

## CHAPTER XVII.

THE ATONEMENT—ITS NATURE—PATRIARCHAL AND MOSAIC  
SACRIFICES.

HAVING seen, in the preceding chapter, the *necessity* for the atonement, we now enter upon the investigation of its *nature*.

No subject connected with our holy religion has been attacked by unbelievers with more virulence than this. They have summoned to the onset the utmost power of invective and raillery which their ingenuity could devise and their venom employ. But in no part of their wanton assault upon the principles of religion have they more glaringly exhibited their disingenuousness and their ignorance. That they may oppose with success, they first misrepresent. Their version of the Christian doctrine of atonement has been generally presented in something like the following miserable caricature: "That the Almighty created man holy and happy; but, because he simply tasted an apple, he instantly became enraged against him and all his posterity, until he had wreaked his vengeance by killing his own innocent son, when he immediately got over his passion, and was willing to make friends with man." Such is the horrible and blasphemous figment of the doctrine of atonement exhibited by infidels, for the fiendish purpose of scorn and ridicule. But how vastly different is this from the truth! Let unbelievers first inform themselves correctly, and they will find less reason to scoff and deride.

But "to the law and to the testimony." With the most implicit reliance upon its truth, we appeal to the word of God for information upon the important subject before us.

We will endeavor to establish the grand and leading proposition, that *the death of Christ is, according to the Scriptures, the meritorious and procuring cause of man's salvation.*

The whole doctrine of atonement is evidently based upon the proposition now before us, and consequently we shall endeavor carefully to *define the terms* of the proposition before we bring the subject to the test of Scripture.

First, by the "meritorious and procuring cause of salvation," we



mean more than is admitted upon the Socinian hypothesis. Even by this scheme, which, perhaps, the most of all schemes depreciates the merits of Christ, his death is not entirely discarded as useless, and in every sense of the word disconnected with human salvation. But if we inquire in what sense the death of Christ is connected with salvation, according to this system, it will be seen to allow no *merit*, in the proper sense of the word, but only to admit an indirect influence to his death as it sealed the truth of his doctrine, honored him as a martyr, and thus became instrumental in leading men to repentance, by which they would necessarily be saved, whatever may be the circumstances or instrumentality by which that repentance is produced. By this scheme it will readily be seen that *repentance*, and not *the death of Christ*, is the meritorious cause of salvation; and the death of Christ cannot, in the proper sense, be considered as strictly necessary, since the death of any other being, as well as many other circumstances, might be instrumental in inducing men to repent.

Secondly, by the "meritorious and procuring cause of salvation," we mean more than is admitted by the modern Arian hypothesis. By this scheme, the death of Christ is only necessary to salvation as it gives an exhibition of his disinterested benevolence, in voluntarily submitting to sufferings so great in the behalf of others; and thus enables him, as Mediator, to claim the salvation of sinners as his reward. This scheme, it may be observed, destroys the absolute necessity for the death of Christ, inasmuch as it makes salvation depend solely on the personal virtue and dignity of the character of the Mediator. Now, it is clear that the actual sufferings of Christ could not add any thing to the intrinsic virtue and personal dignity of his character. He was a being of the same exalted character before his incarnation, and possessed quite as much benevolence before his sufferings; and it cannot be supposed that his actual humiliation and matchless sufferings were necessary to demonstrate, to the satisfaction of the Father, the excellency of the character of his immaculate Son. Had this been the only necessity for the death of Christ, well might it have been dispensed with; and we may rest assured that the benevolence of the Father could never have required it.

But by the phrase, "meritorious and procuring cause of salvation," as applied to the death of Christ, we mean, 1. That there were obstructions in the way of man's salvation, which could not possibly be removed without the death of Christ. 2. That his sufferings were vicarious and expiatory; that he died in our room and stead, to satisfy the claims of law against us, and thereby to render it possible for God to extend to



us the mercy of salvation, on such terms as his wisdom and goodness might devise and propose. This we present as the full and absolute sense in which the death of Christ was necessary to man's salvation, and as the proper scriptural view in which the atonement of Christ is the "meritorious cause of salvation." The doctrine here briefly stated occupies so important a position, and stands so conspicuously to view throughout the entire volume of revelation, that a mere quotation of all the passages in which it is contained, would be a transcript of a large portion of the Holy Scriptures.

So deeply interwoven is the doctrine of atonement with the whole system of revelation, that it is not only expressly presented in numerous passages of the New Testament, but adumbrated, with a greater or less degree of clearness and force, in the types and predictions of the Old Testament. Many of these, it is true, considered in an isolated state, are not sufficiently definite and explicit to amount to satisfactory proof; but, taken in connection with the general tenor of Scripture upon this subject, and with the direct and unequivocal declarations with which the whole system of revelation abounds, their evidence is too weighty to be entirely overlooked.

**I. SCRIPTURE PROOF ADDUCED.** An intimation, too clear to be misunderstood, concerning the incarnation and sacrificial sufferings of Christ, is contained in the *first promise* or announcement of a Redeemer after the Fall.

God said to the serpent, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." Gen. iii. 15. Here, we may observe, there is an intimation of a character styled the "seed of the woman," and consequently human in one sense, who must be superhuman, or at least superior to Adam, in another sense; for he is to "bruise the head" of the serpent, or gain a signal victory over him, who had just gained so great a triumph over Adam.

Observe, in the second place, that this triumph is not to be a bloodless conquest: it is not to be gained without a struggle, and, at least, some degree of suffering, for the serpent was to "bruise the heel" of "the seed of the woman." This evidently refers to the sufferings of Christ, by which redemption from the miseries of the Fall was to be extended to man. Now, as Christ, who is universally admitted to be the "seed of the woman" here spoken of, "did no sin," but was perfectly innocent, we can see no consistency in his "heel being bruised," or in his being permitted to suffer in the least, unless it was by way of expiation, in the room and stead of others; therefore we see in this ancient promise



at least a dawn of light upon the doctrine of atonement through the sufferings of Christ.

II. Our next argument on this point is based upon the *sacrificial worship of the ancient patriarchs*.

There can be but little doubt with regard to the origin of animal sacrifices. Were there no historic record upon this subject, it would appear, *a priori*, impossible for this system of worship to have originated with man. There is nothing in nature which could have led unassisted human reason to infer that God could be propitiated by the blood of slain victims. So far as reason alone is concerned, a conclusion quite opposite to this would have been the most natural.

Sacrificial worship must have originated by *the appointment of God*. This may be clearly inferred from the Mosaic history. Immediately after the Fall, it is said, "Unto Adam also and to his wife did the Lord God make coats of skins, and clothed them." Commentators are generally agreed that the skins here spoken of were taken from animals slain in sacrifice as a sin-offering to God. As yet, the ravages of death had not entered the world, nor had the use of animal food been allowed to man; therefore the most rational inference is, that God, immediately after the Fall and the first promise of a Redeemer, by his own express appointment, instituted sacrificial worship, connected with the duty of faith in Him who, by the offering of himself in the fullness of time, was to "bruise the head of the serpent," and atone for the sins of the world. That this is the true origin of sacrifices, may be strongly inferred from the fact that Abel and others of the patriarchs were soon engaged in similar worship. It could not have been an invention of their own, for they are said to have performed it "by faith," which clearly implies, not only the divine authority for the institution, but also its typical reference to the promised Messiah, the great object of true faith in all ages.

