

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *Bibliotheca Sacra* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_bib-sacra_01.php

ARTICLE VII.

DR. GRIFFIN'S THEORY OF THE ATONEMENT.

BY EDWARDS A. PARK, ABBOT PROFESSOR, ANDOVER.

The personal history of Dr. Griffin gives to his Theological opinions a peculiar significance. He studied theology with Dr. Jonathan Edwards, a divine whose influence is destined to increase as the power of men to understand him increases. From the 4th of June, 1795, until the summer of 1801, Dr. Griffin was the pastor of the Congregational Church at New Hartford, Connecticut. "On the 20th of October, 1801, he was installed colleague pastor with the Rev. Dr. McWhorter [over the First Presbyterian Church of Newark, New Jersey]. The congregation over which he was placed was one of the largest and most respectable in the United States, qualified in every respect to estimate the labors of a most eloquent, gifted and devoted minister."¹ On the 28th of May, 1809, after having fulfilled there a pastorate of nearly eight years, he preached his Farewell Sermon to his church at Newark, and on the 21st of the following June he was inducted into the Bartlet Professorship of Sacred Rhetoric, at Andover Theological Seminary. The Institution was then in its infancy. Its founders, Mr. Abbot, Mr. Bartlet, Mr. Brown, were living, and were Visitors of the Seminary. Their own theological views are indicated by the exalted encomiums which they lavished upon him. His colleagues, Professors Woods and Stuart, avowed their substantial agreement with him in his theological speculations. "The stories," says Dr. Griffin, "about Dr. Pearson's abusing me, or quarrelling with me, or being unfriendly to me, are all false. He resigned on account of age

¹ Sermons by the late Rev. Edward D. Griffin, D. D.; to which is prefixed a Memoir of his Life by William B. Sprague, D. D., Minister of the Second Presbyterian Congregation in Albany. p. 53.

and infirmity. He is a good man, and is still an active and very useful friend of our [Divinity] College."¹ It is not pretended that either Professor Pearson, or the other Professors, or the founders of the Seminary sanctioned all the assertions of Dr. Griffin; they did not agree with each other or with him in all *minutiae*; still they were pleased with the main principles and the leanings, as then developed, both of his theology and of his philosophy.

After having spent two years in the duties of his Professorship, Dr. Griffin was installed Pastor of the Park Street Church, Boston, on the 31st of July, 1811. His installation sermon was preached by Rev. Dr. Worcester, of Salem, Mass. Here he officiated as pastor until April 27, 1815, nearly four years. "Though he spent more time in several other places than in Boston," writes Rev. Dr. Humphrey, "I have always been impressed with the belief that his pre-eminent usefulness was on that ground. When he went there, the piety of the pilgrim fathers had nearly ceased to warm the bosoms of their descendants. Calvinism was a byword and reproach. Orthodoxy hardly dared to show its head in any of the Congregational pulpits. It wanted a strong arm to hold up the standard of the cross, a strong voice to cry in the ears of the people, and a bold heart to encounter the scorn and the talent that were arrayed against him. And nobly, in the fear and strength of the Lord, did he 'quit himself.'

"Nothing was more striking in his character than the high ground which he always took in exhibiting the offensive doctrines of the gospel; particularly divine sovereignty, election, the total depravity of the natural heart, and the necessity of regeneration. These doctrines he exhibited with great clearness and power, before friends and enemies. The crisis required just such a master spirit, and Boston felt his power; or, rather, felt the power of God, which I must think wrought in him mightily during his short ministry in Park Street. From the time of his going there, Orthodoxy began to revive, and we all know how many flour-

¹ Dr. Sprague's Memoir, p. 117.

ishing churches have, as it were, sprung from that one stock."¹

On the 20th of June, 1815, Dr. Griffin was installed Pastor of the Second Presbyterian Church in Newark, New Jersey. There his ministry was attended with extraordinary success. In 1821 he was invited to the Presidency of the College at Danville, Kentucky; to the Presidency of a College in Ohio; and to the same office in Williams College, Massachusetts. The last named office he accepted, and discharged its duties from the autumn of 1821 until August, 1836, fifteen years. The Faculty of Williams College wrote in 1837, that to Dr. Griffin, "probably more than to any other man, is it owing that this College was placed on a permanent foundation, and enjoys its present degree of prosperity. His labors in its behalf were arduous, persevering and successful. During his Presidency the College enjoyed several powerful revivals of religion, and it was especially from its connection with the cause of Christ that he watched over its interests, and prayed for it. Through his pupils his influence is now felt in heathen lands."²

On the first of October, 1836, he took up his residence for the third time in Newark, New Jersey, where he remained, highly venerated and perseveringly useful, until his death, November 8th, 1837. He was then in the 68th year of his age. His funeral sermon was preached by Rev. Dr. Spring, of New York. A discourse commemorative of his death was subsequently delivered at Williams College, by the Rev. President Hopkins.

Before he resigned his Presidency at Williamstown, Dr. Griffin had published various interesting pamphlets, and three extended volumes. The first of these volumes was his "Park Street Lectures," "a book, by the way," writes President Humphrey, "which will go down to posterity."³ He delivered these Lectures in Boston during the winter of 1812 — 1813, "on successive Sabbath evenings, to a crowded

¹ Dr. Sprague's Memoir, pp. 243, 244.

² *Ibid.* p. 240.

³ *Ibid.* p. 243.

audience, collected from all classes of society. [The] Lectures awakened the deepest attention both of friends and foes, and it is hardly necessary to say that they have passed through several editions, and have long since taken a prominent place among the standard theological works of our country." ¹ The second volume which Dr. Griffin published was in 1819, on the Atonement. "As this," writes Dr. Sprague, "is almost throughout a work of pure metaphysics, it were not to be expected that it should have gained so extensive a circulation as the more practical and popular of his productions; but it was evidently the result of great intellectual labor, and could never have been produced but by a mind trained to the highest efforts of abstraction." ² The third volume of Dr. Griffin was published in 1833, entitled: "The Doctrine of Divine Efficiency, defended against certain Modern Speculations." He wrote this work in the sixty-fourth year of his age. He had then various controversial inducements to make expressions antagonistic to some which he had published in the highest vigor of his mind. He preserved his consistency, however, far more than controversialists are apt to do. In 1839, two years after his decease, two volumes of his Discourses were published, and a third volume appeared at a still later date. Unaccompanied with his majestic elocution, these Discourses give no adequate idea of the man whom Dr. Samuel Spring called the "prince of preachers," and whom Dr. Sprague denominates "the giant of the pulpit." His theological speculations were evidently affected by his desire to present the truth in an impressive and a practical form, especially in the times of religious excitement; and his eloquent sermons were, in their turn, affected by the type of his theology. A peculiar interest is added to his writings by this action and re-action of his metaphysical theories and his rhetorical appeals. He labored to awaken the zeal of the churches, and when it was awakened he preached with the most fervid eloquence. In the retreat of his study he remembered those

¹ Dr. Sprague's Memoir, p. 128.

² Ibid. pp. 140, 141.

scenes of thrilling interest, and he conducted his logical processes in sympathy with the past, and in preparation for a future revival of Christian zeal.

It is not the aim of the present Article to examine all the theories of Dr. Griffin on all the doctrines which he discussed; nor to defend any of his speculations, defensible as many of them are; nor to controvert such of them as may seem liable to objection; neither to expose nor to explain the apparent discrepancies between the assertions which he made during the interval of nearly forty years, from the time of his first, to the time of his last publication; but the intent of the Article is simply to explain, and that chiefly in his own words, his theory of the Christian Atonement.

The work from which the main quotations in the Article are made, is the second of his above-named volumes, that which he published in the fiftieth year of his age, and on which he seems to have expended his most masculine energy. It is irenical in its intent, and is entitled: "An Humble Attempt to reconcile the Differences of Christians respecting the Atonement, by showing that the Controversy which exists on the Subject is chiefly verbal: to which is added an Appendix, exhibiting the Influence of Christ's Obedience." It is divided into three parts, designated thus: "the Nature of the Atonement;" its "Extent;" "the Scriptural View." Without adhering to the exact plan which President Griffin prescribed for his work, but from which he himself freely deviates, we will attempt to state his principles in the following order.

§ 1. *Christ did not suffer the literal Penalty of the Law for us.*

On the relation of Christ's sufferings to the legal and the literal penalty for sin, various theories have been held. One is, that Christ endured the punishment which was denounced against the transgressors, for whom he died. Another theory is, that he did not endure any punishment, but that his pains were substituted for penalty. The latter theory was adopted by Dr. Griffin. To the question: What was the

end of Christ's death as an atoning sacrifice? he replies: "Precisely the same as respects the support of law, that would have been answered by our punishment. The atonement, we have seen, was a cover for sin, — was adapted so to bury sin from view, that it should not be punished. It therefore came exactly in the room of punishment, and was adapted to answer the same end. When it had done that it had removed the necessity of punishment, and instituted a complete cover for sin." (p. 22.)

"To atone, in every one's mouth is to make reparation for an injury or amends for an offence. Now *to cover sin* (the Hebrew idiom for atone) is a figurative expression, and plainly means no more than that sin is so far hid from view *that it is not to be punished.*" (p. 15.)

After repeatedly affirming that the atonement was "not a literal execution of the law" (p. 36), and that "it came in the room of punishment, and was all that punishment would have been, except a literal execution of justice," and *this*, i. e. a literal execution of justice, the atonement "*could not be*" (p. 25), our author expressly asserts:

"Christ therefore could not sustain our legal punishment, or the literal penalty of the law. If the law had said that we or a substitute should die, this might have been the case; but it said no such thing. The law is before us, and we see with our eyes that it contains no such clause. The plain truth is, that the sufferings of Christ were not our punishment, but only came in its room. They were not the death of the identical 'IT' that had sinned. They answered indeed the *same purpose* as related to the *honor* of the law, but they were not the *same thing*, and could not be the *same thing* without an absolute personal identity. So far from *enduring* our punishment, the plain fact is, he died to *prevent* our punishment.

But it is still urged with a surprising degree of tenacity, that the honor of God and the eternal principles of right bound him to punish sin. But he did *not* punish sin; for the sinner escaped and the Innocent suffered. It is said that *truth* required him to punish. Then truth failed; for certainly he did not punish Paul, and Christ was not a sinner." (p. 152.)

§ 2. *Christ did not satisfy the Law of God for us.*

With regard to the atonement as a satisfaction of the divine law, there are several theories. One is, that the law re-

quired perfect holiness of men, that Christ obeyed the law for men, and thus satisfied the demand of the law for *duty*; also, that the law required the punishment of sinners, that Christ suffered this punishment, and thus satisfied the demand of the law for *penalty*; therefore, Christ satisfied the law in all its requisitions. Another theory is, that Christ did not satisfy the law by obeying it in our stead, nor by suffering its penalty in our stead; that he did not in strict speech satisfy the law at all, for the law as such must always demand both perfect holiness and also the punishment of the unholy; but Christ by his atonement did satisfy the *Protector of law* in forbearing to inflict the penalty which was legally threatened. The second of these theories was adopted by Dr. Griffin. He did not believe that the demand of the law for our obedience was satisfied by Christ's obeying the law in our stead; nor that the demand of the law for our punishment was satisfied by Christ's suffering punishment in our stead; for, as we have seen, he did not believe either that Christ obeyed the law for us, or that he suffered punishment for us. Dr. Griffin did believe, however, that the atonement honored the law so signally as to satisfy God in pardoning the offences which the law, in its very nature, did and must condemn. He says:

“ It follows from the foregoing reasonings, that the sufferings of Christ were not a literal satisfaction of law and justice, even in behalf of believers, much less in behalf of the unregenerate elect. The law is before us, and if we can read it we can see for ourselves what would have been a literal satisfaction of its claims. It never demanded the death of the innocent for the guilty, but the death of the identical persons who had sinned: and till this is yielded the law is not literally satisfied, and justice, (for the law is the exact measure of justice,) is not satisfied. Justice did not take its course, for the Innocent suffered and the guilty escaped. But the authority of the law is supported, even in the event of the pardon of believers, (not in the event of the pardon of the unregenerate elect, for that would ruin the law, and none the less for their being elect;) and this was enough to satisfy the *Protector of the law*. This was the satisfaction really made. The Protector of the law was satisfied: and men in expressing this truth in figurative language, said that the *law* was satisfied.” (pp. 157, 158.)

