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## ARTICLE V.

## THEORIES OF ATONEMENT.

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## No. II.

IN order to a clearer insight into at least some parts of this great subject, Atonement, I propose to review some of the theories which have extensively prevailed in the church, or have been proposed by theologians. Whatever of error there may have been in these theories, the doctrine of the atonement effected by Christ has under them exerted a glorious and beneficent influence, has been the deliverance from sin and condemnation of innumerable souls; and the theories have, therefore, naturally been most precious and sacred in the view of the beneficiaries. It cannot be in the heart of any good man to treat such feelings with disrespect, or not to cherish a kindly interest in them. But these respectful and tender feelings should not stand in the way of an honest and thorough examination of the theories, and a frank expression of the views, favorable or unfavorable, to which such an examination may seem to lead us.

In the primitive church there was no formal theory of the atonement. There is no such theory exhibited in the Scriptures. In no theoretic way it is merely said that Christ is our propitiation; that God has set him forth as such; that he died for our sins; that he is our ransom; that the saints wash their robes and make them white in his blood as the Lamb of God. The Scriptures leave the facts to their own influence. So the primitive church received the atonement, and rejoiced in the Saviour "with joy unspeakable and full of glory."

## CHRIST'S DEATH A RANSOM PAID TO THE DEVIL.

The first theory that obtained extensive recognition was, that man having become through his sins the lawful captive

of the devil, and he being unwilling to let him off without ransom, and a ransom most costly, Christ the Son of God consented to ransom man with his life; that the devil gladly accepted this, hoping to contrive to retain his influence over man's heart; but that Christ outwitted the devil, by his death gaining a preponderating influence over the race.

This, I think, is the substance of the theory; but though for ages the theory of minds of the first order, no one believes in it now. It lies in the rubbish-heap of ancient nonsense. It is interesting to inquire how men, believing in such a theory, could work their moral nature under it.

1. It represented the deep guilt of man. He could not be the lawful captive of Satan unless he deserved to be so.

2. It taught that man is practically incompetent to save himself without a Redeemer.

3. It represented that God so loved the world as to give his only begotten Son to save it; and it presented also the great love of Christ for the race of man.

4. There was something interesting to the human mind in the respect it represented God as showing to the supposed rights of the devil, giving him his due.

5. It mainly left the facts of the gospel history to their natural influence.

We can hardly imagine that there were not many minds to which this strange theory was a stumbling-block. Be that as it may, we have all come to see that Satan could not have obtained a rightful power over any creature of God, and especially by the perpetration of the most outrageous wickedness. We see that to pay him for the surrender of man such a ransom, or any ransom at all, would have been not divine wisdom, but consummate folly.

This theory has hardly anything in common with the natural import of sin-offerings, unless the scape-goat be considered as an offering to placate the devil; which, though accepted by some modern writers, is received by comparatively a very small number. And the theory does not repre-

sent that any satisfaction was made for the penalty of the law, or that Christ in any sense bore this penalty. But yet it did make the impression that the sinner deserved what his Saviour suffered in his behalf, or worse. It contained this great element of power.

I think we can see that believers in the atonement of Christ, even under this theory, might find the power of God to salvation. They did not blunder in believing that God gave his Son for their souls, even to the death of the cross. That great truth was not lost under the mountain of nonsense. Bishop Thomson in his essay in the "Aids to Faith," says that other views were held along with the above-given defunct theory, somewhat similar to the more modern views. But certainly — and this the good Bishop does not deny — the above was the prevalent theory for centuries.

#### ANSELM'S THEORY.

It could hardly have been that Anselm's theory was wholly different from all the views before entertained; but it probably was a great advance beyond the general thought of the age. With most others I had taken Anselm to be the father of what is called in this country the old school doctrine of the Atonement. I had accepted the interpretation of such men as Tholuck and Hagenbach. The interpretation of Neander, Baur, and Dr. Bushnell seemed to me quite improbable. But a recent perusal of the "Cur Deus Homo" has convinced me that Dr. Bushnell, in the introduction to his "Vicarious Sacrifice," has given, at least, for substance, the true exposition of the celebrated father. I give a brief view of his theory in words and illustrations of my own. Anselm held that as the sin of man had dishonored God and impaired the practical authority of his law, or the order of the world, God must seek a remedy, either by the punishment of the sinner, or through a satisfaction effected in some other way. The God-man appears on the stage; and by his obedience unto death, even the death of the cross, restores the honor of God and of his law, and makes the law stand in

general regard higher than before, and higher than punishment could have made it stand. The God-man receives as his reward the forgiveness and salvation of all his brother men who are led by his satisfaction to repentance.

It is as if a king had suffered in his kingly honor and influence by the rebellion of a portion of his subjects, and there was danger that the disaffection would spread. It is in the king's power to crush the rebellion, to destroy the rebels, and thus restore his kingly influence. But at the king's call some of his nobles of highest rank and influence take occasion to manifest in an especial way their loyal devotion to his person and government, and do not hesitate to risk life and property and influence to sustain the honor of the king and the orderly loyalty of the subjects; and some of them do lay down their lives in the demonstration. The whole manifestation is more impressive from the fact that the loyal nobles are related by blood both to the king and the principal leaders of the rebellion. The result is, that the king in his realm at large, is more honored than ever before; and the loyalty of his subjects is warmer and more enthusiastic. The far larger part of the rebels are so affected that they repent with tears, and cast themselves unconditionally on the mercy of the king. He enjoys forgiving them; but out of regard for his devoted nobles he chooses to say that he forgives their penitent relatives in reward for their loyal love, and considers their self-sacrifice as a full satisfaction for all the demerits of the penitents. Persistent rebels he leaves to the judges and officers of the law. This I consider a faint outline of the theory of the famous Archbishop of Canterbury. A better exhibit of it may be found in Bushnell's introduction to the treatise before-mentioned.

In the "Cur Deus Homo," the theory is marred by needless scholastic subtilty and hair-splitting; while on the whole the wonderful brochure is written in a manner and spirit becoming to an Archbishop.

Dr. Bushnell says of Anselm's theory, that it "shocks no moral sentiment, and violates no principle of natural reason."

I wish the eloquent Doctor had just adopted it, freeing it from its cumbrous scholasticism, and throwing around it the halo of his own beautiful manner of speech.

The power of this theory is found,

1. In presenting aright the guilt of sin, its desert of con-dign punishment.
2. In exhibiting the love of God, and of Jesus Christ his Son.
3. In impressing the holiness of God, his fixed determination to sustain the honor of his throne, and the full sympathy of Christ with his holy purpose.
4. In the full hope it gives to the believing and penitent, and the ruin it denounces against the incorrigible.
5. In the mighty moral influence it sends forth, or rather the gospel of the cross sends forth, throughout this world and all worlds.