The following remarks upon the passage before us are from the Commentary of Matthew Henry: "Those coats of skin had a significancy. The beasts whose skins they were must be slain—slain before their eyes—to show them what death is, and (as it is Eccl. iii. 18) that they may see that they themselves are mortal and dying. It is supposed they were slain, not for food, but for sacrifice, to typify the great Sacrifice which, in the latter end of the world, should be offered once for all: thus, the first thing that died was a sacrifice, or Christ in a figure, who is therefore said to be 'the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.'"

The following comment upon the same words is from Dr. A. Clarke: "It is very likely that the skins out of which their clothing was made were taken off animals whose blood had been poured out as a *sin-offering*



to God; for, as we find Cain and Abel offering sacrifices to God, we may fairly presume that God had given them instructions upon this head; nor is it likely that the notion of a sacrifice could have ever occurred to the mind of man, without an express revelation from God. Hence we may safely infer, 1. That as Adam and Eve needed this clothing as soon as they fell, and death had not as yet made any ravages in the animal world, it is most likely that the skins were taken off victims offered under the direction of God himself, and in faith of Him who, in the fullness of time, was to make an atonement by his death. 2. It seems reasonable, also, that this matter should be brought about in such a way that Satan and death should have no triumph, when the very first death that took place in the world was an emblem and type of that death which should conquer Satan, destroy his empire, reconcile God to man, convert man to God, sanctify human nature, and prepare it for heaven."

Again, in Gen. vii. 2, we find the distinction of clean and unclean beasts specially mentioned. As this was previous to the flood, and consequently at a time when the grant of animal food had not as yet been made to man, it presents a strong evidence of the divine appointment of animal sacrifices at this early period. Unless we admit that God had given commandment for certain kinds of beasts to be offered in sacrifice, this distinction of clean and unclean beasts cannot be rationally accounted for. That this distinction was founded upon the divine institution of sacrificial worship, is farther evidenced by the fact that Noah was commanded to take with him into the ark a greater number of clean than of unclean animals; and as soon as he came forth from the ark, he engaged in the work of sacrifice. Now, if the clean beasts were such as had been appointed as proper for sacrifice, and especially as Noah offered sacrifices immediately upon leaving the ark, the propriety of a greater number of that description of animals being preserved is at once manifest.

Since, then, we find satisfactory evidence that animal sacrifices were thus early established by divine appointment, we cannot consistently deny that they were expiatory in their character. Death was declared to be the penalty of the original law; and it is one of the settled principles of the divine government that "the wages of sin is death." From this it would appear that, whatever may be the circumstances under which death takes place, it must have a direct connection with sin. This connection, so far as we can infer from the Scriptures, must either be of the nature of a penalty or of an atonement. If life be taken by the direct authority of God, and the being thus slain is not a substitute



or an offering in the behalf of others, the death which thus takes place must be the infliction of the penalty of the violated law; but wherever the idea of substitution is recognized, and the sufferings of death by the appointment of God are vicarious, there is no rational way of accounting for them but upon the admission that they are also expiatory. Now, as God commanded animal sacrifices to be offered by the patriarchs, as an act of religious worship, the institution must have had reference to the condition, and been designed for the benefit, not of the animals sacrificed, but of him who presented the offering. And what could there have been connected with the character of man but sin, to require this bloody sacrifice in his behalf? And in what way could man have derived any benefit therefrom, unless it was intended, in some sense, to expiate or atone for his sins?

Thus we discover that, from the very nature of animal sacrifices, their expiatory character may be rationally inferred. And in order to make the argument from the patriarchal sacrifices conclusive, in the establishment of the vicarious and expiatory character of the death of Christ, it is only necessary for us to admit that those sacrifices were typical of the great and only availing Sacrifice for sin. That this important point stands prominently recognized in the whole tenor of Scripture, will be abundantly seen in the sequel of this investigation.

1. The first act of sacrifice to God, of which we have any express record, is that of *Cain and Abel*.

"And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering; but unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell. And the Lord said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen? And if thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door." Gen iv. 3-7. With this account of the transaction we must connect St. Paul's comment upon the same. "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and by it he being dead yet speaketh." Heb. xi. 4.

In reference to the transaction here recorded, there has been much written both for and against the divine appointment and expiatory character of the patriarchal sacrifices. But it is not necessary to our purpose to enter specially upon the many questions, in connection with this subject, which have engaged the attention of commentators and critics.



We shall, however, endeavor to point out several circumstances connected with this sacrifice, which plainly indicate its expiatory character and typical reference to Christ, and which cannot be satisfactorily explained upon any other hypothesis.

(1) Let it be noted that, according to the comment of the apostle, the sacrifice of Abel was offered "*by faith.*" When we examine what is said in reference to the ancient worthies in the eleventh chapter to the Hebrews, we discover that their faith rested on certain promises; and the clear inference is, that such must also have been the case with the faith of Abel. But let us inquire what that promise was. Here, if we deny that Abel, in this transaction, was acting under divine instructions, in the performance of a religious service, we see no possible way in which his sacrifice could have been "*offered by faith.*" Hence we have the plainest evidence that this sacrificial worship was by the express appointment of God.

Again: unless we admit that the victims he presented were a sin-offering, expiatory in their character, and adumbrative of the offering of Christ as an atonement for the sins of the world, we can see no suitable object for the faith of Abel to have embraced in connection with the offering presented; nor can we see the least significancy in the character of the sacrifice. But if we admit that the offering of animal sacrifice by Abel was according to the appointment of God—a typical representation designed to direct the faith to the "Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world"—the whole subject is at once plain and impressive.

(2) Notice the peculiar *character* of the offering of Abel as contrasted from that of Cain. The latter "brought of the fruit of the ground;" but the former "brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof." Now, if we admit that animal sacrifices, by the express appointment of God, were at once an acknowledgment by the sacrificer of his own sin, and of his faith in the great atoning Sacrifice, the reason why the offering of Abel was "better" and more successful than that of Cain is at once obvious; but if we deny this, we can see no reason for the superiority of the one offering to the other.

(3) The apostle styles the offering of Abel "*a more excellent sacrifice*" than that of Cain. The word *πλειονα*, here rendered *more excellent*, has been the subject of criticism with the learned. Some have contended that it means a greater quantity, and others, a better quality, or kind, of offering. The translation of Wickliffe, it cannot be denied, is as literal a rendering as can be made. As Archbishop Magee has observed, though "it is uncouth, it contains the full force of the original



It renders the passage 'a *much more* sacrifice,' etc." Whatever may be the conclusion in reference to the sense in which this "much more" is to be taken—whether it relates to *nature*, *quantity*, or *quality*—it must be admitted that it points out the peculiarity in the offering of Abel, which gave it superiority with God over that of Cain, and became the testimony to Abel "that he was *righteous*." Now if God had ordained by express command that "righteousness," or justification, was to be obtained by faith in the atoning Saviour, and had instituted animal sacrifice as the typical representation of that atonement, the reasonableness and propriety of the whole procedure—the offering of Abel, the respect that God had to his offering, the righteousness he thereby obtained, and the divine testimony it gave him that his gifts were accepted—are all clearly exhibited. But if this be denied, we see no way of accounting for and explaining these circumstances. Hence we conclude that in the "offering" of Abel we have a clear typical representation of the vicarious and expiatory character of the death of Christ.