§ 3. *Christ did not satisfy the Distributive Justice of God for us.*

The Distributive Justice of God prompts him to inflict the punishment which sin deserves. One theory of divines is, that the atonement satisfied the distributive justice of God, because in the atonement Christ endured the very punishment which sin deserves. Another theory of divines is, that Christ did not satisfy God's distributive justice, because he did not endure any punishment at all; but Christ did satisfy the benevolent God in forbearing to inflict the punishment which distributive justice requires. The second of these theories is advocated by Dr. Griffin. As he did not believe that the law was literally satisfied, so he could not consistently believe that the distributive justice of the Lawgiver was literally satisfied by the atonement. He strenuously objects to the notion of a "legal oneness" between Christ and the redeemed; "a legal imputation, a legal obligation to suffer, a legal punishment, a legal satisfaction, and a legal claim on the part of the redeemed." "We deny," he says, "that either of these is legal. The mistake of supposing them such has wholly arisen from drawing literal conclusions from figurative premises." Among these erroneous literal conclusions from figurative premises, he specifies the following: "Because the Lawgiver demanded satisfaction of him [Christ] by commanding him to die, *law* and *justice* made the demand. Because the iniquity of all is said to have been laid on him, he sustained the *literal* and *legal* punishment of sin. Because he was dragged to execution like a criminal, and fell under the stroke of him who was wont to act as the legal executioner, law and justice were literally executed upon him. Because he rendered full satisfaction to the *Protector of the law*, by securing its authority as fully as though it had been literally executed, he satisfied both *law* and *justice*." "Thus," he continues, "by pressing, in some instances, the figurative language of Scripture into a literal meaning, and by twisting the truth a very

little in others," the advocates of a legal satisfaction, etc., "arrive at all the conclusions which have been enumerated." (pp. 132—134; see likewise, pp. 88, 132 *seq.*, 166 *seq.*, 194, *etc.*)

That neither the law nor the justice of God is satisfied by the atonement, harmonizes, according to our author, "with the consciousness of every true believer, whatever systematic phrases he may be accustomed to use. "When he is humbled in the dust at the feet of his Maker, it is farthest from his thoughts to make demands on justice." "Every day of his life he confesses that it would still be just in God to send him to perdition. And if it would be just, justice still demands his death. And if justice demands his death, justice is not satisfied. The literal truth is, that Christ answered all the purposes to the divine law which could have been accomplished by the actual satisfaction of its demands against believers, and the actual satisfaction of justice upon them. And this being done, it may be said by an easy figure, that law and justice are satisfied. And though these expressions are not scriptural, but of human invention, I do not object to their use in prayer and popular discourses. But every divine and every Christian ought to know that they are figurative expressions, and not attempt to draw from them literal conclusions." (pp. 165, 166.)

§ 4. *The Law and the Distributive Justice of God eternally demand the punishment of every one who has sinned.*

One theory of theologians is, that Christ, having obeyed the law, and suffered its penalty for the elect, has cancelled the entire demand of law and distributive justice against the elect; has released them from all guilt, all desert of punishment; and rendered it impossible to condemn them justly for all or any of their sins. Another theory is, that Christ has not obeyed the law or suffered punishment for men; that men who are at any time morally guilty, are so at all times; that, if they once deserve eternal punishment, they forever deserve it, and that the Law and Distributive Justice

of God demand all the holiness and all the punishment which they have ever demanded. Of these two theories Dr. Griffin held the second. He believed moral guilt to be extinguishable in its very essence. Having frequently asserted that the law and the Divine Justice were not satisfied by the atonement, he adds :

“ If law and justice were not literally satisfied even in regard to believers, then law and justice do not adjudge to believers a discharge, much less to the unregenerate elect. Law and justice eternally demand the death of the persons who have once sinned ; and the security of believers is, that they ‘ *are not under the law but under grace.*’ They really deserve to suffer as much as though Christ had never died. To them eternal punishment, though it would be a breach of promise, would not be unjust. It would indeed be unjust to *Christ* thus to deprive him of his stipulated reward ; but it would not be unjust to them, because they personally deserve it. They do not merit what he merits. They cannot claim from justice what he claims from justice.” (pp. 158, 159.)

“ A man may make over his property and render a pauper rich ; but a holy person cannot make over his moral character and render a sinner personally righteous, nor transfer the benefit of his sufferings so as to render a transgressor personally undeserving of punishment. By suffering for him he may render it unnecessary to the public good for him to suffer ; and the ruler, finding the *necessities* of the law answered, though not one of its *demands*, may graciously forgive : yea he may have *promised* to forgive, and may be bound to pardon by *truth* and *wisdom*, and even by justice to the *substitute*, but not by justice to the sinner himself, so long as it remains true that he personally deserves punishment.

“ But let us examine this subject to the bottom. A man personally deserving to die, it is said, may demand from justice, in other words from law, an acquittal, under the claim of another who has suffered for him. But how came the substitute by such a claim ? He may indeed have a demand on the ruler, founded on a *promise*, for the *pardon* of the offender ; but who gave him a claim on the law for a sentence that the transgressor has never broken it ? or a demand binding the law to pardon ? (the *law* pardon !) or binding the law to accept an innocent victim for the guilty ? The law, which, (to make the case a parallel one,) is the exact and unchanging measure of justice, said that the sinner, not an innocent substitute, should die. That then, and nothing but that, is the claim of justice, — the unchangeable, indestructible claim of justice. How came a substitute possessed of a demand which annihilates this, and renders the immutable claim of justice unjust ? Even the *administrator* of the law cannot be bound by justice, (other than that justice to the substitute which arises out of a *promise* of reward,) to accept the sufferings of an innocent person in the room of the guilty.” (pp. 160, 161 ; see likewise, p. 18.)

§ 5. *The Atonement did not involve a work of supererogation.*

A work of supererogation is a work which the moral law does not require of the performer. One theory of divines is, that, although Christ obeyed the divine command in our stead, yet his obedience was not required of him by the moral law; that it was a gratuitous work, and could be, therefore, as it was in fact, transferred, made over to us, and it thus became our own obedience. Another theory is, that if there be any holiness possible, it is required by the law; that every moral agent is obligated to obey the law so far forth as he can obey it; that a right act cannot be performed without a previous obligation to perform it; that rectitude and duty are essentially correlative, and therefore there cannot be a work of supererogation. The latter of these two theories was maintained by Dr. Griffin. He says:

“One of the duties enjoined upon him [Christ] was to lay down his life. So far as that was a duty it was obedience, and no further than it was a duty was it entitled to a reward. That act was of greater merit than other acts of obedience, because it involved greater self-denial; but the sufferings bore no other relation to the reward than as being the highest test of obedience. Christ was rewarded for his obedience ‘unto death,’ not for his sufferings viewed as *uncommanded*; not therefore for sufferings in themselves considered. What claim could uncommanded sufferings have to a reward? Should a creature in any part of the universe inflict pain on himself which God had never required, who would be bound to recompense him? There is no such duty of supererogation in the kingdom of God.” (p. 57.)

“A moral agent then is a being *capable of deserving praise and blame*. But as there are no works of supererogation, and no moral goodness among creatures but what lies in conformity to the will of God, nothing is entitled to praise from him but the fulfilment of an *obligation*, or to blame from him but the violation of an obligation. A moral agent then, (to carry back the idea one step further,) is a creature *capable of fulfilling or violating obligations*. But as he cannot fulfil or violate an obligation of which he is not susceptible, the radical definition of a moral agent is, a creature *susceptible of obligations*. And as the bonds are actually imposed by divine authority on all who are capable of receiving them, the definition which accords with matter of fact is, a creature *under obligations*.” (p. 224.)

All then, who are capable of meriting a reward from God, are capable of obligation; and all who are capable of obligation, are, in fact, under obligation; and all who are under obligation, are unable to free themselves from it, and are, therefore, unable to perform a supererogatory work. Such a work being impossible, could not have been involved in the atonement (see pp. 31, 32, 36, *et al.*).

§ 6. *The Atonement consisted not in the obedience, but in the sufferings of Christ.*

It is the theory of one class of divines that the atonement consisted entirely in Christ's active obedience. It is the theory of a second class, that the atonement consisted partly in Christ's active obedience, and partly in his sufferings. It is the theory of a third class, that the atonement consisted entirely in the sufferings of Christ. To this third class Dr. Griffin belonged. He says :

"In examining this subject [the matter of the atonement] it is necessary to keep immovably before the eye the end which an atonement was intended to answer in the government of God. It was the same that would have been answered by punishment. And what was that? To furnish practical proof that God would support the authority of his law by executing its penalty on transgressors. When that proof was given, and the end of punishment was thus answered, the Protector of the law was *satisfied*. The thing which produced that satisfaction, was the atonement or cover for sin. When I ask after the *matter* of the atonement, I ask what that thing was. What was that by which the Protector of the law furnished the same practical proof of his resolution to execute the penalty, that he would have given by punishment itself? My general answer is, it was *humiliation imposed and sufferings inflicted by his own authority and hand on his beloved Son*. What could so naturally show that God would inflict evil for sin, as the actual infliction of evil on account of sin? as the tokens of wrath discharged against the Son of his love standing avowedly in the place of sinners?" (p. 28.)

"Shall we then say that the action of the Father helped to make atonement? No, for while all the testimony came from him, all the atonement came from the Son. The *matter* of atonement then came from the Son. This brings us to the conclusion that the matter of atonement was that which answered to these two descriptions; it was something *yielded by the Son*, (not the *act* of yielding,) and something *by which the Father testified* that he would punish sin. Now certainly the testimony of Christ was not

that by which the Father testified. The obedience of Christ was not that by which the Father proved in his own Person that he would punish. The consent of Christ did not show that the Father would inflict evil on sinners *without their consent*. Nothing answers to these two descriptions but the bare sufferings of Christ. I do not say, the sufferings of—no matter who; but the sufferings of the beloved Son of God. I do not say, sufferings caused by accident or self-inflicted; but sufferings inflicted by the supreme Magistrate of heaven and earth. When we speak of the sufferings of the damned, or the death of a malefactor, we always include the act of the magistrate: we do not mean dead sufferings, but sufferings inflicted by way of punishment. It was sufferings inflicted by the Magistrate which were threatened in the divine law, and sufferings inflicted by the Magistrate must come in their room. But because the act of the Magistrate was necessary, to say that sufferings alone did not constitute the matter of atonement, is like saying, for the same reason, that sufferings alone do not constitute the punishment of the damned." (pp. 46, 47.)

"I will now show you from the Scriptures that the thing which was offered for sin, and which came in the room of punishment, and which laid the foundation for pardon, was no other than suffering." (p. 49.)

