what we mean by the word atonement. For a definite meaning, as it seems to us, is not always given to the word, and sometimes when a definite meaning is attached to the

word, it is not a correct one. As to the etymology of the word we are not much concerned. We do not care to controvert the commonly received notion that to the word *one* a termination, indicating an action of the mind, was added, and that so an absolute verbal noun *onement* was formed; and that afterward the preposition *at* was prefixed to make *at-one-ment*. But if this is taken to mean no more than the reunion and intercourse of parties, effected in any manner, who have been, from some cause, at variance, such meaning is, it is most certain, very inadequate to express what is, or what ought to be, understood by the word in religious discourse, when speaking of the atonement of Christ. If this alone were intended, reconciliation, not atonement, would be the proper word.

What we mean by the word atonement is a particular mode, namely, his obedience unto death, by which the Lord Jesus accomplished a just and certain reconciliation between God, as the Representative and the Guardian of Justice, and some persons who, having transgressed the commanded will of the holy, just, and good Lawgiver, had become liable to the declared penalty of the law. Hence, therefore, it will be observed, that reconciliation and atonement are clearly distinguished from, but closely related to, each other; just, indeed, as are effect and cause. In the New Testament the word atonement occurs but once, and in that instance, as written in the margin, only in the sense of reconciliation. But in the Old Testament, in connection with those expressive sacrificial types of the great Sacrifice, the word frequently occurs, and in its exact sense.

Having made these few remarks, we proceed to consider, as we may be enabled, the atonement of Christ in its connection with the Sovereignty of God, with his Justice, and with his Mercy.

## CHAPTER I.

### THE ATONEMENT OF CHRIST IN ITS RELATION TO DIVINE SOVEREIGNTY.

IF God is, dominion must belong to him. If he were not Lord, he would not be God. But God is, and "He is Lord of All." An absolutely supreme dominion is his by right, and in fact. But the sovereignty he has and exerts over his intelligent creatures is not solely that of a proprietor, but also that of a moral governor. As such he subjected man to a law which is holy, just, and good. This law may be taken as a transcript, so far as any law can be, of his own nature; and it may be confidently concluded that, while he will suffer none who are subject to this law to break a single precept with impunity, he himself, in any of the acts of his sovereignty, will never violate its principles. In the outworking of his sovereignty, then, there will be nothing unholy, unjust, nor evil. If, therefore, nothing apart from God controls his sovereignty, the immutable excellencies of his own nature will ever secure its beneficial exercise. "Thou art good," said the Psalmist, "and doest good."

Seizing thus on this fundamental truth of God's nature, we may grasp with unmistakable certainty the fixed relation of that truth to all God's acts, and may hold fast our confidence against all the opposition of apparent contradictions. For the existence of apparent contradictions we do not deny. To do so would be fanaticism. No man can open his eyes without seeing such presentments. He cannot but see that, however much power has been exerted to preserve physical order

in the universe, moral disorder abounds; that if some of the angels have been upheld to keep their first estate, others of them were left miserably to fall; and that moral order has been overthrown in the person of the father of our race with fearfully calamitous consequences to all his posterity. Losing sight of God's sovereignty herein, men have come to deny his excellency, and the necessary result of assuming these false premises has been the adoption of the fool's conclusion, "There is no God." If, say they, God is good, he is not almighty; or if almighty, he is not good. Ignoring thus God's sovereignty, and judging only from appearances, their reasoning to them is irrefutable. Their mistake lies in ignoring the lordship of God. Only as we acknowledge the sovereignty of God exerting almightiness under the direction of wisdom and holiness and justice and goodness, both as to way and end, can the mind find rest. Simple faith in God, in other words, is here the only anchor of the soul. This gives quiet.

Divine sovereignty is especially illustrated in the existent occasion for the atonement, in the admission of a substitute, in the provision of the Substitute, and in the appointment of the beneficiaries.

Sin, the *existent occasion* for an atonement, we say, can find no solution of the difficulty it presents to the human mind apart from divine sovereignty. Philosophers have speculated very foolishly on this subject, fanatics have very madly raved about it, and the friends of God have very impertinently apologized for the conduct of the Lord of all about it; but after all, the fact remains just where the philosopher, the fanatic, and the friend found it, and just what that fact was, a judgment of divine sovereignty that is unsearchable, and a way that is past finding out.

Reasoning on the ways of God as the great moral Governor, it has been thought no temerity to conclude that, given the creation of beings capable of moral agency, of being determined in their actions by external inducements as well as by internal taste, of being influenced by contemplated good and evil, of suffering

and enjoyment, it would not comport with wisdom wholly to prevent this capability from an actual working; that is, wholly to prevent such creatures from sinning by the effectual exertion of a preserving power. But on the knowledge men at present have of this matter, we unhesitatingly denounce this conclusion. It is more than temerity—it is a desperate daring. This notion is not self-evident truth, it is not a logical conclusion drawn from undoubted premises, it is not a revelation, and there are existing facts which are out of harmony with it. Has not God preserved the unfallen angels? Does not their preservation comport with his wisdom? Will it not comport with the wisdom of God to preserve his ransomed ones in unsinning obedience for ever? Is there danger and doubt about another fall occurring in heaven? No doubt the opportunity, as it is said, “to declare his righteousness,” and the moral virtues of the creature, which arises out of the existent occasion for the atonement of Christ, results from the wisdom of God; but it would be a boldness more than impudent to say, God needed this opportunity for himself, or for his creatures. Granting that the Divine Being should not only be, but should also *show* himself to be, holy, just, and good, would it overmatch the wisdom of God to show all this without the existence of an odious, a damnable, and a miserable contrast? What! are the odiousness, and crime, and misery of earth, and the damnation of hell, means originally taken in the wisdom of God to illustrate by contrast his holiness, and justice, and goodness? If this is philosophic divinity, it may be questioned whether the philosophic divine, or the blaspheming infidel, presents the more striking exemplification of the forbearance of God.

It may appear becoming to the philosophic divine to say, that the divine glory and the greatest good on the whole to the creatures are inseparable ideas. But is there a man who is able to present examples of this inseparability of ideas in connection with certain associated facts, and make them intelligible to the human mind? He is a pragmatic prater, though he may dress and sit



as a philosopher, who, on the knowledge man now has, talks about the good of evil. In truth, all existence of evil shocks the moral sense of man, and confounds his reason. Who knows the good of, or feels the better for, the least evil or the greatest? Who feels that the existence of hell and of devils is good on the whole to God's creatures, or who on the whole understands that he is the better for their existence?

Granting that man being created with such moral principles as charity and sympathy, it is congruous that these principles should have some fitting occasion afforded for their manifestation; would it overmatch the devising power of infinite Wisdom to find suitable occasions for their display without the existence of evil? Must it necessarily be taken to be a display of infinite Wisdom to devise human wretchedness, in order that kindly human virtues might find an occasion for their manifestation? If charity, draped, so to speak, with beneficence, sits an acknowledged queen among the beautiful forms of grace which adorn human minds and manners, might she not appear with equally queenly beauty in some other drapery? If a hospital for incurables and an asylum for idiots present fine occasions for beautiful charity in her appropriate garb to display her lovely form, what man is there who has a brother, or what father is there who has a child, ever so well cared for in either of these valuable institutions, who does not feel that it would be better for his brother, or for his child, for himself, for all, and, therefore, better on the whole, if no occasion had ever presented itself for the exhibition of this loveliness of charity? Sympathy in tears is one of the potent touches of nature that link the world in kinship. David, mourning for Absalom, is a painfully pleasing example of this sympathy. No man can fail to feel with that afflicted father who reads of his affliction, nor can fail to feel a luxury in his own sympathetic grief. But few, too, can read that afflicted father's peerlessly charming exclamation of his sorrow without admiration. But is there a man who can feel that on

the whole, it is better for the community of God's intelligent creatures that Absalom was driven away in his wickedness, because an occasion was afforded for the manifestation of the loveliness of sympathy in tears? Might it not have been a sufficient opportunity for the display of sympathy if there had been only a joyous object?

Jesus Christ could, indeed, thank his Father, the Sovereign Lord of heaven and earth, for evil—for the evil of human privation, and that privation one of the most serious which can afflict man, the hiding of the truth of the gospel. But Jesus Christ is, and possesses the knowledge of, the God-man. If a mere man should venture to imitate him herein, he would be guilty of gross inhumanity, and of foul presumption.

Men, if they will, may amuse themselves and others by attempting to penetrate the impenetrable secrets of God, and by making guesses at the reason and fitness of things; but the attempts must be abortive, and the guesses vain. It must be found that nowhere below a simple acknowledgment of a divine sovereignty which is searchless in its ways, is there any ground on which, with his present knowledge, man can set his foot. Knowing only in part, and unable to find out the Almighty to perfection, it will be "the meekness of wisdom" to guess nothing, and to "judge nothing before the time." He will be the most philosophic here who is content to walk in an opened way, and there is no other way yet opened to man but to behold, admire, confide, and devoutly say, "How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!"

Revelation, it is true, and the truth is precious, teaches us that all things work together for good to them that love God; but this is an altogether different matter. And even this truth we know for the most part, just as we know a great deal beside that is, simply by faith, as taught in the Word of God. Those that have the privilege to stand on the vantage-ground held by them that love God may often be found holding their peace,

like Aaron, with the submission of faith, rather than rejoicing with acquiescence from a well understood knowledge of the good unto which all things affecting them are working together. What godly man is there that has had occasion to acknowledge the righteousness of God's judgments to him, who has not felt his acquiescence to be halting of both feet, and who has not yearned, as Jeremiah did, to talk with God at the same time about his judgments? We are far from saying that infinite wisdom is not displayed in human wickedness and human woe; but we do say that the wisdom of God in the existence of evil, is not a subject for philosophy to explain, but for faith to believe.

But however little is known of God's reason for the existence of sin, and guilt, and misery, we do know for certain that law is, and sin is, and guilt is, and misery is; and we know with equal certainty that the evil of sin has created a posture of affairs which can only be effectually met by the atonement of Christ. This atonement *the Divine Sovereign has admitted*, and the admission is a prime article in the plan of grace.

That the Supreme Ruler possessed the sovereign right to admit an atonement, provided always a substitution could be found having every essential quality to give it validity, there ought to be no doubt. But the possession of the right would not oblige to exercise it, and did not. The admission was an act of high and pure sovereignty, and the sovereign act was a pure favour. In the use of this sovereign prerogative, the sentence of the law was dispensed with, the supreme Lawgiver was subordinated to the supreme Ruler, and distributive justice gave way to commutative justice. But for the Sovereign putting this prerogative in action, the sinner must have been subject to the penalty of his wrong under the award of justice, in his own person. But on the employment of this sovereign right, an act of commutative justice followed, which is unique in its kind, which is chargeable with no injustice, which brings no ultimate loss to the Substitute, which, more than anything else, illustrates the excellency of the law,

which secures a respect for the law, and which satisfies the claims of the law on behalf of innumerable criminals who otherwise would have miserably perished for ever under its just sentence. Herein is wisdom, and "herein is love," blended with sovereignty. The functions of the Judge, of the Lawgiver, and of the King, are harmoniously discharged in respect of criminal defaulters, and yet the offenders are saved. "The Lord is our Judge, the Lord is our Lawgiver, the Lord is our King; he will save us." This testimony finds its most illustrious meaning and fulfilment in the admission of the substitution of Christ. The King subordinates the Lawgiver and the Judge, and yet exalts and glorifies them by the subordination. Provision is made by the King for a higher manifestation of the Lawgiver by a magnification of the law otherwise unattainable, for the awards of the Judge to be executed so as fully to meet the justice of the case, and for righteousness and life to be secured to myriads of transgressors. "Great is the mystery of godliness."

But divine sovereignty has more than admitted an atonement; the Sovereign has *provided the Substitute*. Milton, having introduced the Father as admitting a substitute for offending man, represents the Supreme as asking the assembled choir of heaven where such a one might be found, having a "charity so dear," as to become a substitute, and who, being willing, should be able to "pay the rigid satisfaction, death for death."

"He asked, but all the heavenly choir stood mute,  
And silence was in heaven."

To have admitted a substitute, without providing one, would have left the sinner in helpless ruin. But offended Majesty provided the Substitute. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son." — "He spared not his own Son."

It will appear from this that if the great business of reconciliation through the atonement of Christ be represented as a *merely personal* affair of sacrifice and propitiation between the Father and the Son on behalf of

others, the representation will be false and misleading. In the atonement of Christ it is not to be considered that the Father is determined to have a personal revenge on sinners; that the Son, moved with pity towards them, is willing to interpose himself and to let the Father's revenge be wreaked on him; that the Father is pleased, therefore, to wound his innocent Son in their stead and to satisfy his vengeance and pacify his wrath; and that, his vengeance being satisfied through the shedding of innocent blood and his wrath relieved, he is willing to release the offenders from the pains of hell and to advance them to the pleasures of heaven. Such a representation may befit a pagan atonement, but not the atonement of Christ. God will, indeed, by no means clear the guilty; but the object of the punishment is not to wreak a personal revenge and to appease a personal fury, and so to obtain such a personal consolation as a gratified revenge affords; but to vindicate holiness, righteousness, and goodness, in the justification of the ungodly. God willed to have mercy. This mercy is a natural element of his goodness; and the purpose to shew mercy is a sovereign outcome of his goodness. But in order to vindicate his justice and holiness as represented in his law, he, in showing mercy, admits and provides a Substitute who makes a proper atonement for those to whom mercy is shown. Hence the admission of an atonement and the provision of the Substitute are at once the manifestation and the commendation of his love. The Judge, indeed, punished the Surety, and vindicated the Lawgiver in the atonement of Christ; but here everything is official. Of the personal God in the whole of this wondrous transaction, it should ever be proclaimed that, "Yea, he loved the people!"

