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ON THE NATURE OF THE ATONEMENT.

MATT. 20:28—*Even as the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.*

THE coming into the world of God's "only begotten and beloved Son" must have had an important object. It took place four thousand years after the creation. It had been the subject of many promises and prophecies—it had been fore-shadowed by many types and figures—and it had excited long and anxious expectations before the "fulness of the time" came. Not, however, more than its importance demanded. And now, the time having arrived, he did come, and found good old Simeon waiting for him, the second temple standing in its glory, the daily sacrifice still smoking on the altar, the sceptre of Judah just passing into Roman hands, and John the Baptist ready to receive him, set him apart to his offices, and introduce him to Israel as the Messiah. He was then "conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary," announced and hailed by angels, and honored by "wise men from the East" who had seen his star, and were conducted by it to the place where he lay.

The object of all this he himself declares in the text. He "came not to be ministered unto." His appearance was not splendid and glorious. He was not born in a palace, but in a stable. He was not pillowed on down beneath a canopy of state, but on straw, in a manger. He did not appear amid the splendors of royalty, but in the lowliness of earthly poverty, and in the feebleness of helpless infancy. This was, because he came to "minister" to the necessities of his own creatures. He therefore "took on him the form of a servant" when he "was found in fashion as a man." Hence we have his life of toil in ministering to the instruction and comfort of ignorant and miserable men, for he "went about doing good," as if that was his whole object. However many came to him, he never turned one empty away. However wearied, he never refused to minister. Though "Lord of all" he became "servant of all."

But the great object of his mission remained yet to be performed: "He came—to give his life a ransom for many." "A ransom" is a price paid for the release of one who has forfeited or lost his liberty. He is either too weak to break his chains, or too poor to pay his ransom, and a friend redeems him, and sets him free. This was the condition of our race. Our

lives were forfeited. The law of God condemned us to death—eternal death, and the “law was holy, just, and good.” The law could, therefore, afford us no relief. We could do nothing but bear the penalty, and that left us hopelessly wretched. From this condition Christ came to ransom us, and that ransom our text informs us was his life—and to give *that* for *this* end was the great object of his mission. That object was accomplished on the cross—and his death, under these circumstances, we denominate “The Atonement,” or, that on account of which sinners are pardoned and saved.

A right understanding of this most interesting and important transaction, we consider of the highest moment. But important as it is, a great variety of opinions have been entertained on the subject. The friends of the Christian system have been obliged to defend themselves against the whole body of those who deny the Bible as a revelation from God. And then, again, they have been put upon their defence for the truth by the whole body of Unitarians, who claim for themselves the Christian name, although they deny this vital part of the Christian system. In addition to this, *the nature and extent* of the atonement have been debated at great length, and with much spirit, (not always Christian,) in the bosom of the Christian church. The following definitions of the atonement will show with sufficient clearness the views of the parties to this controversy. The one defines the atonement to be, “A proper satisfaction to the divine law and justice, vicariously made by the Lord Jesus Christ, dying as a substitute, and bearing the sins of his people in his own body on the tree; in virtue of which they are renewed by the Holy Ghost, and freely justified”—The others have defined it to be, “A satisfaction rendered to the *public justice* of God, giving him an occasion to express his displeasure against sin, and exercise his mercy in the forgiveness of sinners.” Out of this distinction has grown, (as I think,) the great question as to the extent of the atonement. We limit the atonement, as to its extent and objects, to the subjects of salvation; but not as to its value, which we fully and freely admit to be sufficient for the salvation of all mankind, if God had so designed it. My present design is to inquire, What the *Scriptures* teach us the true nature of the atonement is.—I say, *the Scriptures*, because we can learn the true nature of God’s institutions only from God himself. In order to arrive at the object which I have in view, I shall,

I. Show, that that definition of the atonement which describes it as “A satisfaction to the *public justice* of God, giving him an occasion to express his displeasure against sin, and exercise his mercy in the forgiveness of sinners,” gives an inadequate and unscriptural idea of its nature. In the view of this definition, I would reverently ask, Was the death of Christ necessary for such a purpose? Is not the divine displeasure against sin sufficiently illustrated by the death of our race?—by the multiplied and inconceivable miseries under which our world has groaned for nearly six thousand years?—by the everlasting destruction of the finally impenitent? And if God, as an act of *mere mercy*, had pardoned the whole of our race, would not the eternal damnation of all the fallen angels have been a sufficient and perfect illustration of this?