§ 7. *The Atonement consisted in such sufferings as fulfilled the design of punishment.*

One fundamental question on this subject is: What is the design of punishment? Some suppose that the sole or the sufficient end of a divinely inflicted punishment is, to satisfy the distributive justice of God as a personal agent. Others suppose that the only sufficient design of this punishment is, to satisfy the desire of God as a Moral Governor for expressing his feelings toward sin, and to uphold by this expression the authority of his law. The second supposition is favored by Dr. Griffin. He teaches that punishment is designed to reveal God's attributes, and thus convince all moral agents that if they sin they shall suffer. This revealing and convincing process maintains the authority of the law. Our author says:

"What end did the death of Christ answer as an atoning sacrifice? It opened the way for the pardon of believers. But why could not believers have been pardoned without it? *How* did it open the way? I am not answered by being told that it expressed the wisdom and benevolence of God. Until I discover some important end answered by it, I can see no wisdom or benevolence in it, but something very much like a waste of hu-

man life. What was that end? Do you tell me that the eternal principles of justice required that sin should be punished? But sin was not punished; for innocence suffered and sin escaped. What end was answered by laying this affliction on the innocent? Precisely the same, as respects the support of law, that would have been answered by our punishment. The atonement, we have seen, was a cover for sin,—was adapted so to bury sin from view, that it should not be punished. It therefore came exactly in the room of punishment, and ought to answer the same end. When it had done that, it had removed the necessity of punishment, and constituted a complete cover for sin. It might answer that purpose more fully, but we have no right to ascribe to it any other end.

“What end then does punishment answer? The same that was aimed at in attaching the penalty to the law, only in a more intense degree. And what was that? The support of the authority of the law. Without a penalty the law is nothing more than a summary of advice, which every one is at liberty to regard or neglect as he pleases. Did the penalty show God's attachment to the precept? But how? By being set to guard the precept, or to give authority to the law. In this way alone it revealed any thing of God. Whatever of him was shown by bringing forward a sanction to support the authority of a holy and benevolent law, and nothing more, was disclosed by the penalty. The sole end of the penalty then was to support the authority of the law, and to discover as much of God as such an expedient for such a purpose could reveal. The support of law therefore comprehended all other ends, and may be put for the whole. The same end is answered by the execution of the penalty, only in a higher degree. Without the execution it would have been the same as though no penalty had existed. The law would have lost its authority; the reins would have been thrown upon the neck of every passion; anarchy, discord, and misery would have ravaged the abodes of being, and all the happiness which is bottomed on holy order, and all the discoveries of God which are made in a holy and vigorous moral government, would have been lost. This unbounded mischief would have followed a prostration of the authority of the law: that prostration would have followed a proclamation of impunity to transgression: and this proclamation would have been implied in a neglect to execute the penalty. The only way to prevent this infinite mischief, was to proclaim and prove that transgressors should be punished. In this single declaration and proof the whole antidote lay. For whatever else of God was proved, if it did not go to establish this, it could not uphold the authority of the law. If it proved that he was holy, or just, or good, or true, or wise, or attached to his precept, or all these together, it could not support the authority of the law any further than it gave evidence that transgressors should be punished. Nothing of God could be expressed by punishment but what is contained in the single proposition, that he does and will support his righteous law by punishing transgressors. Did it express his holiness, justice, benevolence, and wisdom? But how?

By showing his determination to uphold the authority of a righteous law, by punishing sin. Besides furnishing motives to obedience, it was intended to set him forth as the object of confidence, complacency, joy, and praise. But how? By showing his inflexible purpose to maintain his holy and benevolent law by adequate punishments. The ultimate end of government, as of all other things, was to exhibit the glory of God, so needful to the happiness of his kingdom, and to secure to him that treatment which was his due, and in which the blessedness of creatures was involved. This was the ultimate end of punishment. But before it could answer this end, it must accomplish an immediate purpose subservient to government and the dominion of holiness. Before it could express the holiness, justice, benevolence, or wisdom of God, or hold him up as an object of confidence, complacency, joy, or praise, it must be fitted to answer an important end subservient to the reign of holy principles. What was that end? The support of the authority of a righteous law by discovering a fixed resolution to punish transgressors. This, then, was the immediate and proper end of punishment. In that punishment I care not how much of God you suppose to be revealed, — how much attachment to his law, how much hatred of sin, how much justice, or even truth; you may add more or less of these things; but the whole is expressed in the single proposition that he will support his righteous law by punishing sin. To give proof that he will punish, is certainly disclosing every thing of God which punishment can reveal. The end of punishment then in any given instance, besides pronouncing the subject personally ill-deserving, and being an exercise of justice in that particular case, is merely to uphold the authority of the law by revealing God's determination to punish transgression." (pp. 22—25.)

Having seen, then, that the design of punishment, according to Dr. Griffin, is to maintain the authority of law by revealing the character and purposes of the Lawgiver, we come to another fundamental question on this theme: How does the atonement fulfil this design of law? The fact that it does so, Dr. Griffin repeatedly affirms. "The atonement," he says, "as it stood related to pardon, was adapted to come in the room of punishment, and to answer the same end; and besides removing the curse of abandonment, it had no other use" (pp. 85, 86; see also pp. 15, 28, 87, 173, 214, 215, 216, 354, *et al.*). With regard to the *manner* in which the atonement accomplishes this end, he is equally explicit. He does not suppose, as some have done, that the atonement is our punishment transferred to Christ, but rather that it expresses the same great truths which would have been expressed by our actual punishment. He says:

“Precisely the same [as has already been stated to be the design of punishment,] was the end of that which came in the room of punishment and answered its identical purpose. In whatever the atonement consisted, it expressed all that punishment would have expressed, except that the sufferer was personally a sinner; and was all that punishment would have been, except a literal execution of justice. This it could not be. Justice never required the personally innocent to suffer, but the personally guilty; and no plan of substitution or representation, and nothing but a personal identity between Christ and the sinner, rendering him personally a transgressor, could make out an act of literal justice in the infliction of sufferings on him. Equally certain it is, that the sufferings did not pronounce him personally a sinner. These two uses of punishment being separated from the atonement, the only end remaining is, the support of the law by showing God's determination to execute its penalty on transgressors. This was its precise and only end. This answered, it became an expression of amazing wisdom, benevolence, and mercy, and laid a foundation for the most luminous display of all the divine perfections in the application and progress of redemption. But before it could do this it must answer an end properly its own, which therefore is to be considered the immediate and proper end of the atonement; and that was what has already been stated. It made an impression on the universe, stronger than would have been made by the destruction of all Adam's race, that God was determined, notwithstanding his mercy to men, to support the authority of his law by executing its penalty on transgressors. How much was implied in this declaration, I am not concerned to inquire; — how far it ‘condemned sin in the flesh,’ how far it pronounced transgression to be as hell-deserving as the law had said, how far it asserted the rectitude of the divine government and took the part of the Father against the sins of the world. If it answered any or all of these ends, as it undoubtedly did, it was by giving the Father an opportunity to prove to the universe that he would execute his law on future transgressors. It expressed everything (except that the sufferer was a personal sinner,) that could have been expressed by punishment, or that could be implied in a determination to punish the future transgressors of a holy law. In the expression of punishment or a determination to punish, you may comprehend as much as you please: the same was expressed by the atonement. Say that punishment or a determination to punish proves that God is just, and attached to his law, and believes it good, and is like it himself, and hates sin, and if you please, is a Being of truth; then all these were expressed in that single declaration of the atonement that he would punish sin. Every thing of God which punishment could reveal, was disclosed by an atonement which proved that he would punish. Every end which punishment could answer, (except a literal execution of justice, and an implication of the moral turpitude of the sufferer,) was accomplished by an atonement which proved that God would punish. The whole use then of an atonement which was to answer

the exact purpose of punishment, was to show that God was determined to support his holy law by punishing sin." (pp. 25—27.)

§ 8. *The Atonement is the means of a Testimony from God the Father.*

The preceding quotations reiterate the idea of Dr. Griffin, that the punishment of the law is a means of the divine testimony; it reveals the divine character; it makes known the divine purpose: the atonement also is a means of the divine testimony; it unfolds the feelings of God toward sin, and his design to punish it. When he speaks of the atonement as "this august drama," "this stupendous drama," "that awful tragedy," and says: "In the whole exhibition the Son appears either a servant or a vicegerent, till the curtain falls" (see pp. 43, 44), he does not intend to intimate that the atoning act was unsubstantial, or that it developed anything fictitious. He simply means by these incautious phrases, that the sufferings of the cross were, like the sufferings of the lost, manifestations of the divine mind, that "the very end of the atonement was to convince the universe that transgressors should not go unpunished" (p. 78), that "the matter of the atonement was something *by which the Father testified* that He would punish sin" (p. 46). He says:

"Whatever testimony the obedience of Christ gave, atonement was not made by testimony, but by affording the Father opportunity and means to testify in his own name. A great and glorious testimony was to be sent forth into the universe *by means* of the atonement, but that testimony was to come from the Father." — "The great question to be decided was whether *he* would resolutely punish. Who was competent to speak for God and pledge himself for the Most High? It became him who was to answer for the Godhead, to speak for himself. Accordingly he appears the Principal in every part, the Originator and Director of the whole. All is appointed and demanded by his authority, and done in his name, that the testimony may be exclusively his; as the expression of a measure ordered by the master of a house and executed by his servants, is the expression of the master alone. The satisfaction which he demanded as the Protector of the law, was not the testimony of a Servant or Son, but an opportunity to give to the universe with his own arm a great practical proof that he would punish

sin. What could the testimony or obedience of another do to that end? Nothing would answer but sufferings unsparingly inflicted on the Son of his love with his own hand. And when he had drained upon him the cup of trembling, as Guardian of the law he was satisfied. Had the person of the sinner stood before him unshielded by a Substitute, he would have shown with his own arm his resolution to punish by sufferings inflicted on the sinner. This would have been the satisfaction demanded in the case; and no part of it would have consisted in the consent of the sufferer. If the sinner was to escape, the satisfaction demanded was an opportunity to inflict sufferings on a Substitute, which should give out the same testimony as from his own lips, or rather should shed the same practical proof from the awful gleamings of his own sword. And when he had actually inflicted these sufferings to the full extent which the necessity of the case demanded, and had thus testified by the tremendous voice of his own authority, he was satisfied." (pp. 45, 46.)

"The ultimate design of the mediation of Christ was to fill the universe with motives, by bringing out to view the secrets of the Eternal Mind. He came to be "the image of the invisible God;" "the face," in which he should be seen; "the word" by which he should be expressed." John 1: 1. 2 Cor. 4: 4, 6. Col. 1: 15. (p. 290.)