Not choosing to make this obvious and necessary distinction, the enemies of the atonement of Christ have charged on its friends the representation of a weak and unseemly irascibility and of a change in God,—that he is now angry, and anon soothed and appeased. And from not keeping this distinction clearly in view, it may well be questioned whether the friends of the atonement

of Christ have not made representations of God, which have injuriously misled poor penitent transgressors when seeking forgiveness; whether they have not so represented the severity of his justice as to hide the manifestation of his grace; whether they have not shrouded divine love in the cross with a covering of unrelieved terror; and whether they have not spoken of the just God after a manner so as to leave a doubt in the mind of the poor sinner, rather than so as to raise and confirm his hope of obtaining the precious blessing. Truthfully represented, there will be seen in the cross the admission of an atonement and the provision of the great Substitute. In these will be seen the commendation of Divine love, and herein the humbled sinner's surest argument in prayer, and best ground of hope for the pardon of his sins. Never let it be forgotten by those to whom is committed the ministry of reconciliation, that it is in the cross we see that "God is love." And on this ground let them never fail to proclaim among all men, with the utmost latitude, to whomsoever it may concern, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."

Lastly, Divine sovereignty is exemplified in *the appointment of the beneficiaries* of the atonement of Christ. It was for God alone of his sovereign will to admit of an atonement, and thereby, in effect, to say, "I will have mercy." And it was for God only, of his sovereign will, to determine the extent of the admitted atonement, and to say, in effect, likewise, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy." But nowhere more than here may it be said, "With God is terrible majesty." Nowhere more than here does the Lord of all gather about him clouds and darkness, nor anywhere say with more lofty magisterialness, "Be still, and know that I am God." Here God's thoughts are different from man's thoughts, and they are not less contrary than different. In nothing more than in rendering a reason for this unrevealed part of the mystery of God's will

could men exemplify the saying of the apostle, "Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools." Nowhere is submission required more than here, and nowhere is submission more difficult. Full acquiescence is impossible. To talk of acquiescence in full, while knowing only in part, is the ranting of folly, or the raving of fanaticism, or the sanctimonious mumbling and suppressed raging of a gratified malignity. O for grace to say, with submission, "The will of the Lord be done!"

All unsubmission, and all contradiction notwithstanding, a particular extent is an attribute of the atonement of Christ. And if the reason of nothing may be more difficult to understand,—yea, the reason of this is utterly confounding to the human understanding,—the truth of nothing can be plainer, according to the Scriptures, than that the atonement of Christ, in its relation to persons, is ruled by sovereignty, and is limited. What it is in itself in fact as to extent, and what it is in effect, are after considerations. Here we speak only of its extent in design as to persons, and we say in this respect it is limited, and as definite as it is limited. If a few remarks will not be sufficient to represent this truth, a folio volume of elaborate argument would not be enough.

It is presumed that no man in his senses can imagine God not to have purposed the atonement, or that he can imagine God to have formed and entertained an indefinite purpose. Foreknowledge, and predestination, and calling, and justification, and glorification, it is certain, are predicated of the self-same persons; can it be imagined that the atonement has a more extended reference than these? And if so, would not the purpose of God in the death of his Son be, so far, made void? When will men cease daring to say that, in any sense, or in respect of any persons, "Christ is dead in vain?"

The typical representations of the atonement in the Levitical sacrifices, had all of them a limited and definite reference. The burnt offering presented by an individual was "to make an atonement for him," and that offered for

the people was "to make an atonement for them." And the same applies to the sin-offering and to the trespass offering. Can any man imagine that the atonement made by these offerings extended beyond those for whom they were offered? If these were but shadowy representations of Christ, they were, nevertheless, truthful.

When the angel of the Lord commanded Joseph to call the name of Mary's son Jesus, he gave this reason: "For he shall save his people from their sins." He saved his people from their sins by an atonement for them. He certainly did no less than this; on what grounds can it be said that, in any sense, he did more than this? Did he save any people, in any sense, whom he will fail to save in every sense? Does he emptily bear this name in any respect relative to any people? They will not, who cannot, see limitation here.

The Lord Jesus speaks of himself as the Good Shepherd, who possesses a flock of sheep. "I know my sheep," he says; and he says, "I lay down my life for the sheep." For them also for whom he died he prayed; and we are informed, with a very solemn distinctness, that he prays for no others. "I pray for them," he says, "I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me." If a man misses the mind of God here, it cannot be from want of perspicuity in the teaching; is it from perverseness in the will?

In every age of the world there have been peoples who never so much as heard of the atonement of Christ. If God spared not his own Son to make an atonement for these, would he not have sent to them some of his servants to whom he had committed the word of reconciliation, that the good news might be heard, and the benefit be appropriated? If he had redeemed these persons by a price so costly, would he not, as the Scripture speaks, "hiss for them and gather them?"

It is said, and we repeat the saying with some consciousness of its awful solemnity, "The wicked is driven away in his wickedness." We are also taught that, in the day of judgment, Jesus will say to them who are separated to his left hand, "Depart, ye cursed." Did the



Lord Jesus make an atonement for these? If he did, who is advantaged? Is there any glory arising to him, or any benefit to those who are banished, or to any others? Does it not appear congruous that if God spared not his own Son to make an atonement for them, he would not spare anything requisite to accomplish their reconciliation? Is not the atonement of Christ a cause? Will not reconciliation, the effect of atonement, be commensurate with its cause? And if not, seeing both are of the Lord, why not?

Just a concluding word on this part of the subject. We read of obeying the gospel. Obedience to the gospel, in many things, is exceedingly difficult. But, perhaps, there is no doctrine of truth which exacts a greater submission of the judgment, than that of the existent occasion for making an atonement, or a greater sacrifice of feeling, than that of the limitation of the atonement made. What, however, we know not now we shall know hereafter. Yet now even we know that if God sways an authority over the destinies of men, irresponsible as that of the potter over his clay, he is ever controlled of himself. And until the sight of his ways in the light above is granted, adored be his name for faith enough to believe that, "Gracious is the Lord, and righteous; yea, our God is merciful."

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## CHAPTER II.

### THE ATONEMENT IN ITS RELATION TO DIVINE JUSTICE.

IN entering on this subject it seems proper to remark that in all government there must be law, by which obedience and disobedience may be known. But there is a difference between arbitrary and moral government. In an arbitrary government, laws may be established which have not the sanction of the moral judgment; and if such be the case anywhere in fact, justice will have no

place there. A breach of law which has no moral sanction, though it be a disobedience, is not felt to be a moral wrong, while the breach of a law which is itself morally wrong, is felt to be a virtue; and if in the breaking of such a law a penalty is incurred, to have incurred that penalty will make the transgressor, in his own and the public estimation, a hero, and to have suffered the unjust and immoral award, will make him a martyr.

God's government is a moral government. If the will of God be regarded as his law in his kingdom, it should be understood that his will is the will of the Holy One, the Just, and the Good, and that his governing will in all that it is, results from his moral nature. Hence the transgression of his law is not only a disobedience, but the disobedience is sin—is a moral wrong. It is because the transgression of the law of God is sin in the moral judgment, that the transgressor is, neither in his own nor the public estimation, a hero in breaking the law, nor a martyr in suffering its award, but a sinner—a moral wrong-doer. Therefore in the government of God justice has a natural place.

Justice is equity: moral right as opposed to moral wrong. This is the essence of justice. If any are pleased to call justice, by interpretation, a modification of benevolence, or to say, justice includes within itself every virtue, there need be no objection raised.

Justice in a moral government will be exemplified in vindicating the obedient, in punishing the disobedient, in rewarding the meritorious, and in vindicating the justified. Or, to use the well-known formula, justice will be exemplified in giving to every one his due. Every example of justice in a moral government is found in connection with the atonement of Christ.

I. There is a vindication of the obedient. Jesus was personally obedient, and he was personally vindicated. But the question arises, What was the rule of Christ's obedience, personally considered? Seeing that he had a created nature, it seems congruous that a natural obligation to obey some law devolved on him by a natural

consequence. But seeing that his created nature never had an independent personal existence apart from his divine nature, who is there that seeks to know what might have been, or may be, the natural obligation of Jesus Christ to obey law, and what might have been, or may be, the law given him to obey, that does not feel he is seeking knowledge under the utmost difficulty? It is, indeed, true that He, speaking in prophecy, says, "I delight to do thy will, O my God; yea, thy law is within my heart." True also, among other things which may be taken to bear on this point, he said during his ministry, "I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me." "I do always the things that please him." "I have kept my Father's commandments." But who of mortals is able accurately to distinguish herein between natural obligation and the discharge of natural duty, and official engagements and their perfect discharge? Who has the perspicacity to see where duty ended, and the discharge of assumed obligations began? If a line is to be drawn between what was done as a natural duty, and what was done in discharge of assumed obligation for a meritorious acquirement, (and it seems congruous there should be a line somewhere,) God only can draw that line. With befitting humility, an able writer on the subject has suggested that the line should be drawn between those acts of our Lord Jesus Christ which were physical, or merely intellectual, and his moral acts, together with all the moral qualities of his complex acts. But this seems very unsatisfactory, for the reason that it appears to denude the human nature of Christ of all moral qualities. To us it seems that an accurate knowledge of this matter is impossible and unnecessary. Whatever may have been the law whereby the duty of the Lord Jesus was prescribed, that he did his duty perfectly is certain; and it is equally certain that justice vindicated the obedient Jesus, and gave him his due. But in the performance of this his duty, it ought to be, though it is feared that it is not, clearly understood, that Jesus merited nothing. He only did the duty which

was required of him in justice. Had he have done no more than his duty, whatever this may have been, he would have made no atonement for others. We should still have been under the law, and in our sins.

II. There is a punishing of the disobedient. Justice and vengeance differ. Strictly speaking, there is no vengeance in God, nor does this passion form an element of justice. Vengeance, properly so called, can only be sated by the pain or injury desired to be inflicted upon the person himself against whom the fury of the avenger burns. It wholly declines the offices of a substitute if any such are offered. It steadily and sternly refuses to be pacified by the suffering or injury of another than its proper victim. If in the wildness of its rage it strikes at any relation of its object, this is simply on the ground of that relation having some identity with the object, and because the object himself cannot be reached. Vengeance is a personal and private feeling; it is the flaming of a personal and private wrath from whatever cause kindled; it admits of no propitiation by another, nor does it, in sating itself, seek any public good, but only its own consolation. If, therefore, vengeance, in its strict sense, were an element of justice, the substitution of Christ and an atonement thereby would have been absolutely impossible. In that case, justice could only have been satisfied by the punishment of the offenders themselves.

Retribution is, however, an element of justice; and this was, in spirit and effect, exactly exhibited in the atonement of Christ. By disobedience demerit has entered. Demerit is more than punishable. If sin were not punished at all, there would be a failure of justice; and if sin were not punished adequately, there would be a proportionate failure of justice according with the inadequacy of the punishment. It wholly comports with man's moral sense of right and wrong that the demerit of sin should be dealt with judicially for its own sake. Of the demerit of sin every moral agent is conscious, but of the just award of that demerit God is the sole judge. From the Word of God we learn "the wages of sin is death."

From the same Word we learn that sinners who suffer for their sins "shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord." If, then, the penal sanction of the law is everlasting destruction, and the law itself is holy, just, and good, everlasting destruction is, in the judgment of the Just One, a righteous award. From this, then, we may learn what, in the judgment of God, is the demerit of sin.

Any man therefore, who believes in God needs not to seek a further reason at present, nor so long as he can only "know in part," for the everlasting punishment of the wicked. He may also very profitably abandon all his apologetic, but quite unsatisfactory, reasonings on the perpetual sinning of the wicked, and their perpetual suffering in consequence thereof. He may also give up the equally apologetic and unsatisfactory reasoning of the sinner's punishment being, as Dr. Owen puts it, "*a natura subjecti, not a natura causæ*;" that is, it is from the nature of the subject punished, not from the nature of the cause of the punishment, that it happens the wicked are punished for ever. God declares in unmistakeable terms that sinners are punished for ever, and that they are punished for their sins; and as it would be impious to suppose they are unjustly punished for their sins, we are irresistibly brought to the conclusion that the demerit of sin is such as, in the sinner himself, to deserve the everlasting punishment awarded.

But it seems nevertheless to be of more than very doubtful propriety to speak of the *infinite* demerit of sin. All those who have so spoken of the demerit of sin have, when questioned, felt the necessity of qualifying what they have said. What they have meant, we learn, is a *qualified infinity*, which is very much like informing us they did not mean what they said. It should be enough for man, in a matter of this kind, to speak after God only,—to say, "The wages of sin is death;" and that this solemn award is by interpretation, a being "punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord."

If men, feeling the unspeakable mischief of sin as to

its principle, practice, and consequences, are pleased in a popular discourse to speak of the infinite evil of sin, it ought to be known that they are speaking rhetorically. God is, indeed, infinite, and it is impossible to speak duly of the evil of sin as done against him; but if disobedience to God is to be regarded as an infinite evil because it is a disobedience to the Infinite One, it must follow that obedience to God will be an infinite good because it is an obedience to the Infinite One. This, however, as must be obvious to all, is, rhetorically speaking, infinite nonsense. We have seen some objections to this necessary conclusion, but they have proceeded on a confusion of ideas relative to duty and merit, and from shifting the ground of the argument in the case of obedience from that which was taken in respect of the disobedience. Thus, obedience cannot be an infinite good, because the person obeying is finite; but disobedience is an infinite evil because the Being disobeyed is infinite.

It is thought that where a commutation is admitted retribution is destroyed; but this seems to us a baseless notion. It is certain that in the atonement of Christ a penalty and a ransom were exacted, and the penalty suffered and the ransom paid. But it is objected that the penalty was not precisely what the offenders would have suffered in their own persons. True; but was it not a just equivalent in the judgment of justice? And if so, is not this, in the fullest sense of the term, retribution? Is it on any consideration to be inferred that justice did not proceed against the Substitute with a just balance and a just weight? Let us look a little further into this matter. Its importance cannot be overrated.