Now if this illustration could have been made without the sufferings and death of the Savior, (as it is humbly conceived it might,) why was it necessary that he should have died for such a purpose? Would he have died for no higher end? God does nothing in vain. He does not perform a mira-

etc unless the occasion be worthy of it. In all Christ's doings and sufferings there was a *needs be*. "Thus it behoved him to suffer." If there had been another way by which the great object could have been effected, it would have been. There needed no farther illustration of what was already written as with a sunbeam on the inconceivable misery of our world, and the everlasting destruction of the fallen angels. It does appear to me that the atonement does mean something more, *much more*, than this. Under this view of the subject, I cannot see how it was necessary that Jesus should have died; and if not necessary, surely it would not have taken place. Let those who entertain this sentiment think again of the subject. Have they not been mistaken? Have they not thoughtlessly endeavored to accommodate this great Scripture doctrine to a philosophical system? Does it agree with any view of the sufferings and death of Christ contained in the Bible?

This view of the atonement proceeds upon the supposition that the pardon and justification of sinners is an act of *mere mercy*. That God exercises mercy in the pardon of sinners, the preacher feels no disposition to deny. He would cordially unite with all those who sing,

"O to grace how great a debtor!"

But he, at the same time, believes that the *justice* of God is as strikingly illustrated as his mercy. And so it is thought the Scriptures consider the subject. So it seems to me the apostle John thought when he penned the following words—"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and *just* to forgive us our sins, and cleanse us from all unrighteousness;" and Paul, when he said—"Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time, his righteousness, that he might be *just* and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus." (Rom. 3:25, 26.)

Now, how the justice of God appears under this view of the atonement, I am utterly at a loss to conceive; or even what concern it has with it. And yet we are told by the Holy Ghost, that God is *just* in performing this act of grace, and that in the view of the propitiation found in the blood of Christ. All this is easily understood and explained under what I believe to be, a Scriptural view of the atonement; but under this view, it seems to me no more than a mere flourish of words, conveying no definite meaning to the mind; and I strongly suspect, would never have been thought of, certainly not suggested by the word of God, unless, when some philosophical dogma was hardly pressed, men had laid hold of the first plausible imagination which had suggested itself to the mind. Upon his plan, I find it difficult to know what such expressions as these mean—"The Lord our righteousness"—"Christ Jesus, made of God unto us righteousness"—"Bring in an everlasting righteousness"—"Make reconciliation for iniquity"—"He will magnify the law and make it honorable"—with a multitude of others of similar import. Is the word of God so lame on a subject of such tremendous import, involving all the hopes of our ruined race, or am I so blind? Let the men of God, the expounders of the revealed will of Jehovah, the ambassadors of God to men, the comforters of those whom guilt has distressed, the priests whose lips should keep knowledge, think, and inquire, whether such be the nature of the atonement? Are these the teachings of the Holy Ghost? Think again, and let God speak by you.