The following is presented by Archbishop Magee, as a brief summary of the conclusion of many of the ancient divines upon this subject: "Abel, in firm reliance on the promise of God, and in obedience to his command, offered that sacrifice which had been enjoined as the religious expression of his faith; while Cain, disregarding the gracious assurances that had been vouchsafed, or, at least, disdaining to adopt the prescribed mode of manifesting his belief, possibly as not appearing to his reason to possess any efficacy, or natural fitness, thought he had sufficiently acquitted himself of his duty in acknowledging the general superintendence of God, and expressing his gratitude to the Supreme Benefactor, by presenting some of those good things which he thereby professed to have been derived from his bounty. In short, Cain, the first-born of the Fall, exhibits the first fruits of his parent's disobedience, in the arrogance and self-sufficiency of reason rejecting the aids of revelation, because they fell not within its apprehension of right. He takes the first place in the annals of Deism, and displays, in his proud rejection of the ordinance of sacrifice, the same spirit which, in latter days, has actuated his enlightened followers, in rejecting the sacrifice of Christ."

2. The next instance of patriarchal sacrifices which we shall mention is the case of *Noah*, immediately on his leaving the ark.

"And Noah builded an altar unto the Lord, and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt-offerings on the altar. And the Lord smelled a sweet savor; and the Lord said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake." Gen. viii.



20, 21. Here, in order that we may see that Noah performed this act of worship in compliance with a previous appointment of God, it is only necessary for us—

(1) To reflect on the dispatch with which he engages in the work when he comes forth from the ark. There is no time for the exercise of his inventive genius, which we may suppose would have been requisite, had he not previously been familiar with this mode of worship.

(2) He “took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl;” which is an evidence that the distinction of clean and unclean animals was an appointment of God in reference to sacrifice, and consequently that the system of sacrifice connected with this distinction was also an appointment of God.

(3) The Lord approved this sacrifice: he “smelled a sweet savor;” which he could not have done had not this mode of worship been in accordance with his own institution.

(4) The sacrifice of *clean* animals here presented was typical of the atonement of Christ. This may be seen by the allusion to this passage in the language of Paul, in Eph. v. 2: “Christ hath loved us, and given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God, for a *sweet-smelling savor*.” Here, the words *ὁσμὴν εὐωδίας*, used by the apostle, are the same found in the Septuagint in reference to the sacrifice of Noah.

3. Again, we see the patriarch *Abraham*, on a memorable occasion in which he received a renewal of the gracious promise of God, engaging in the performance of animal sacrifice with the divine approbation.

“And he said unto him, Take me a heifer of three years old, and a she-goat of three years old, and a ram of three years old, and a turtle-dove, and a young pigeon. And he took unto him all these, and divided them in the midst, and laid each piece one against another; but the birds divided he not.” Gen. xv. 9, 10. In reference to this passage, Dr. Clarke says: “It is worthy of remark, that every animal allowed or commanded to be sacrificed under the Mosaic law, is to be found in this list. And is it not a proof that God was now giving to Abram an epitome of that law and its sacrifices which he intended more fully to reveal to Moses; the essence of which consisteth in its sacrifices, which typified ‘the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world’?”

We will only add that we have, in this coincidence of the animals sacrificed by Abraham, and under the Mosaic law, a clear demonstration that the patriarchal sacrifices were of divine appointment; otherwise this coincidence is unaccountable.



In the twenty-second chapter of Genesis, we have a record of the remarkable faith of Abraham, in presenting his son Isaac as a burnt-offering on Mount Moriah, in obedience to the divine command. In Heb. xi. 17-19, we have the comment of St. Paul upon this subject: "By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac; and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure."

(1) We have in this transaction a clear proof that animal sacrifices were originally instituted by divine appointment. This is evidenced by the considerations that God expressly commanded Abraham to go to Mount Moriah, and there offer a burnt-offering; that Abraham spoke of his intended sacrifice as of a service to which he had been accustomed; that Isaac, by asking the question, "Where is the lamb for a burnt-offering?" discovered a familiarity with that mode of worship; and that God actually provided the lamb to be sacrificed instead of Isaac. All these circumstances testify that sacrificial worship was an institution of God.

(2) We here have a lively type of the atoning sacrifice of Christ. Abraham is said to have received Isaac "from the dead in a figure." The word here rendered *figure* is *παραβολή*, *parable*, or *type*. Macknight paraphrases it thus: "*From whence on this occasion he received him, by being hindered from slaying him, even in order to his being a type of Christ.*" As we have here the testimony of the apostle to the fact that Abraham's sacrifice was adumbrative of the offering of Christ on Calvary for the sins of the world, we deem it unnecessary to dwell upon the many striking points of analogy between the type and antitype.

4. On the subject of the sacrifices of the patriarchs, the case of *Job* is worthy of particular attention.

With regard to the period in which this patriarch lived, there has been considerable controversy. Some have supposed that he lived subsequent to the giving of the law; but the more probable opinion is that he was contemporary with Abraham, Isaac, or Jacob. At any rate, he does not appear to have been acquainted with the Mosaic ritual, or we might reasonably expect to find connected with his history some allusion to the giving of the law.

It is true, some have contended, and Dr. A. Clarke among the number, that the circumstance of Job offering "burnt-offerings" to God is a proof that he was acquainted with the Mosaic institution, and consequently that he lived subsequently to the exodus from Egypt. But, in



reply to this, it may be said that Abraham and Noah also presented "burnt-offerings" to God, and the same argument would prove that they also were acquainted with the Mosaic institution, which we know to be contrary to the fact of the history. The most consistent opinion is, that Job was contemporary with the ante-Mosaic patriarchs, and that we have in his history a comment upon the patriarchal religion, previous to the general spread of idolatry among the descendants of Noah.

An account of the sacrifice of Job is recorded in Job i. 5: "And it was so, when the days of their feasting were gone about, that Job sent and sanctified them, [his sons and daughters,] and rose up early in the morning, and offered *burnt-offerings* according to the number of them all; for Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts. Thus did Job continually." That this mode of sacrifice was the regular practice of Job, and that the decided testimony is that he was pious and exemplary, are sufficient evidence that he was acting in obedience to a divine command, received through tradition or otherwise. But the fact that the supposition that his sons might have sinned was given as the reason for the sacrifice, is clear proof that it was expiatory in its character, and a typical representation of the great sacrifice of Christ.

To all that has been said in reference to the divine appointment and typical and expiatory character of the sacrifices of the patriarchal dispensation, it has been *objected* that the Mosaic history contains no direct account of the divine origin, and no express declaration of the expiatory character of these sacrifices. It is a sufficient reply to the above, to know that Moses does not profess to give a complete history of the patriarchal religion. What he says upon the subject is incidental and exceedingly brief. There is no express account of any moral code being delivered to the patriarchs between the time of the Fall and the law of Moses; yet the fact that "Abel's works were *righteous*," and Cain's works "were *evil*," is sufficient testimony that God had in some way prescribed to them their duty. Even so, the fact that God sanctioned the patriarchal sacrifices with his express approval, is clear evidence that they originated not in the invention of men, but in the appointment of God.

Again. we have the direct proof from the New Testament that Moses did not think it necessary to give a complete and full account of every thing connected with the patriarchal religion. Enoch prophesied concerning the day of judgment, and Abraham looked for a "heavenly inheritance, a better country;" and yet Moses makes no record of the prophesying of the one, or of the promise on which the faith of the



other was based. Therefore we conclude that the above objection to the view we have taken of the divine origin, and typical and expiatory character of the animal sacrifices of the ancient patriarchs, is perfectly groundless; and the argument derived from those sacrifices, for the vicarious and expiatory character of the death of Christ, is seen to be conclusive.