It will be conceded that "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities."—That he "Suffered for sins, the just for the unjust."—That he "His own self bare our sins."—That he "Was offered to bear the sins of many."—That he "Was delivered for our offences."—That "He gave himself for our sins." The cause for which he was delivered, for which he was offered, for which he was wounded and bruised, for which he suffered, and for

which he gave himself, was specific, then, if any combination of words can certainly specify anything. If, then, the procuring cause of his sufferings was our sins, was not the object of his sufferings to make an atonement for the cause of the sufferings? Was that object really accomplished according to the judgment of justice or not? Surely there can be but one answer. If this object, then, was really accomplished, was there not a repayment, and was not retribution actually established?

Retribution, in reference to the atonement, is altogether necessary to the satisfaction of all parties concerned therein.

First, it is necessary to the great Fountain of justice, its Administrator, and the Guardian of its rights. If the Sovereign makes a provision for sinners by grace unknown to the law, the Lawgiver will part with none of his claims in favour of the gracious transaction. God, the Fountain of justice, be it reverently spoken, must have his own moral judgment satisfied in any atonement which, as the Fountain of justice, he accepts. If it is the province of justice to give to every one his due, shall not the very Fountain of justice do justice to himself as such, in accepting what is presented to him as right, yea, as the very declaration of his own righteousness? It is not possible to conceive the just God to be contented to accept something not strictly just as and for what is strictly just, and to call that just which he so accepts.

A perfectly just retribution is also necessary to the Administrator of justice. Shall it be said that the Administrator of justice did not lay on the Surety what of suffering was due to the iniquities laid on him? Can it be said of the Surety in this momentous transaction as, through this transaction, his friends worshipfully say to God of themselves, "He hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities?" Did the Administrator of justice deal leniently with Jesus, and the Fountain of justice accept an unreal as a real expiation for an atonement? What of suffering was due to the God-man as the substitute of his people when

charged with the responsibility of his suretyship, it is not for mortal man to say. It is impious for a worm to exalt himself in judgment, and to pronounce on a matter like this. God only is Judge here. But while no man possessing the "meekness of wisdom" will dare to pronounce a judgment on what was due as a just retribution to Christ as the Substitute of his people; and no man in his senses will attempt to gauge the intensity, or to measure the extent of the sufferings of Christ for his people; no man, nevertheless, can think and speak of those substitutionary sufferings according to the Scriptures, who excludes the truth of a just balance being in the hand of the great Administrator of justice in relation to those sufferings. Did chance, or sovereignty, or justice, bear rule in the extent of the sufferings of Christ? Did chance, or sovereignty, or justice wound and bruise the Son of God for his people's offences? If chance had no hand in the awful decision of the extent of the sufferings of Christ, nor in their infliction, and if the part of sovereignty was to deliver up for us all the admitted and provided Substitute into the hands of the Judge, did the Judge assume the rights of the Sovereign, or did he faithfully discharge his own functions as the Administrator of justice? There is but one answer.

As the Guardian of the rights of justice, a just retribution is to God a necessary element of the atonement of Christ. If he surrenders the rights of justice on any conceivable pretence in one case, he endangers, yea, compromises those rights in every case; and if he compromises those rights, he compromises his own honour as their Guardian. But his "name is Jealous." He will as little forfeit his glory as he will give it to another.

Secondly, a just retribution is necessary to the Great Atoner. Shall it be said that the moral judgment of the God-man can be content with bearing that as and for a just retribution which is not so? Impossible.

Thirdly, a righteous retribution in the atonement of Christ is necessary to the guilty person to whom mercy is extended through that atonement. It is gloriously



true that God does clear the guilty, does acquit the wicked, and does justify the ungodly; but it is not true that he clears the guilty, acquits the wicked, or justifies the ungodly, as such, nor without an equitable retribution for their wrongs; for thus he will "by no means clear the guilty," he "will not at all acquit the wicked," and he "will not justify the wicked." Indeed, thus, there could be no moral clearing, or acquittal, or justification at all. Mercy extended thus to the guilty man could afford him no moral satisfaction. In order for him to feel a moral satisfaction in the atonement, he must needs feel that his sins have, all of them, been condemned in the flesh of his precious Substitute. Every soul of man whose sins have been forgiven him for Christ's sake, who has experienced the exercise of judgment and conscience in the matter, must have felt that a real atonement is an indispensable requisite to a contenting pardon. Exoneration from debt can only be morally satisfactory by an actual and full payment. Exculpation from blame only can give a moral contentment as it is justified by a full condemnation of the wrong from which blame arises. Only as the just claims of a moral law are justly met,—in the case of an arbitrary law, matters would be wholly different,—can a moral satisfaction be found in any atonement itself, or in any of its consequences. If the just claims of the moral law of the great Lawgiver are not righteously satisfied in connection with the extension of mercy through the atonement, the moral judgment of the forgiven man will induce in him the feeling that the whole affair of the atonement is at best but a splendid sham, and his whole moral sense will be disgusted. If, from any notion of the dignity of his person, or what not beside, it be said of Jesus Christ that what he suffered for the sins of a forgiven man is accepted as a sufficient retribution in law, without being a righteous retribution in fact, that man, if he worships his God in the matter of salvation as "a just God and a Saviour," will be required to ignore all his moral consciousness. He will be required to feel that he is exculpated from blame; that he is jus-

tified from wickedness; that he is called righteous; that he is taught to triumph in the absence of all condemnation; that he will lift up his head in the judgment of the great day at the tribunal of God as a just man; that he will, as righteous, by the sentence of the Judge, with the acquiescence of the unjust, and with the acclamations of the holy angels, pass from the judgment-seat of the Just into eternal life; and that he will be eternally without blame, and happy in his condition by—revolting and abhorred thought—a fiction of law! Are these things possible? What! is heaven to be peopled with released bankrupts and enlarged criminals, who have obtained a right to freedom in law by favour, but who are nevertheless under a moral obligation to pay and to suffer? Rejoice, believer in Christ, that all thy sins were equitably condemned—damned—in the flesh of thy Substitute; that the holy, just, and good law of the great Lord of all is, on thy behalf, magnified and made honourable; and that, whatever thy ungodliness, thy God is just in thy justification and salvation.

Fourthly, there exists also a great public necessity, wide as the existence of moral beings in the universe of God, that a righteous retribution should be found in the atonement of Christ. Every moral agent in the creation is amenable to law. This accountability must not be shocked by judicial proceedings which might awaken suspicions of their righteousness. It is not speaking with an unwarranted boldness to say that, it is due from the Fountain of justice to all who are amenable to law, that every judicial decision shall be such as shall not weaken the authority of the law in their mind, nor, therefore, relax a sense of obligation, nor justify a slight thought of sin. It is necessary, therefore, that in God's acceptance of the atonement of Christ, and in his extending pardon to the guilty through the atonement, there should not be so much as the very thinnest cloud of a suspicion of his justice overshadowing the throne of his righteousness. Since man sinned, there has been a strong propensity in the human mind to lessen the evil of sin. On every hand we hear of this, and the reason

for it is not far to seek. From this very propensity, as it seems to us, the enemies of the atonement of Christ vituperate the doctrine of the cross as *the abominable doctrine of a sacrifice for sins*. Hence it is that all the resources of sophistry have been, and are, employed to make men believe that the penal sanctions of the law will not be executed. But all that think slightly of the evil of sin, the dupes and the duped, are perpetually unsettled and uneasy. And no wonder. In order to bolster themselves and others in their wretched hope, they have to pervert the testimony of truth itself, to subordinate their steadily-refusing conscience into a slavish subserviency to a corrupt will, and to hold a silencing authority over a self-accusing power which is as little subject to their control as is the wind. Miserable men! while the moral sense of man abides, it can never be self-evident, and human arguments must fail to prove, that there is a slightness in the evil of the nature of sin; and while facts cannot be disproved, the innocuousness of the effects of sin will never be proved. Against all contradiction, Jesus Christ was holy, harmless, and undefiled. Without controversy he suffered. According to the testimony of truth, he suffered for sins. In his sufferings there were the retributions of justice. By those retributive sufferings an unanswerable denial is given to all sophistical arguments against the evil of sin; an irrefragable confirmation is given to the convictions of man's moral conscience concerning its iniquity; an everlasting infamy is broadly and indelibly stamped on its badness; and upon the divine law there is written a signature of honour, which is legible to every intelligent beholder, and is lasting as eternity. Go, ye disputers, to the cross, and learn there that God is just. Come, ye enquirers, to the cross, and learn here that God is just, and the Justifier of the ungodly.

It has been said by an able writer on the Christian atonement, "It would seem to be correct to regard justice, when considered as a binding power, as having reference to the faithfully granting what is due in the form of benefit, but not as absolutely obliging to inflict

merited evil. We will not charge insidiousness on this writer, but we hold his notion to be unphilosophical, unscriptural, and dangerous. Unphilosophical as confounding expediency with justice in the government of God under the plausible name of wisdom. Unscriptural as being against the entire voice of the Scripture on t his subject. And dangerous, as helping to delude those that are labouring to delude themselves into the notion that God may clear the guilty, and that it may be well with the wicked. When human wisdom points one way, and divine wisdom another, a wise man ought to feel no difficulty in shaping his course. That God punishes for sin is clear ; that he punishes for sin proportionately to its evil is equally clear ; that he will not, as bound by the claims of his own moral nature, acquit the wicked, seems no less clear ; and that when he pardons a sinner, the pardon is extended only through the sins of that sinner having been adequately condemned in the flesh of his great Substitute, is clear as words can declare.

In the sufferings and death, then, of the "Man of Sorrows," the Surety was punished, wounded and bruised in the stead of his friends, and retribution was established in righteousness. Justice, therefore, hides not, nor blushes when Mercy forgives for Christ's sake ; and Mercy, not with furtive shame in a corner, but with unconcealed publicity from the throne of righteousness, gives remission of sins to penitent sinners. Jesus, conscious that he has paid their debt, is not ashamed to receive the worshipful ascriptions of his ransomed ones. The forgiven sinner, assured of the expiation of his crimes by the sufferings and sacrificial death of his great Substitute, exults from a moral satisfaction in the justness of his pardon. In this establishment of retribution, the moral government of God is exhibited with an untarnished lustre to the view of all moral beings. Those that suffer in hell for their sins have no suspicion of an uneven balance against themselves, nor have they the least mistrust of an unjust weight on the behalf of those whose sins have been condemned in the

flesh of Jesus. In heaven the spotlessly white garments worn by the redeemed are the truthful symbols of a moral reality acquired by Jesus being made sin for those who wear them, which receives the exalted designation of the righteousness of God. From a moral consciousness of the righteousness displayed in the wondrous transaction, when redeemed sinners in heaven ascribe with acclamation salvation to God and to the Lamb, all the angels unite with them in a rapturous chorus of praise.

Retribution is established in hell, and a moral conviction of unrighteousness silences every soul under the execution of judgment. Retribution is established in heaven, and a moral conviction of righteousness inspires a satisfaction in every soul with the safety and bliss. In each case justice repays what is due.

We may now pass to the consideration of the next branch of our subject.

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### CHAPTER III.

#### JUSTICE REWARDING THE MERITORIOUS.

If it be the province of justice to give to every one his due, to reward the meritorious must be one of its obligations. The reward of Christ, as the atoning Substitute of his people, comes within this province of justice, and presents the most illustrious example of its giving to the meritorious his due. But before entering on this subject, it seems necessary we should try to understand the meaning of the word merit, and how merit itself arises.

“Those deeds are meritorious which, without or beyond personal obligation,” are performed for the sake of the benefit of others. But meritorious deeds may be of merely moral value, or they may have the additional excellency of a legal value. Morally meritorious deeds may be estimated from the person meriting, from the moral value of the thing merited, from the moral worth, or from the unworthiness of the person for whom the

meritorious deeds are done, and from the moral consequences resulting. If what is morally meritorious is required to have the additional excellency of a legal value, either the law must sanction the deeds done, or they must have the sanction of the supreme power. Noble, generous, heroic, self-sacrificing, and the like deeds, are spoken of as being meritorious. In a moral sense all such deeds ought to be so regarded; but can any man fail to see that any number of such deeds might be done by one person on the behalf of another under conditions which would render them, in a legal sense, null, and therefore as to any beneficial result, wholly worthless? Manifest, however, as this truth seems to be, it is taught by an able writer on the atonement of Christ, that meritorious deeds are such only "in proportion to their proper moral influence." Such an influence as arises from the accomplishment of what is not only just and good, but arduous, dangerous, painful;—from the respect conciliated to the laws through the splendour of the deeds performed;—from presenting such a pre-eminent example of virtue as must provoke to imitation, and the like. "Socinian notions of merit!" we think we hear exclaimed. Nay, these notions are entertained of the merits of Christ by one who, in some respects, ably combated Socinianism.

We are taught in the Scripture that, "Peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die." Who can fail to feel the moral influence of, or to have his whole moral nature stirred by the example of such a self-sacrifice? But it is nevertheless certain that if this self-sacrifice for another were made, and that other were a prisoner sentenced to death for a capital offence in due form of law, whatever might be the moral influence of the sacrifice on the prisoner's mind, and on the mind of others, no possible legal benefit could accrue to the prisoner through the sacrifice without a legal connection previously established, by permission of the supreme power in the state, between him and his self-sacrificing friend. Whatever the moral merit might be in such a case, the legal merit would be

nothing; the prisoner must nevertheless die. Between a person condemned to die and one willing to be his substitute, a legal connection, that is, a connection admitted by the supreme power, must be established, or else the self-sacrifice of the substitute will not be expiatory, and if made, will be without avail.

Hence, whatever might have been its moral influence wherever heard of by moral beings, if the self-sacrifice of Christ for the benefit of his people had not been vicarious, it would have been wholly worthless as to any legal merit. If he had not been vicariously wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities, if he had not been vicariously delivered for our offences, and if he had not vicariously died for us, whatever else his self-sacrificing sufferings and death might have been, and whatever moral influence they might have exerted, no merit for us would have been acquired, and no atonement would have been made for us. We should have been still in our sins and under condemnation. A federal connection between the great Sufferer and the sinner was essential to the Substitute to merit, and to the offender to be benefited by the meritorious sacrifice. One essential element of merit, then, in the legal sense, is that the excellent deeds which are done by one for the benefit of others must be vicarious.