The theory of Anselm needs a clearer and fuller exposition. This is all it needs to show its vast superiority over the mechanical supposed improvements of it. It will be seen that this theory does not represent our Lord as punished in the room of the sinner, or as occupying his law place. The sinner's sin is not legally imputed to him, nor his righteousness to the sinner, though the sinner is saved through his influence and for his sake. Anselm seems to have had no place in his fine mind for the dreary philosophy which has been imputed to him. But he doubtless felt as strongly as most of the saints that his Saviour " bore his sins in his own body on the tree ;" that the Lord had " laid on him the iniquities of us all," and that " the chastisement of our peace was upon him " ; that " he is the propitiation for our sins," and our high-priest who offers his blood in God's holy of holies. I thank God that the dear old father ever lived, that he might endeavor by lifting up the Saviour's cross in the true light of heaven, to honor him, and induce his fellow-men to look to the Saviour and live. His theory has had a wide influence and will have more influence as it is better understood.

## THE THEORY OF NICHOLAS OF METHONE.

So far as I can judge from the little I have seen of his writings, Nicholas presents the view that the redemption of Christ consists in his victory over Satan in all the temptations that assailed him, whether in the wilderness or in the garden, or in his whole passion. It is apparently an example in the Eastern church of a line of free thought like Anselm's in the Western. The idea of Milton's "Paradise Regained" seems the same; and it has the support of the relation of the temptation and victory of our Lord to the temptation and defeat of Adam. The victor Redeemer must be sinless in the sense in which God only is sinless. But the conflict with Satan must be pushed to a mortal issue; therefore, the Redeemer must be capable of suffering even to death; therefore, the divine Saviour must become incarnate and die. This was the judgment of this world. Now is the prince of this world cast out; and by his cross the God-man draws all men to himself to be victorious through him.

This theory has the same elements of power with Anselm's, though not in an equal degree. There is nothing in the way of their amalgamation. Both present vicarious *suffering*, not vicarious *punishment*; but exhibit as clearly as any vicarious punishment could do the ill-desert of sin and the redeeming love of God, and furnish a basis for the forgiveness of repentant rebels.

## THE JURIDICAL, OR SO-CALLED OLD SCHOOL THEORY.

This theory is very extensively held throughout Christendom by many branches of the church universal. It is a form under which millions of souls have received the grace of God. It has been that through which they have seen the guilt of sin, and the holiness and loving-kindness of God. In it they have felt the power which has shaped their Christian lives, and which has given their hearts joy and peace in sickness and death. It is the glory of the work of Christ that, construed in various ways, and in some that stray far from

Scripture and scientific truth, it still retains its saving power, not always in perfection, but in a wonderful degree. It is quite certain that none of us understand it fully, and that as it is now the delightful and edifying study of angels, so it will be of human saints forever and ever. This all true Christians believe, and they rejoice that the time is hastening on, when, seeing the truth face to face, their differences will melt away in the pure white light of the heavenly state.

I cannot without occupying too much space present the details of this theory; neither is it necessary, as it is given in so many theological treatises accessible to all. In Symington and the younger Hodge may be found the Calvinistic view ably exhibited; and in the "Aids to Faith," Bishop Thomson gives a short and interesting presentation of the theory independent of Calvinistic peculiarities.

The chief and essential points of the system, as I apprehend it, are, that God being not only a God of love, but of justice also, gives to his law the sanction of reward for obedience, and the sanction of the denunciation of wrathful punishment of disobedience. It maintains that the promise must be performed and the threat executed without fail; that the threat just as sacredly binds the divine holiness and veracity as the promise. But it maintains also that this does not preclude the salvation of sinners,—that God, in order that he might save, sent his Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to the world, and that he bore the punishment of our sins, and that thus he became the substitute for sinners, being punished in their stead. Thus the difficulty of the threat is removed. The redeemed sinner becomes entitled to the reward of righteousness by the imputation to him of the perfect righteousness of Christ. The operation of the Holy Spirit changes the hearts of redeemed sinners; and this, with the moral influence flowing from the life and death of Christ, progressively sanctifies them till they are perfectly holy. Faith, produced in the soul by the agency of the Spirit, is a condition on which these results are suspended.

Believers in this remarkable theory have found in it,



1. An impressive exhibition of the moral hatefulness and ill-desert of sin.

2. A glorious manifestation of the love of God for his sinful creatures, and of the love of the Redeemer, the Son of God.

3. Powerful motives for faith, for love, and for holy lives.

4. A foundation for assured hope that the God who had given them his Son would with him also freely give them all things.

These elements of saving power, every Christian will see, appear in the doctrine of the atonement as presented under this theory. It owes to them all the influence for good it has ever had ; and that influence has been, and still is, very extensive. But the influence is not due to the form, but to the glorious truth under the form. And so, many an apologue, parable, or allegory, not a word of which was literal truth, but the whole narrative a fiction or a cluster of fictions, has taught the most wholesome doctrine ; and sometimes interpreters have thought it incumbent on them to maintain the literal truth of the fictitious stories. I frankly confess, with all respect and fraternal love towards the great body of Christians who believe in this theory as a statement of literal facts, that I consider this their belief as signal an exemplification as the history of good, sensible, learned, and great men presents, of the practicability, from pious motives, of believing impossibilities and contradictions to reason and Scripture.

This theory finds it necessary to maintain that love is not the whole of virtue ; and yet it would seem as if nothing had been more plainly taught in God's word. The apostle Paul says that love is the *pleroma* of the law, the *fulfilling*, as our version renders it, or *the full content*, as usage leads me to think it should be rendered. In the law itself, which divines have been wont to call a transcript of the character of God, love is the only thing commanded ; and on the law of love, our Lord himself says, that all the law and the prophets hang.

Faith, too, is said to work by love, and he that loveth is born of God. Whatever there is in justice which deserves

unswerving regard, must be comprehended in love. For why should justice be done? It would seem plain that if justice rewards a good man, or a good angel, it must be because the reward is a good to him, and an encouragement to others to go and do likewise. If justice is done in punishing a sinner, his punishment, if the sinner is excluded from mercy, is no good to *him*; and the object of the punishment must be, to do away sin, and promote virtue in others. If it does not promote, or tend to promote these ends, it is of no use at all. To do justice, or inflict on a sentient being terrible pain, for no end but the realization of an idea or feeling, does not seem worthy of God. The law is made for God's rational creatures, and not they for the law.

Punitive justice is only a form of benevolent action for their good, and can be modified or set aside if the good of the moral realm requires it. There never can be a reason for the non-performance of the promise; but when the ends of punishment can be secured in a better way it may be set aside. This has always been the idea and the practice of mankind in all governments, so far as I know, except that of the Medes and Persians. The inflexibility of the punitive sanction of law did not work very well with them. Punishment, it is true, is the first course to pursue with sinners; and had it not prevailed so much and so terribly in the divine administration, mercy could not be appreciated, could not be the blessed thing it is. And mercy can never be wisely or righteously exercised when its exercise would diminish the horror of sin in the universe of God.