§ 9. *The Atonement consisted in such sufferings of Christ as render the sins of believers pardonable.*

Some suppose the atonement to be such, in its very nature, as not only causes the sin of believers to be *pardonable*, but also such as *inevitably secures* the forgiveness of the elect; not only such as to make the law *allow* the salvation of the penitent, but also such as to make the law *demand* the salvation of all who were predestined unto life; not only such as to make the forgiveness of the regenerate *consistent with the honor* of the law, but also such as to make the rewards of the elect *requisite to fulfil the very nature* of the law; not only such as to *remove all legal obstacles* to the eternal happiness of the believer, but also such as to *introduce a legal necessity* for the eternal happiness of those who were predestinated to be believers. These divines affirm: "The Hebrew word for atonement signifies *to cover*; and when sins in the Old Testament are spoken of as atoned, the meaning always is that they were *covered, removed, never to be charged* on the person who committed them. A

transaction which only renders it *possible* for sin to be pardoned is no atonement, whatever else it may be." Others suppose that the atonement merely makes the sin of the penitent pardonable; that is, consistent with the honor of the law, and unobstructed by any of the obstacles which the law, left to itself, throws into the way of the believer's forgiveness. Dr. Griffin need not have adopted either of these theories. He might have favored a doctrine intermediate between the two; but he did advocate the second of the theories. He says often that "the proper office of the atonement" is "merely to render sin pardonable" (p. 49; see also pp. 80, 81, 90, 91). By this he means, first, that the atonement renders the pardon of sin consistent with the honor of the law; and, secondly, that it removes all legal barriers to this pardon. Therefore he writes:

"The atonement therefore rendered it consistent with the honor of the law, so far as the influence of the penalty was concerned, to bestow regenerating grace on men, without any previous faith or repentance. And this is what I mean by removing the curse of abandonment." (p. 20.)

"When I say that the curse of abandonment was removed, I do not mean that the law ceased to pronounce the sentence on men. The law never ceases to pronounce any part of its sentence against those who have once sinned, even after they are pardoned. But what I mean is, that it was as consistent with the honor of the law to give the Spirit to men, as though the curse of abandonment had not been pronounced or incurred. (p. 18.)

"The mere cover for sin [Heb. atonement] so far from securing the gift of faith, could not even render it consistent with the honor of the law. It would only remove the penal bar which stood in the way." (p. 84.)

"We are reconciled *by* the atonement, because that is the *ground* of our reconciliation: but atonement is not itself reconciliation or pardon, neither does it contain the influence which secures reconciliation." (p. 74.)

"The name [atonement] is applicable only to that which answered the end of punishment, by showing the universe that God would support his law by executing its penalty on transgressors; which thus secured the authority of the law and satisfied its Protector, and besides removing the curse of abandonment, reconciled with the honor of the law the pardon of believers, (whether of all indiscriminately who would believe, or of those only who it was foreseen would believe;) which thus removed the legal impediments to the acquittal of believers, and rendered their sins pardonable, and so became the ground of pardon." (p. 80.)

§ 10. *The Antecedents and the Consequents of the Atonement distinguished from the Atonement itself.*

Some theologians consider the active obedience of Christ one part of the atonement. Others regard it a logical antecedent of the atonement. Dr. Griffin favored the latter of these two views. He believed that the entire obedience of Christ was pre-requisite to the expiation, first, in order "to qualify Christ to make atonement," in order "to set him forth as the *beloved Son*, and thus to render his sufferings sufficiently expressive of God's inflexible resolution to punish sin;" secondly, in order to make the atonement, both in fact and in appearance, a result of the Father's action (see pp. 30, 37). But this logical antecedent of the expiation, although not separable, is yet distinguishable, from the expiation itself. Dr. Griffin says:

"There is a distinction to be set up here between the *matter* of atonement and the *making* of atonement. The *matter* of atonement was the thing which satisfied, the *making* of atonement was the presenting of that thing. When Aaron offered an expiating victim he was said to make atonement, though the atoning power did not lie in Aaron's arm, but in the bleeding lamb; and though Aaron's action could have no other effect than to present the victim to God according to his appointment, in other words, to bring it, with whatever power it had, into the necessary relation to God. According to the same form of expression, the *Priest* of the New Testament is said "to atone for the sins of the people," and "to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." The same form of expression is used whenever we speak of Christ's *making* atonement. And it is common also in other matters. It is medicine, and not the act of the physician, which works the cure. But it must be *administered*, and administered in a *right way*. And when this is done we commonly say, the physician healed the patient. So it was the sufferings of Christ and not his action which satisfied: but they must be presented by the Priest, and presented in a right way, that is, unmixed with any disobedience in his life: and when all this is done we very properly say that Christ made atonement; not only ascribing to him the effect of his sufferings, but referring to his act in presenting them." (pp. 29, 30.)

"We do not put into the matter of atonement the possible nature and humanity of Christ, though they were necessary qualifications to fit him to make expiation; nor yet his dignity, though that was necessary for much the same reason that his general obedience was. Why then should his obedience be thus distinguished?" (p. 35; see also p. 37 *seq.*)

As it is supposed by some that the obedience of Christ is an integral part of the atonement, so it is supposed that his merit is an essential constituent of the same. It is thought that the atonement itself secures the salvation of the elect, because the atonement consists in Christ's meritorious obedience, and his legal punishment. It is thought by others, however, that the merit of Christ is a logical consequent of his obedience, and that his obedience, although necessary to the atonement, is no part of its essence. The latter is the opinion of Dr. Griffin. He says: "We mean by atonement nothing more than that which is the ground of release from the curse, and we separate it entirely from the merit of Christ, or his claim to a reward" (p. 11). It is his favorite remark that "we can distinguish between atonement and a claim to reward for making atonement." (p. 51.) "The thing which was offered *for sin*, and which came in the room of *punishment*, and which laid the foundation for *pardon* was no other than suffering" (p. 49); but Christ "is rewarded only for the *merit* of obedience, and neither for sufferings as such, nor for any testimony which his action gave out" (p. 52). "That which rendered sin pardonable is the mere sufferings of the beloved Son, inflicted by the Father's hand; that which constitutes the claim of Christ to the gift of faith is the merit of his obedience; as wide a difference as between passion and action." (p. 68.) Dr. Griffin attempts to show a coincidence of the doctrine that the atonement partly consists in Christ's merit, with the Socinian doctrine that the value of Christ's mission may be resolved into his virtue. He says:

"This leads us to see the immense importance of discriminating between the matter of atonement and the *merit* of obedience, in order to separate the proper influence of the expiation from a claim to reward. Our brethren have a strong reason for retaining obedience in the matter of atonement. It is vital to their system to place *merit* there, in order to give to the atonement a power to secure the gift of faith, and thus to accomplish actual reconciliation. Without an influence to secure the gift of faith it must either fail to accomplish reconciliation by its own power, or must obtain remission for stubborn unbelievers. Our brethren therefore are willing to comprehend in the atonement the *whole* influence of Christ; and

if they succeed in this they carry their point, at least so far as relates to the meaning and proper application of the term. For if the atonement contains an influence which secures the gift of faith, there is atonement for none but those who will ultimately believe."

"In those who are under law merit is obedience, considered as *deserving a legal reward*. It is obedience viewed purely in its relation to a recompense. If then we put merit into the matter of atonement, we place it there, not as that by which anything is to be *proved* (for that would be a testimony, not a merit); not therefore as anything which is to witness that God will punish sin (indeed how can the merit of one prove that God will punish another?); not therefore as anything which is to answer in the room of punishment. Here then we abandon the whole end of the atonement, and give up the need of a vicarious sacrifice altogether. It comes out that the release of the sinner is granted to Christ purely as a reward. And this is the ground taken by those who deny a vicarious sacrifice, and place the whole atonement in obedience. But the fault of this scheme is, that such an atonement furnishes no proof that God will execute his law, and answers in no degree the end of punishment, and therefore is not fitted to come in the room of punishment and to be a cover for sin." — "Nor can you make merit *partially* the ground of pardon without proportionably drawing after it the same effects. In exact proportion* as pardon is dispensed on the ground of being a reward to Christ, and not on the ground of substituted sufferings, you abate the evidence that sin must always receive a frown. Indeed there is no halving of things in this way. If the legal impediment to pardon is partly taken away by Christ's deserving a reward, it must have been such as could not need a vicarious sacrifice to remove it. For if the impediment was, that the law had threatened sufferings, and sufferings must come in their room, how could the *merit* of a Substitute touch the difficulty? And what *need*, I further ask, of anything but the sufferings of the Son of God to clear away such an impediment as this?

"What possible influence could merit have in removing the impediments to pardon? To what does the proposition amount? That the sins of believers are pardonable because Christ deserved a reward! What conceivable relation can exist between these two things? Christ's desert of reward, considered by itself, could lend no influence to render sin pardonable. Where is the text that asserts or hints at any such thing? On the contrary have we not seen that sufferings, and sufferings alone, are everywhere displayed in the Scriptures as the ground of remission?" (pp. 52—55; see also on the general subject pp. 48, 51. 56.)

§ 11. *Comprehensive View of the Work of Christ.*

According to the preceding quotations, the work of Christ consists of two parts. One of them is his atonement, which consists in his humiliation and sufferings; another is his

claim for a reward, which results from his obedience. The atonement is "the ground of our reconciliation," but does not "contain the influence which secures reconciliation" (p. 74). The obedience of Christ claims a reward, and this reward consists in the salvation of the elect; this salvation, therefore, is secured by the meritorious obedience, and not by the atonement of Christ. "Thus it was not the same influence which atoned that ensured the acceptance of the atonement. That which atoned was the sufferings of the beloved Son inflicted by the Father's hand; that which ensured the acceptance was the merit of Christ, constituting a claim to a reward for general obedience and particularly for making expiation. The completion of the atonement and the security of its acceptance were two things." (p. 62.) Accordingly the *sufferings* of Christ are styled the lower ransom; and his active obedience is called the larger or higher ransom. The complete ransom consists, first, of the lower ransom, that is, the "part which the Father respected as the ground of release" from punishment, and this "was *the blood and life laid down*;" secondly, of the larger or higher ransom, that is, the "part which supported the claim of Christ to the souls of his elect as his reward, and this "was the giving or sanctifying of himself," the voluntary subjection of himself to the law, and the self-denials it required (see pp. 100, 101; also 81, 87, 95). The lower ransom, or the atonement secured for us a negative blessing, a possibility of pardon; but the higher ransom, or the obedience of Christ secured for us a positive blessing, the gift of the Spirit, and the eternal reward of faith. This distinction explains the remark so often reiterated by Dr. Griffin, that "the atonement is that which changes the relations of moral agents in reference to a release from the curse, and not that which procures the positive gift of the spirit to passive recipients" (p. 81), and that "the gift of faith to the elect was Christ's reward, conferred for the merit of his obedience unto death, that is, for *making atonement*" (p. 89), and that both the negative and the positive blessing, that all the blessings of the present and of fu-

ture life, emanate from the whole work, including the obedience and the atonement of Christ (see pp. 13, 20, 29, 58, 59, 64, 66, 69, 79, 80, 89, 104, 192, 193). The most comprehensive view which Dr. Griffin has given of this two-fold work of the Mediator is unfolded in the following passage, and is explained by the preceding quotations :

“ We have found that the atonement is the cover for sin, by which is meant that it hides, or is adapted to hide sin so from view that it will not be punished ; that therefore it came in the room of punishment, and answered the same end, or was adapted to come in the room of punishment, and to answer the same end ; that that end was to support the law by convincing the universe that God would punish transgression ; that the means of this conviction were the sufferings of the beloved Son inflicted by the Father's hand, which therefore constituted the matter of the atonement ; that when the end of punishment was thus answered, the Protector of the law was satisfied, and the legal impediments to pardon were removed ; that the result of this was that the sins of believers, and of none else, were pardonable, and God could forgive them without injuring the law, but was not obliged till another influence, a promise made to the obedience of Christ, had created the bond ; that atonement is distinguishable from its covenanted acceptance, it being that which came from the Son and satisfied the Father, and not the security given by the Father to the Son that believers should be pardoned on that ground ; that this ground on which men might be pardoned, viewed as *already believing*, could not be the influence which secures the gift of faith ; that the atonement therefore, separate from its covenanted acceptance, was, in relation to those for whom it was made, a mere provision in the hands of the Father for moral agents, rendering it possible for him to pardon them when they should believe ; and that its covenanted acceptance merely placed that provision for moral agents in the hands of Christ, by securing to him the pardon, on that ground, of all who would believe. Besides this connected chain whose links seem indissoluble, we have found that an entirely different influence, constituted not by sufferings, not by anything which answered in the room of punishment, not by anything which is the ground of pardon, but by the merit of obedience, and consisting in a claim to a reward, obtained the gift of faith for the elect. (pp. 81, 82.)