Again, merit is not acquired by the discharge of natural obligation. If in this sinful world a man discharges his duty as a son, a brother, a husband, and a father, he is, and may be, justly commended; but to call a son, brother, father, or husband, meritorious who simply discharges his duty as such, is to force language to express a harsh association of ideas. To speak of a meritorious creature is a harsher association of ideas, is to speak falsehood in fact, and the falsehood is an impious one. A man, as between man and man, may have the right, and may often have the power, to do meritorious deeds; but, as between himself and God he neither has, nor ever had, the right or the power to do more than his duty. In so doing his duty, justice would vindicate him as dutiful, but would

not reward him as meritorious. Even the most exalted personage who only discharges his natural obligation, acquires no merit thereby and is entitled to no reward.

Our Lord Jesus, as has been observed, had a created nature, and it seems congruous that, in respect to his created nature, he should have a natural obligation to discharge, whatever that obligation might be, and whatever might be the defining and binding law of that obligation. But what, if any, seeing his created nature never had an independent existence, may be the law of the natural obligation of Christ, as to his created nature, we know nothing. If, however, such law and such obligation exist, he in the discharge of this obligation acquires no merit for others; but while we know and affirm nothing as to what may be the natural obligation of Christ as to his created nature, it is certain that obedience to the law given to Adam formed no part of that obligation. Being man, he could obey that law, and this obedience was necessary to him and to us as our Surety; but as Adam was not a natural and federal head to him he was not naturally born under our law nor bound by it. He was made under this law by a special constitution for a special purpose. The importance of this distinction will be seen if it is borne in mind that Jesus merited for others by what he did vicariously beyond, not by what he did in the discharge of, natural obligation. If then, as man, he fulfilled the law under which we are bound in discharge of a natural obligation he did his duty, and is entitled to be vindicated as dutiful, but is not entitled to be rewarded as meritorious. If his obedience to our law did not form a part of his official engagement there is no meritorious acquirement in the fulfilment. Hence, then, another element of merit is something done apart from the discharge of natural obligation.

Again, a person who engages to do and to suffer for another, in order to merit something thereby, must possess the right of self-disposal to the extent of what he engages to do and to suffer, and must be a voluntary agent in such disposal. A man, as between man and



man, has but a limited right of self-disposal ; and, as between himself and God, no right at all. Whatever, therefore, a man may merit of men he can merit nothing of God. An original and independent right, however, belongs to the Lord Jesus to do " whatsoever his soul desireth ;" and in the assumption of his inferior nature he did not forfeit his original right to do his pleasure. In the sense of *right* he said, " I have *power* to lay down my life." And that he was a voluntary agent in what he did as the Substitute of his people, the Scriptures abundantly testify by every form of expression which can declare his voluntariness. These necessary elements of merit, then, are found in the mediation of Christ.

Again, another element of merit in the case of one suffering for the wrong of another is the sanction of the supreme power. For one to suffer for the wrong of another is to suffer something beyond the injunction of the law ; and, therefore, as for such suffering the law confers no reward, such suffering to be meritorious, must have the sanction of the supreme power, and the sufferer and his friend must look for a meritorious recognition of the substitutionary suffering from the supreme power. To go beyond the law in suffering for another, without the sanction of the supreme power, would be a demerit, and only as sanctioned by that power could such suffering be a merit. While, therefore, the Lord Jesus was careful to teach us that he had the right to lay down his life, he was equally careful to say, " This commandment have I received of my Father." This element of merit, then, is found in the substitutionary sufferings of Christ.

Again, it seems necessary in any mediatorial interference of one for another, in order to make such interference something more than a provisional arrangement and a possible advantage,—in order, in fact, to make such interference what it is necessary it should be, namely, the acquiring of a meritorious right and the securing in equity of the benefit intended upon terms, that there should be a contract, and that the contracting parties should be equal. That there should be a con-

tract stipulating what is to be done and for whom, and what shall be the reward; and that the restipulating party to the contract should, on the complete discharge of his obligations under the contract, have the right of suing out his reward. Without such a contract in reality or in effect, whatever might be done by one for another in the way of mediatorial interference could only be provisional; no mediatorial merit would be gained, no federal right would be acquired, no beneficial effect would be secured, all the labour might be wasted, and the whole design might collapse. Moreover, in the case of such a contract being made, it seems necessary that the parties to it should be equal. That on the one hand the stipulating party should be free and have the right to stipulate; and on the other hand the restipulating party should be equally free and equally have the right to restipulate. Absolutely supreme authority, however possessed, when held by one over another, shuts out the person subject to that authority from meriting anything legally by whatever morally meritorious actions he may do. On this matter we have the teaching of the Lord Jesus himself. In his own matchless way he shows the immeritoriousness of the best doings of one who, without being free to contract, served an absolute lord. A servant has been ploughing or feeding cattle all day and returns home weary from labour. His master does not say to him in consideration of his weariness, "Go and sit down to meat," but with the lordliness of absolute authority, says to him, "Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself, and serve me, till I have eaten and drunken; and afterward thou shalt eat and drink." Nor having done all this did the master thank his servant for doing it, as for any meritorious work, but made him to know he had but done his duty, and that he had acquired no merit in so doing.

If any object to the notion of a contract, because it may seem to represent the whole business of the mediation of Christ as a merely personal affair between the Father and the Son, wherein the Father is all severity, and the Son is all mercy, the objection will be unjust

and inconsiderate. For, as has been said, as the expiatory sacrifice of Christ was not offered to the Father as and for a personal propitiation, but was offered to vindicate holiness, justice, and goodness, in the extension of righteousness and peace to the ungodly, so the covenant which was confirmed by this sacrifice was made with the same view. It was a covenant of peace as having peace for its object, and each of the contracting parties had an equal concern in that object.

But the best answer to this, as to every other, objection to a covenant, in relation to the mediatorial work of Christ, is the simple fact that there is one, and that the counsel of peace is "between them both," the Father and the Son. According to this economical arrangement the Father contracted in terms to give the Son a kingdom, and the Son accepted the kingdom upon the terms of the contract. When the Son came into the world he came with the law of this covenant in his heart, and delighted to do it; and when he had obeyed so much of the law of this covenant as was required to be obeyed in this world, he pleaded the fact as his right of reward, and was heard. "I have finished the work which they gavest me to do," he said, "and now, O Father, glorify thou me." Hence, then, this seemingly requisite contract in relation to the mediatorial interference of Christ to "save his people from their sins" exists and is acted on. According to this contract, therefore, his mediatorial interference is no uncertain provisional arrangement in which there could be nothing meritoriously done or acquired according to terms, and nothing secured by the meritorious fulfilment of terms; but, being according to this contract, his interference is such as to earn a mediatorial merit upon terms, upon terms to acquire a federal right, upon terms to entitle him to every blessing of peace pledged to him in the contract, and upon terms to put him into a position to sue out in equity everything for which, according to contract, he interfered.

Once more, merit, in the legal sense, does not arise from any moral meritoriousness previously acquired by,

nor from any superior moral excellence attributable to, nor from any relative superiority belonging to, the substitute doing or suffering, but from the deeds and sufferings themselves. In a moral sense it is otherwise. In this sense, if a person interfere for another by whom he has been deeply injured, his interference will be immeasurably more meritorious than if, instead of being injured, he had been as greatly obliged as he has been deeply injured. So also, if a king take a personal interest in any one to whom he is not personally obliged, so far as to involve himself in personal inconvenience, loss, and suffering, common consent will attach amoral merit to this kindness of a king which it would not, in a like case, to a like kindness done by one of his subjects. But if the sentence of the law against the person for whom the interference is made be twenty shillings or as many stripes, justice will make no difference, supposing a substitution is admitted, whether the substitute be an injured or an obliged person, whether king or subject, whether of great or of small ability, whether a merely righteous man or a great public benefactor. In any case justice requires "the uttermost farthing" of the fine, and the last stripe of the penalty; and whoever is the substitute, it will steadily refuse to liberate the defaulter until a complete equivalent is given for the default.

The sum, then, of our doctrine on merit is,—First, that it is something done for the benefit of others beyond the natural obligation of the doer.

Secondly, that legally to merit anything by suffering for another, a legal connection must be established between the substitute and the offender.

Thirdly, that the discharge of natural obligation merits nothing.

Fourthly, that a substitute must have the right of self-disposal to the extent of his substitutionary engagements.

Fifthly, that a substitute must be a voluntary agent.

Sixthly, that when the law does not provide a substitution the sanction of the supreme power is essential to any merit arising out of any substitution.

Seventhly, that in order to merit upon terms a contract is necessary.

Eighthly, that the parties to the contract must have the right, and be free to contract.

Ninthly, that to merit the release of a defaulter, the claims of justice must be fully met whoever may be the substitute.

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## CHAPTER IV.

### FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS OF THE ATONEMENT IN ITS RELATION TO DIVINE JUSTICE.

HAVING already, in passing, briefly illustrated these points of our teaching concerning merit in their connection with the atonement of Christ, it will be unnecessary, by any direct reference, to illustrate them any further while pursuing our inquiry about, and advancing our opinions upon, justice rewarding the merit of Jesus Christ.

If it is the province of justice to give to the meritorious his due, it will follow that if Jesus Christ, regarded as a Surety, is dealt with justly, he will receive the full due of his merit. To withhold from him anything which he justly merited, under any possible consideration of his meritoriousness estimated by the rule of justice, would be, precisely to the extent of the withholding, to deal unjustly towards him; just as to reward him beyond what, according to rule, he really merited, would be to extend favour to him.

All that have considered this subject will feel that we are necessitated by these remarks to confront a question which has given rise to, and which continues to be the cause of, considerable vexation to enquiring minds, and of much vexed controversy between minds polemically disposed. A calm consideration of this matter may be helpful.

It is thought and taught that, from the fact that

Jesus Christ is properly Divine, his obedience must needs be infinitely meritorious.

This doctrine of the infiniteness of the merit of Christ is true, and it is not true. It is, as it seems to us, from not distinguishing the truth from the untruth of this doctrine that the confusion in men's minds arises on the whole question. If, as it appears to us, a distinction were clearly apprehended between merit in the moral sense, and merit in the legal sense, all confusion would be cleared away. The realm of ethics and the realm of jurisprudence require to be kept distinct here, although justice presides in both realms. In the realm of ethics, justice always acknowledges merit, but is often utterly unable to reward the merit it acknowledges. In the realm of jurisprudence, justice not only acknowledges merit, but invariably rewards in full the merit it acknowledges. Those that contend for the infiniteness of the merit of Christ, err from estimating his obedience according to the moral judgment, apart from all legal consideration, and as though no law were concerned in the matter, instead of estimating that obedience, as in a case where a binding law is concerned, according to its legal value.

On moral grounds, apart from law, many circumstances will go into the account of a meritorious deed in the moral judgment. For instance, the higher in rank the person interfering is above him for whom he interferes, the further removed from him in relationship, the less he is obliged or the more he has been disobliged or injured by him, and the less advantage or service he expects to reap from him, the more merit will be his acknowledged award. So also, the more worthy a person is to have a meritorious deed done for him, the less merit will be awarded to the deed; and the less worthy or the more unworthy a person is to have a meritorious deed done for him, the more merit will be awarded to the deed. And there are many other considerations which will materially regulate, in a moral sense, the merit of meritorious deeds. But where a law exists, and the merit to be acquired is what will satisfy

the claims of justice according to terms of law, the thing is palpably and altogether different. A full payment, and a just equivalent for what would have been the punishment of the defaulter are absolutely essential. Anything less would yield no content to any of the parties concerned, and anything more would be superfluous.

In every view of it, in a moral sense, the interference of Christ for his sinful creatures can only be regarded as boundlessly meritorious. The essential dignity of his person, the wholly incomprehensible attributes of his nature, his absolute independence of the persons for whom he interfered and his boundlessly lofty removal in rank above them, together with their unqualifiable unworthiness, must make his interference for them immeasurably meritorious, and as high above all possible reward, as it is high above all possible praise. Estimated on moral grounds, it will be impossible to set a bound to the merit of a single act done or pain suffered by that peerless person for guilty men. Estimated on these grounds, even the very lightest gracious thought of the Son of God for a sinner must be of immeasurable merit. Estimated thus, the merit of Christ's obedience unto death is as far beyond any reward which justice, presiding in the moral world apart from all considerations of law, can award to it, as he himself "is exalted above all blessing and praise" in the moral judgment of his beneficiaries. Presiding here, justice does not propose to reward, but only to acknowledge his merit. As nothing imaginable could on these grounds, be an adequate reward, so nothing is given for his reward.

It is as presiding, not in the moral realm, but in what may probably be thought an inferior realm, the realm of law, where the exactness of legal injunction, obligation, and sanction obtains, that justice estimates the merit of Christ in the matter of the atonement, and gives to him his due reward. Here it is that the sinners were found for whom he interfered. They were under law. They had violated its injunctions, they had lightly esteemed its obligations, and they were exposed to its

sanctions. In this realm the merit of the Saviour was acquired for them. His merit is appraised at its value in law according to the decision of justice as the administrator of law. What he acquired in law, that he merited; what he did not acquire according to law, he did not merit. If he did not acquire the redemption of all men, he did not merit the redemption of all men. According to justice, presiding here, he is remunerated with his full due. Sin, it must be remembered, is a criminal default, and sinners are criminal defaulters; and he, whoever he be, and whatever may be his rank, his personal dignity, and his moral worth, that interferes for criminal defaulters, must pay the sanctioned fine and bear a penalty for the default to the entire satisfaction of retributive justice in the case. If from any moral consideration of the person interfering for a criminal defaulter retributive justice does not exact what is due in the case for the default, and the defaulter is liberated on that consideration, remunerative justice will reward unduly, the substitute will receive an inglorious recompense, and the defaulter will escape by favour and carry the stigma of an unatoned default upon him. In such a case there will be in different respects, a miscarriage of justice relating to all concerned, and a general discontent will be the unsatisfactory issue.