This view of the atonement appears to me to be very nearly akin to a branch of Unitarianism. It certainly leaves the law and justice of God where it finds them, for it has nothing of the nature of a satisfaction in it; and how, without a definite satisfaction, duly rendered, a transgressor can escape the curse denounced, who can tell? This is the language of the Lawgiver, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." To deliver us from this dreadful state, "Christ was made a curse for us." How emphatical on this point is the Scripture?—"For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." (2 Cor. 5:21.) The Unitarians admit that Christ died—but not as an atoning sacrifice—not to satisfy the divine law and justice—not to "bring in an everlasting righteousness"—not to free us from the curse of that law which we had violated. He died, say they, as a martyr for the truth, to show that he really believed what he taught—thus putting the death of Christ upon a footing with the death of James or Paul. And I see not why, under the view to which I am objecting, the death of these men might not have answered the purpose as well as the death of Christ, if it be not considered as a proper sacrifice of atonement to satisfy the divine law and justice. The alleged design, "To illustrate the divine displeasure against sin," does not alter the case. Is it to be credited, even for a moment, that God would, for such a purpose, so unnecessarily have put his only begotten Son to shame? Is there any thing in the death of Christ, which, under this view of the subject, bears a single characteristic of a real atonement? Was it in this school that Socinus received the rudiments of his education? Will men, to get out of the mire, plunge the whole body into this bottomless slough? Having thus shown that the view of the atonement, which our attention has been directed, is entirely inadequate and inadmissible, we shall next proceed to show,

II. From the Scriptures WHAT ITS TRUE NATURE IS. If we clearly understand what *the nature* of the atonement is, we shall have very little difficulty about its *extent and application*. In order to arrive at a Scriptural knowledge of this, I remark in the

1st place, That our race is sinful and guilty. We are also taught, that "without the shedding of blood there is no remission." The reason of this is, because the forfeiture of life is the penalty for transgression. "In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die"—"The soul that sinneth it shall die." For this state of things God has provided a remedy in "the seed of the woman," his "only begotten Son." That Son must be "made of a woman," that he might be "near of kin," having the right of redemption, be "under the law," and have blood to shed, or a life to offer up. (See Gen. 48:16, Job 19:25, Gal. 4:4, 5.) But inasmuch as it was the divine design, that four thousand years should elapse before "the seed of the woman" should come to perform the great work, God saw fit to have that work foreshadowed by types, to keep alive faith in the first promise, to impress the hearts of men with a sense of their guilt and need, and give them some distinct apprehension of the mode in which sin was to be atoned for. Hence the institution of sacrifices. They were of divine institution, as we learn by comparing Gen. 4:4 with Heb. 10:4. These sacrifices could do no more than I have stated, for it is written, "For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sin." (Heb. 10:4.) We find the whole system of sacrifices embraced in the Jewish ritual, and shall pro-

bably be able to ascertain the true nature of the atonement, by comparing the Scriptural account of that ritual with what is said concerning the sufferings and death of Christ. This, it is thought, will give us a clear view of the divine mind on the subject. We may with propriety make this comparison, for we are told that "The law had a shadow," (or figure, or type,) of those "good things to come," the substance of which was found in Christ.

It will not be expected, nor is it necessary, for the object had in view, that a detailed view should be given of the legal sacrifices. Their nature and object can be sufficiently ascertained without this. These sacrifices were numerous and various. My present design is to direct your attention to two or three of them as explanatory of their *nature* and *object*, and which may serve to throw light on the great doctrine of the atonement. The first relates to sacrifices to be made by individuals. "And he shall lay his hand upon the head of his offering, and kill it at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation; and Aaron's sons, the priests, shall sprinkle the blood upon the altar round about." (See Lev. 3:2, 9, 13; 4:4, 24, 29, 33.) The plain and obvious meaning of this transaction is the following: The person bringing the offering is considered as a sinner. The penalty is death. He feels desirous of relief. The Lawgiver has appointed a victim which may be received as a substitute for the transgressor. It has life, and must have, for "without the shedding of blood is no remission." He brings the appointed victim. He lays his hand upon its head, acknowledges his just liability to the penalty, gives it to the demands of the law; it dies in his stead, and he is set free. And now, should any one complain of him as a transgressor, and demand his punishment as a violator of the law, he has an effectual and legal plea in bar of further proceedings, because he has offered the required satisfaction. An atonement has been made. We shall hereafter take occasion to verify with respect to Christ's sacrifice what is here predicated of an acknowledged type of it.