III. In the next place, we notice *the sacrifices prescribed under the Mosaic law.*

The argument for the expiatory character of the death of Christ, derived from this source, will not require an extensive and minute examination of the entire system of sacrificial worship as it is presented in the Mosaic dispensation. If it can be shown that animal sacrifices therein enjoined were expiatory in their character, and divinely constituted types of the sufferings and death of Christ, the true character of the atonement of Christ will be thereby established.

That we may the better understand the nature and design of the sacrifices under the law, we will first notice that the Mosaic law itself consisted of three distinct, though connected, parts—the *moral*, the *ceremonial*, and the *political*.

1. The *moral* law is summarily embraced in the decalogue, but comprehends also all those precepts throughout the books of Moses and the prophets, which, being founded on the nature of God and of man, are necessarily and immutably obligatory upon all rational and accountable creatures, without regard to time, place, or circumstance. In this acceptance of the term, the law of God is essentially the same in all ages; and the Patriarchal, Mosaic, and Christian dispensations are only different developments or exhibitions of the same grand principles of righteousness.

2. The *ceremonial* law comprehends that system of forms and religious ceremonies which God prescribed for the regulation of the worship of the Israelitish nation, and which constituted the peculiar characteristic of the Mosaic dispensation. This law had respect to times and seasons—to days, months, and years; but it especially embraced the regulations of the priesthood, the stated assemblages and regular festivals of the people, and the entire system of sacrificial worship.

3. The *political* law comprehended the civil jurisprudence of the Jewish people. This law was of divine appointment, but related peculiarly to the government of the Israelitish nation. It defined the rights, prescribed the mode of settling the controversies, and had jurisdiction over the lives of individuals.

This threefold character of law, under which the Jews, during the



Mosaic dispensation, were placed, must render their entire legal code somewhat complex; and admonish us that when sin is spoken of with them, it must be the transgression of one or more of these laws; and care should be taken to ascertain to what law it has reference. This important point being borne in mind, it will not be presumed that the taking away of sin through the piacular sacrifices of the ceremonial law was properly a moral ablution. As these sacrifices belonged to the ceremonial law, it is only contended that they were expiatory in a ceremonial sense. The atonement which they made was not a real acquittal from the guilt of moral transgression: it was a ceremonial cleansing. The distinction here specified is clearly recognized by St. Paul, in Heb. x. 4: "For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should *take away sins*." Here the apostle is evidently speaking of the removal of moral guilt, or sin, in view of the moral law. *This*, ceremonial sacrifices could only remove in a *ceremonial*, not a *moral*, sense.

In Heb. ix. 13, the apostle speaks of the ceremonial cleansing and expiation of the sacrifices of the law in these words: "For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling the unclean, *sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh*," etc. Here we perceive that the same sacrifices which we had just seen could not remove moral pollution, or cleanse the conscience, were efficacious in the removal of ceremonial pollution, or in the cleansing of the body. Now, if it can be shown that the sacrifices under the law were expiatory in a ceremonial point of view, and that this ceremonial expiation was typical of the only proper expiation for sin under the gospel, the argument from this subject for the expiatory character of the death of Christ will then be sufficiently manifest.

It should farther be remembered, that it is not necessary to this argument that *all* the sacrifices of the law should be shown to be expiatory in their character. Some of them were eucharistic, and others were *mere* incidental purifications of persons or things. All that is requisite to our argument is to show that there were some sacrifices which were expiatory and typical. Nor is it necessary to show that their expiatory character related to the law in every sense of the word; to show that it related to it in either the *political*, *ceremonial*, or *moral* sense, will be all that is required. To accomplish this, we think, will not be difficult.

To bring forward all the passages properly bearing upon this subject, would be unnecessarily tedious; we shall therefore only select a few.

(1) First, we refer to the yearly *feast of expiation*, Lev. xvi. 30, 34: "For on that day shall the priest make an atonement for you, to cleanse you, that ye may be clean from *all your sins* before the Lord. And this



shall be an everlasting statute unto you, to make an atonement for the children of Israel, for *all their sins*, once a year."

Now, let it be remembered that death, according to the law, is the penalty of sin, and that an atonement is here made by the offering of slain victims for all the sins of the people, and the inference is plain that, through the death of the animals, the people were saved from death, which was the penalty incurred by their sins; consequently the death of the victims was vicarious—in the stead of the death of the people; and also expiatory—it removed, ceremonially, their sins from them.

That this atonement was a substitution of the life of the victim for that of the sinner, may farther be seen from Lev. xv. 31: "Thus shall ye separate the children of Israel from their uncleanness, that they *die not in their uncleanness*."

(2) Again, the ceremony in reference to the *scape-goat* on the solemn anniversary of expiation, is peculiarly expressive of the transfer or removal of the sins of the people. The priest was to "put his hands on the head of the goat, and confess over him *all the iniquities* of the children of Israel, and *all their transgressions in all their sins*, putting them upon the head of the goat;" and then he was to "*send the goat away* by a fit man into the wilderness." If this ceremony was not indicative of an expiation or removal of sin, it will be difficult to perceive in it any meaning whatever.

(3) The celebrated feast of the *Passover*, instituted in commemoration of the deliverance of the Israelites, when the angel smote the first-born of Egypt, clearly shows that the life of the sinner was preserved by the death of the victim. The lamb was slain, and its blood sprinkled upon the posts of the doors; and wherever the blood was sprinkled, the destroying angel passed over and spared the lives of all within the house. Thus, by the blood of the slain lamb, was the *life* of the Israelite preserved.

IV. In the last place, upon this subject, we come to notice *the language of the New Testament*, in reference to the connection between the sacrifices of the law and the offering of himself by Christ as the great sacrifice for sin.

So full and pointed is the comment of St. Paul in his Epistle to the Hebrews, that it is difficult to conceive how any one can read that Epistle, and not be convinced that the Mosaic sacrifices were typical of the vicarious and expiatory sacrifice of Christ.

Heb. vii. 27: "Who needeth not daily, as those high-priests, to *offer up sacrifice*, first for his *own sins*, and then for the people's; for this he did once, when he *offered up himself*." Heb. ix. 14: "How much more



shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, *purge your conscience* from dead works to serve the living God." Heb. ix. 22-28: "And almost all things are by the law *purged with blood*; and *without shedding of blood is no remission*. It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the *figures of the true*; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us: nor yet that he should *offer himself* often, as the high-priest entereth into the holy place every year with *blood of others*; for then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world; but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to *put away sin by the sacrifice of himself*. So Christ was *once offered to bear the sins of many*." Heb. x. 10: "By the which will we are sanctified through the *offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all*." Heb. x. 12: "But this man, after he had *offered one sacrifice for sins*, forever sat down on the right hand of God." Heb. x. 14: "For by *one offering* he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified."

In the passages above quoted, the vicarious and expiatory character of the death of Christ, as typified by the sacrifices under the Mosaic law, is so clearly shown that, if we deny this doctrine, we may despair of ever finding a consistent meaning to these scriptures.