Is justice, in the sense of retributive justice, in the sense of the threat of the law, done when a sinner is saved? The suffering deserved and denounced is not inflicted on the ill-deserving party, but on the most innocent and holy being on the earth substituted for him. Is that justice fit to satisfy the ethical hunger for justice in God or any moral being? Is that justice according to the threat of God's law? Neither God's law, nor any other righteous law, ever threatened any one excepting the transgressor. And how can it be pro-

tended that legal justice is accomplished when the glorious Son of God is substituted for the sinful wretch, and crucified as a malefactor for him under God's authority? Calvin actually appears to have thought that the sanhedrim, and Pilate, and the Roman executioners were God's court and officers to condemn and execute the Son of God as a criminal and malefactor, standing in the place of sinners. It is astonishing how so great and good a man could ever have entertained such a thought, and imagined that such a transaction was the punishment of sin threatened in the law, instead of being simply the most atrocious and horrible murder ever perpetrated. To call the sufferings of our Lord the punishment of sin, using the word punishment in the literal sense, is one of the strangest attempts on the part of good and intelligent men to make things *what they are not*, and to do this, for themselves and others, by mere sleight of hand in the management of words. The practice, I have no doubt, has been honestly and piously pursued. The people of God have often loved masses of chaff on account of the wheat they are in, and have even piled it on to preserve the precious wheat, while the devil's cheats and dupes have gladly taken occasion from the chaff to throw overboard wheat and chaff together.

Another serious error in this theory, necessitated by its fundamental principles, is found in its doctrine respecting justification. It rightly rejects both the doctrine on this subject held by the Romanists, and that advocated by Drs. Bushnell and Young. Justification, according to this theory, is the pronouncing of the believing sinner righteous *according to law* at God's tribunal, as not liable to punishment on account of Christ's sufferings legally substituted for his punishment, and on account of the righteousness of Christ legally imputed to him. The justification is pronounced in God's court of law, not of equity. Occupying there Christ's law place, the believing sinner has as good a right to a legal justification as any angel in heaven. It seems to me as plain as day that the Bible teaches that the believing, penitent sin-

ner is justified in an entirely different way. God has provided for him an atoning Saviour, a Saviour from sin and condemnation ; and the gospel proclaims this, and has invited him to put himself under the operation of this provision ; and when he does this he is justified under the gospel proclamation as a penitent rebel, who accepts thankfully God's conditions of mercy. It is just as simple a thing as it was for Queen Victoria's Canadian subjects, who had been in rebellion, to avail themselves of the Queen's proclamation of mercy, and receive justification as having done so at the hands of the Queen's representatives. Under the law against treason still on the statute book, they were liable to be hanged ; but when the Queen's government thought it safe under certain conditions to pardon them, a proclamation, a gospel, to that effect was sent forth, and under it they were justified and saved.

If before God we were judged by law, not one of us could be saved. The law knows nothing of redemption, of atonement. The law knows nothing of a faith which is the condition of salvation to a sinner. It simply says, the man that doeth them — the commandments, that is — shall live by them. When a soul stands before the law-tribunal the only question the judge can ask is, Has this soul kept the commandments ? Can that soul reply, Yes, I have, not in my own person, but in my substitute ? Is there anything like that in the law ? No, indeed. The law and the gospel are entirely distinct systems, not hostile, but the one supplementing the necessary impotence of the other to save any soul that has sinned. The justification of the gospel is a totally different thing from that of the law ; but it is even more glorious, and does more to diffuse holiness and blessedness throughout the moral universe of God. And I am happy to think that my beloved old school brethren, if I may call them brethren, do in substance believe this as heartily as I do.

In endeavoring to obviate the objections to this theory, especially that part of it that represents Christ's sufferings as literally the punishment of our sins, one, at least, of the

great champions of the theory, the elder Professor Hodge, brings forward a new definition of punishment. Punishment, according to him, is suffering inflicted (or borne, as I suppose) for "the support of law." The "support of law," I understand to mean here the promotion of obedience to it. This definition seems to me to be logically an abandonment of the theory, though designed to sustain it. The definition would spread a shield over every theory which regards the sufferings of Christ as essential to the redemption of men. It applies to Anselm's theory as interpreted by Neander and others, to the theory of Nicholas of Methone, to the theory of Barnes, Beman, etc., and to the ancient ransom-paid-to-Satan theory. But that is not what mankind understand by punishment when the word is literally understood. Figuratively the word has manifold applications. It is applied even to the bruising the poor fellow gets in the barbarous champion boxing. It might be applied to the battering a police-officer gets in arresting a criminal, as that would be received for the support of law. But would it be punishment in Dr. Hodge's sense, or in the sense of his theory? Yet to save his theory he must resort to some such device as this definition, which turns the theory into sense by destroying it.

Another device of the advocates of the theory is the supposition of such a divinely constituted unity between Christ and those he came to redeem, as rightfully transfers their responsibility to him. It is not irreverent to say of God that he cannot effect impossibilities or contradictions. He cannot make a thing be and not be at the same time; nor can he do that which is contrary to the nature of things as he has constituted that nature, unless he does away that nature. Moral responsibility is in its nature incapable of transfer. No will, no power can transfer it. One being may suffer for another, and often must fail in duty if he refuses to do it. Of course he might bear for another the full equivalent for the sufferings contained in any punishment; but punishment, literally taken, is a necessarily personal thing. There is a sense in which Satan is responsible for the sin of the world,

because his malign temptations have occasioned them. But still his sin is one thing, and the sin of man is another; and each person is in strictness responsible for his own sin only. It is only an abbreviated mode of expression to say that Satan is responsible for man's sin, or will be punished for it. Christ's responsibility is that of the Redeemer, not that of the sinner. But he may and does save his people from sin and from punishment; not by being punished himself, but by his obedience unto death, even the death of the cross, by which he obtained for them sanctification, and forgiveness and eternal life.

Another objection to the juridical theory is, that it nullifies the Scripture doctrine of forgiveness; at least, this is one of its logical outcomes; because, to use the terms of Grotius, the juridical atonement is a *solutio*, not a *satisfactio*. Justification, as old schoolism regards it, is a legal process, by which one is discharged legally from all bad responsibility, and legally invested with a right to all blessings. It is as different from forgiveness as any one thing can be different from another. Forgiveness always contemplates the sinner as ill-deserving; but when he is penitent blots out his sin, dispensing with the punishment of it. We are all perfectly familiar with the word and the thing. That is what the sinner is invited in God's word to receive, in response to the hearty confession and forsaking of his sin. And where the gospel is preached this sin would include, as its worst element, all previous refusal to believe on the Only-begotten Son of God. But the theory does not, as I conceive it, exclude grace. Grace, however, is solely found in the spontaneous gift of the Saviour, to which God was not bound by justice. Mere justice would have left the sinner to perish; but grace provides the glorious Saviour, and saves a countless multitude through his marvellous doings and sufferings and the Spirit of God given to apply his work to the soul. But after the Saviour is provided there is no more grace, but all is law.