§ 12. *The Atonement was designed, equally and indiscriminately, for all men viewed as moral agents.*

On the extent of the atonement, as on almost all the topics noticed in the preceding Sections, there are several differing theories among evangelical divines. As heretofore,

so now, we will mention only two of the conflicting views. One is, that although the atonement is sufficient for all men, it is efficient for the elect only; in no respect was it intended for the benefit of those whom God had not pre-determined to regenerate; but in all respects and exclusively was it designed for the benefit of those whom God had pre-determined to renew. According to this theory, the divine election of a certain number to be saved was antecedent, in the order of nature, to the divine purpose of making an atonement for that number, and there could have been no use, and therefore no wisdom in providing so costly a sacrifice for those who were not included in the elective plan. A second theory is, that the atonement both is, and was designed to be, a privilege for all men as moral agents; that it was intended for the benefit of the non-elect as really as of the elect; that, in the order of nature, the decree to make an atonement preceded the decree to reward a certain number of men; and thus the atonement was planned for the entire race before a part of the race were selected to become the recipients of a regenerating influence. The second of these theories was advocated by Dr. Griffin. He writes:

“What do we mean by FOR when we say that the atonement was *for* all? Not that it was for them considered merely as sentient; in other words, not that it was the secret purpose of God to make them all happy by the provision, through an operation on them as passive; but that it was for all as moral agents. When we say that it was for all as moral agents, we mean four things. (1.) That, in its actual influence, it changed the relations which all as moral agents sustained to the divine law. (2.) That it thus became, in relation to all who hear the Gospel, a provision for moral agents, and a real privilege. (3.) That the provision and privilege were purposely intended for all. (4.) That the atonement was expressly offered for all.” (p. 308.)

“Now a provision which thus affects all men, may be said to be *for* all, in the same sense as a law is for those who refuse to obey it, or as Bibles and sabbaths are for those who abuse them, or as an estate is for a prodigal son who forfeits or squanders the inheritance. It gives all a *fair chance* to live; a fair chance being where a blessing is so brought within the reach of an agent that he can enjoy it by doing his duty. It is to all a complete *privilege*; privileges being only means of happiness which men are under *obligations* to improve for their good. The privilege of an atonement is as completely brought to all, as any advantage was ever brought to a man which he wick-

edly threw away. It is as perfectly in their hands as any privilege was ever in the hands of a man which he failed to improve. The whole advantage of an atonement, as far as depends on God, is as much in the hands of one as another, bating the single circumstance of the gift of faith; and that has nothing to do with the subject, for we are speaking of men, not as recipients of faith, but as creatures bound to believe. It could not have been for them as moral agents in a higher sense; for if a higher sense is added, it respects them not as agents but as passive receivers, or at most as sentient." (p. 310.)

"On the question whether the atonement was *equally* for all, and in what sense it was not; when we speak of the secret purpose and motive of the divine mind, and speak of man as a whole, we cannot say that it was as much intended for Simon Magus as for Paul. But when we would express the proper influence and tendency of the measure itself, we must speak of men as moral agents only, and then we must pronounce it as much for one as another. Its influence upon all was equal. It removed the curse of abandonment from Simon as much as from Paul, and rendered one as pardonable on the supposition of his faith as the other. And this is all that it did for either. As a privilege it was equally designed for both by the Moral Governor, and was, in itself considered, an equal expression of benevolence to both; and when we use the popular dialect of a moral government, we must say unqualifiedly that it was designed for both alike. And certainly in the express purpose, as it appears in the public instrument, there is no discrimination, no hint of any such distinction as elect and non-elect. 'God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that *whosoever* believeth in him should not perish.' — This is all we mean." (p. 312.)

"That government, which he [Christ] desired and considers a reward, he exercises, not only over mere passive receivers of sanctifying impressions, (quickenings whom he will,) but over a world of moral agents, offering them indiscriminately the benefits of his purchase, and commanding, inviting, promising, threatening, rewarding, and punishing, as though they were independent of the Spirit." (p. 72; see also 69, 71, 237, 238, 297, *et al.*)

"And now if you ask what was gained by this general provision, my answer is, it gave that glorious Sovereign who fills the public throne of the universe, not the cabinet of private decrees, who governs his subjects by motives, not by mechanical force, whose business during a state of probation is to express their duties, not their destinies, to provide privileges, not to constrain their acceptance; it gave him an opportunity to come out to this entire world with his renovated law, with new favors in his hands, with new claims to the homage and gratitude of men, with new splendors around his throne, with a sceptre dipt in blood, sure to bring more glory to himself, more confusion to his enemies, and more good to the universe. It gave him a chance to add one proof of his inflexible adherence to his law which no other circumstance could furnish, a practical declaration that transgressors should not escape though his own Son had died for them. It gave him on

whom devolves the task of punishing the wicked, an opportunity to prove that he does not delight in their misery, to acquit himself in a double sense of their blood, and to make this appeal through heaven, earth, and hell: 'What could have been done more to my vineyard that I have not done in it?' It gave him a chance to come into contact with subjects in a new relation, and such a relation as subjects will never again sustain to eternity,—that of creatures wading to perdition through the blood of Christ expressly shed for their redemption, and a compassionate Sovereign standing over them and urging and beseeching them to live. This exhibition of character, both human and divine, will bring an inconceivable amount of additional lustre to a throne of mercy, as well as to a tribunal of justice." (p. 296, 297.)

§ 13. *The General Atonement implies that all men as moral agents, have natural power to comply with the conditions of life.*

Some believe that God has made an atonement for all men, and yet deny that all, or any men have the natural ability to accept the atonement. They admit, also, that God has pre-determined not to regenerate, and no other being has the natural power to regenerate, the non-elect. Therefore they infer and avow that in these circumstances the salvation of the non-elect is a natural impossibility. Others believe that God has made an atonement for all men, and has thus made the salvation of all men possible, but he has purposed not to regenerate the non-elect; therefore, as their salvation is not a natural impossibility, they must have the natural power to make to themselves new hearts, and thus to accept the offer of life. There are still other theories on this subject, but as our general aim has been on the topics of the preceding Sections, so it is now our aim, to mention only two of the antagonistic opinions prevalent among divines. The second of the above-named theories was adopted by President Griffin. He speaks of the atonement as "a grant made for the benefit of *all who would believe*; leaving all at liberty to share in it if they would do their duty, and becoming thus a grant for all as moral agents" (p. 70). "The merit of Christ's obedience procured eternal life and all positive good for the race at large,

in the highest sense in which they could be procured for mere moral agents, that is, for creatures not to be acted upon by sanctifying influence except as a reward to themselves. Accordingly a part of that good, viz.: a state of probation with all the means and comforts which it involves, is for his sake conferred on the race at large, and the rest is offered to all, as what he procured for them in such a sense that it is to be theirs if they will make it their own" (pp. 70, 71). Throughout his Treatise, Dr. Griffin insists that the atonement was not made for the elect as such, but was made for all men as free moral agents, that is, men capable of freely accepting the atonement. His Treatise abounds with emphatic repetitions; and none of them are more frequent than that "the mistake of those who deny that Christ died for all men," lies in their "not perceiving that an atonement intended merely for agents, is completely for them, without reference to the question whether the same creatures are to be regenerated" (p. 179). "Be the number for whom it [the atonement] was offered greater or less, it was offered for them only as agents, to take away the penalty of abandonment which they as agents had incurred, and to render pardonable the sins which they as agents had committed. To this I add, that it was offered and accepted with an express understanding that it should be applied to them for pardon only when as agents they should believe: and thus the enjoyment of it was not secured to them as passive and motionless, but was suspended on their own act as a *sine qua non*, an act which they were in duty bound to perform" (p. 85). "None but moral agents bear any relation to law, obligation, guilt, pardon, rewards, or punishments; and none else can bear any relation to an atonement which was intended to support law, to expiate guilt, and to lay a foundation for pardon. The passive had not sinned; the passive needed no pardon" (p. 193; see also pp. 193 — 196, 269). "A cover for sin" "could only affect the relations of moral agents. If it covers *sin*, it only covers what an agent has done, for the passive have not sinned. If its whole effect and tendency is to cover sin, it stretches itself over

none but agents, and exhausts all its virtue upon their relations" (p. 84). In agreement with these principles, our author makes the following decisive remarks:

"After all that has been said, if the benefit is offered to the non-elect upon impossible conditions, it is still not provided for them as moral agents, and the grant really amounts to nothing. This is the very opening by which some who admit the universality of the grant, elude the force of this stupendous fact. It is impossible, say they, for the non-elect to believe, because faith is 'the gift of God;' and on this assumption they proceed to draw their conclusions just as though the non-elect were dead masses of matter. If this was the case, or if salvation had been offered them upon any condition which they had not natural ability to fulfil, (for instance, on their possessing the strength of a Goliath or the intellect of an Aristotle,) then indeed the offer would not have proved a provision for them as moral agents. But if the benefit had been suspended on their stretching out the hand, it would have been easy for all to see that it was provided for them as capable agents, though they should have lost it by refusing to perform that act. Now if they do possess a capacity which is a *bona fide* basis of obligation, and which bears the same relation to the obligation to believe that muscular strength would to the obligation to extend an arm at the divine command; if they can be as reasonably required to do the one as the other, and as reasonably punished for the neglect, without resting any part of their obligation on Adam; then a benefit which is suspended on their faith, is just as much provided for them as moral agents, (or as creatures *under obligations*,) as though it had been suspended on their stretching out the hand. And the only reason why it is not easy for us to realize this, is the difficulty we find in apprehending that their natural powers are as complete a basis of obligation in the one case as in the other. If it was familiar to the mind that a rational creature, separated from the Spirit, is as perfectly and reasonably bound to believe on Christ as to extend an arm at the divine command, every difficulty would vanish. We should then see that the benefit of an atonement is as completely provided for those who remain unsanctified, as the house which they are at liberty to occupy, or the office which is suspended on their own choice." (pp. 343, 344, 345; see also 232 — 241.)

§ 14. *The General Atonement implies that all men, as moral agents, have natural power to repent without the special influence of the Spirit.*

Many believe that we have no natural ability to repent, but we receive a gracious ability from the interpositions of the Holy Ghost. They also believe that these interpositions are not constant, but are special and extraordinary; and

therefore, when they are not vouchsafed to us, we have no kind of power to comply with the conditions of life. Consequently, as the non-elect will never receive the renewing influences of the Spirit, there is no natural possibility of their ever accepting an atonement, and of course no atonement could wisely be made for them. Others believe that men have the natural power to obey God, whenever he imposes a command upon them; and that he imposes some command at all times, but does not bestow the special influences of his Spirit all times; therefore all men have the natural ability to obey God, even when he does not aid them by a supernatural interposition. This was the belief of President Griffin. He has been distinguished for his advocacy of the doctrine that we are always dependent on the efficient aid of our Maker, and without that aid we certainly and uniformly sin; but he did not regard this doctrine as inconsistent with the proposition, that when our Preserver withholds his supernatural influence, He still continues to uphold our natural power to yield what He exacts. If the atonement is designed for all men, at all periods of their probation, then all men, at all such periods, have a power, whether aided or not, to accept this atonement. Dr. Griffin makes the following unequivocal remarks:

Obligation "rests upon capacity or natural ability, in other words, upon the physical faculties accompanied with light. It is not diminished by the dependence of man, nor by a bad temper, nor by the absence of the Spirit; nor is it increased by original holiness, nor by a good temper, nor by the influence of the Spirit, further than the latter presents light to the understanding, or is a mercy to be acknowledged. In contemplating men therefore as creatures under obligations, we have nothing to do with their dependence, or their temper, or the action of the Spirit, (further than is above expressed,) or with any decree concerning that action." (pp. 229, 230.)