As corroborative testimony upon the subject before us, it may not be amiss to refer to the *sacrifices of heathen nations*. From what has already been said in reference to the origin of animal sacrifices, it will follow that, however much the institution has been perverted, the heathen nations have all derived their first notions upon this subject from revelation, transmitted through tradition. History testifies that scarce a nation has been known, either in ancient or modern times, that was not in the practice of offering sacrifices for the purpose of propitiating the Deity. Many of them went so far as, on occasions of great emergency, to offer up human victims. This was the case with the Phenicians, the Persians, the Egyptians, the Carthaginians, and also the learned Greeks and the civilized Romans; hence Cesar, in his Commentaries, states it as the doctrine of the Druids, that "unless the life of man were given for the life of men, the immortal gods would not be appeased."

Dr. Priestley has denied that heathen nations pretended to expiate sin by animal sacrifice; but he has met with a pointed rebuke from Dr. Magee, who directly charges him either with culpable ignorance or unfairness. Nor is he more leniently treated in the hands of Dr. Dick.



in his "Lectures," who says: "Either Dr. Priestley, who has made the strange assertion which I am now considering, had never read the history of the various nations of the human race, and in this case was guilty of presumption and dishonesty in pronouncing positively concerning their tenets; or, he has published to the world, with a view to support his own system, what he must have known to be utterly false. It would disgrace a school-boy to say that the heathens knew nothing of expiatory sacrifices."

The argument for the vicarious and expiatory character of the death of Christ, based upon the *system of sacrifice*, though not the main dependence of the advocates for the true doctrine of the atonement, must be seen, we think, from what has been said, to possess considerable force. Let it be remembered that the patriarchal and Mosaic sacrifices were of divine appointment; let the circumstances connected with the offerings of Abel, of Noah, of Abraham, and of Job, be well considered; let the institution of the Passover, and all the sacrifices under the law, be contemplated, together with the duties of the divinely constituted priesthood of the Jews; let the peculiar offerings of the heathens be taken into consideration; and then let the declarations of the New Testament, especially of the Epistle to the Hebrews, be consulted, and the manner in which sacrificial terms are applied to the death of Christ, and we think that the conviction must force itself upon the mind of the unprejudiced, that, unless the whole system of patriarchal and Mosaic sacrifices was unmeaning mummery, and the writers of the New Testament designed to mislead their readers, the death of Christ upon the cross was a properly vicarious offering, in the room and stead of sinners, as an expiation for their sins.

The denial of this proposition would at once mar the beautiful symmetry which pervades the entire system of revelation, and render perfectly unmeaning, or force a far-fetched and unnatural construction upon, the institutions and a great portion of the word of God. Its admission beautifully and harmoniously connects the law and the gospel, the old and the new dispensations, and stamps the entire code of revelation with the sacred impress of consistency and truth.



## QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER XVII.

- QUESTION 1.** In what light has the Christian doctrine of atonement generally been presented by infidels?
2. What is the grand and leading proposition expressive of the true doctrine of the atonement proposed to be established?
3. What are the Socinian and Arian hypotheses on this subject?
4. What do we understand by the phrase, *meritorious and procuring cause of salvation*?
5. How may it be shown that the promise concerning "the seed of the woman" contained an intimation of this doctrine?
6. What was the origin of the patriarchal sacrifices?
7. How is this proved?
8. What is the evidence from the sacrifice of Abel?
9. Of Noah?
10. Of Abraham?
11. Of Job?
12. What is the grand objection to the divine origin of sacrifices?
- 3 How is it answered?
14. What is necessary to be proved, in order that the argument for the atonement, from the Mosaic sacrifices, may be conclusive?
15. What are the three distinct parts of which the Mosaic law consisted?
16. What is meant by each?
17. What is the distinction between a *moral* and a *ceremonial* expiation?
18. What is the evidence that St. Paul made this distinction?
19. Is it contended that all the sacrifices of the law were expiatory?
20. What is the Scripture proof in reference to the yearly expiation?
21. In reference to the scape-goat?
22. In reference to the Passover?
23. What are the allusions from the New Testament?
24. What is the probable origin of heathen sacrifices?
25. What is the proof from them?
26. Has the piacular character of heathen sacrifices been denied?
27. What has been replied?
28. How is the argument summed up?



## CHAPTER XVIII.

THE ATONEMENT—ITS NATURE—EXPIATORY CHARACTER OF THE  
DEATH OF CHRIST.

IN the preceding chapter, the proper nature of the atonement has been argued from the typical institution of *the sacrifices of the Old Testament*; but, as has already been intimated, clear and conclusive as the evidence from that source may be, it is not the principal reliance of the advocates for the true doctrine of the atonement.

As the first dawn of morning light is succeeded by an increasing brilliancy, till the earth is illumed by the full glories of mid-day, even so the great doctrine of redemption through the blood of the everlasting covenant, which at first faintly gleamed from the illustrious promise of "the seed of the woman," continued to shine, with still increasing luster, through the consecrated medium of the types and shadows, the smoking altars, and bleeding victims, of the patriarchal and Mosaic dispensations; till, at length, under the superior light and more glorious developments of gospel day, we behold the clear fulfillment of ancient predictions, the infallible comment upon the divinely instituted types, and the most explicit revelation of the great mystery of salvation, through the merits of the vicarious and piacular oblation of God's Messiah.

For a correct view of the doctrine of the atonement, we are not left to reason from ancient predictions and Jewish types alone, but we are furnished with an abundance of the plainest and most direct testimony. Let the true point of controversy be now borne in mind. That Christ died for us in such sense as to confer benefit upon us, Socinians, Arians, Unitarians, etc., admit; but the doctrine for which we contend is, 1. That he died *for us* as a proper *substitute*—in our *room and stead*. 2. That his death was *propitiatory*—a proper *expiation*, or *atonement*, for our sins. These are the points which are strenuously denied, especially by those who also deny the proper divinity of Christ; but, that they are expressly taught in the Scriptures, we shall now endeavor to show.

Now, the point is, to show that Christ died *for us*, as a proper *substitute*.



I. Our first argument is founded upon those passages in which Christ is expressly declared to have died for us.

1. That the preposition *ὑπέρ*, translated *for*, sometimes merely signifies *on account of*, or, *for the advantage of*, is admitted; but that it also implies *instead of*, and that such is its meaning, as applied to the subject in hand, in the Scriptures, is what we shall endeavor to prove.

(1) That it is so used by the Grecian classics, cannot be disputed. Raphaelius, in his "Annotations," affirms that "the Socinians will not find one Greek writer to support a different interpretation." One or two quotations are all we shall adduce: "*Would you be willing ὑπὲρ τούτου ἀποθάνειν,*" *to die for this boy?*—that is, would you be willing to die *in his stead?*—to save his life by the sacrifice of your own? Again: '*Ἀντίλοχος τοῦ πατρὸς ὑπεραποθανών*—'*Antilochus, dying for his father,*" obtained such glory, that he alone among the Greeks was called *Φιλοπάτωρ*. The context in these passages admits of no other construction than that of a proper *substitution*. (See Xenophon De Cyri Exped. et De Venat.)

(2) But that such is the sense of the preposition in the New Testament, may be seen from John xi. 50. Caiaphas said: "It is expedient for us that one man (*ἀποθάνῃ ὑμὲρ τοῦ λαοῦ*) should die *for* the people, and that the whole nation perish not." The meaning evidently here is, that the life of Christ should be taken to save the lives of the nation from the vengeance of the Romans. Rom. v. 7: "For scarcely (*ὑπὲρ*) *for* a righteous man will one die; yet peradventure (*ὑπὲρ*) *for* a good man some would even dare to die." Here the sense is plainly that of substitution—the life of one man for that of another. But see the next verse: "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, (*Χριστὸς ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν ἀπέθανε,*) Christ died *for* us." Now, if *ὑπὲρ*, in the preceding verse, meant a plain substitution of life for life, it must, in all fairness of criticism, mean the same here, for it is a continuation of the same argument.