I do not suppose that old-school men in general admit that on their theory there is no room for forgiveness. They are

perhaps as abundant in speaking of forgiveness as any class of Christians. I have had in view, in the preceding remarks, only the logical outcome of the system.

It is thought by the advocates of this theory that it best accords with the natural meaning of Scripture. The natural meaning, or the obvious meaning of terms to interpreters, depends much upon their antecedent views. We must employ our reason and our common sense in interpreting all books. To warn a man against the use of reason in interpretation is to exhort him to interpret like a fool. There is a perverse or foolish use of reason, and there is a perverse and foolish attempt to lay reason aside. What is the organ which we are to employ in interpreting God's word? We must use some intellectual organ, even if we embrace the infallibility of the pope; and so we must if we follow the interpretation of the church at large. And we must have some reason for accepting the infallibility in either case, or we must act unreasonably. No man ever had a deeper sense of human ignorance than the illustrious Bishop Butler; but he insisted upon the necessary use of reason. "This I say," he remarks, "lest I should be understood to vilify reason, which is the only faculty we have whereby to gain the knowledge of anything." I am not sure that I remember the bishop's exact words; but I am sure of his sense.

One of the most important rules of interpretation is to interpret according to the known nature of the subject. This rule applies to all books, and certainly not less to the Bible than to any other book. We must not by interpretation make any writer write nonsense without a decisive necessity of so interpreting. Men may write nonsense, and often do; and we have to interpret them accordingly. There is the strongest antecedent certainty that there is no nonsense in the Bible; but we may by our false interpretation put a great deal of nonsense into it, and perhaps we all do more or less of this deplorable mischief. We are to do the best we can to interpret right, with all the light from reason, science, philosophy, and the Spirit of the Father of lights.

The Bible is one of the most figurative books in the world, and it is quite as likely as any other book to contradict in its language, taken literally, the known nature of things. This does not necessarily make the Bible obscure, or specially difficult of interpretation; but every sound interpreter knows that this figurative language of the Bible is often most absurdly taken, and even by learned men. Some have argued from the saying in Genesis that "it repented the Lord that he had made man," that the author of the Book of Genesis, or of that part of it, believed God to be changeable.

If the language of the Bible respecting sacrifice and atonement is capable of a figurative construction, and this construction is most conformable to the known nature of things, then this construction should be accepted as the true one, and, of course, *vice versa*. The sense attached by unintelligent readers often has nothing in its favor in the view of the really well-informed.

The word of God is given to be understood, but not without study, not without divine aid, not without due respect to the sense, conscientiousness, and possibly better knowledge of brethren of different views from our own. I have derived great advantage from the study of the old school commentators, among whom I account Dr. C. Hodge one of the best, and Calvin almost unrivalled; but, as I have frankly said, I regard their views of the atonement as erroneous; yet I cherish for them a respectful and affectionate regard, because I believe they have loved their theory for the sake of the glorious truth in their opinion best expressed by it. I believe that the truth is not well expressed by it, and I think their theory contains very dangerous and hurtful elements.

#### THE GOVERNMENTAL, OR SO-CALLED NEW-SCHOOL THEORY.

This theory is held by a host of New England divines, by many of the Presbyterian church, and by some of the English divines. It has found able expositors and defenders in Dr. Lyman Beecher, Dr. Beman, Albert Barnes, President Finney, Dr. Edward Hitchcock the geologist, and Professor Park of



Andover. It has many other defenders; but it is enough to mention these.

Some of the most interesting of the earlier treatises have been collected into a large volume by Professor Park, who has furnished an able introduction and some notes. There are, of course, varieties of representation; but I consider the substance of the theory to be as follows:

1. The death of Christ is not the punishment of sin, but a symbolical representation of its ill-desert, analogous to the representation of the ill-desert of sin in the sacrifices of the law, which are a typical prophecy of the atonement of the Son of God.

2. The impressiveness and worth of the sacrifice are proportioned to the dignity of the victim, and proportioned also to his glorious moral character.

3. This sacrifice lays a foundation for the offer of pardon and justification to all the world, if believing and penitent.

4. This atonement is a moral influence to promote repentance, impressed on the soul by the operations of the Holy Spirit.

5. The saving result cannot be effected, except through a faith which places the heart under the influence of the atonement presented by the Holy Spirit.

6. The sufferings of Christ are vicarious, as they are borne for sinners, and answer the same purpose with their punishment in a higher degree.

This theory possesses all the elements of moral power exhibited in the juridical theory. It aims at sustaining the authority of the law and moral government of God. But it does not call the sufferings of Christ punishment; while they are as great as under the old school theory, and equally express the guilt of sin and love of God. It has the advantage over that theory in admitting the exercise of pardon, and making justification to consist in acquitting the sinner and admitting him to favor on his performance of the published conditions of mercy. If the sufferings of Christ are contemplated as directly laid on him by the authority of God, as

death was dealt to the sacrificial animal, they represent the same thing — human ill-desert — on both the old school and the new school theory. But as the human mind cannot really believe that they are the very punishment threatened by the law, or an equivalent punishment, or any punishment at all in the literal sense of the word, the new school theory has the advantage over the old of not being cumbered with the fiction which logically turns the favor shown to a sinner into a legal justification, and promotes the utter mystification of human thought.

But both theories really, though not, I believe, intentionally, represent our Lord as sacrificed in a manner analogous to the sacrifice of a brute animal, or as put to death under God's authority in the manner of a felon, in order to represent the ill-desert of the sinner. The old school called this sacrifice or execution the vicarious punishment of sin. The new school say, as Dr. Griffin expresses it, that it answered the purpose of the threatened punishment. But both theories represent God as putting Christ to death as the real or symbolical substitute for sinners. I remember, however, that when Dr. Channing, in his sermon preached at Baltimore, represented the orthodox doctrine of atonement under the figure of a public execution of a criminal, the illustration was denounced as a caricature of the doctrine. But I do not see that it caricatures either the juridical or the governmental theory in its common form; and I used to hear from the lips of the eloquent President Griffin similar illustrations. But somehow there are few Christian men whose feelings are not shocked by such figures; and this must be because the figures do not truly exhibit the doctrine of atonement as it lies in their heads and hearts. But the theories, for aught I can see, really present the atonement as consisting in the great God-man's sacrifice laid upon an altar and slain, or the ignominious execution of the Son of God on a gibbet, as the representative of the guilty human race.

This commonly accepted form of the great doctrine of the atonement has made it repulsive to many honest men, and

has stumbled others who were glad to have a stumbling-block. In the theory of Anselm, as Neander interprets it, and in the views presented in these pages, the sufferings of the Son of God were a necessary result of his glorious devotion to the restoration of the honor of his Heavenly Father, and his law, and the salvation of men; and they create a moral influence which tends to do away sin, and bring in everlasting righteousness, and make reconciliation or atonement for iniquity. In this world of sinners the Son of God could do no otherwise than meet his death in his conflict with God-dishonoring and man-ruining sin; and his death could not but demonstrate in various ways that sinners deserve a death unspeakably worse. It shows and means all and more than any direct effusion of his blood by divine authority, in the manner of the animal sacrifices, could express.