"The whole fabric" of moral government "rests upon the principle that all this treatment is suited to rational creatures even without the Spirit, in other words, that they are complete moral agents without supernatural influence. The Moral Governor grounds his claims, not on their temper, nor on their original righteousness, nor on any spiritual aids afforded, but on their physical faculties accompanied with light, or their natural ability. By comparing their obligations with their conduct, and without reference to any-

thing else, he judges of their character and deserts. From their obligations he estimates their privileges, reckoning to them as such whatever they ought to improve for their good. Where a blessing is so placed within their reach that they can enjoy it by doing their duty, he charges against them an opportunity or fair chance to obtain it. He makes experiments upon their temper, just as though they were independent. In all his measures he assumes from their capacity that their holy action is possible. He presents instructions and motives fitted to influence rational beings, as though he expected the effect from their own independent powers. He commands, invites, rewards, and punishes as though there was no Spirit. With the exceptions mentioned in a former chapter, he never once alludes to the passive character of men throughout the whole administration of a moral government, but holds his way through the world with an eye apparently filled with agents alone. He sets before him a race of distinct and complete agents, and proceeds like an earthly prince who has no control over the minds of his subjects but by motives. This must be apparent to any one who opens his Bible, and has already been proved by quotations sufficiently numerous. In short a moral government is a world by itself, because moral agents, so to speak, are complete entities in themselves." (pp. 243, 244.)

"The treatment of agents by itself is therefore a system of incalculable importance. That general treatment which is bottomed on their capacity, and would have no meaning without it; which assumes at every step that they have natural ability to act without the Spirit, and is in truth the same as though they were independent; which comprehends all the instructions given, all the authority employed, all the obligations imposed, all the motives presented, all the provisions made, all the invitations offered, all the long-suffering exercised, all the guilt charged, all the rewards conferred; this system, separate from the sovereign operations of the Spirit, is of immeasurable importance. Laying out of account the direct ends which the measures are calculated to accomplish, the system as a whole is of unspeakable importance as a mere source of motives." (p. 288; see also pp. 72, 197 — 179, 256 — 262, et al.)

§ 15. *The General Atonement implies that all probationers have a "fair chance" to obtain eternal life.*

The phrases "chance," "fair chance," have been generally excluded from the dialect of theologians. They are perilous and unfortunate words. Dr. Griffin does not use them to denote any uncertainty in regard to the action for which there is a "chance." He did not believe in any such contingency of volitions, as implies that they are not the sure re-

sults of motives, and the objects of God's infallible decrees. But he employs these terms as luminous alternations of speech, reflecting an intense light on his favorite doctrine of natural ability. He says :

“ There is no such thing as being a sinner, and needing an atonement, without a capacity to accept it. For without a capacity to believe, there would not be a capacity to obey ; and without a capacity to obey, there would not be a capacity to sin. You must not split up and divide the essential attributes of a moral agent. You must not contemplate him as a sinner, without contemplating him as capable of faith. To say that he needs an atonement, and yet labors under a natural incapacity to believe, is the same sundering of essential properties, and the same contradiction, as to say that a mass of matter has shape but not impenetrability, or that a ball is not round. Further, if a man has a capacity to believe, then his faith is naturally possible, then he is susceptible of a fair offer of life, of a fair opportunity or chance to obtain it, of the complete privilege of an atonement, and of a course of probation or trial. Such a possibility of action and susceptibility of privileges are inseparable from capacity, are inseparable of course from a sinner. A man cannot be one to whom an atonement is adapted, that is, a sinner, but in the character in which he is capable and susceptible of all these things. And to call him a sinner, and yet deny the natural possibility of his believing, or his fair chance to live by the atonement, or the completeness of his privilege, (allowing the Gospel to be in his hands,) is the same contradiction as is noticed above.”—
“ Further, if the atonement so far affects any agent that he is susceptible of the offer of its benefits, it must affect all his other relations which are capable of being affected by such a measure ; it must give him a fair opportunity or chance to live by it, must put him completely upon probation, and be to him a perfect privilege ; otherwise the essential attributes of an agent are divided. If the atonement so affected the relations of Simon Magus that he could receive the offer of pardon by it, then it gave him a fair chance for pardon, put him fully upon probation, and was to him the complete privilege of an atonement.” (pp. 239 — 241.)

“ It is a fundamental principle of the system [which includes the doctrine of Limited Atonement] that men without the Spirit have no power to believe, that is, no capacity which can be called a natural ability. Then, indeed without the Spirit they are not moral agents, for capacity, we have seen, is the very foundation of moral agency. Accordingly some have the consistency to deny, that there is in natural men a proper basis of obligation without resorting to Adam. In general they will not admit the natural possibility of the non-elect's believing, nor even allow us to make the supposition of such an event. From not perceiving that their capacity is a full foundation for the provision of privileges, just as though it was certain they would improve them, and enough to justify the expression that they can

improve them, they are unable to see that the non-elect bear any more relation to an atonement brought to their door and offered to them, than masses of inanimate matter; and often ask, of what avail such a provision without the gift of faith? just as they would ask, of what avail a provision for the dead? Of course they will not allow that it gives them a *fair chance* to live, or is to them a complete *privilege*, though chances (thus actively considered), and privileges, are predicable only of moral agents. Its being for them as moral agents is a fact of great magnitude and importance, but this is wholly sunk.

“They cannot see that the atonement expressed the least benevolence to the non-elect, any more than if it had suspended pardon on their possessing the intellect of a Locke or the strength of a Hercules. They do not see that the natural powers of men in such a case constitute a foundation for treatment by which benevolence can be expressed, no less than if pardon was suspended on their stretching out the hand. And this leads to the conclusion that nothing which God can do for those who remain un-sanctified, can indicate benevolence towards them. And the next step is to affirm that he has no benevolence towards them, not even a ‘general affection to them as creatures.’ And then he could have no motive to make the provision for them, and it could not be designed for them, but must have fallen out a provision for them in some incidental way, though fastened upon them severally as such by express law. In short, moral agents are such absolute non-entities, that God could have no motive to make a provision for them as such; and therefore to place the decree respecting the atonement before that of election, is to charge him with resolving on a costly measure without a motive.” (pp. 314, 315, 316; see also 243, 244, 296, 297.)

It may be replied, that in these quotations Dr. Griffin occasionally speaks of the “fair chance” *as given by the atonement*. He teaches, however, that “this chance is thus given only as the atonement implies the natural ability of the sinner to accept it.” Everywhere he teaches that the atoning work is “a provision for moral agents,” that it did not “obtain the gift of faith.” “Here,” he says, “I plant my foot” (pp. 94, 95). If, then, the atonement did not “secure faith,” but only offered salvation to all men on condition of their *voluntary* faith, it gave all men a *fair chance* of obtaining salvation, only on the ground that all men have the natural power to exercise the faith which is required of them.

§ 16. *The General Atonement implies a Natural Ability, which is something more than a dormant faculty of the soul.*

What is meant by the doctrine of Natural Ability to do right? Some affirm that it may signify nothing more than an undeveloped and dormant capacity for virtuous action; like the capacity which infants have to speak, run, cherish parental love, etc. Others suppose that the phrase denotes a capacity which *can* be exercised, and that a capacity which *cannot* be exercised is an incapable capacity, and this is nothing different from an incapacity. Dr. Griffin has been regarded by some as advocating the first of these notions. It is evident that he advocates the last.

In the first place, he contends for a kind of natural ability which is denied by those Calvinists who deny the General Atonement. Do any Calvinists disbelieve that all sinners, even the non-elect, are endued with the capacities which are termed Reason, Conscience, Will? But Dr. Griffin frequently implies that the whole controversy on the extent of the atonement may be reduced to a controversy on the natural power of men to do right (see page 323); therefore one party in the controversy must own, and the other disown, the existence of this natural power; but neither party disowns the truth, that the non-elect possess the bare organic capacities which the elect possess; therefore the question in dispute must be something more than a question on the existence of dormant faculties in the non-elect. Dr. Griffin says:

“The root of the difficulty lies in overlooking the *capacity* of unsanctified men. And without capacity they are no longer agents: and when they cease to be agents, they indeed cease to be susceptible of the privilege of an atonement. If the non-elect are as powerless in regard to faith as dead masses of matter, I admit that the atonement was not made for them in any sense; and then I must consider the appearances of such a provision as calculated to deceive. But if they possess the full capacity which is the proper ground of treating them as moral agents, then there is an atonement for them as agents none the less for their being unsanctified. If a feast is brought into a room surrounded with statues, and it is determined to impart life only to half; there may be a ludicrous proclama-

tion that it is for as many as will receive it, but after all it would be preposterous to say that it was provided for all. But if it is brought into a room surrounded with living men, and they are all to share it if they will, and are invited and urged to partake, then it may truly be said to be provided for all, though in the event a part refuse the invitation. The question then about *power* is really a vital one." (pp. 220, 221.)

In the second place, Dr. Griffin advocates a kind of natural ability which his opponents believe was lost in Adam. But have any of his opponents believed, that men lost in Adam their fundamental capacities of Reason, Conscience, Will? If any, who? His antagonists contended, that Adam "being left to the freedom of his own will" sinned, and by sinning lost his freedom to do right, his natural power to obey God; and in opposition to them Dr. Griffin contended that men have now all the freedom which they ever had, and of course did not lose their natural ability in Adam. He lets fall several remarks like the following:

"There is no need therefore of recurring to our original purity in Adam to find the foundation of obligation. Under the notion that sinners have no more power to believe than stocks, men have attempted to justify the universal command on the ground that the power was lost by our own fault. If a servant, say they, has cut off his hands to avoid labor, his master may still require his daily task, and punish him for the neglect. But if a solid ground of obligation independent of Adam still remains in the soul, there is no need of resorting to this laboring principle to vindicate the command. We lost nothing in Adam, (so far as concerns the present subject,) but a right temper; and the want of that does not impair the basis of obligation which exists in ourselves. What else can you imagine we lost? Power? But what power distinct from a good heart? Have we not still power to love God if our heart is well disposed? Do you mean a power to make the heart good, or a self-determining power of the will? But did Adam himself possess that? What had he which we have not, but a right temper? And that could not have been the ground of obligation had it continued. Besides, this resort to original holiness for the ground of obligation involves so many seeming absurdities, that it ought not to be made without the most urgent necessity. Take the case of the servant. His sin was one, the act of disabling himself. For this he might be punished as long and as much as that single act deserved. But to impute sin to him for not performing his task after it had become impossible, is contrary to all truth and justice. He was not to blame for that omission. With the best dispositions he could not have prevented it. If God looks at the heart, and accepts 'a willing mind' where there is nothing else to give,

he could not have seen that servant striving with the best desires to perform his task without hands, and blamed him for the failure. The sin was but one. And if this illustrates the case of Adam's posterity, there is but one sin to be charged against them all, and that was committed in Eden. The idea of different degrees of criminality is a dream; and men would have been as guilty, and might have received the same punishment, had they been born without reason. No personal act of theirs is sin, and it is no matter what they do. These consequences must follow, or there must be in the present structure of the soul a foundation of obligation altogether independent of Adam's innocence or fall. And where do the Scriptures teach us that men have not in themselves a complete foundation of obligation without resorting to Adam? What text from Genesis to Revelation hints at such a thing? The notion is altogether a human inference. So far from supporting such a thought, the Scriptures pointedly charge sinners with faculties which render them without excuse, alleging that they have eyes but see not, ears but hear not, hearts but do not understand, talents but will not employ them, a price in their hands with no heart to improve it; and constantly treat them as moral agents in their own persons, and as fully so as if there had been no federal head." (pp. 223—225.)