2 Cor. v. 21: "For he hath made him *to be* sin (*ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν*) *for* us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." Here the sense evidently is, that Christ was made a sin-offering, as a *substitute for* us. In no other sense can it be said that he "was made sin." The word *ἁμαρτίαν*, here rendered sin, is by Macknight and others translated *sin-offering*. So it is frequently used in the Septuagint. So also it is used in Heb. ix. 28: "And unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time, (*χωρὶς ἁμαρτίας,*) without a *sin-offering*, unto salvation." The scope of the apostle's argument will admit of no other interpretation. So also it is used in Heb. xiii. 11: "For the



bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high-priest for (*ἀμαρτίας*) a *sin-offering*." Now, it is clear, that the blood of beasts was offered "for sin" in no other sense than that of an expiation or atonement. Hence we perceive that Christ was "made sin for us" in no other sense than that of a vicarious offering. 1 Pet. iii. 18: "For Christ also hath once suffered *for sins*, the just (*ὑπὲρ*) for (or, *instead of*) the unjust." Rom. v. 6: "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died (*ὑπὲρ*, *instead of*, or) *for* the ungodly." 2 Cor. v. 15: "And that he died (*ὑπὲρ*) for (or, *instead of*) all." Heb. ii. 9: "That he by the grace of God should taste death (*ὑπὲρ*) for (or, *instead of*) every man." 1 Tim. ii. 6: "Who gave himself a ransom (*ὑπὲρ πάντων*) for (or, *instead of*) all."

2. Again: from the use of the Greek preposition *ἀντὶ*, we may also infer that the sufferings of Christ were vicarious. That this preposition implies commutation and substitution, we may see from Matt. v. 38: "An eye (*ἀντὶ*) for (or, *instead of*) an eye, and a tooth (*ἀντὶ*) for (or, *instead of*) a tooth." Also, see Matt. ii. 22: "Archelaus did reign in Judea (*ἀντὶ*) in the room of his father Herod." Now let us see how this same preposition is used in reference to our Lord. Matt. xx. 28: "Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom (*ἀντὶ*) for (or, *instead of*) many."

If the foregoing quotations do not prove that Christ died as a substitute for us, we may confidently affirm that they prove nothing.

II. In the next place, to prove that the death of Christ was both vicarious and propitiatory, we appeal to those passages which speak of his dying for our sins.

Isa. liii. 4-6: "Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." Verses 10 and 11: "Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many, for he shall bear their iniquities."

The passage just quoted is as plain and pointed as language will admit. Had the prophet written for the express purpose of vindicating the doctrine of atonement from the Socinian perversion, we do not see



how he could have more strongly presented the vicarious and expiatory character of the death of Christ. Observe, here, our Lord is said to have "*borne* our griefs and *carried* our sorrows;" our iniquity is said to have been "*laid on him*;" and he is said to "*bear the iniquities* of many."

In all this there is doubtless an allusion to the ceremony in reference to the scape-goat, upon which the priest laid his hands, and confessed over it the sins of the people, and then sent it away into the wilderness; but there is evidently more implied here than the bare removal of sin. This is implied, but the most emphatic meaning of the language is the bearing of the punishment due to sin. That this is the meaning of the phrase "to bear sin or iniquity" in the Scriptures, may be seen from Lev. xxii. 9: "They shall therefore keep mine ordinance, lest they *bear sin* for it, and *die* therefore, if they profane it." Here, to bear sin was to be exposed to death, the penalty of sin. See, also, Eze. xviii. 20: "The soul that *sinneth*, it shall *die*. The son shall not *bear* (die for) the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father *bear* (die for) the iniquity of the son."

Thus it will appear that, by our Saviour bearing our iniquities, as seen in the passage from Isaiah, we are plainly taught that he bore the punishment due to us on account of our iniquities; consequently his sufferings were vicarious and expiatory. Again, it is said: "He was *stricken, smitten* of God, *wounded, bruised, chastised*; it pleased the Lord to *bruise him*," etc. Language cannot more plainly declare that the sufferings of Christ were a penal infliction for our sins. Again, by his sufferings we here learn that we procure "peace," "we are healed," we are "justified;" all of which testify that his death was properly propitiatory.

There is an allusion to this passage in Isaiah in 1 Pet. ii. 24: "Who his own self *bare our sins*' in his own body on the tree, that we, being *dead to sins*, should live unto *righteousness*; by whose *stripes ye were healed*." Here the expiatory character of the death of Christ is clear from the effects resulting from it. By it we are said to be "dead to sins," "alive unto righteousness," and to be "healed."

In Gal. iii. 13, we read: "Christ hath redeemed us from the *curse* of the law, being made a *curse* for us; for it is written, *Cursed* is every one that hangeth on a tree." The law had said: "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them." Consequently, as "*all* had sinned, and come short of the glory of God," *all* were exposed to this curse; therefore, as Christ, in this sense, became a curse for us, he must have suffered *in our room*, on account of our sins.



Rom. iv. 25: "Who was delivered *for our offenses*." Here our offenses are presented as the antecedent cause of the sufferings of Christ; consequently they were expiated by his death.

III. Next, we refer to some of those passages which speak of *reconciliation, propitiation*, etc., as connected with the sufferings of Christ.

✓ 1 John ii. 2: "And he is the *propitiation for our sins*; and not for ours only, but also for *the sins of the whole world*." Col. i. 20: "And having made *peace* through the *blood of his cross*, by him to *reconcile* all things unto himself." Rom. iii. 25: "Whom God hath set forth to be a *propitiation*, through faith in *his blood*, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God." Rom. v. 11: "By whom we have now received the (*καταλλαγήν*) *atonement*," (or *reconciliation*.)

The amount of these passages is equivalent to what is implied in being "saved from wrath through him"—that is, delivered from exposure to the penalty of his punitive justice. Again, we would notice some of those passages in which the salvation of the gospel is spoken of under the appellation of redemption. 1 Pet. i. 18, 19: "Ye were not *redeemed* with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation, received by tradition from your fathers; but with the *precious blood of Christ*, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." Eph. i. 7: "In whom we have *redemption through his blood*." The Greek words *λυτρόω, ἀπολύτρωσις*, properly imply the liberation of a captive by the payment of a *ransom*, or some consideration, without which he could not have been liberated; therefore we are here taught that the death of Christ is the procuring cause of salvation.

IV. Lastly, we notice that *justification*, or *the remission of sin*, and *sanctification*, are said to be connected with the death of Christ.

Acts xiii. 38, 39: "Through this man is preached unto you the *forgiveness of sins*; and by him all that believe are *justified from all things*, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." 1 John i. 7: "The *blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin*." Rev. i. 5: "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood." Matt. xxvi. 28: "For this is *my blood* of the New Testament, which is shed for many, for the *remission of sins*." Eph. i. 7: "In whom we have *redemption through his blood*, the *forgiveness of sins*, according to the riches of his grace." Rom. v. 9: "Much more then, being now *justified by his blood*, we shall be saved from wrath through him."