The death of Christ, indeed, on these theories, does not by itself express anything, but is an absolute dumb mystery, unless accompanied by explanatory words. It is so with the animal sacrifices so far as respects the mere slaying of the victims. But on Anselm's theory the whole life and death of the Son of God explain themselves. All the facts, severally and taken together, are naturally significant. Words, if needed at all, are employed to call attention to what the facts say with the voice of divine emphasis. No one can doubt that they honor God and magnify his law of love, and, done and suffered for man, are a wondrous manifestation of holy love. But it is very much doubted by many honest thinkers whether, as interpreted by the old school or new school theory, these sufferings are a fit expression at all of what they are held to express, or fit at all to be an atonement. But all theorists who have Christian hearts read alike the law-honoring obedience to death of the Redeemer, and expatiate on it with widely efficacious persuasion. All Christian schools harmonize in this — that, first or last, the moral influence going forth from this obedience is promotive of salvation; and that this must be brought to bear on the soul by the agency of the Holy Ghost.

## THEORY OF S. T. COLERIDGE.

The writings of Coleridge have exerted a fascinating influence on some of the best minds in our English-speaking world; but, except on the negative side, I know not whether his doctrine of redemption, as propounded in his "Aids to Reflection," has had much sway.

After having been in his early manhood a zealous preacher of Unitarianism, he was in his riper years, and to the end of his life, a most earnest advocate of Orthodoxy in most of its doctrines; but he differed from the great divines of his beloved church of England on the doctrine of redemption. I think that his difference was not so great as he imagined it to be. No great English divine believed, as he seems to represent, in a redemption that left the sinner enslaved to his sins. This misapprehension appears in the case supposed of Matthew as a vicarious son, discharging all filial duties, shamefully trampled on by James an only son of a most loving and self-sacrificing mother, and then proposing that this unworthy son should be treated by the abused mother, on account of this vicarious goodness of Matthew, as if he had done no wrong at all, when he gave not the least sign of repentance. I know of no orthodox sect or divine that represents God as so treating persistent sinners.

In his formal statement of his doctrine Coleridge seems to represent regeneration as redemption:

"The causative act [of Christ the Redeemer, who is the co-eternal Word, and Only-begotten Son of the living God, incarnate, tempted, agonizing, crucified, submitting to death, resurgent, ascendant, communicant of his Spirit] by which redemption is effected is a spiritual and transcendent mystery that passeth all understanding. The effect caused is the being born anew — as before in the flesh to the world, so now in the Spirit to Christ. The consequence from the effect are sanctification from sin and liberation from the inherent and penal consequences of sin in the world to come; these consequences being the same to the sinner, relatively

to God and his own soul, as the satisfaction of a debt for a debtor relatively to his creditor; as the sacrificial atonements made by the priests for the transgressor of the Mosaic law; as the reconciliation to an alienated parent for a son who had estranged himself from his father's house and presence; and as a redemptive ransom for a slave or captive. Now, I complain that this metaphorical *naming* of a transcendent causative act, through the medium of its proper effects, from actions and causes of familiar occurrence, connected with the former by similarity of result, has been mistaken for an intended designation of the essential character of the causative act itself; and thus divines have interpreted *de omni* what was spoken of *de singulo*, and magnified a *partial equation* into a *total identity*."

That this illogical interpretation has prevailed a good deal must be conceded. The old school divines, who on this subject are perhaps the most literal interpreters, avoid this error with respect to the relation of debtor and creditor. In the process of redemption as to those who are really saved by it, the causative act which Coleridge speaks of, the regenerative operation of the Spirit of Christ, mysterious as Christ represents it, must occur; and the consequences are, in all cases of salvation, sanctification and liberation from the inherent and penal consequences of sin in the world to come.

Coleridge did not differ from his fellow-Christians essentially on this point; though he uses words of more learned and philosophic sound. In speaking of the *agens causator* — that is, active causer — in redemption, he goes over an outline of the great facts in Christ's person and career, but does not say what these facts have to do in redemption, — what Christ does by them, what we have to do with them, or whether they have any bearing on the forgiveness of sin or the rescue of the soul from its power. But inasmuch as he mentions these characteristics of the Redeemer it is fairly inferable that he thought them somehow necessary to redemption. A partial understanding of his view may be gained by considering a portion of his Matthew-and-James

illustration, preceding his formal statement, but not included in it: "If, indeed, by the force of Matthew's example, by persuasion, or more mysterious influences, or by an inward co-agency compatible with the idea of a personal will, James should be led to repent, — if, through admiration and love of this great goodness, gradually assimilating his mind to the mind of his benefactor, he should in his own person become a grateful and dutiful child, — then, doubtless, the mother would be wholly satisfied."

There is nothing in this theory respecting the restoration of the parent's honor, as the moral and authoritative head of the family, as in Anselm's theory. On repentance the child is restored to full favor, and is, of course, grateful to his moral Saviour and to his forgiving parents. The theory, so far as it goes, contains elements of power, and not encased in an unworthy casket; but lacks that combination of kingly, rectoral majesty with grace, which satisfies fully the demands of the moral nature.

The Matthew-and-James illustration of Coleridge has a remarkable parallel in a paragraph from President Edwards, given by Professor Park in his elaborate introduction to his volume of treatises on the atonement. "The satisfaction of Christ by his death is certainly a very rational thing. If any person that was greatly obliged to me, that was dependent on me, and that I loved, should exceedingly abuse me, and should go on in an obstinate course of it from one year to another, notwithstanding all I could say to him, and all new obligations continually repeated; though at length he should leave it off, I should not forgive him unless upon gospel considerations. But if any person that was a much dearer friend, and was a very near relation of him that offended me, should intercede for him, and, out of the entire love he had for him, should put himself to very hard labors and difficulties, and undergo great pains and miseries to procure him forgiveness, and the person that had offended should, with a changed mind, fly to this mediator and should seek favor in his name, with the sense in his own mind how much his me-

diator had done and suffered for him, I should be satisfied, and feel myself inclined, without any difficulty, to receive him into my entire friendship again; but not without the last-mentioned condition, that he should be sensible how much his mediator had done and suffered. But if he was ignorant of it, or thought he had done only some small matter, I should not be easy nor satisfied. So a sense of Christ's sufficiency seems necessary in faith."<sup>1</sup>

This remarkable passage contains some important elements not in the Coleridge theory; but, what is quite strange in Edwards, it says nothing of satisfaction to rectoral honor and influence, or the restoration of that. No doubt many a soul has been saved by a glimpse of one beam of the great Sun of Righteousness.