In the third place, Dr. Griffin advocates a kind of natural ability which makes the atonement a real privilege to even the non-elect. Men who believe that the non-elect, without special aid, cannot use their faculties in accepting the atonement, and also that God has decreed never to give this to them, do not believe that the atonement is a privilege to the non-elect. But Dr. Griffin supposes that we must ascribe to God, as *Moral Governor*, "the same reason for an atonement for Simon Magus as for Peter, to wit, a direct regard to his deliverance from the curse" (p. 294), a real benevolence to Simon Magus; "as complete an *exercise* and *expression* of common benevolence to Simon Magus, as there is of maternal feeling where a mother runs to catch a falling child" (p. 294). "There was in him [Simon Magus] as perfect a foundation to support the privilege of an atonement, as to sustain a punishment for rejecting it. His capacity made it as proper for God to provide the privilege for him (just as though he was likely to use it without the Spirit), as for God to punish him for not using it. The mercy then, no less than the punishment, may be contemplated as lying between God and Simon, and as being ex-

pressive of the divine character in its direct aspect upon him" (p. 295). Where can we find stronger language to express the fact that all men possess, and can use the power of right choice, than is found in our author's assertion that "by the capacity which moral agents possess, they have in themselves, without the Spirit, a complete foundation for all the treatment which might be rendered to independent beings, and no less a foundation for merciful than for punitive treatment" (p. 293). Dr. Griffin says that a privilege is "a means of happiness, which a man has *a capacity, or is able, if well disposed,* to improve for his own good. It is always reckoned originally from his natural ability" (p. 235). He adds:—

"A privilege then is complete without any influence of the Spirit inclining the man to improve it. It is complete provided *his obligation to improve it is complete.* If he possesses that ability to use a blessing for his good which is the *bona fide* basis of obligation, it may be charged against him as a privilege, with as much reason as though the enjoyment of it depended on his stretching out the hand. A benefit so placed within his reach that he ought to make it his own, is his own. It is a blessing in his hands till he throws it away; and the traces of it will still be found upon him as an accountable being. Otherwise *the abuse of privileges* is a phrase altogether without a meaning, and is no more applicable to men than to statues. It is only because it is difficult to realize the completeness of the obligations of the non-elect to believe, that we doubt whether the atonement is a complete privilege to them. We pore so much on their inability, and lay the ground of their obligation so much in Eden, that it becomes difficult to realize that they are under the same present, personal obligations to believe that they are to do any outward act. If remission was offered them on the simple condition of their stretching out the hand, it would be easy to see that the privilege was complete, because it would be obvious that their obligation was perfect. Only let it be realized that, without reference to Adam, they are under as entire obligations to believe as they would be to extend an arm at the divine command, and every difficulty vanishes." (pp. 235, 236.)

The whole style in which our author illustrates the facility of accepting this privilege, of accepting it "*as if independently,*" "*by stretching out the hand,*" by using those faculties which bear "the same relation to the obligation which the *muscular strength* of a slave does to the obligation to lift a weight when bidden by his master (p. 227); the "*full opportunity,*"

the "*fair chance*" to obtain the blessings of the atonement,—all these and other yet stronger phrases are illusory and deceptive, unless they denote a power to use our faculties in holy love.

In the fourth place, Dr. Griffin unequivocally declares that he means by natural power to choose the right, something more than a bare germinal faculty of choice, and that he regards this power as either involving in itself, or as inducing by necessary consequence, a power to use the faculty in the right, as well as in the wrong, way. He says :

The possibility of the action of moral agents "grows out of their capacity, which without this would be no capacity. What is a capacity for action where the action is a natural impossibility? As the capacity from which the possibility of action is calculated, is not affected by the presence or absence of the Spirit, nor by any decree concerning his influence, nor yet by the certainty that the capacity will not be employed, they who speak and act in reference to agents have a right, without regard to any of these things, to assume that their action is possible, and to speak and act as though it was likely to happen. Even the omniscient God, as we shall see in another place, shapes his measures as though their action was probable, even when he foresees that it will never occur. On the same principle we have a right, whenever an argument requires it, to make the supposition of the return of the very devils to holiness. As agents they have a capacity to return; and all the language of the universe respecting the possibility of action refers of course to agents." (p. 231.)

Even in his *Treatise on Divine Efficiency*, where he had a temptation to reduce our "natural power" to the narrowest compass possible, he remarks: "A faculty to move, that, physically speaking, cannot move, is a contradiction in terms. It is a faculty which is not a faculty. But there may be faculties which in point of fact *will* not move in such a manner, but in him in whom they have their being" (p. 78).

The objector may reply, that Dr. Griffin defines natural ability to be "the foundation of moral obligation," and affirms: "This independent basis of obligation is what we mean, and all that we mean by natural ability," "and when we ascribe this power to sinners, we only assert that they have the physical faculties of a rational soul" (p. 225).

But to this we rejoin, that the word "faculties" here denotes "faculties capable of right action;" and in the *very paragraph* from which the objector infers that Dr. Griffin does not mean anything more than our simple organic capacities, Dr. Griffin himself expressly affirms that he does mean something more. He says that "this power lies in the physical faculties of a rational soul, connected with light." "It is so self-evident that a man cannot be bound to perform natural impossibilities, or to do what with the best dispositions he has no power to accomplish, (as for instance to make a world,) that we find it necessary to prove the existence of such a power in order to fasten upon the conscience a sense of obligation. But call it by whatever name you please, the whole that we mean is, that the physical faculties, accompanied with light, are a complete and *bona fide* basis of obligation, independent of the temper of the heart, or the action of the Spirit, or original righteousness or sin, and none the less for man's dependence. This is all that any Calvinist ever meant or can mean by natural ability" (p. 226). In another paragraph he says: "When, therefore, we inquire what constitutes or is the basis of moral agency, we are only asking what that is in the creature which is the foundation of obligation.— That foundation is no other than the faculties of a rational soul, to which, in reference to the present subject at least, I am willing to add *light*" (pp. 221, 222). Whenever Dr. Griffin attempts to define "natural power" with the greatest precision, he says, not that it *is* a dormant, germinal capacity, but that it "*lies in*" the faculty; not the *bare* faculty, but "the natural faculties *with* the light" (p. 225), "the physical faculties *accompanied with* light" (p. 229). "The completeness of moral agency has no dependence on supernatural impressions, and on nothing but a rational existence *combined* with knowledge" (p. 197). There must then be light, knowledge, in *addition* to the faculties of a moral agent. Why? Because the mere faculties *without* the light, knowledge, will not *enable* him to obey the law; and the idea of "natural ability" is the idea of both the faculty *and* the

light; it is the idea of *all* which is, in the literal sense, necessary for the obedient choice.—The meaning which our author attaches to the disputed phrase may become still more obvious, perhaps, from the following Sections.

§ 17. *Relations of the General Atonement and of Free Moral Agency to the Divine Foreknowledge and Decrees.*

It is easy to misunderstand the remarks quoted in the present Section. It is easier still to misrepresent them. They are not exactly what we would desire them to be. The intent of them, however, is easily seen by a candid reader. They were designed to be *complements* of the truths often presented by Dr. Griffin, that God has fore-ordained whatsoever comes to pass, and that consequently all the actions of men are certain and foreknown. The style, the thoughts, and even the subjects of Dr. Griffin's discourses prove him to have been, through life, eminently Calvinistic in his views. The spirit of eloquence which glowed within him, however, impelled him to declare the *whole* counsel of God, in order to reach the moral sensibilities of men. He was not a man of one idea. He held up the truths which are on the side of the Sovereign, and also the truths which are on the side of the creature. Like many other Calvinists, he made a broad distinction between the Providential and the Moral Government, the Purposes and the Commands, the Secret and the Revealed Will of Jehovah. He was punctiliously careful to guard his readers against the belief, that the divine decree is their rule of duty, that the purpose of election lessens the freeness of divine grace, and that any providential plan with regard to the *application* of the atonement affects the *nature* of it, as a provision for moral agents. He was firm in resisting those writers who believe that, as the atonement was not intended for the non-elect, and as the non-elect have not any kind of power to repent, therefore the non-elect are not in a state of probation. "Is election," he writes, "brought against it [probation]? But God treats agents, as we have seen, just as

though there was no election. Is foreknowledge brought against it? But God treats agents, it will appear hereafter, just as though there was no foreknowledge" (p. 233). We are not to busy ourselves with the question, whether we are elected, but we are to regard the Most High as our Moral Governor, and with him, *as such*, "our business lies through the whole course of our active virtue. In every part we proceed as though nothing was settled from eternity, and except a submission to the eternal purpose of God, set ourselves to raise others to happiness as though we never heard of an absolute decree. We transact with the Moral Governor in almost all our *worship*. *Prayer* has no other object. Its concern lies not with election, but with the present will of him who 'is a *Rewarder* of them that diligently seek him.' Its sole encouragement is drawn from the promise of the Moral Governor; and a long pondering on election, by turning the eye from him, is apt to damp the spirit and discourage the effort. When we pray for the regeneration of others, we do not ask the Elector to change his eternal decrees: we address ourselves to the Moral Governor alone, and hope to be rewarded by an act which to them will not be a recompense" (p. 248). Believing that the atonement is designed for men only as moral agents, he boldly affirms that God, as a Moral Governor, "knows not a non-elect person on earth" (p. 285), and that "a moral government, in dealing with pure agents, is so regardless of the decrees, and promises, and influences which respect the passive, that it goes around them, and wanders over them, without appearing to see them" (p. 255). Far from believing that God first elects the heirs of salvation, and then makes an atonement for *them as elect*, Dr. Griffin says: "The Moral Governor had nothing to do with men as elect and non-elect, but merely as moral agents, and in reference to his final treatment of them, as believers and unbelievers. And his decree to punish any for rejecting a Saviour, must be founded on his foreknowledge that they would thus reject. This was all the decree that the Moral Governor could pass respecting the misery of those who were to hear the

Gospel" (p. 304). Is an atonement planned and provided for the non-elect? If not, they are not under obligation to accept it, and are not qualified to reject it. Our author reasons thus :

"The only part of a moral government which discovers prescience, is prophecy. All the other parts are framed together with the same consistency of relation as if there was no foreknowledge. Break up this principle, and plant the eye of prescience visibly in every part of a moral government, and you turn the whole into confusion : the entreaties of God to the non-elect would appear like mockery, and many of his declarations false. God proceeds in his treatment of moral agents as though it was perfectly uncertain how they will act till they are tried. The reason is that the capacity and obligations on which the treatment is founded, are in no degree affected by foreknowledge. This neither weakens an obligation, nor helps to create one which would not otherwise exist. It does not weaken an obligation, and therefore does not prevent the issuing of commands and invitations; for these only express the obligations of men with precision, without any thing prophetic as to their conduct or destiny. Nor yet does it help to create an obligation which would not otherwise exist. To this maxim I wish to draw particular attention. Were there no foreknowledge, neither the nature of things nor any command could impose on men an obligation to accept a privilege which in relation to them had no existence, (for that would be a natural impossibility,) nor, unless deceived, to believe the privilege to be for them in such a sense that they could enjoy it by doing their duty; for that would be an obligation to believe a lie. This would be common sense if there was no foreknowledge. Now what I assert is, that the foreknowledge of God that they would not accept the privilege if provided for them, did not render it proper for him, without providing it, to command them to receive it and to believe that it was provided for them. They could not be under obligation, nor could any command lay them under obligation, to accept a privilege which in relation to them had no existence, nor, unless deceived, to believe a lie. The inconsistency of attempting to impose such an obligation, will appear by making the supposition, (and of moral agents we have a right to make the supposition,) that they should exert or try to exert their agency in this way. The moment they should make the attempt, they would find one part a natural impossibility, and in performing the other, unless deceived, they would actually do wrong. No power therefore could lay upon them an obligation to accept a privilege which, from the foreknowledge that they would reject it, had not been so provided for them that they could enjoy it by doing their duty. Accordingly the Moral Governor no more attempts to impose the obligation without providing the privilege, than would any fair and honorable man. He does not command impossibilities, secure in the foreknowledge that creatures will not obey, and then punish them forever for not doing what no power with

the best dispositions could have done. He does not thus take advantage of his superior knowledge to oppress. He does not thus practise upon the ignorance of creatures, sure at last to detect the imposition." (pp. 249 — 251.)