The evidence from Scripture for the vicarious and expiatory character of the death of Christ might be extended much farther, but we deem it unnecessary. If persons are disposed to abide by the express decla



rations of Scripture, what has already been adduced is sufficient; but if they are determined, at all hazards, to spurn the Bible doctrine of the atonement, they may, if they choose, form a creed to suit their own notions, and enjoy the luxury of fancying that it is the "perfection of beauty," however adverse it may be to the teachings of revelation. We think we may safely say that, had the inspired writers designed expressly to teach the vicarious and propitiatory character of the death of Christ, the passages we have adduced are admirably adapted to the accomplishment of that purpose; but had they designed to teach an opposite doctrine, it will be a difficult task to vindicate them from such a degree of ignorance of language, or disingenuousness of purpose, as would utterly discredit their claims to inspiration.

V.- Having now established from the Scriptures the grand and leading *principles* of the atonement, as based upon the vicarious and expiatory character of the death of Christ, as the meritorious and procuring cause of salvation, we proceed, next, to illustrate more particularly the *reasonableness and propriety of the whole scheme*.

From what has already been said in reference to the necessity for the atonement, as originating in the principles of the divine administration, it will necessarily follow that, after man had violated the law of God, there was but one possible way in which the threatened penalty could, in any degree, be averted or removed, and guilty man rescued from the opening jaws of impending ruin. And we now inquire, What was that way of escape? What was the only door of hope to a ruined world? We answer, it was that something different from the precise penalty should be substituted, which would answer, as fully as the threatened penalty itself, all the legitimate purposes of the divine government. Now if it can be shown that the sufferings of Christ, in our room and stead, meet this requirement, and perfectly secure all the ends of the divine administration, the propriety of the great scheme of atonement which we have presented will at once be manifest, and the plan will be opened up to our view "by which God can be just, and yet the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus."

That the point now proposed may be clearly presented, it will be necessary for us to inquire what are the grand purposes of the divine government. These are—

①. To show God's hatred to sin, arising from the holiness of his nature. This is essential, in order that his holy and excellent character may be known and revered by his intelligent creatures. For if their happiness be connected with their duty, and their paramount duty be love to God, it is plain that they cannot be led to the exercise of that



love unless his character be presented to them in its native excellence and purity, as it was proclaimed unto Moses—"The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin, and that will *by no means clear the guilty.*"

2. Another end of the divine government is, to show God's determination to punish the sinner. This is essential, that he may maintain dominion over the intelligent creation, and prevent general anarchy and rebellion, and consequent destruction, throughout all parts of the moral universe. If the "morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy," at the birth of creation, may we not reasonably suppose that they were spectators of the fall of man? And what, we ask, would have been the effect upon, perhaps, millions of worlds, had the Almighty failed to require the penalty of the violated law? Would they not all have received license to sin with impunity? And would not the result probably have been fatal to the inhabitants of innumerable worlds? Therefore we conclude that the mercy of God, much more his justice, demanded satisfaction for a broken law, that the divine determination to punish sin might be strikingly exhibited for the safety and happiness of myriads of intelligent and accountable creatures, formed for happiness in communion with God.

Thus it appears to us that the two particulars above presented exhibit the grand ends of the divine government. Now if it can be made to appear that the sufferings and death of Christ, as a substitute, will subserve these purposes, as fully as the exact penalty threatened in its precise kind and degree, then it will follow that, by this arrangement, the honor of the divine throne may be sustained, the demands of justice satisfied, and yet mercy be extended to a fallen world. All this, we conceive, is fully accomplished in the divine plan and arrangement, as set forth through the merits of the crucified Immanuel.

That such is the fact, will more fully appear by the examination of several particulars.

(1) Consider *the exalted character of Christ*. Here we must view him as Mediator—as God-man, possessing all excellency and perfection; as "the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person." But we must also contemplate him in the endearing relation of the *Son*—the *only Son*—the *well-beloved Son* of God. For the Almighty to let fall his wrath upon a character so exalted, and so dearly beloved, rather than to violate the claims of justice, or give countenance to sin, surely is a far more illustrious exhibition of the holiness of his character, and his settled purpose not to clear the guilty at the



sacrifice of correct principle, than could have been presented by the eternal punishment of the whole human family.

(2) Notice the *freeness with which Christ was delivered up by the Father, and with which he consented to suffer for us.* Man had no claims upon God. God was under no obligations to man. All was free, unmerited mercy and compassion. God saw and pitied us, and ran to our relief. The Saviour voluntarily laid down his life. Surely these facts enhance the value of the sacrifice, and tend gloriously to exhibit the extent of the love, the holiness of the nature, and the sacredness of the justice of God.

(3) Next, notice the *nature and extent of the sufferings of Christ.* We do not pretend to say that he suffered, either in *kind* or *degree*, precisely the same that man would be required to suffer, if deprived of the benefits of redemption. Far from it, indeed. The very idea is monstrous and absurd.

He could not suffer the same *kind* of torment. One of the principal ingredients in the cup which the miserably damned are to drink, is the bitterness of remorse. This the Saviour could not taste.

Neither do we believe that he suffered to the same *extent* that man would have been required to suffer, had no atonement been provided. We cannot believe it: in the first place, because there is no intimation of the kind in the Bible; and, in the second place, because we think it unnecessary, unreasonable, and absurd. It was unnecessary, because of the superior merits of Christ. The value and efficacy of his atonement result mainly, not from the *intensity of his sufferings*, but the *dignity of his character*. It was the humanity, and not the divinity, which suffered. The humanity was the sacrifice, but the divinity was the altar on which it was offered, and by which the gift was sanctified. The sufferings were finite in their extent, but the sacrifice was of infinite value, by reason of the mysterious hypostatic union with the divinity.

(4) Again: the hypothesis is unreasonable and absurd, because it would mar the glorious exhibition of divine love in redemption. For if the full and exact penalty due to man, in kind and degree, was endured by the Saviour, where is the manifestation of the Father's benevolence? Redemption, upon this supposition, would not be a scheme of grace, so far as the Father is concerned; but merely a transfer of misery to a different object—from the *guilty* to the *innocent*. But, furthermore, an *endless degree* of punishment was due to man; consequently this punishment was infinite, at least in duration. But the sufferings of Christ, as they were not infinite in duration, so neither could they have been infinite in extent; otherwise they never could have termi-



nated. Infinite means *without limit*. But his sufferings were limited—they came to an end; consequently they could not have been infinite. Had they continued even an hour longer than they did, with their greatest intensity, it is evident they would have been greater, in the aggregate, than they were; therefore they were not infinite in extent. All the infinitude connected with them is applicable to the dignity of the sufferer, and not to the intensity of the agony.

(5) And if it be objected that the atonement cannot be satisfactory to justice, unless it equal the original penalty in the extent of suffering, we reply, that the same argument would prove that it must also correspond with the original penalty in the kind, as well as the degree, of misery; which we have seen to be impossible. All that is necessary is, that the sufferings be such as justice can accept as an adequate satisfaction, in the character of a substitute, for the original penalty. All that may be lacking in the extent of the suffering is amply made up in the superior, yea, the infinite dignity, of the sufferer. But, after all, we freely admit that the agony of our blessed Lord was great, beyond the power of language to describe, or of mere man to endure. "It pleased the Father to bruise him;" and he bore the fierceness of the wrath of Almighty God.