#### THEORY OF DR. J. M. CAMPBELL.

An interesting treatise on the atonement not very long since came from the pen of an able divine of Scotland, Dr. Campbell, whose theory cost him his ministerial standing, though it appears by the suffrages of all that he bore an excellent character. His book on every page gives evidence of his Christian spirit; and under his exclusion from the ministry of his church he manifested the utmost meekness and freedom from a schismatic heart, attending respectfully on ministrations from his brethren, and in every becoming way promoting Christian love and fraternal union. There is a great deal of edifying matter in his volume, of which I can take no notice. I can only briefly state what I understand his theory to be.

Dr. Campbell expatiates on a quotation from President Edwards, in which that illustrious divine says, that if man without any other atonement were to exercise an absolutely perfect repentance, he thinks that repentance might be accepted. But as such a repentance is never exercised by man, and the repentance he does exercise is derived from

<sup>1</sup> Discourses on the Atonement, by Edwards, Smalley, and others (Congregational Publishing Society), p. xxiii.

Christ, Christ's atonement is necessary. Dr. Campbell regards Christ as our vicarious confessor of sin, condemning it in our name perfectly, in our behalf testifying by word and deed against it. In like manner he vicariously acts in favor of holiness, and in favor of every precept of God's law. He recognizes our ill-desert, and the ill-desert of all sin. In his whole course he is on the side of God and of his government.

As the incarnate Word he demonstrates the falseness of the slanders of Satan against God. He is an actual manifestation of love for the poor human wretches who have fallen in with Satan's lie. In their behalf he takes away this consent to the base lie of Satan, and exhibits in full all the transcendent goodness of God.

If men, influenced by what he has done, believe, repent, and cast themselves on God's mercy, they are accepted; otherwise their condemnation is awfully increased. I think that it must be said of this theory, that all that is positive in it is true and wholesome, and that it is erroneous only by defect and omission. Perhaps it does not insist as much as it should on the bearings of the whole work and sufferings of the incarnate Word on the general interests of the government of God; or, as the new school men express it, on the interests protected by general justice. In a remarkable degree this theory recognizes the mediatorship of Christ, and gives it very interesting characteristics.

#### THEORY OF DR. HORACE BUSHNELL.

The only other theory of which I shall take notice is that of Dr. Horace Bushnell, more celebrated, and at least in our country, more influential than any other proposed in our days. That of Dr. John Young of Scotland, presented in his book, called "The Life and Light of Men," remarkably coincides with Dr. Bushnell's view. Dr. Bushnell's "Vicarious Sacrifice," and Dr. Young's book appeared the same year. Dr. Bushnell had in previous publications presented substantially the same theory. His views are set forth in that masterly style of original eloquence for which he is distinguished.



Dr. Bushnell has, perhaps, made it plainer than any previous writer had done, that all the virtue there can be in any atonement must be found in its moral influence on God's moral creatures. Nothing can be extracted of good from any theory of atonement but moral power or influence for God's moral government. Even the juridical theory, which supposes that the great thing done in atonement is the realization of justice in vicarious punishment and righteousness, thus rendering man's salvation possible, holds that salvation is in part effected by the manifestation to souls of God's holy, gracious love.

The tenor of Dr. Bushnell's theory is, that Christ, appearing in our world with truly divine perfections and powers, in due season puts forth most earnest efforts for the good of man, body and soul, realizes and manifests in the most extraordinary and affecting way the ideal of moral excellency, intensifying this manifestation by his submission to the death on the cross. By the life he lived, and the death he died, and all the wonders he displayed, he acquired transcendent moral power to employ for the deliverance of mankind from sin, and for establishing in the heart everlasting righteousness. When the gospel that proclaims him, in the presence of the Holy Spirit, is believed with practical faith, deliverance from sin begins ; and at the same time begins salvation from the misery that sin produces, and the enjoyment of the peace and blessedness effected by righteousness ; and the salvation advances to perfection as the Saviour becomes more and more known. The punitive causes more and more cease to operate, because they more and more cease to exist ; and the causes of good grow in volume and power more and more till salvation is completed in complete moral excellence attained through the saving power of Christ, the Holy Spirit co-operating by showing the things of Christ to the soul, working faith and all right willing and doing. This is a very feeble account of the theory as compared with the glowing picture which Dr. Bushnell draws ; and to propose to substitute it for his picture would be like proposing to substi-

tute for the Paradise Lost a meagre table of contents, or argument; or for the Transfiguration of Raphael a slip from a newspaper report of a chance traveller.

I understand both Dr. Bushnell and Dr. Young to hold that when deliverance from sin begins in the soul, and righteousness begins to take the place before occupied by the evil thing, this is a beginning of remission, forgiveness, justification; these words expressing salvation, as to inward experience, in its entire extent, so far as deliverance from punitive evil and enjoyment of gracious reward are concerned. Only, when the good work begins, time is needed for its consummation; but all that follows is of a piece with the commencement.

The great facts of the life and death of Christ, in their natural bearing on the soul of man for his rescue from sin and attainment of a true life of love, are set forth by competent advocates of this theory in an excellent manner, and with happy results. It is very edifying to read in this view much found in the writings of both these able men.

One of the most interesting things in Dr. Bushnell's "Vicarious Sacrifice," is the account he gives of the spirit and manner in which the Saviour takes our case on his heart and feeling, entering into the disordered state of our souls, our guilt, or deep misery, and the countless evils we have pulled down on our own heads. In his masterly way he turns this over and over, and makes it clear how this is adapted to give the Redeemer great power in our unhappy hearts. It is quite clear that this deep compassion, so holy and tender, must belong to the character of a divine Redeemer for man. As our Lord bore our sins in the sense that he felt intensely their odiousness and ill-desert, and groaned in solemn indignation when he had before him the infinite evils and horrors with which sin has filled the world, this Dr. Bushnell fully accepts, — and sets forth as scarce any other man has done so impressively. Such sin-bearing has a mighty curative power, manifested often in infinitely humbler spheres. To see his creature-man in the power of such

a monster, stirred the heart of God to redeem the race, and his love culminated in the cross of Calvary.

The work of redemption logically, according to this theory, terminates with a moral and spiritual deliverance; and there is nothing for the Redeemer to do for man, saved from sin and its necessary natural consequences, more than for moral creatures of God who have never sinned. The atonement provides for no pardon or justification except in the sense of a moral deliverance. There is no *expiatory* power or force in any possible atonement—in the “Vicarious Sacrifice” Dr. Bushnell maintained that there is no *propitiatory* power. In his recent amendment of his previous works Dr. Bushnell maintains, not that the atonement when made propitiates God, but that God in making it propitiates himself; that is, in the work of saving he becomes more and more interested in lost sinners as he makes cost for them, and takes the burden of their sin and misery on his soul. In this he resembles a man, made in his image, who should, renewed in love, undertake to rescue from ruin loathsome wretches from whom at first he shrinks; but as he goes on in his work he is more and more interested in them, his saving love reacts on his own heart, and so propitiates him. If Dr. Bushnell only meant that God is *phenomenally* more and more in the work of redemption, this would not contradict his own doctrine of the perfection of God in love and pity, and the impossibility of any change in him making him more loving or merciful or propitious. As I understand this book I regard it as no amendment of his previously taught theory, but inharmonious with the whole spirit and tenor of it. It was magnanimous of this distinguished man to write it, and blot out so large a part of the “Vicarious Sacrifice”; but it might have been a nobler magnanimity to recall the whole of it. It is in disharmony, not only with Dr. Bushnell’s theory, but with all theories which the church has seen.