Those who have entertained the notion that an atonement was made intentionally for all men, and those who have contended for a sufficiency in the atonement for all men, have strenuously clung to the idea of the infiniteness of the merit of Christ as necessary to the support of their respective opinions; but those who have rejected these opinions, and have contended for a limited intention of the atonement, as to persons, but have retained for the same reasons the infiniteness of the Saviour's merit, would have been embarrassed with a wealth of merit of which they would have been at a loss to dispose, but for a need they have discovered for it all in their notion of the infinite evil of sin. A simple regard to the truth would set all right.



If either of the unscriptural notions were true—namely, that the Lord Jesus made an atonement intentionally for all men, or that he made one sufficient for all men, yet neither of these would require one of infinite merit for its support. Even in either such a case, the foundation would be out of all proportion to the superstructure; for whatever ultimately may be the number of mankind, it will never be infinite, and, therefore, never can be the ground of a necessity for an infinite atonement. Respecting the other supposed ground for this necessity—namely, the infinite evil of sin, it should be understood that the atonement was neither required nor made for sin as one and indivisible, but for all the sins of many sinners. But even if we were to regard all the sins of all the saved as one indivisible, infinite evil, and the atonement of Christ as one indivisible, infinitely-meritorious requirement, our understanding would be put upon the hard duty of apprehending, and our faith upon the extraordinary labour of believing, that one infinity has been successfully employed to countervail, to exhaust, and to swallow up another. But, further, sins are many; and if there be an infinite evil in sin at all, there must be in every sin; and if there be an infinite evil in every sin, we shall then be put upon the very far more extraordinary business of understanding that one infinity countervails—these are the proper terms, we believe—exhausts, and swallows up an innumerable multitude of other infinities. Still further, sins are greater and less, and they have awarded to them appropriately a greater and less penalty, a less and more tolerable damnation. If, then, there is an infinite evil in every sin, and some sins are greater than others, it would seem, therefore, that there are greater and less infinities; and if so, our understanding and our faith will be put on the yet still harder duty of perceiving and believing that one infinity countervails, exhausts, and swallows up an unnumbered multitude of infinities of various dimensions. Verily, this is wonderful! But extremes meet;

and sometimes that which is taken to be sublime, turns out, on examination, to be only ridiculous.

The ground of the truth of this notion of an infiniteness of merit in the atonement is as unsound, as the grounds of its supposed necessity are extraordinary. It seems to be inferred, from the great Atoner being essentially the Infinite One, that he imparted somehow, but whether by design or of necessity does not seem clear, his own essential infinity into his atoning merit. But is infinity a transferable quality? Moreover, supposing that infinity were a transferable quality, if an infinitely meritorious atonement was not demanded as an equivalent in righteousness, and that it was, is by no means in proof, it would be supererogatory; and if such an atonement was made without being demanded, and no adequate occasion for its employment is ever presented, and it is presumed that no sane mind can imagine any such an occasion, then it will be, just so far as it exceeds in capability the design for which it was made, a superfluous provision.

Again, if it is supposed that there must be an infinite atoning sufficiency in the meritorious obedience of Christ arising necessarily from the Divine nature of the great Surety, will it not follow, according to this supposition, that something that is infinite must also necessarily arise out of everything he ever did, because he that did it is essentially Divine? And if not, why not? If, for instance, an infinity of merit necessarily arises out of his meritorious obedience because he is infinite who rendered the obedience, why must there not be an infinity of excellency arising necessarily out of every good thing he ever did for the same reason? Can any mind fail to perceive that, if we follow this notion to its legitimate consequence, we must fall into an absurdity?

That the Son of God has broadly and legibly stamped the character of his essential infinity on all he has done, just as the character of the Godhead of the Creator is stamped on the creature, may be seen of every man; and that he may have written the signa-

ture of his infinity on the atonement in a larger and more illustrious character than he has on anything else will be cheerfully admitted; but that he ever imparted a substantive infinity to anything which he has done, that he ever created, or made, or merited, or procured anything, no matter what, that is substantively infinite, is one of the strangest fancies that ever ran away with the head of any man gifted with the power of thinking.

One fancy begets others. It is sometimes said, and with no little rhetorical flourish, that one drop of the precious blood of Christ, on account of his essential divinity, is sufficient for the atonement of the sins of the whole world, had, as some put it, God so willed it; or, as others put it, if sinners would but avail themselves of it. But, however the efficacy may be put, whether on the will of God or on the will of the sinner, this saying is a mere rant born of a fancy. Yea, worse, in terms it is a bold impiety. For if one drop is sufficient, ought two to have been shed? Where were the wisdom and the justice of God when Jesus bled? Have not those that embrace this worse than silly sentiment the perspicacity to perceive that if it were true, a question of insuperable difficulty relating to the wisdom and justice of God in respect to the sufferings of his Son would be raised?

Another fancy begotten of that under consideration is a supposed distinction of value in the atonement, defined by the terms *intrinsic* and *extrinsic*. It is supposed that there is an intrinsic value in the atonement, above what is called its extrinsic value, which is as infinity to what there may be of value in the actual reconciliation of sinners to God that shall finally be brought to pass. Omitting to notice now the great truth taught in the Scriptures, that the atonement, whatever may be its value, is something acquired by an obedience that had a beginning, a progression, and an end—a truth which, if duly considered, would effectually dispose of more than one of the fanciful notions that have arisen on this great subject, let us ask, was the supposed intrinsic value of the atonement

ever employed, or ever intended to be employed, for any practical purpose? And if not, is this a suitable subject for grown men to discuss? All values, to be practically valuable, require a currency. Has this supposed excess of value ever had a currency, or will it ever have one? If, then, this supposed intrinsic value has never found and never will find a currency, will it not be something which never was and never will be realized by any persons in heaven or earth for their advantage, and something which never did and never will acquire anything to illustrate the excellency, or to advance the honour of the great Atoner? For what, then, and to whom is this intrinsic value valuable? If a speculation is a mental view of a thing which is not verified in practice and in fact, then this view of the value of the atonement is a veritable speculation; and we submit that this great subject is not one on which a speculative inclination should be indulged.

We, therefore, repeat that, estimated on purely moral grounds, and received in a purely moral sense, an immeasurable merit must be attributed to the very least gracious thought of the Son of God for sinners. But we are not in a condition to estimate his merit on these grounds, nor is his merit thus estimated. Circumstanced as we are, were his merit estimated thus, no legal right would be acquired, and no practical advantage would result. The only grounds on which his merit can be estimated for any practical purpose in our condition, are those on which justice, presiding in the realm of law, estimates things good and evil, and gives to every one his due. On these grounds, merit will be, of necessity, something acquired on terms, something due, and something which must be rewarded in full. Whatever sufficiency, then, there may in the merit of Christ, it is an acquired sufficiency on terms. Whatever sufficiency of merit he acquired on terms, just that sufficiency is his righteous due. And if the whole of his sufficiency of merit were not righteously rewarded, then justice would appear to be partial and imperfect in not rewarding that sufficiency of merit according to its due.

As, then, the merit of Christ is estimated on legal grounds, and for practical purposes, it will follow, of necessity, that his merit must be limited. Estimated on these grounds, an infiniteness of merit is not possible, and no absolutely infinite practical purpose could possibly be intended or accomplished.

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## CHAPTER V.

### FURTHER THOUGHTS ON THE ATONEMENT IN ITS RELATION TO DIVINE JUSTICE.

THERE are some considerations which must, of necessity, be taken into account in the reward which Justice accords to the Saviour of sinners. Let us look at a few of these considerations.

I. Justice will reward the Saviour to the full extent of his representative capacity.

If the Lord Jesus held a representative capacity under supreme sanction, and if he discharged every obligation devolving on him by consequence thereof, Justice will surely reward him to the full extent of his due arising from the absolutely perfect discharge of every such obligation. But he did, and he does, hold such a representative capacity. It will be conceded that believers are represented in him. But it should be observed that believers do not begin to be represented by Christ when they believe in him. Their representation by him took place just as early as their election in him, and this took place before the foundation of the world. They were chosen in him; and their being chosen in him has respect to his federal relation to them, Election made Christ and all chosen in him, federally one.

The federal headship of Christ had a typical presentment in the federal relation of "The first man Adam." Adam, the type of Christ, as invested with a federal

character, disobeyed the injunctions of the law, and by his disobedience all whom he represented "were made sinners;" and Justice, giving to every one his due, with a certainty that has been unfailing in so much as a single instance, has secured the award due to the members through the demerit of the representing head. Every soul of man descending from him has been made a sinner. If, then, Justice is so precisely just in case of demerit, will it be less precisely just in case of merit? If the imagination can conceive the vile notion that Justice will be impartial to curse, and partial to bless, will not the judgment strangle the monstrosity at its birth? Is Justice readily just when it is a righteous thing to kill, and reluctantly just when it is a righteous thing to make alive? Is Justice heartily just in the matter of the first man, and hardly just in the matter of the Second man? Is Justice pleasurable just when punitive, and painfully just when remunerative? Yea, is Justice severely just in respect to the demerit of Adam, and cruelly unjust in respect to the merit of Christ? It is as clear as self-evident truth that, to whatever extent the Lord Jesus held a representative character, if his obedience for those whom he represented was sufficiently meritorious to make them righteous, he ought to be rewarded accordingly by their being "made righteous." If he did not render an obedience sufficiently meritorious for the ransom of all whom he represented, the failure is his, and he must bear the inglorious consequence; but if he did render a sufficiently meritorious obedience for the ransom of all whom he represented, and every one of them is not delivered "from going down to the pit," then he will not be rewarded according to his due, and Justice must for ever bear the stigma of having been cruelly unjust to the merciful and righteous Saviour of sinners. For, be it observed, when Justice, in its punitive character, has employed the requisite means to exact its due, it may not leave to accident to remunerate; but it is bound by every consideration of right, in its remunerative character, to employ the necessary means to secure the reward due to merit.

On what grounds, and with what object, we will not now enquire, but we do hear that, in popular discourses, it is sometimes said, *there are thousands in hell for whom Christ died*. If this false,—gratuitously false—if this calumniating, if this inexpressibly vile, if this unutterably horrible, if this ineffably execrable sentiment could be verified in the case of only one whom Jesus, the Son of God, represented, supposing his obedience unto death to be sufficiently meritorious to make that one righteous, and to give him the benefit of being made righteous, that single verification would fix on divine justice a deep, a dark, an abhorrent stain of infamous iniquity that could never be erased. Yea, it would unclthe the Eternal of all his moral beauty, and dress him in the drabbed rags of an odious immorality.

For ourselves, while we bow submissively to the testimony of the Scripture concerning hell, while we derive no pleasure from thinking of the sufferings of our fellow-creatures in that dreadful prison, and await the doing away with knowledge “in part” in the light of heaven to acquiesce in its very existence, yet we dare not imagine or utter anything which might serve to lessen and to lighten, in the judgment of moral beings, the pain and despair of “the damnation of hell.” But we are sure that if there were any in hell for whom Christ died, and they were conscious of this supposed fact,—the infinite sufficiency of the Saviour’s merit for all men—that this consciousness would deprive hell itself of all its moral torment. The sufferers, whatever might be their pains, would feel they were the victims of a moral wrong perpetrated upon them in defiance of every principle of right, and would derive thence that solace which moral beings can derive in their sufferings from suffering wrongfully.

Such horrible extravagancies are not only heard in the heat of popular discourses on this subject, but the sophistical premises of these shocking conclusions are found in treatises on this great matter written in the quiet of seclusion, and, apparently, in the sober belief of their truth, by men of unquestioned learning and

godliness. When we may read in a treatise on the priesthood of Christ, written by an eminently learned and godly man, "We have found our Lord and Redeemer, described as a Priest,.....divinely appointed in a manner consonant with his unrivalled dignity, standing in an assumed relation to mankind, for the purpose of making a sacrificial and a consecrating offering; submitting to the most bitter sorrows, agonies, and death; effecting a real propitiation and expiation for the sinful state of mankind, in all senses and respects which are suitable to the immutability of the divine perfections, and the glorious honour of the divine government." When, we repeat, we may read such a statement as this written by a learned and godly doctor of divinity, we may abate our wonder that unlearned and ignorant men should, in the heat and ferment of mind sometimes incident to public speaking, utter the shocking abomination mentioned. Can not, or will not men see that Jesus Christ did not stand in an assumed federal relation to all mankind? Can not, or will not men see that the Son of God did not stand in an assumed federal relation for gracious purposes to, say, Judas Iscariot? A single exception will burst this bubble. If any man will say that the Son of God stood in an assumed federal relation to "the son of perdition;" that he, in any sense, was wounded for his transgressions and bruised for his iniquities, that he made "a sacrificial and consecrating offering" for him, that he effected "a real propitiation and expiation" for his sinful state, that man must be left to his hallucination or to his perverseness, whichever it may be. It will be of no avail to such a man to reason with him on the representative analogy there was between the high priest of the Jews and our High Priest. It will be of no avail to expound according to the proportion of faith and agreeably to fact, Rom. v. 12—21; and 1 Cor. xv. 22. It will be of no avail to assert after the apostle that "Christ is the head of the church." Such a man must be left. But can any other man fail to see that if Jesus Christ did stand in this assumed federal relation



to Judas Iscariot, if he did make a sacrificial and consecrating offering for him, if he did effect a real propitiation and expiation for his sinful state, that then that unhappy man's going to his own place must lie at the door of divine justice? If Jesus Christ represented Judas Iscariot as he did the crucified thief who was plucked out of the jaws of perdition, like a brand from the fire, in the last moments of his miserable and guilty existence here, Judas Iscariot ought not to have gone to his own place, but he ought, whatever may have been the requisite means within him or without him for the effectual accomplishment thereof, as a matter of righteousness, to be in Paradise with the ransomed and rescued malefactor.