The next instance to which I shall refer, relates to communities; viz., the Jewish commonwealth or congregation. "And the elders of the congregation shall lay their hands upon the head of the bullock before the Lord; and the bullock shall be killed before the Lord." (Lev. 4:15.) The same general view is given in the account which we have of the goats on the great day of atonement, in the 16th chapter of Leviticus. "And Aaron shall lay both his hands on the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions, in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness: and the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited." His fellow was slain. This is probably the most striking and instructive type in the whole of the ancient ritual—the most complete figure of the atonement made by Christ. No single type could fully fore-shadow the real atonement, the taking away of sin by the sacrifice of Christ. But in this double type we have the confession and transfer of guilt, the bearing away of iniquities, so that they no more return to accuse and condemn, and the offering of the atoning sacrifice. Here, therefore, we should look to find the most perfect type of "the Lamb of God;" for here was the great day of atonement. I might add that distinguished transaction on Mount Moriah, which occurred in the days of Abraham, when, in the act of sacrificing his son, he was arrested by the Lord, and had his attention directed to the ram caught in the thicket, which he took and offered in the

stead of his son—to which occasion Jesus referred when he said, “Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it, and was glad.”

The leading idea which runs through the whole system is, The *substitution* of the animal, offered instead of the person making the offering, including a legal transfer of the guilt of the person to the sacrifice, sometimes plainly expressed, and, as I think, always clearly implied. This, it appears to me, enters fully into all the legal sacrifices, and constitutes all their character and force. That whole system, we have seen, was typical of gospel verities, for the identification and illustration of which the apostle employs almost the whole of the epistle to the Hebrews. It was from these sacrifices principally, that believers derived their ideas of atonement and acceptance with God, from the beginning till the full development of the gospel dispensation by Christ; and the main part of the knowledge upon which their faith was founded, was illustrated by these exhibitions. If they had any distinct understanding of the doctrine of atonement it flowed from this source. I am aware it may be said, these were only types and figures. But types and figures mean something; and in this case, they are exceedingly important. Upon a right understanding and application of them, the salvation of souls depended. They were, till the manifestation of God in the flesh, the principal lights on the pathway to heaven. It was as necessary *then* to understand *their* nature and application, as it *now* is to understand the nature and application of the great sacrifice of the Lamb of God. The ancient faith of the church of God was not the belief of cunningly devised fables. The lamb of the ancient sacrifices was a distinct symbol of “the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world.” Else the ancient *faith stood not in the power of God, but in the wisdom of men.* Having briefly shown the nature and object of the ancient sacrifices, considered as types of the great atoning sacrifice which was to be offered once for all in the fulness of the time, it may now be relevant to turn our attention,

2. To the view which the Scriptures give us of that sacrifice. I say *Scriptures*, for on this subject we can borrow no light from any other quarter. And if they should put into our hands “a two-edged sword,” let it cut its way, no matter whose system it may “pierce,” or whose “joints and marrow it may divide asunder,” or “the thoughts and intents of whose heart it may discern.” My object shall be to ascertain, if possible, “the mind of the Spirit.” It will not be expected that every passage of Scripture which speaks of the death of Christ will be quoted or noticed; for it is not designed to write a system on the subject, but to ascertain as briefly as possible, what was the nature and design of what Christ did, when “through the Eternal Spirit he offered himself without spot unto God.”

Our attention shall first be directed to the light which prophecy throws upon the subject. One of the distinguishing names by which the Messiah was revealed to the church of old, was that of “Redeemer.” The name occurs too frequently for particular reference. The idea conveyed by the name is that of a person who procures the release of a slave or captive, either by the payment of a valuable consideration, or by the strong hand of power. With respect to the former, Christ is called “a ransom.” (Job 33:24; text; 1 Tim. 2:6.) With respect to the latter, “A Deliverer,” (Rom. 11:26.) When we consider Christ as “a ransom,” his sacrifice necessarily conveys the idea of a *substitute*. So the Holy Ghost seems to consider it when he moved Caiaphas to say, “it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not.” (John 11:50.) This appears to me to be the attitude in which the facts

of the case place the subject. The law condemns us to death. Christ pays "the ransom" by offering up his own life in our stead. Is not this the construction which every sensible, unsophisticated mind would put upon the language which the Holy Ghost has seen fit to employ for our instruction? If our systems cannot bear this, let them perish. They are not worth maintaining at the expense of giving up the plainness and simplicity of Bible truth.