To me the greatest errors in the theory of Dr. Bushnell appear to arise from his opinions on punishment and reward, and on remission and justification. I think that both he

and Dr. Young are seriously astray on these several points. The Greek word rendered *remission* appears to be used in two senses. 1. It is used to express forbearance towards evil-doers, and granting them a space for repentance. This is the sense the word bears in the prayer of our Lord for his murderers. 2. The other sense is that of the complete setting aside of the punishment of the sinner, which is always represented as conditioned on his repentance. This is the sense the word has in the Lord's prayer. The sense given to the word by Dr. Bushnell I do not find in the Scriptures. A concordance, English, Greek, or Hebrew, will settle the question for most unsophisticated minds. It plainly seems to be taught in the Scriptures that when sinners have been brought by the grace of God to repentance, to a revolution in character, they need the remission of their sins — an act of mercy by which the punishment they deserve is set aside. This is not a mere natural effect of the change in the heart, but a procedure of divine authority. It was this that David prayed for when he repented of his heavy sins; and it is this for which, in the Lord's prayer, we all supplicate. We pray that we may be forgiven as we forgive our injurers; but we surely do not mean by our exercise of forgiveness effecting a moral change in our injurers' hearts.

To justify a sinner, in the view of Doctors Bushnell and Young, is to make him righteous in heart, to work a radical moral change in his character. There are two cases in the Old Testament in which some authorities, ancient and modern, suppose the original expression, usually rendered *justify*, to exhibit this meaning. The passage most favorable to Dr. Bushnell's interpretation is found in Daniel xii. 3. Here the hiphil participle of the verb is rendered in our version, "they that turn [many] to righteousness." The Vulgate translates "quia justitiam erudiunt multos," which is somewhat ambiguous, as "justitiam" may here have the so-called Pauline sense. The Greek translation given in the version of Daniel in Van Ess's Septuagint, would, Englished, read "Some of the righteous ones of the many"; which differs

totally from our version, yet, strange to say, requires no change of the Hebrew text, but only a different vocalization. It thus appears that the most ancient authorities are not certainly favorable to the now common view of this passage.

The other passage occurs in Isaiah liii. 11, where the word in question is rendered in the common version *justify*, as also in the Vulgate, *justificabit*. The modern lexicographers, Gesenius and Fürst, interpret here as Dr. Bushnell does, and perhaps the majority of other authorities. But no one can carefully examine a Hebrew concordance without concluding that the prevailing forensic sense of the causative forms of the verb is to be held fast, as it is by most Hebrew scholars. The other sense is almost if not quite unknown to Hebrew usage, and doubtful in the two passages where some moderns think they find it. The Greek translation did not know that sense in either of them.

The case is, if anything, clearer still in regard to the *Greek* word rendered in the common version *justify*. Classic usage knows nothing of Dr. Bushnell's sense of the word, as any one may see for himself by looking carefully into Liddell and Scott's *Lexicon*. A Greek concordance, or even an English one, under the words "justify" and "justification," will set the matter at rest in most men's minds. Cremer, in his recent *Lexicon*, thought he had found one exception in the Septuagint usage; but it might be easily shown that he is mistaken. Let Psalm lxxiii. 13, Septuagint, be compared, in the Hebrew, with Psalm li. 6, and it will appear that the Hebrew verb used there has sometimes a forensic sense, as well as the more common verb in the parallel member of the verse. So the Vulgate took the word Psalm lxxiii 13, following the Septuagint in its translation: "Ergo sine causa *justificavi* cor meum"; where the meaning is, not I have actually made my heart righteous, but shown it to be so, *justified* it. The correct conclusion seems to be that there is no example of such a use of *δικαίωω* as Doctors Bushnell and Young need for their position. The common view of remission, forgiveness, pardon, and justification, accords with

the Biblical use of the words rendered by these English terms.

It is not denied that the proffer of forgiveness and justification to men in their sins, is a powerful argument to induce men to repent. But the proffer of these blessings is not identical with the blessings themselves; nor is the repentance which is secured by the proffer. It is also the case that the experience of forgiveness deepens and confirms repentance, but is not the repentance which it promotes. It is also true that where the one is the other will and must be; but they are as distinct as if they were centuries apart; they are as distinct as cause and effect, occasion and consequent event, are distinct. For the sinner's great need of moral renovation the theory under consideration seeks to make provision; but it denies that there is any additional need of pardon and justification, and confounds these with the renovation of the heart. It maintains that sin is its own punishment, and that there is no other; and of course that prayer for mercy in any other sense than that of renovating or sanctifying grace, is an absurdity.

On the principles of this theory an atonement can make no provision for the legitimization of remission or justification, as distinct from the change in character, or salvation from sin itself. But the human soul, while it knows that sin, by its natural effect, produces misery, fears also punishment from the hand of an offended God. No philosophy can annihilate this fear. The soul needs, therefore, an atonement that provides a remedy for the object of this natural fear; and no atonement can satisfy its wants but one that provides salvation from sin, and salvation from punishment as well. An atonement that does not provide for this great want an accessible, legitimate pardon and justification in the sense commonly held, must lack one great element of power for the renovation of the heart. The heart knows its own bitterness; and that only makes the most effectual appeal to it which legitimately proffers deliverance from the whole, from sin, and, ultimately, all its natural and penal

consequences in both worlds. The voice of man's moral nature is on the side of God, his holy law, and the moral order of his vast realm, and refuses to be at rest until the demands of all are met.

The great facts, public facts, of the life and death of our Lord, do provide for both needs. They show the ill-desert of sin as justly punishable, not merely while it lasts, but after it is put away. This is what the moral nature teaches, and this is the teaching of the atonement of the Son of God. And often, no doubt, when the facts of the gospel are told by Dr. Bushnell in his eloquent way, they speak forth, in spite of his theory, all the glorious truth that is needed to transform and give peace to the soul. I am persuaded that some read Dr. Bushnell's books with great spiritual profit, and never even suspect what the negative import of his theory is.