Federal representation, then, rules the extent of the merit of Christ. He represented his people, and he came to save his people from their sins. He represented the persons whom he calls his sheep, and he laid down his life for them. He represented and he "loved his church and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word; that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish." What he intended to procure for his church by giving himself for it, that he merited for it. Beyond this limit, in a legal sense and for any practical purpose, he merited nothing; but, at the same time, every moral being in the universe of God who may be informed of this wonderful obedience unto death of the Son of God for sinners, especially those who are redeemed unto God thereby, will for ever feel that there is a moral merit in the redeeming interference boundlessly above reward, and as high above all blessing and praise.

## CHAPTER VI.

FURTHER OBSERVATIONS ON THE ATONEMENT IN ITS  
RELATION TO DIVINE JUSTICE.

II. ANOTHER consideration which falls into the account of the reward of Christ in respect of the atonement is his responsibility. Representation and responsibility were united in the official engagement of Christ. He accepted a responsibility for those whom he represented. He was Surety for them. If he has discharged his responsibility, it is due to him that he should be rewarded accordingly. But a question of meaning arises here which it will be proper to consider.

Words having a close affinity often step, with a good deal of freedom, out of their own proper domain into that of their neighbours. This licence may often be permitted without challenge, and sometimes may be invited with a welcome. But if on ordinary subjects, when accuracy is not of high importance, words of similar import or of nearly synonymous meaning may be often interchanged with an agreeable effect, it is far otherwise when the subject is of prime importance, and when accuracy is essential. The words *responsibility* and *accountability* are frequently interchanged with a good deal of freedom; and in matters of slight importance, wherein accuracy is of little consequence, it would be idly pedantic wholly to disallow the licence. But in relation to the momentous subject we are considering, no such freedom ought to be permitted. Each of these words ought to be rigorously confined to its own domain. We ought to be as exact here as if writing a dictionary, and, indeed, far more exact than writers of dictionaries sometimes are. In this case we should be just as justice itself—giving to each his due.

Accountability represents an obligation arising from a natural, a civil, or a privileged state. The accountability of man, for instance, as God's creature lays him

under the obligation of keeping God's law. Parents are accountable to God and to the state, according to the laws in force, respecting their children; and children are accountable by the laws of God and man to honour their parents. The accountability of a citizen lays him under the obligation of observing the laws of the state. The accountability of a Christian lays him under the obligation of whatever is due from him in his Christian state according to the commandments of Christ. A man's accountability obliges him, independently of his will. His will is never consulted in the matter of his accountability; and while a failure to discharge all the obligations arising out of his accountability draws down upon him a penalty, the perfect discharge of all the obligations arising out of his accountability merits nothing. Having done all, he has but done his duty.

Responsibility differs from accountability in essential particulars. In a case of responsibility, the will of the person becoming responsible is consulted. The obligations of responsibility do not fall on a man without his consent, but they are taken upon him by himself with free concurrence. He responds. When there is no response there is no responsibility; for to respond is essential to the creation of a responsibility. Hence, a state of responsibility is an official or an assumed, not a natural state. The duties and the obligations of this state are presented and accepted, and the acceptance is free. Everyone bound under a responsibility is bound by his own free act. In accountability there is no presentation to the understanding of terms, of obligations to be undertaken, and of reward to be given; no consultation of the will, and no formal and willing acceptance; but in a case of responsibility there are all these. If, therefore, a responsibility which has for its object the conferring of a benefit, is accepted on terms, the discharge of the voluntarily accepted obligations, unlike the discharge of any obligation which may arise in a case of accountability, will be meritorious. Something beneficial will then have been done in such a case, for

which the doer was not accountable, but for which he voluntarily made himself responsible.

The Lord Jesus is the federal representative and responsible head of his church. The obligations of his headship arise from a responsibility, not from an accountability. He responded, and he responded freely. In discharging these obligations he does not discharge obligations which naturally and necessarily fell upon him, but obligations which were presented to him, and were voluntarily accepted by him. Had he been accountable for their discharge, he would merit nothing by their discharge. He would then merely perform a duty, and from the performance of a duty no merit arises. But he discharges obligations in his representative character which arise from a responsibility. This is beyond natural duty. He discharges, not a natural, but an official obligation voluntarily assumed for a beneficial purpose, and he merits thereby accordingly.

Confining our thoughts within the limits of what the responsibility of the great Head of the Church was in respect to the atonement, it will be proper to inquire what was that responsibility. Nothing can be simpler than this inquiry and the answer thereto, yet nothing seems to be less clearly understood. If the Lord Jesus accepted a responsibility respecting an atonement, what could that responsibility be but to make an atonement? And what is an atonement but the making of a valid expiation of certain offences according to the judgment of Divine justice? Simple as these things are, there are few things about which men seem to be more confused and less of one mind than about the nature and the extent of the responsibility of the Son of God respecting the atonement, the discharge of his responsibility, the merit he acquired by that discharge, and the reward conferred on him for it.

We have already said that representation is limited. We now say, that representation and responsibility are co-extensive. We say that the Lord Jesus did not make himself responsible to acquire a limitless atoning sufficiency for all men, but that he made himself responsible to make

a valid atonement to the extent of his representative capacity. It will be allowed that he expiated offences by his death. For whom did he die? He himself said—"The good Shepherd giveth his life for the sheep." "I lay down my life for the sheep." True, we think we hear some say, but is it not also said—"God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life"? And also, "By him all that believe are justified from all things"? Is there not, then, a provisional sufficiency for all to be secured by whosoever will through believing in Christ? Doubtless these are testimonies of the Scripture, but those that so interpret these testimonies should know that there is an antecedent cause of believing in Christ, and of unbelieving. This antecedent cause of believing and of unbelieving is thus spoken of:—"He that is of God heareth God's words. Ye, therefore, hear them not, because ye are not of God." "Ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me." "He that knoweth God heareth us. He that is not of God heareth not us." When Jesus said to his disciples, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned," he gave no intimation that he had made a provisional atonement for all the world then to be offered for acceptance universally, and to be secured individually by an individual belief; but he simply made a solemn declaration of fact relating to himself, for the information of all concerned.

But is it not an altogether wild notion to imagine a responsibility in any case so void of terms?—To imagine a presentation and an acceptance of a charge so utterly indefinite, and connected with results so absolutely accidental? In the case of a responsibility being undertaken to make a valid expiation of offences, is it supposable the offenders and their offences were not foreknown, and were not taken into the account? Is it not a downright violation of every notion of pro-

priety in one's judgment of things to imagine Christ, the Surety, making himself responsible, and actually discharging the obligation of his responsibility, for every wrong of everybody, if it may so happen, and for no wrong of anybody, if it may so happen? Did the Son of God pledge himself at a mere venture? Did he die at a mere venture? Was his compact with the Father termless? Is he awaiting at the right hand of the Majesty on High for what may result from mere accident for his reward? Responsibility is a distinctly and a strongly relative term. It is impossible not to associate in the mind, by even the most violent effort, the person responsible with the person or authority under whom, the persons for whom, and the matter about which, the responsibility is undertaken. If it is a hard saying, and difficult to hear, it is nevertheless certain that Jesus received his name because, as the angel interpreted it, "He shall save his people from their sins." To save his people from their sins exactly defines the limits of his responsibility in the matter of the atonement. Had he charged himself with more, more would have been done with the same certain results which follow what he has done. His atoning responsibility is a part of his saving responsibility. He not only made himself responsible to ransom his sheep by a price, but laid himself equally under an obligation to gather them from their ruinously wandering courses to his own fold. As he "ought" to have suffered for them, so he "must" bring together to himself those for whom he suffered. But we are now only concerned with his atoning responsibility and its discharge.

Jesus discharged the obligation arising from his atoning responsibility by his obedience unto death. When his obedience unto death was completed, his atoning responsibility was discharged. We have already distinguished his natural from his assumed obedience, although we have not dared to draw the line where the one ends and the other begins. We speak now wholly of his assumed obedience. This is that "obedi-

ence unto death" of which the apostle speaks. The rule of his obedience Jesus calls the will of his Father. We have no written copy of this rule, and can only form a judgment about it from what the obedient Son did. Human law would form a part, but only a part, of that rule. But it should not be imagined that the mere fulfilment of human law by the Lord Jesus for those who had violated that law is the measure of his obedience. Being a man he could obey that law, and he did, and this was necessary; but not because he is a man. This was not necessary for his own sake, because he was not accountable. No doubt the fulfilling of this law was a part of his obedience. Hereby it was that he magnified the law, and made it honourable. Yet the fulfilling of this law was only a part of his obedience. He had to obey the will of his Father so as to make an atonement for his people by the expiation of their sins. Hence, his was a peculiarly suffering obedience. He suffered much loss, much privation, much grief, much pain; and he died. This brings us to more much questioned matters relating to this subject.

Some think that, somehow, the Lord Jesus must have suffered infinitely, and that, by consequence, there must be an infinite merit arising from his sufferings, but on what grounds does not seem very clear. Some say he suffered infinity at a stroke, and eternity in a moment. Perhaps the rhetoric of this saying is felt to be so very fine that its logic may be taken for granted. On the other hand, there are others who, with no little philosophic lore and with much plausibility, have laboured to show that there was no measure in the sufferings of Christ having a direct relation to a definite cause of those sufferings, and to a definite design to be brought to pass by them; and they have taken occasion to speak with no little contempt of any such measure as an arithmetical calculation, and of the arithmetical calculation as a pitiful trifling. About an infiniteness in the sufferings of Christ in the discharge of his responsibility, and an

infinite merit arising therefrom, it will be unnecessary to say anything. If we tell those who contend so warmly for these infinitenesses that the term *infinite* represents a positive, inherent, essential, and intransferable quality, it will, it may be feared, set nothing right in their minds. We must leave them amidst their infinities. Such things are too wonderful for us. But about the measure of the sufferings of Christ for a definite cause and a definite end, it will be proper, speaking, as we are, of the discharge of his responsibility, to say a word.

We that say the suffering obedience of Christ was a measured obedience in discharge of a measured responsibility undertaken for the accomplishment of a measured purpose. We say that the purpose was measured by Divine sovereignty, and that the suffering obedience requisite to accomplish the purpose was measured by Divine justice; and we say this in the clear view of the unsearchably mysterious conclusions legitimately following the doctrine taught. If these conclusions create difficulties which utterly baffle human thought, they are not a whit more baffling than are a multitude of facts in this world which are patent to all, and which wholly refuse satisfactorily to accommodate themselves in the human mind to any apologetic principle yet discovered by human ingenuity. What, however, we know not now, we shall know hereafter. Where it is so wholly necessary to live by faith on so many other matters, blessed be God for faith enough to live by on this momentous matter!

That measure is to be predicated of the suffering obedience of Christ must appear to every sane mind. Ought anything justly urged that is true of the sufferings of Christ to be contemptuously spoken of as pitiful trifling? We repeat the question, Did chance, or sovereignty, or justice, preside over the measure of the sufferings of Christ? Is it imaginable that the measure of those sufferings bore no reference and no relation in righteousness to the discharge of a definite responsibility which that illustrious Sufferer had undertaken? It has been very sillily urged that some of the



sufferings of Christ came from the hand of man, and that these sufferings of the great Substitute were merely incidental things which simply exhibited the barbarous cruelty of man. Some of his sufferings did, indeed, come from the hand of man, and herein the cruelty of man was manifested; and some, too, of his sufferings came from the hand of the devil, and herein was the malignity of the devil manifested: but was not the hand of God over the hand of man and the hand of the devil in the whole? Were not wicked men and devils Jehovah's sword in Jehovah's hand which Jehovah himself bade awake against his Shepherd, the Man his fellow to smite him? Was not Jesus led of the Spirit into the wilderness, to be tempted of the devil? If Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel gathered together against the Lord's Anointed, was not all this to do whatsoever God's hand and counsel determined before to be done? Was he not delivered to them by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God?

But it may be urged that many of the sufferings of Christ, and the peculiar forms in which they fell upon him, were endured for merely economical ends; that he suffered many things for the economical purpose of fulfilling "all things which were written in the law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms concerning him," that thereby the important truth that the Christ of history is the Messiah of prophecy might be unmistakably established. All this is true and very important withal. But it is equally true and equally important that the economical purpose of the Saviour's sufferings was subordinate to the judicial purpose, and that the judicial purpose wholly comprehended the economical purpose. The fulfilment of all those things which were written concerning Christ, wherein any suffering was involved, had a judicial cause anterior, and a judicial end ulterior, to the proof of his Messiahship. For, be it held in remembrance, that whatever he suffered, he suffered all in an assumed relation according to the counsel of God. He was under no

obligation from a natural accountability to suffer anything. If, then, he suffered a single loss, or privation, or grief, or pain, or any such thing, which did not diminish the obligation arising from his responsibility in his assumed relation, he suffered to that extent from a cruel injustice, according to—abhorred thought!—the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God. Can anything more revolting be imagined? Merciful Teacher, preserve men from speaking unadvisedly on the awful sufferings of the Son of God through the stupidity of ignorance or the rashness of folly!

The suffering obedience of Christ had a beginning, a progression, and an end. In the beginning, the accomplishment of a Divine design was commenced, in the progression that design was pursued, and in the end the design was finished. Jesus must needs do and suffer all that he did and suffered to fulfil that design. His obedience was itself perfectible, and was perfective of him. His responsibility was diminishable. His merit was cumulative. When his obedience was ended, his responsibility was discharged, and his meritorious acquirement was completed. Nothing can be plainer than the testimony of the Scripture on these points.

Foretelling his death to his disciples by a little while, the Lord Jesus said to them, "All things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man shall be accomplished," or *ended*. When yet nearer to his death he said to them, "The things concerning me have an end." And when he gave up the ghost in death he uttered that thrillingly wondrous and never-to-be-forgotten word, "It is finished," or *ended*. The end of all things which were written in the law of Moses, in the Prophets, and in the Psalms concerning him was coincident with the end of his atoning responsibility. He himself said, "It is finished," or *ended*, as "knowing that all things were now accomplished," or *ended*. If any man will affirm that all this was ended for the fulfilment of the predictions of the Scripture otherwise than as that fulfilment, whatever other valuable purposes it might serve, and what-

ever other ends may have been accomplished thereby, was subordinate to the discharge of the atoning obligations of the Lord Jesus, the power of God only can cure that man of his blindness or perverseness.