Isaiah has been called the evangelical prophet, because he entered more fully into the spirit of the gospel dispensation than any of his compeers. We might then expect more light on this subject from him than from any other of the ancient prophets. He has also expressly written on the subject, particularly in his fifty-third chapter. Let me direct your attention to some of his very striking language:—"Surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows"—"He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way, and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all"—"For the transgression of my people was he stricken"—"Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief; when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin"—"He shall bear their iniquities." This language is definite and plain—the ideas are strikingly expressed—so variously, yet simply exhibited, that I scarcely know how it is possible to be mistaken as to the meaning.

The death of Christ is here certainly considered as a proper sacrifice. What else can the phrase, "make his soul an offering for sin," possibly mean? Can any language more precisely and plainly express that idea? He is evidently considered as charged with the guilt of those for whom he died. Does the declaration, "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all," import less than this? Can it by any legitimate rule of interpretation mean any thing else than this? Let it not be said, guilt cannot be transferred. That would be begging the very thing in dispute. The question is, What does the Lord say, and what does his language fairly import? We do not pretend that the Lord Jesus Christ was *actually* guilty. But we do say, that he gave himself to be legally charged with the guilt of those for whom he died, and was treated accordingly; and that the phrase which we are now considering fully bears us out in this sentiment. And this sentiment, which the word of God so clearly teaches, we *must* and *will* maintain, against every objection which "the wisdom of this world" may bring against it. Here we plant the standard of the cross, and say, "Let God be true." We shall hereafter find, that this is the only view which will admit of even a tolerable interpretation of several interesting and important passages of Scripture. It also harmonizes entirely with that part of the chapter where it is said, "He was wounded *for* our transgressions, he was bruised *for* our iniquities." It only remains to remark, that the doctrine of *substitution* here stands forth in such bold and prominent relief, that a man must have a bold, if not a presumptuous mind, who, with this chapter before him, would venture to deny it. How could that idea be more plainly and convincingly expressed? We have here, man, a guilty sinner, condemned by the law which he had violated; and yet, *justly* pardoned—and Christ, the surety, charged with the guilt incurred, and treated by God himself as the sinner would have been; viz., dying under the wrath of God—wounded, bruised by God's own hand. Is this substitution, or is it not? Can lan-

guage make it plainer? When will men have the grace to say, "Speak, Lord, thy servant heareth?"

Again—Jesus is expressly called "The Lord our righteousness." (Jer. 23:6, 38:16, compared with 1 Cor. 1:30.) What is the meaning of this phrase? Jesus is unquestionably righteous, or he could not be our high priest? But, how is he "The Lord our righteousness?" Is it not on account of that "everlasting righteousness" which he "hath brought in," so that God "might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus?" Is there another even tolerable sense in which this can be predicated of him? With this view agrees the language of Gabriel to the prophet, (Dan. 9:24,) "Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people, and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in an everlasting righteousness"—connected with the 26th verse, "Messiah shall be cut off, but not for himself." Here we have, God reconciled by the cutting off, or death of *Messiah*, and "an everlasting righteousness brought in," on account of which sinners are "freely justified from all things from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses." Do I pervert the holy records? Do I misapply the revelation of God's grace? Let every unbiassed mind judge.