It is in providing for pardon and justification, as they are commonly understood, that Anselm's theory differs essentially from Dr. Bushnell's. This provision cannot be fairly thought to hinder, but seems greatly adapted to help, the influence of the whole atonement of Christ on character, both in the case of each sinner who is saved and in all the moral creatures of God who are not irredeemably obdurate. I see not why the idea of expiation for sin should be abhorrent to any mind. The idea of expiation, in this circle of thought, is only that of putting the government of God into such a position with respect to sin, as that sin may be forgiven without harm to moral order, but even with advantage to it; and God is said to be propitiated, not when his love or mercy is excited or gained, but when, through satisfactory expiation, he can justly exercise his mercy, and there is no necessity for punishment remaining. Is there in this "anything to shock any moral sentiment, or violate any principle of natural reason?" The obedience of our Lord unto death, — the magnifying thus of the law and making it honorable, — may not that be such an expiation as can subdue the hearts of sinners and propitiate God, that is, justify him in mercy?

That is, in Anselm's language, "a satisfaction," that is, a *doing enough* to meet the great objects to be accomplished. It is plainly true that when there is a general prevalence of high, zealous, and steadfast loyalty to good rules and good laws, this sends forth an influence rendering mercy more easy and wholesome than it could be in an opposite state of things. And shall not the transcendent self-sacrificing loyalty of the Son of God, his obedience to the death of the cross, honoring inexpressibly his Father and his authority, not only rescue men from sin, but render their pardon, when they repent, safe, wholesome, and glorious? There is ample power in that divine-human loyalty to act back on all the ages of the world, and to justify all the forbearance and mercy God ever exercised; so that, beyond controversy, it will remain most salutary and blessed in its influence forever. That Sun of Righteousness has filled all the lesser orbs with glorious light. But neither the rod nor sword of punishment is laid aside; but they are in the hands of him who died for the world, and thus we are assured that they will not be used without imperious necessity.

On Dr. Bushnell's theory, if a sinner becomes conscious of complete moral renovation through the moral power of Christ, he has suffered all the punishment he deserves. Logically he has no pardon to ask, has no occasion for mercy except to perpetuate his moral excellence; and a prayer like that of the prodigal son would be utterly unphilosophical. He is entitled, on the score of justice, to more than the penitent prodigal asked; and the penitent thief only asked justice from Christ in requital for his faith and love. The sense of unworthiness which the apostle Paul carried about with him through life, on account of his former persecutions of the church of God, was only a piece of voluntary humility, sincere indeed, but intellectually shallow. Dr. Young might have told him he had paid the last farthing of the debt.

In one thing I rejoice, that all who believe with Doctors Bushnell and Young will amply tell "the old, old story of Jesus and his love," and that will, of itself, speak of man's



sin and guilt, and of salvation from sin and condemnation, through him. The poor philosophy will generally occupy a low seat, and have relatively little to say. It was this story, with very little aid from philosophy, which conquered the world, and cast the old dragon down from heaven. To the believing eye the cross may still be seen in the heavens, "In hoc signo vinces" written brightly over it. It is matter of gladness inexpressible that there is so much in this great theme on which Christian minds and hearts agree; and that in their prayers and hymns they naturally employ the same language to express the views and experiences of their hearts. And if they meet together in great concourse to manifest Christian alliance, they naturally talk in much the same way; and their talk is not unintelligent vagueness, but a nobly significant utterance of the warm, universal sentiments of Christian hearts, fervently loving each other, and the glorious One who loved them and gave himself for them, and whose reign over human souls they together ask their Heavenly Father to make universal.

No Christian man, in the exercise of his intelligence, will desire that theologians should cease to think or to endeavor to discover the genuine form of highest truth. But every Christian well knows that truth ought to be subservient to life — life in love. When great generals have been engaged in mortal combat for long years, settling great questions in controversy, they have cherished for each other deep respect, they have been at the farthest remove from rancor and animosity. It ought to be so in the case of theologians, and *odium theologicum* should cease to be a possible combination of words in reference to combatants recognized as belonging within the Christian lists. In determining who these are, the greatest charity possible to right reason should have sovereign sway. Charity that goes beyond that is a hateful thing, that has stolen a very beautiful and lovely name. But it is relatively of little account what we may think of one another. Our aim should be to enjoy the confidence of the Master, and so

to hold up our little mirror to his glorious light as to reflect it around as we may.

When atonement as made by the Son of God is fitly interpreted it appears, as President Edwards says, a very rational thing, nay, we may add, the perfection of reason, the most consummate moral manifestation of himself and transcendent moral excellence that God ever made, or even can be conceived to have made. It is, as the apostle Paul calls it (1 Tim. ii. 6), *the testimony* — in word and deed, and in utmost suffering and in death — of the consummate flower of humanity and of the Word of God, in whom dwells the life that is the light of men incarnated in him, to the highest truth thought can reach or receive, truth whose legitimate seat and throne is the centre of the human heart. The Word had been uttering it, syllable by syllable, since the world began; for his goings forth did not begin when his incarnation was effected, but were from of old, from everlasting. The utterance became plainer and plainer as his spirit breathed progressively in the prophets. But at length the Sun of Righteousness arose, and mounted to mid heaven, and flooded the universe with his beams. Both before and since his star-heralded birth at Bethlehem, fitly sung by angelic hosts, he had been the inspiration of all the witnesses for God and truth in behalf of man's redemption that ever have trod our earth, and will be till the end, as it is the great function of the Spirit of God, in his most holy moral working, to take of the things of Christ and show them to the soul.

Atonement, when wise and good law has prepared the way for it, has a higher sphere of influence than law. It does not address fear as its primary appeal; it goes at once to the moral sentiments, and at once uncovers the character of sin and of obedience to holy law. Hence it has a more mighty, as well as a more natural, tendency to deter from sin and win to righteousness.

Both law and atonement are personally administered, and hence are the more powerful in their influence. To make

either impersonal is to mar their wholesome efficacy. In the atonement God, as it were, through his Son, unbosoms himself completely, comes with all the charms of infinite loveliness and beauty, to bind the soul in golden chains.

We may safely conclude that, while the world stands, the church, as a body, will maintain and proclaim that the Son of God has made an atonement which does not make void the law, but establishes it in greater glory; that this atonement, naturally attracting all to Christ, effectually provides for the deliverance of all believing souls from the power of sin, securing in such souls the love and practice of righteousness; and that while it ultimately delivers believing penitents from the natural consequences of sin, it also provides for their legitimate complete pardon and justification, securing for them to all eternity the position and inheritance of children of God, through union with him who is the first born among many brethren.

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## ARTICLE VI.

### THE STAR OF THE EAST.

BY REV THEODORE APPEL, D.D., FORMERLY PROFESSOR OF ASTRONOMY IN  
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#### PART FIRST.

It is now generally conceded that the Saviour of the world was born at least four years before the beginning of the Christian era. The current chronology, introduced during the sixth century by the monk Dionysius, without much critical examination, and adopted by Archbishop Usher over two centuries ago, is therefore not less than four years in error. This has been satisfactorily demonstrated by the most careful investigation of the subject in more recent times. King Herod died in the year 749 of the founding of Rome according to one date of this event, or in 750 according to another; and of course Christ could not have been born