Further, when all was ended, Jesus bowed his head and gave up the ghost. In the dazzling glory of the fulfilment of that Scripture, "A bone of him shall not be broken," another glory seems to escape the observation of many observers. The death of Jesus needed not to be hastened by that barbarous or humane practice, whichever it was, commonly resorted to in order to hasten the death of crucified persons. When the soldiers came to break his legs that he might die the sooner, he was dead already. At this Pilate marvelled. It was unusual, and as mysterious as unusual. How could this be? From the merely human view of the matter, was Jesus so exceptionally weak that he died thus unusually early in the crucified condition from exhaustion of vital power through the bodily hurt? That could not be. Nay, nay, the suffering obedience was ended, the atoning obligation was discharged, and, all being ended, he voluntarily bowed his head, laid down his life, and gave up the ghost. Oh, blessed consummation! This procures, this pleads, this claims my peace with God!

Again, the truth we are stating is illustrated and confirmed by the teaching of the apostle. In Heb. ii. 10, we read, "It became him for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings." We have one presentment of this truth we are stating in the title given to our Lord, and another in the testimony concerning him. But to make this clear, as it respects the title, we shall require that rendering of the apostle's word, here translated "captain," which it receives in the margin of chap. xii. 2, namely, "beginner;" and which, with submission, we deem by very far the best. The "Beginner" of the salvation of the sons was made perfect through sufferings. In its relation to *make perfect*, the word so rendered is

beautifully appropriate and clear; and so it is in relation to *bringing many sons to glory*; but the relation of the word "captain" to the connection here seems exceedingly misty. The leader of an army is not usually made perfect in any sense by his death in the field, nor is an army usually led to glory by the loss of its captain. Contrariwise, as must be apparent to all, a captain is made perfect as he is a conqueror, and more than a conqueror; that is, by a complete conquest, and by his life being spared to enjoy its fruits. And so far from an army being usually led to glory through the death of its captain, this event has mostly been a great calamity to it, often an irreparable loss, and sometimes has resulted in its rout and ruin by the enemy. But it was necessary to the Beginner of salvation to suffer, and through sufferings to be made perfect. By his suffering obedience the Lord Jesus became the Beginner and the Perfecter of the doctrine of faith. This is, as we take it, the meaning of Heb. xii. 2. By his suffering obedience also he became the Beginner and the Perfecter of the atonement, the substantive matter on which the doctrine of faith is founded, promulgated, and believed; and at the end of his suffering obedience the Beginner of salvation was himself made perfect through his sufferings. A surety charged with the obligations of his suretyship is not made perfect; a surety discharged from his obligations is. A redeemer who has not paid the ransoming price of redemption is not made perfect; but a redeemer who has paid the required ransom, so far as the ransom is concerned in the redemption, is made perfect. By the discharge of his obligations our Surety was made perfect, and by the payment of the ransom was our Redeemer made perfect.

We are taught by the testimony of the apostle here that Jesus was made perfect through sufferings. The Lord Jesus suffered many things. He was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; he suffered, being tempted; he was reproached; he hungered and thirsted; he had not where to lay his head; he was

straitened in view of a baptism into which he had to be baptized; he suffered an exceeding sorrow and agony in Gethsemane; his sweat there in his agony was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground; and afterwards, his sufferings accumulated more and more, until, at the end of the agonies of the cross, he gave up the ghost—he died. These things cannot escape even the slightest observation; but what of positive suffering, physical, mental, and moral, underlay and wrought beneath the outward and visible signs of the agonies of the Man of sorrows, comes within the view of no creature, man or angel.

We have seen that all the sufferings of Christ were penal. If he suffered one undeserved agony—we speak of his deserving agony solely in his representative capacity—he suffered that agony unjustly, or, if he suffered one unnecessary pang, he suffered that pang unwisely, and that, too, according to the determinate counsel, under the government, and by the hand, of God himself. For what, then, was his suffering prolonged? Why were his agonies so multiplied? It is more than conceded that his death was necessary to make an atonement; but if the Divine nature of the great Sufferer gives an infinite legal meritoriousness to the whole of his sufferings, why should not an infinite legal meritoriousness on this ground arise from far fewer and far lighter agonies? Why this piling of agonies from hands that were visible, and from the hand of the awful Invisible One himself? Meritoriousness in the sufferings of Christ, and an atoning sufficiency co-extensively accumulating therewith, are ideas which harmonise with each other, and they are in full harmony with the prolongation of the atoning sufferings of the great Substitute. But can anything be more demonstrative of the foolishness of the supposition of an infinite meritoriousness, in the legal sense, and of an infinite atoning sufficiency, in any sense, in the sufferings of Christ, than is the prolongation of his suffering and the multiplication of his agonies? There is but one answer to the question of the prolongation of the suf-

fering of Christ and the multiplication of his awful agonies, and that answer is supplied here by the apostle; he was thereby *made perfect*. Men may contemptuously denounce all this, if they will, as pitiful trifling; but, against all contradiction, it is the testimony of the Holy Ghost that Jesus suffered many things, and that he was made perfect through suffering. It is a daring thing to speak with contempt of the testimony of God.

In chap. v. 9 of this Epistle, this truth concerning the Surety's responsibility and its discharge is further illustrated and confirmed by another testimony of similar import, but which has a peculiarity all its own. "And being made perfect he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him." Being made perfect here relates to a responsibility undertaken for the same persons as those mentioned in chap. ii. 10. There they are designated sons from their adoption in Christ. Here they are designated from a particular manifestation of their having received the adoption of sons—namely, their obedience to Christ. Because they were sons, God sent forth the Spirit of his Son into their hearts to lead them into a state of obedience to Christ. Humble souls afflicted with doubt about a personal interest in Christ may, by comparing these testimonies, learn from their obedience to Christ their adoption in him, and their certain salvation by him.

How Jesus was made perfect for them we have already learned. Here we are taught that, being made perfect, he became the author of their eternal salvation. He became the rightful Saviour on the self-same grounds, by the self-same rule, and to the self-same extent that he became the perfected Surety. As he discharged his responsibility as the Surety he acquired his right as the Saviour. It would be well if it could be more generally known among those that show to others "the way of salvation," that the word "author" in this place represents a very different word from that which is rendered *author* in chap. xii. 2, and *captain* in

chap. ii. 10. The word represented by "author" here points unmistakably to the exact *accusation*, or *cause*, alleged by divine justice against the Surety, and the reason in equity of his sufferings; and it proclaims, with a clearness which leaves nothing to be desired, that the perfected Surety became in equity the MERITORIOUS CAUSE of salvation to all that obey him. Made perfect through sufferings, the Surety was discharged from his obligations. Made perfect through sufferings, the Saviour was invested with the merited right of salvation, and was exalted to give repentance and remission of sins, and every other blessing of salvation accordingly. (See Note, p. 76.)

## CHAPTER VII.

### CONCLUDING REMARKS ON THE ATONEMENT IN ITS RELATION TO DIVINE JUSTICE.

III. JUSTICE will reward Jesus according to the right he meritoriously acquired.

A design was determined on. A compact was projected. Terms were settled. Stipulations and restipulations were made. A responsibility was undertaken. The obligations of that responsibility, so far as a valid expiation of sins to the extent of his representative capacity went, were all discharged when Jesus gave up the ghost. A right was acquired. Speaking by anticipation, the Saviour sued for his acquired right in the opening of that wondrous address of his to his Father on the eve of his death. "I have finished"—*perfected*—he said, "the work which thou gavest me to do; and now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was."

Jesus had acquired a personal right in his public capacity as Head of the Church. By this right he was raised from the dead. The resurrection of Christ was the Surety's discharge. Men, "when they had fulfilled all that was written of him, took him down from the tree and laid him in a sepulchre; but God

raised him from the dead." This was, doubtless, by an act of power, and according to prediction; but the prediction was given on the ground of a right to be acquired, and the power was exerted on the ground of a right actually acquired, for he was brought again from the dead "through the blood of the everlasting covenant." As it was not possible to relieve him of his obligation, to take away the cup given him to drink, so, in righteousness to him, having drank that cup to its last dreg, it was not possible that he should be holden of death and see corruption. By his acquired right he ascended up on high. When he had discharged his atoning obligation, "when he had by himself purged our sins, he sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." It was as beholding Jehovah seated on the throne of justice that "David in spirit" heard and has reported the wonderful saying, "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool." All power in heaven and earth is given to him for mediatorial purposes, and he won the unparalleled distinction. It is as he destroyed death and him that had the power of death on the behalf of some, that, in respect of them, he holds "the keys of hell and death." His intercession is prosecuted on his right. His style in his intercession is, "Father, I will." He sues not charitatively, as for a favour, but pleads authoritatively as by and for a right. He is on the throne of a kingdom, as Head over all things to his Church, for which he covenanted, and to which he wrought, and bought, and fought his way. He has the right to give repentance, and remission of sins, and eternal life "to as many" as were given to him. In a word, having perfected the work given to him to do, and being himself made perfect, whatever was stipulated to him in the compact he is entitled to as his reward.

But Jesus also acquired a federal right for those who were given to him. By the atonement he made he more than opened a way of repentance to those to whom he is related, and more than formed a channel through which the mercy of remission of sins might



flow to them. He secured repentance to them by meritoriously acquiring the right to himself to give them repentance, and the right to them to have the gift; and he secured to them forgiveness of sins by meritoriously acquiring to himself the right of remission through the shedding of his blood and the right to them to be pardoned. He did not make repentance and remission merely possible as matters of favour to those whom he represented, but he made them certain as matters of right to himself and to them through him. The taking away of the heart of stone and the giving of a heart of flesh, and the healing of the broken heart, are, indeed, pure favours to those who receive them. To them these favours are absolute mercies and unspeakably precious mercies, but they are a righteous reward to Christ. If God is merciful and gracious to the forgiven in the forgiveness of sins, so is he faithful and just to Jesus in their forgiveness. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." The mercy of the Church is the right and reward of her Head.

If, then, the Church is saved from the wrath to come, it is by the right of deliverance therefrom by her Head. If she is delivered from this present evil world according to the will of God, it is because Jesus gave himself for her sins that she might be so delivered. If she is forgiven, it is for Christ's sake. If she is righteous, it is because Christ was made sin for her that she might be made the righteousness of God in him. If she is sanctified, it is because Christ loved the Church and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it. If she is free, it is because Christ hath obtained eternal redemption for her and made her free. If she stands in a filial relation to God openly, it is because Christ hath redeemed her from under the law that she might receive the adoption purposed in him before the world began. If she lives, if she has the elements of life in her existence, it is because Jesus came that she might have life. If she is restored

from her guilty wanderings, it is on the pleading of her Advocate. As she was preserved in Christ before being called, so afterwards she lives, and her life is imperishable, because Jesus lives. The Church lives by the same right of life as that by which her Head lives. There is no more judicial reason that she should die than there is that he should die. There is the same judicial reason that she should live that there is that he should live. If she triumphs over death, she obtains her victory through the Lord Jesus Christ. If she is elevated here to sit in heavenly places, it is in Christ Jesus. If, finally, she enters heaven itself, it is because she is redeemed unto God by the blood of her great Head. Whatever of spiritual good the Holy Ghost imparts to her here is imparted to her in the right of her Lord. Every spiritual sorrow and joy she experiences, every spiritual blessing she enjoys, every spiritual privilege she possesses, every spiritual principle she has and exerts, and all the fruits arising to her from the exercise thereof, come to her from the right of her Head and form a part of his reward. Every favour, in a word, shown to the Church is a stipulation to Christ fulfilled and a right ceded. Herein he is now seeing of the travail of his soul; and is receiving a satisfaction for his obedience unto death.

The complete cession of the Saviour's atoning right and the full reward of his atoning merit will be the absolution and the justification of his people from their sins, together with the legitimate consequences thereof. Then will he fully see of the travail of his soul and will be satisfied.

We have, then, in sum, in the matter of justice rewarding Jesus, a measured representation, a measured responsibility, a measured right, and a measured reward.

Of the extent of the representation we know nothing beyond what the Scripture teaches. Of the reason for its extent we know of nothing but the sovereign will of God. We offer no apology for its being no wider. All apologies of this kind are officious meddlings. Let

him who will dare to put God on his defence. "Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker!" "Shall any teach God knowledge?" To deny the truth of divine sovereignty seems very like a denial of God himself. To defend the ways of divine sovereignty is a gratuitous meddling of audacity and folly. Where the prince of the apostles hesitates and stays, it is not the boldness of courage in another to proceed, but the temerity of ignorance and rashness. For ourselves we believe and adore, and hope for the light above.

The measured responsibility was given and accepted in sovereign love, and was discharged in righteousness. Jesus engaged to save his people from their sins, and he fulfilled his engagement perfectly. He pledged himself to nothing more. He did nothing more. When the purposed, pledged, and predicted things concerning him were accomplished he received his discharge.

The measured right was acquired according to the decision of justice. The Saviour's merit, in the practical sense and worth of it, is the measure of his right. Had he righteously merited more, Justice, to be just, must have given him more accordingly. To the extent that any sufficiency of his merit should be unrewarded, in the same degree his right would be denied to him. No supposable opposing conditions existing in the persons intended to be benefited can release remunerative justice from giving to every one his right. No unbelief of a sinner can discharge Justice from remunerating the Saviour. If every one have not his merited right, there would be in every such case a miscarriage of remunerative justice. In the case of Jesus, is any such thing possible? In his case shall not Justice be as just in its remunerations as it has been in its severities? Is it not as impossible to God to be unjust as it is impossible to God to lie?

The measured reward of Jesus will be the many sinners who are made righteous, and the many sons who are brought to glory by him. Had he merited more in any practical sense, and more were not made righteous and brought to glory, he would not be rewarded according

to his merit. But, against all contradiction and opposition of men, "If God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in himself."