Before taking leave of this branch of the subject, I will refer only to the *piercing* of the Savior, (Zech. 12:10,) compared with the *opening of the fountain*, (Zech. 13:1,) and ask, whether we are not constrained to connect all our hopes both of justification and sanctification with the vicarious sufferings and death of Christ, considered as an atoning sacrifice, by which the law and justice of God are satisfied, and the sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit procured? Salvation, be it remembered, is not the mere issue of pardon to the guilty, however procured, but the exercise of an influence which shall subdue and eradicate corruption, so as to fit the soul for the enjoyment of God; flowing, as the last reference teaches us, immediately from the blood of Christ.

This brief view of Old Testament instruction concerning the atonement which *Messiah* was to make, will, it is thought, serve to give us a clear insight into its nature, and be found in harmony with the instruction which we next mean to draw from the New Testament. The view might have been much enlarged, if it had been thought necessary. Having directed your attention to the views which the voice of prophecy gives of the death of Christ, and ascertained its harmony with the typical sacrifices by which it was prefigured; I will next,

Direct it to the views which are given in the New Testament of the same subject. From it we learn that Christ has actually been "found in fashion as man," and after dwelling in a tabernacle of clay for about thirty-three years, that he died under very remarkable circumstances. What does the New Testament say about his death? "He was made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law." His death actually took place under form of law. Hence the Jews said, "We have a law, and by our law he ought to die." By this law, however unjustly, they procured his death. The apostle, however, in the passage quoted, does not refer to this, but to the relation in which he stood before God as Mediator. His death was a legal act under the divine government, and its object was redemption. Hence it is written, "We have redemption through his blood." (Eph. 1:7.) "Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish

and without spot." (1 Pet. 1:18,19.) The blood of Christ, then, was shed to satisfy the demands of the divine law: This is the only principle upon which we can account for his sufferings either in the garden of Gethsemane, or on the cross. In the garden his sufferings were purely mental, yet so severe as to cause the "bloody sweat." What occasioned them? "The cup" he was drinking—what was that cup? Was it any thing but the wrath of God? Did it or did it not fulfil the declaration of Isaiah, "The chastisement of our peace was upon him." And what was the burden of his complaint on the cross? All seems to have been swallowed up in this one soul-absorbing consideration, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!" This was the iron which entered into his soul. Whatever the atonement was, here it was made, and here we may profitably study it, and learn its true nature. Several things appear in this transaction with the clearness and force of a demonstration; viz.: That Jesus died—that he died under the law of God—that his sufferings were inconceivable, and principally mental—that God treated him as a sinner, putting upon him the *chastisement* which was due to others—that he could not justly thus have suffered, unless he had taken upon himself the responsibilities of others—and occupied their place under the law—and that his death was accepted as a complete legal satisfaction. Which is abundantly proved by the justification of every believer, and the declared fact that God is just in so justifying them. His death, then, was a proper sacrifice of atonement under the law of God. It was vicarious.

The next passage to which I would refer, as illustrating the nature of the atonement, is 2 Cor. 5:21. "He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." The view here taken of the subject is certainly very remarkable and striking, and the language very characteristic. Let us look at some of its characteristics. Jesus Christ "knew no sin." "He was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners." He had no moral defilement—no legal obliquity. This was his real character—"He was made sin." How could this be? Did he ever become a sinner? Certainly not. He was always immaculate. What then does the expression mean? That he was treated as a sinner; that is, he was legally charged with guilt, and then punished. But why? Because he had assumed the legal responsibilities of others, having become their surety. But how could this be? He was a free, *independent* agent, having power to lay down his life, and to take it again. Why was he thus "made sin," or a sin-offering, (for this appears to be the proper meaning of the word)? "For us;" that is, on our account—in our stead; for, says Peter, "He bore our sins in his own body on the tree." Why is not this the true meaning, as it certainly is the obvious and consistent one? for it fully agrees with the latter clause of the verse, "that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." By this I understand, that we have in this sin-offering a divine, and a divinely provided righteousness, on account of which we are freely justified in virtue of our union to Christ by faith; for "there is now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." Here, again, we have Christ a sacrifice, vicariously making atonement, and the interpretation verified by making believers "the righteousness of God in him." Such a construction is plain and simple. It requires no great learning—no confused, perplexing, metaphysical argumentation to arrive at the conclusion. The unlettered man, and even the child can grasp it.