If it be physically possible for the non-elect to accept the atonement, then, even if God has not pre-determined to induce them to accept it, still may we not make a supposition that they will accept it? And if they should do so, how would their act of faith stand related to the divine decree? Dr. Griffin replies:

"Who will pretend to say that if Judas had believed, (and I hope enough has been said to justify the supposition,) he would have been rejected? But if he had believed, you say, it would have been foreknown, and the atonement would have been made for him. And are you sure it would have been foreknown? We have no other idea of God's foreknowledge than that it is founded on his own purpose to produce or permit. He therefore foreknew whether he should give faith to Judas. But this possible action of which I am speaking, would not have been caused by God, nor have grown out of any purpose of his. How then should it have been foreknown? No event is in fact unforeknown; because, beyond what is produced by the direct influence of God, the universe is governed by motives, the tendency of which he perfectly understands. But the possibility of the action under consideration, did not depend on the motives which God had actually spread, but on the faculties of a rational soul. Had Judas done as he ought, an event would have taken place which was never foreseen. And had he done as he ought without the influence and motives which God controlled, (and his obligations were independent of both,) an event would have taken place, which, so far as we can judge, could not have been foreseen. No such event ever did or will occur: I only make these remarks to show how independent of divine foreknowledge the natural possibility of action is. Unnumbered actions which God never foreknew, are still naturally possible, or prescience reduces everything to fate.

It is on this ground that God, in all his treatment of moral agents, (except in the single instance of prophecy,) proceeds just as though he had no foreknowledge. The capacity of creatures to act, and of course the natural possibility of their action, and their obligations, are independent of prescience; and the Moral Governor, founding his course on that capacity and possibility, and on those obligations, holds his way as though nothing was foreseen." (pp. 333, 334.)

§ 18. *Relations of the General Atonement and of free Moral Agency to the Arminian and the Calvinistic systems.*

If a theologian advocate the doctrine of divine decrees, he will be regarded as a fatalist by some. If he advocate the doctrine of human freedom, he will be regarded as an Arminian by others. But Dr. Griffin advocated both doctrines. We regret that he did not more analytically discriminate between his own theory of human power, and that which is characteristic of Arminianism. He might have shown them to be radically unlike each other. Contenting himself with the more general distinctions, he says:

“ These principles of a moral government [pp. 158—171 of this Article exhibit these principles], which are everywhere conspicuous on the sacred page, are what Arminians have discovered, and set themselves to defend, in opposition to doctrines which they thought irreconcilable with these. As advocates for the fundamental laws of a moral government, they deserve real praise: but their error has lain in not perceiving that all the attributes of moral agency are perfectly consistent with absolute dependence. If ever this unhappy division in the church is healed, it must be on the ground here taken, by showing that respectable class of men that all the prerogatives of a moral government can be maintained in perfect consistency with absolute election and special grace.” (pp. 244, 245.)

“ So far as the dispute [in regard to the extent of the atonement] is verbal, a phraseology ought not to be adhered to which does not express the truth. And how far it is verbal, is a question of some importance. Now our brethren in detail admit all that we ask. This they do as often as they say that Christ died ‘ that whosoever believeth in him should not perish ; ’ and as often as they allow that all may enjoy the benefit by believing, and are bound to make it their own. And yet when they come to general propositions, they contradict the one which we support, and distinctly say that the atonement was not for all. This is because they do not attach to the general proposition the same meaning that we do. And the reason of this is, they are not agreed with us as to the character in which men are to be spoken of in this matter. We contend that they ought to be spoken of as moral agents; they speak of them continually as passive receivers. In general they do not mean to deny what really is meant by the atonement’s being for all as moral agents, but they so annihilate agents as to make no account of this. When therefore we say that it was for Simon Magus, (meaning that it was for him as a capable agent,) they, though they allow what we mean, refuse to use our language, and say decidedly that it was not for him, because they overlook his agency, and speak of him as merely

sentient and passive. The proposition that it was for him, has a different meaning with them from what it has with us, because they see him not as an agent. And if they could see him as an agent, so as to attach the same meaning to the proposition that we do, they would not deny it. So far the dispute is verbal. But the mistake lies deeper than words, and consists in overlooking the natural ability of man. This is the bottom of the difficulty. Though therefore there is much logomachy in the contest, yet if we are right our brethren labor under a real mistake. On a subject where they ought to speak of men exclusively as moral agents, they constantly reason about them as though they were passive tablets, no more capable of believing than the clods of the valley. And when they refer to the purpose of God in this provision, they constantly speak of him only as intending or not intending to make impressions on passive recipients. This is plainly turning the Moral Governor out of a transaction which was exclusively his own, and transferring the whole business to the Sovereign Efficient Cause. This has been the grand mistake of Calvinists of the type of a part of the Synod of Dort. They have reasoned right against the Arminians about election and regeneration, but on several points have plainly lost sight of moral agents and a moral government. On the other hand, the Arminians have had many correct ideas of a moral government, but have been as blind as Bartimeus to all the secrets of the other department. And thus these two parties have gone on contending from age to age, and after all both have been right — and both wrong.” (pp. 322 — 324.)

“ We admit that the Sovereign Efficient Cause absolutely decreed the characters of men, so far as whether he would make them holy or leave them to themselves. But we think that all these difficulties which have perplexed the church in consequence of viewing God in a single character, may easily be solved by contemplating him in two. While we do not say of the Sovereign Efficient Cause that he suspended any thing on the conduct of men, or had the least reference to that conduct in one of his decisions (because his decrees and acts terminate upon men as purely passive) ; we scruple not to attribute to the Moral Governor all the aims which the measures of his government are calculated to accomplish. We readily yield to the Sovereign Efficient Cause everything that the highest Calvinist ever did, and none the less ascribe to the Moral Governor everything, as relates to the present subject, that an Arminian ever did. In particular we find no difficulty in saying of the Ruler of agents, that he *wills* the salvation of all to whom the Gospel is sent. And we understand Peter and Paul as speaking of God in the same character, and meaning the same thing, when they say of him that he ‘ will have all men to be saved and to come unto the knowledge of the truth ;’ ‘ not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.’ We dare not therefore say of him who provided the atonement (for that was the Moral Governor alone,) that he had no intention to benefit the non-elect, nor do we generally speak of him as even knowing such a class of men.” (pp. 285, 286.)

It requires but little of that genius which accompanies the "*odium theologicum*," to misrepresent the author of the preceding citations, as adopting a semi-Arminian and semi-Calvinistic creed. On some points he did agree with the Arminians where other Calvinists do not; and on some more noticeable points other Calvinists agreed with the Arminians where he did not. On the whole, he was further from Arminianism than were his Calvinistic opposers. He was, as he professed to be, a strong but a self-consistent believer in the substance of the Assembly's Catechism. His doctrine of moral agency has been often admitted in fact, even when it has been denied in form, by the most one-sided devotees of that Formula. It is this doctrine, however, which was regarded by President Griffin as the point of his divergence from the technically avowed belief of the old Calvinists. "I am inclined to think," he says, that the habit of regarding men as "moral agents" rather than "passive receivers" "is the original angle of separation, and that the dispute about the nature of the atonement is rather consequential" (p. 178). "In all the views which our brethren take of the non-elect in relation to this question, they overlook their existence as moral agents, and affirm the same things of them as might be affirmed if they were passive blocks under the hands of the engraver. This is the principal source of the whole mistake" (pp. 313—320). He regarded their false views of moral agency as leading many Calvinists, step by step, into a labyrinth of such errors as the following: that "the atonement was a legal transaction," p. 130 *et al.*); that our sins were imputed to Christ legally and literally, were "*considered*" his; whereas God *considers* every thing as it really *is*, and when he imputes one man's sin to others, he merely *treats* them as if they had sinned, and pursues this course *practically*, "*so far as is necessary to answer the purpose*" of moral government (pp. 150—154, 164 *et al.*); that Christ was our legal Surety, Sponsor and Representative (p. 168 *et al.*); that there was a legal identity between him and us (pp. 149, 170 *et al.*); that God is legally obliged to save the elect (pp. 61, 160, 164);

that the atonement has "the attributes of a commercial transaction" (p. 134 *et al.*); that the law punishes "sin with sin" (p. 16); that sin may be something passive (p. 84 *et al.*).

It is to save men from these, and from similar errors already noticed, that Dr. Griffin insists, with rare eloquence, on the doctrine of "natural ability commensurate with duty," and on the importance of that style of writing and preaching which is superinduced by the influence of this doctrine (see especially Part II., chapters 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 20, 21 of the present Treatise). According to him the two opposing parties of Calvinists may, and should, be reconciled with each other; but in the concessions needful for their union the Edwardeans, who have chosen the accurate and the fitting language, should not disown the truth and the utility of their propositions; but the advocates of the Old Calvinism, who have borrowed an inaccurate and a perilous phraseology, should abandon the error and the harmfulness of their set and stereotyped forms of speech (pp. 313 — 326). Their language often produces a ruinous impression on the soul (pp. 320 — 326 *et al.*). They fail to "distinguish between the literal and figurative meaning of texts," and they frequently reason from poetry as if it were prose (pp. 9, 10, 12, 104, 113, 154, 158, 165, 166, 168, 187, 210 *et al.*). Their imaginative style they often qualify, and when they explain their poetical images by prosaic terms, they come into a substantial agreement with the views of Dr. Griffin. They contend against his principles, while they are compelled tacitly to admit them (p. 322; see also pp. 178, 180, 181, 369—390). If they would avow in form that God never requires moral agents to work impossibilities, they would be willing to avow that the atonement was made for men *as moral agents*. Then they would logically admit that it was made for *the entire race*. Then, coinciding with him in regard to the *objects* of the atonement, they would coincide with him in regard to its *nature*, for its designed results unfold its essence. Then would exist a real harmony of views, and this would induce a harmony of style, between the two schools who now "grate harsh discord."