IV. Justice, in connection with the atonement of Christ, is manifested in vindicating the justified.

Mainly, it is in this sense that it is "well with the righteous." Under the government of the Just One none ever finally perished being innocent, and no one, being righteous, was ever condemned. What justifies a sinner is righteousness. All justified sinners are made the righteousness of God in Christ on account of Christ being made sin for them. The righteousness of all that are justified in Christ had a substantive being when Jesus was made perfect through sufferings. Some of them who are justified by the righteousness of Christ have lived in every age of this world, and in every age of this world yet to come some of them will live. In every age justice has vindicated them, and will vindicate them. Jesus represented them before he died for them. In due time he discharged for them the federal responsibility he had undertaken, and acquired for them a right. Not one of them that lived before the advent of Christ did justice fail to vindicate. As they were all made righteous by imputation on the credit of the great Surety, so they were vindicated accordingly. They were all called, and justified, and glorified. Since the discharged Surety ascended to the right hand of the Majesty on high the same order prevails. The predestinated are in due time called, the called are justified, and the justified are glorified. Justice rewards the justifying Surety, and vindicates the justified at the same time and in the same way. Every thing requisite in the divine economy to the complete vindication of the many that are made righteous is provided. If it is necessary that they should be regenerated, they are born again of the Spirit. If necessary that they should repent, repentance is given to them. If necessary that they should believe in Christ, the word of faith is sent to them, the principle of faith is given to them, and the power of believing

with the heart unto righteousness is imparted to them. If it is necessary that they should not fall away from the faith, but should endure to the end, they are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation. And in the great day of God, justice will separate them to the right hand of the Judge, and will complete their vindication by conducting them, "the righteous, into life eternal."

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## CHAPTER VIII.

### ON DIVINE MERCY AS IT IS MANIFESTED THROUGH THE ATONEMENT OF CHRIST.

By mercy, as it is manifested through the atonement of Christ, we understand that particular phase of the character of God which is made to appear when favour, in an appropriate form, is extended to one who is miserable through being criminal.

It has been the prevailing fashion, the propriety of which we do not question, to personify the justice and mercy of God when speaking of these qualities in connection with the salvation of sinners. But it has been also an almost equally prevailing fashion, the propriety of which we do very much question, to speak of justice and mercy as having dissimilar and conflicting interests. To our mind their interests are identical and harmonious. Salvation is the interest of both, and each has an equal interest therein. Each has, indeed, its own sphere of operation, and a particular interest in its own sphere, but both have the same end. One is helpful to the other, and each, moving in its own sphere of operation, subserves the manifestation of the other. Justice, to be just, must, as occasion is served, punish for disobedience, reward merit, and vindicate the justified. Justice punished for disobedience when Jesus was wounded and bruised for our transgressions and iniquities. Herein Mercy co-operated with justice. "It pleased the Lord to bruise him." Mercy had her pleasure in the bruising as well as Justice. It was the end of the

bruising, not the formal act, which pleased both Justice and Mercy. Justice has yet to reward the merit of the Sufferer, and to vindicate them who are justified by his sufferings. Mercy's province is to relieve those who are wretched through their criminality. Furnished by Justice with the right to do so, Mercy employs her many and various methods to give the knowledge of salvation through the remission of sins. As Mercy, seeking for this right to relieve the wretched, co-operated with Justice in punishing the Surety, so Justice, discharging its obligations to reward merit, and to vindicate those who are made righteous, co-operates with Mercy in relieving the wretched. Both are manifested by the same means. Mercy is manifested in relieving the miserable, and Justice is manifested in rewarding merit and in vindicating those who are made righteous. When Justice wounded the Surety to secure its own particular interests, it subserved the particular interests of Mercy; and when, by relieving the guilty through the atonement, Mercy secures her own particular interests, she subserves the particular interests of Justice in its remunerative and vindicating character. Thus, the common interests of both are promoted by the particular interests of each being served. They have ever been, and are, hand in hand in the salvation of sinners.

Mercy owes her right of display and finds her channel of communication through the atonement. Only as the blood of the sacrificial victims was shed under the Levitical dispensation for an atonement for sin was sin forgiven to the Israelites. Without shedding of blood there is no remission of sin now. Remission without blood would be remission without right. Remission without blood could extend no further than the sentence and the punishment, and the remission of the sentence and the punishment without the remission of the sin itself would be every way unsatisfactory. Remission, to be effectual, must reach and relieve the conscience, as well as exempt from punishment, and open the prison doors. Sin is a moral wrong, and remission, to reach the case, must be a moral release. Mercy, without an

atonement, would be utterly helpless to give such a release. If she liberated, she could not relieve. If she condoned, she could not comfort. If she blotted out the written accusation, the unwritten accusation would remain in unmitigated force. Whatever she does for a criminal convinced of his moral wrong, she does nothing for him to purpose until she removes his criminality from him in righteousness. But she does all this through the atonement. At the cross sinners lose their burden. At the cross they attain to a change of state. At the cross the many who are made righteous by imputation, receive the gift of righteousness from the hands of Mercy and Justice; and, being justified, they are made perfect as pertaining to the conscience, they have peace with God, and they joy in God.

Mercy, through the atonement, is empowered to relieve the miserable criminal with entire freeness. Wholly furnished with the right of remission through the atonement, she hangs none of her precious blessings on any moral conditions. She asks for no moral excellency as a reason for the dispensation of her favours. The one thing needful in order to forgiveness, conviction of sin and repentance for sin, she herself bestows. Some dream of mercy because they are so good, and some doubt of mercy because they are so bad. The dream arises from ignorance of sin and its desert, and the doubt arises from false notions of the atonement and the freeness of mercy. Both the dream and the doubt are groundless. Many, from false notions, may be too good to receive mercy; none can, in truth, be too bad for Mercy to reach and relieve. Through the atonement Mercy is justified in her bestowments of repentance and remission on sinners, comparable to Manasseh for the heinousness of their crimes, and on sinners, comparable to the thief on the cross, for their persistence in their vicious courses to the very last moment of a most criminal existence. Many a justified transgressor, now walking with Christ in white, exemplifies the saying, "A brand plucked out of the fire," with a surprising veritableness. Precious as is this truth

of the free handedness of mercy in every view of it to those who know its value, nothing is more offensive in public estimation. High and low, cultivated and rude, moral and profane alike, find herein one of their most offensive offences. All, naturally, are indisposed to buy in God's market, so to speak, on other terms than those in vogue in human markets. They will not buy Mercy's wine, and milk, and honey, and bread, without money and without price. All will take their counters in their pockets, under the vain imagination that they are coins, and that they must buy for money. Even the wickedest take credit for some moral excellencies and redeeming qualities, and if they accept mercy, they must take it in exchange for some of their imaginary valuable considerations. In fact, they ignore the atonement, and disown mercy. None of these ever really buy any of Mercy's commodities. The terms are beneath them. Neither can they buy. For those who seek mercy must of necessity renounce merit, even as God in showing mercy, must of necessity deny merit. Mercy can only be displayed on principles essential to its display.

Mercy, while dispensing her appropriate favours freely, ever broadly marks, as is necessary, the moral majesty and excellency of the law violated, and the evil of sin forgiven. She does this by dispensing all her favours to her beneficiaries through the atonement. They receive everything through the cross. They find repentance through the cross. Remission is given to them through the cross. They are cleansed in the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness. They are justified by blood. Their consciences are purged with blood. They enter into the holy place with blood. It is through the rent veil that they are conducted into the most holy place. It is through Jesus Christ they are led of the Spirit unto the Father. Thus, the majesty and excellency of the law are proclaimed, and the evil of sin is marked, that a moral awe may be inspired of the law, and a moral dread may be inspired of sin in the mind of every partaker of Mercy's favours.



Mercy ever magnifies Justice in the manifestation of herself.

“Mercy shall be built up for ever.” Mercy’s right of manifestation will, through the atonement, last while the occasion lasts. Jesus suffered “that he might bring us to God.” The atoning blood of the Lamb will retain its forgiving and sanctifying power until the last of the ransomed shall find no further occasion to exclaim, “Oh wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” Human forgivenesses, extended on no atonement, are sometimes sought and granted on condition of the offence never being repeated. Were this a condition of divine forgiveness, who, then, could be saved? But it is not; and those who grieve that what they would they do not, and what they hate they do, may, as Paul did, thank God through Jesus Christ, that, through the atonement, Mercy will extend her benefits until they “are saved to sin no more.” Of David’s Antitype and his seed it is written, “My mercy will I keep for him for evermore, and my covenant shall stand fast with him. His seed also will I make to endure for ever, and his throne as the days of heaven. If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; if they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless, my lovingkindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail.” It is not to provoke an occasion, but to meet a continual necessity, lasting as the existence of the regenerate in the body that, through the atonement, it is written, “If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” From the very conditions of their existence in the world, the regenerate will be necessitated to petition for Mercy’s favours in every prayer they offer. “God be merciful—*propitious*—to me a sinner!” will be an appropriate petition to all saints while here, and the holier they are the more appropriate will they themselves feel that petition to be to them. But the propitiation abides in

power; the propitiatory is accessible; Mercy, empowered by the atonement, waits to be propitious, and the petition ever finds acceptance.

Reconciliation may be regarded as the ultimate effect of the atonement. Justice and Mercy have ever had this end in view in all their operations. In this end they have ever "met together." Justice has been engaged about the removal of the judicial cause of irreconciliation between the parties, and Mercy about the moral cause. Both causes of irreconciliation are taken out of the way through the atonement. Through the expiatory sufferings of the Surety the sins of those whom he represented were condemned in his flesh, and they themselves were made righteous by imputation. From hence all cause of judicial displeasure against them is removed from the mind of the Lawgiver, and the Lord is well pleased in them for the righteousness' sake of his Son. This part of the great end in view was eminently the province of Justice to bring about. But the people themselves were irreconciled to God from being alienated in the spirit of their minds from the life of God; yea, from being naturally at enmity against God. They were at enmity against God because they were by nature unholy, unrighteous, and evil. The fool's saying, "No God!" expresses just the natural sentiment of aversion which the unholy must feel from the Holy, the unrighteous from the Righteous, and the evil from the Good One. Reconciliation, therefore, could not be effected by simply removing the judicial cause of displeasure on the side of the Lawgiver; the moral cause on the side of the sinner must also be removed. To remove this cause is eminently the province of Mercy; and this cause of irreconciliation, equally with the other, albeit differently, is removed through the atonement.

Regeneration and sanctification are Mercy's great works in the persons of all those that are made righteous, and these works are, equally with righteousness, the fruits of the atonement. He who was made of God unto his represented ones righteousness, was made of

God unto them sanctification by the selfsame means ; and the Holy Ghost gifts them with the precious blessing. The Holy Ghost receives the things of Christ in carrying out the works of mercy, and shows them to the people. Hence, those who were dead in sins are quickened together with Christ, and are raised up together with him from a moral death and entombment. Prisoners held in moral bondage are brought out of the pit wherein is no water, by the blood of the covenant. Gifted with the precious blessing of sanctification, those that were by nature unholy, unjust, and evil, are renewed in the spirit of their minds. They become holy, righteous, and good men. Being regenerated, holiness, righteousness, and goodness are natural to them. This brings them into sympathy with God. They love God. They renounce allegiance to all their former lords, and become the servants of God, and God accepts their allegiance of loyalty and love. God avouches them to be his people, and they avouch him to be their God. As God has received the effect of the atonement in respect to himself—namely, satisfaction ; so they have received the effect of the atonement in respect to themselves—namely, reconciliation. As in the early ages men solemnly passed between the parts of a victim, slain in sacrifice and divided, into bonds of friendship, so, through the expiatory sacrifice of Christ, all differences between God and his people are done away, and they are at peace. Peace is established between the parties, not only on a basis of justice and mercy, but also on that of a natural choice. God takes pleasure in his people, and rejoices over them as the bridegroom rejoices over his bride. He calls them his Hephzibah and his Beulah, his delight and his married one ; and they—Oh, the hallowed blessedness !—joy in God through Jesus Christ by whom they have now received the reconciliation.—A blessedness which, having neither superior nor equal in its kind, can itself be enhanced only by its consummation in the consummation of the atonement, when the reconciled shall realise the perfect bliss of being holy and without blame before God in love for ever.

## NOTE, PAGE 63.

PAUL, writing to Timothy, spoke of some as "desiring to be teachers of the law; understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm." Incisively biting as these words are, they were, no doubt, demanded; and we think that they are still demanded. A proof of this conviction is served by the licentious and interchangeable use of the words *accountability* and *responsibility* respecting the relation of sinners to Christ. Sometimes we are told that sinners are accountable, and sometimes that they are responsible to believe that Jesus Christ has saved, or will save them; and it is generally added that a failure to discharge the obligation of the accountability or the responsibility, whichever it may happen to be, for the terms are commonly interchanged, will be attended with the penal consequence of a deeper damnation. It may be doubted whether a rebuke given to this wild licence and wretched ignorance may have any curative effect; but however sincere and energetic they may be that so speak, it is certain that they lay themselves open to be regarded as "understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm."

If a sinner is accountable to believe Jesus Christ will save him, his obligation will arise from natural law. Is this so? If a sinner is responsible to believe Jesus Christ will save him, his obligation will arise from a covenant to which he himself is the restipulating party. Is this so? The damnation of a sinner, it is presumed, will be the just penalty of crime. But just penalties are the sanctions of a moral law, and all moral law has its necessary foundations. By what law is it, and on what necessary foundations does it stand, that damnation is awarded to a sinner for not believing Jesus Christ will save him, when he, the sinner, has no personal evidence of the fact? Can that law be holy, just, and good, which, on pain of the damnation of hell, requires an intelligent being to believe anything to be true of which he has no personal evidence? Has a sinner any personal evidence of what he is said to be obliged to believe before he believes what he is said to be obliged to believe? Besides, if these things were so, would not damnation for not believing be the exact antithesis of salvation for believing? And if so, is this a principle of the gospel of the grace of God? Do believers regard themselves as having discharged the obligations of an accountability by believing, and thus to have become entitled to a vindication? Or as having discharged the obligations of a responsibility and thus to have acquired a right? Do they not rather regard their faith as "*the gift of God,*" and themselves as having "*believed through grace?*"