Take another example—"Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." The law curses all who have violated its

precepts. Nothing but a satisfaction in kind meets its demands. The curse must be borne, otherwise the demands of the law remain in full force against the transgressor. Left to ourselves, that curse must have remained upon us for ever. Hence the necessity of a Mediator. For, if bearing it for any finite period would have answered the purpose, would God have given his only begotten Son to have suffered as he did? From this dreadful and hopeless condition, Christ was given to redeem men. This seemed to have been the only way left. But how should he effect this all-important object? The passage now under consideration tells how he *has* done it. "Being made a curse for us." What does this fairly imply? What is its meaning? The expression is a very strong one, and would never have been employed by the Holy Ghost without an important reason. Does it not mean that he bore the penalty of the law which men had violated?—that God the Father treated him as though he were a sinner? And why? "For us"—in our stead—that *he might redeem us from the curse of the law*. This he undertook, and must fulfil. There was no letting off. The cup must be drunk to the very dregs. And from the infinite dignity of his person, although his sufferings were temporary, this became available for the redemption of all to whom God should see fit to apply it. Could language more fully express substitution? *We were under the curse—Christ became a curse for us—and thus we are redeemed from the curse of the law*. Will the words bear any other consistent, or even tolerable construction?

I might extend my remarks to many other passages of Scripture, couched in similar language, and evidently bearing the same meaning; but it appears to me to be so unnecessary, that I shall content myself with simply quoting a few, and leaving them for the attentive and prayerful consideration of my readers, without a note or comment. I shall confine myself principally to the Epistle to the Hebrews, because it treats professedly of Christ's priesthood and sacrifice, and shows their connection with the Levitical ritual. "He offered up himself." (Heb. 7:27.) "By his own blood, he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us." (Heb. 9:12.) "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the Eternal Spirit offered himself without spot unto God, purge your consciences from dead works to serve the living God." (Heb. 9:14.) "But now once in the end of the world, hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." (Heb. 9:26.) "So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many." (Heb. 9:28.) "By one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." (Heb. 10:14.) "Who his ownself bore our sins in his own body on the tree." (1 Pet. 2:24.) "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." (1 Pet. 3:18.)

The sum of the whole matter is this—that the Scriptures do most fully and assuredly teach us, that the death of the Lord Jesus Christ *is a proper sacrifice of atonement—that it completely satisfies all the penal demands of the divine law and justice, so that God is just as well as merciful in the pardon and justification of believing sinners—and that it is, strictly speaking, vicarious—that is, that he substituted himself for, or in the stead of those for whom he died:—Or, as the apostle Peter expresses it, speaking in the person of believers, "Who his ownself bore our sins in his own body on the tree:—Or, as Isaiah speaks, "All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all."* This I consider as being the Scriptural view of the atonement, giving a clear exhibition of its true nature, and consequently limiting its

application to its legitimate objects. Nor do I believe that it will be found as objectionable in the end, as those loose, metaphysical views, which have sometimes been taken of it, for the purpose of rendering it more palatable to carnal minds. The preacher's object has been to ascertain the mind of God on the subject; and if he has succeeded in this, he would anchor his own soul's hope there, and urge all who hear him, to "go and do likewise."

I am not unaware that this view of the atonement has met with a variety of objections, and some of a plausible and captivating nature. My object, however, has not been to arrive at a system to which none could or would object. Of that any man may well despair. But to ascertain what God has revealed on the subject. And I am not aware that we are under any obligations to give up the clear dictates of the Spirit, because some can be found to raise objections against them. Else we should be obliged to give up *every* doctrine of revelation; for they have all been assailed. It is not intended at present to go into a detailed consideration of objections; not because we have any fear of meeting them satisfactorily, but because time will not permit. I will only remark, that we do not restrict the gospel offer, and believe that we have a divine warrant for its universal extension, with every sanction and encouragement by which it can possibly be enforced by motives drawn from the Scriptures, in the command of Christ, "Preach the gospel to every creature." And if those who differ from us have a broader warrant enforced by better motives, we shall be pleased to become acquainted with it. The grand motive, among all that may be stated, is, the divine assurance that *whosoever believeth on Christ shall be saved*. This is a revealed fact, and facts are the most powerful of all persuasives. Indulge me now with a very brief

APPLICATION.

1. The doctrine of our text is a very important one. The only hope of our ruined race is founded upon it. God will accept of no other plea from sinners; for "other foundation can no man lay, than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." Our works do not avail us, for "by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight; for by the law is the knowledge of sin." We have no sacrifice to bring. The blood of our cattle, or even our children, could not procure our acceptance. And as for the divine mercy, we know it only as it emanates from the atonement of Christ. But here our hope is ample, for the atonement is invaluable. It meets all the wants of all who trust in it. "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." So it has been found—and so it will be. It has never failed in any case in which it has been applied.

2. The atonement is throughout a marvellous display of divine love. The Father was self-moved in giving up his only begotten and well beloved Son. The Son was self-moved in undertaking and performing the stupendous work. How could it be otherwise. What was there in man to influence the divine Mind? Misery, you reply. Yes; but that misery flowed from the blackest guilt and rebellion, and the most disgusting moral corruption; all of which was infinitely abhorrent to the mind of God, who "is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, and will by no means clear the guilty." These are the facts of the case. "This is love," says John. Who can measure it? Who can form an adequate conception of it? Let us study this love at the foot of the cross, looking upon him whom we have pierced, and learn at least a little of

its length, and breadth, and height, and depth; and let us study it until all sin becomes entirely and for ever embittered to us.

3. This atonement, ample and free as it is, will avail us nothing, unless it be heartily embraced and appropriated. Slighted or neglected, it only increases guilt and wo. "This is the condemnation that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation." My dear hearers, you look upon that atonement under awful responsibilities. The sight of it—the hearing of it, will tell deeply and loudly upon the eternal destiny of every one of our souls. The blood of the cross will cleanse or ruin every one of us. We *must*, we *shall* have to do with it. We cannot shut our eyes. We cannot wipe the knowledge of the atonement from the table of our memory. The providence of God—our assigned local habitation—the history of our lives—the privileges of this very day, all render ignorance impossible. We must either accept or refuse. I tremble, my dear friends, while I raise up before you "the Lamb of God," and uncover the fountain of his blood.

4. With what reception has "the atonement" hitherto met from you? You have had full knowledge on the subject. Jesus Christ has been set forth before you as crucified and slain. All the blessings which it covers have been fully, frequently, and freely offered to your acceptance, and urged upon your regard. And you must perish without an interest in them. It is the *only* ground of our plea, and of your hope. Have you cordially accepted of it as made and offered? Have you by faith become clothed with that spotless robe which was made white in the atoning blood of the Lamb? I put this question, this awful question, to every soul that hears me. I look round this assembly. I mark the interested faces which I behold, and ask with the affection of the sincere friend, Who can answer this question, big with the eternal destiny of all our souls, in a satisfactory manner? The child of God—the humble Christian—the broken-hearted penitent, who has cast himself naked and helpless upon Christ—he can do it, and only he. Of him, of him *alone*, it can be said, "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity." Would that this were the blessedness of all who hear me! But I fear it is not. I fear that many of my hearers have not even *begun* to think seriously, much less to feel deeply on this all-important subject. And yet they are on the way to that judgment-seat where nothing but the atoning blood of Christ will stand them in stead; and with that blood they now permit themselves to trifle! Shall all that Jesus has done and suffered be in vain with respect to you!

"Will you let him die in vain?"

"Still to death pursue the Lord?"

Sinner, go to-day, this very day, and lay your hand upon his head, and confess over him all your iniquities, and roll on him all your guilt, and appropriate his atonement, and you shall live, and be for ever blessed. Amen.