(6) On the subject now under consideration, the following observations of a learned divine are appropriate and satisfactory:

"But how, it may be asked again, could the sufferings of Jesus Christ satisfy for the sins of 'a great multitude which no man can number, out of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues'? The common answer is, that the transcendent value of his sufferings was the consequence of the dignity of his nature, and it seems to be sufficient. His sufferings were limited in degree, because the nature in which he endured them was finite; but their merit was infinite, because the suffering nature was united to the Son of God, (the divinity.) An idea, however, seems to prevail, that his sufferings were the same in degree with those to which his people (all mankind) were liable; that he suffered not only in their room, but that quantum of pain and sorrow which, if he had not interposed, they should have suffered in their own persons through eternity; and so far has this notion been carried by some, that they have maintained that his sufferings would have been greater or less if there had been one more or one fewer to be redeemed. According to this system, the value of his sufferings arose, not from the dignity of his person, but from his power. The use of his divine person in this case was, not to enhance the merit of his sufferings, but to strengthen him to bear them. If this is true, it was not necessary that



he should have taken human nature into personal union with himself; it was only necessary that he should have sustained it; and this he could have done, although it had subsisted by itself. That the sufferings of the man Christ Jesus were greater than those which a mere mortal could have borne, will be readily granted; but, although it does not become us to set limits to Omnipotence, yet we cannot conceive him, I think, considered simply as a man, to have sustained the whole load of divine vengeance, which would have overwhelmed countless myriads of men through an everlasting duration. By its union to himself, his human nature did not become infinite in power; it was not even endowed with the properties of an angel, but continued the same *essentially* with human nature in all other men." (Dick's Theology.)

Those who imagine that Christ endured all the pain which "the millions of the redeemed were doomed to endure throughout the whole of their being," have taken an improper view of the whole subject. They have considered "our sins to be debts in a literal sense, and the sufferings of Christ to be such a payment as a surety makes in pounds, shillings, pence, and farthings."

Those who have represented "that one drop of the blood of Christ would have been sufficient to redeem the world," have erred on the opposite extreme. According to this, it might well be asked why he shed so many drops as he did, or why he "poured out his soul unto death." Therefore, while we admit that the sufferings of Christ were inconceivably great, we cannot believe that they were infinite in degree. Their transcendent value resulted from the union of the divine with the human nature.

From what has been said, we think it must appear that, through the sufferings and death of Christ, in our room and stead—although something different is accepted, instead of the exact penalty originally denounced—the ends of the divine government are fully answered, the holiness of God is exhibited, the claims of justice satisfied, and thus "mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other;" and a new and living way is opened up for the extension of mercy to fallen man. All difficulties being removed—the law being "magnified and made honorable"—God can stoop to fallen man with offers of pardon, and the throne of justice stands secure.

VI. We conclude the present chapter by noticing a few of the prominent *objections* which have been urged against the view here taken of the atonement.

1. It has been said "that it is derogatory to the divine character to



suppose that God was angry with the human family, and could only be induced to love them by the death of his own Son."

To this we reply, that the doctrine of the atonement sets forth no such idea. It is true the divine justice demanded satisfaction, or the punishment of the criminal; and this fixed principle of the divine administration to punish the guilty is, in Scripture, denominated the *anger*, or *indignation*, of God; but no intelligent divine ever taught or believed that the Almighty is liable to be perturbed by the rage of that passion, in the sense in which it exists with men. This is so far from being true, that "God loved the world" with "the love of pity," or compassion, perhaps quite as much before the atonement was made as after it; yea, it was his love that induced him to send his Son to die for us; and therefore it is plain that this objection is founded upon a false assumption.

2. It has been objected "that it is contrary to justice to punish the innocent for the guilty."

To this we reply, that if the innocent sufferer undertakes voluntarily, in view of a rich reward which is to follow and a greater good which is to result, there is nothing in it contrary to strict justice, as recognized in the practice of the wisest and best of our race in all ages. The objection now under consideration must come with a bad grace from believers in the truth of revelation; for if it be unjust for the innocent to be punished in the room of the guilty, it must be unjust for the innocent to be punished under any circumstances. The ground of the injustice, if there be any, is not that the innocent is punished *for the guilty*, but that he is *punished at all*. Now, if we believe in the truth of revelation, we are compelled to admit, 1. That Christ was *perfectly innocent*—"he did no sin." 2. That he *was punished*—"it pleased the Father to bruise him." These are facts which we must discard our Bible before we can dispute.

The only question, then, for us to determine is, whether it comports more with the principles of strict justice, the purity of the divine administration, and the general tenor of Scripture, to say that the innocent Saviour was punished with the most excruciating pangs for no good cause—for no assignable reason whatever—or, to contend, as we have done, that his sufferings were voluntarily entered upon, in the room and stead of a guilty world of sinners, who had incurred the penalty of a violated law, from which they could only be released by the admission of a substitute. That the former position is far more objectionable than the latter, we think cannot be disputed. If we admit the former, we assume a ground in direct opposition to the plainest principles of



justice, as recognized by all enlightened governments upon earth, and as set forth in the Holy Scriptures; if we admit the latter, we are sustained by the theory and practice of the wisest and best of mankind, as well as the plain teachings of Holy Writ. Therefore the objection may be dismissed, as deserving no farther reply.

3. It has been objected that the view we have taken of the atonement is "contrary to the admitted facts that all men suffer, more or less, the penalty of the violated law in this life, and that some will still continue to suffer it in a future state."

(1) Now it is contended by the objector, that if Christ suffered this penalty in our room and stead, all for whom he suffered should be immediately and forever released therefrom; otherwise a double payment of the claims of justice is exacted, which would be unreasonable and derogatory to the divine administration. The objection here presented lies with full force against the view taken of the atonement by the Antinomians and many of the Calvinists, but it can have no application to that view of the subject which we have presented, and which we believe to be the scriptural account.

(2) Upon the supposition that Christ discharged the exact penalty of the law due from man, in the sense in which a surety would liquidate the debt of an insolvent individual, by the payment of the full demand in dollars and cents, it would most certainly follow that the debtor would be at once and forever discharged from all obligations to the creditor, and justice would require that all for whom the atonement was made should have immediate and complete deliverance from the penalty of the law which they had incurred. But such is far from being the true presentation of the subject. The very idea of a substitute implies that something different from the exact penalty is admitted in its place. And here it must also be confessed, that in the admission of Christ as a substitute, there is a relaxation of the rigor of law; for the Almighty was under no obligations to admit any compromise or commutation whatever, and, in strict justice, might have rejected every substitute, and enforced with rigor the threatened penalty, to the last jot and tittle. But, at the same time, be it remembered, that the admitted relaxation of law was such as was perfectly consistent with justice, such as was calculated to sustain the honor of the divine throne, and such as God might, consistently with his character, admit.

(3) Now, if it be admitted that God was at liberty either to accept or reject the substitute, it will follow that he was at liberty to prescribe the terms on which the substitute should be accepted. And, as God was under no obligations to accept a substitute at all, so he was under



no obligations to extend mercy to the sinner through the substitute. And as the efficacy of the substitute, as such, is based entirely on the will and appointment of God, even so the blessing of pardon and salvation through him is based entirely on the unmerited mercy and free grace of God, who has condescended freely to bring himself under obligations, by his own voluntary promise, to extend mercy to man through the Mediator. Hence it will follow that, as the admission of the substitute, and the promise of mercy through him, were acts of pure favor and free grace on the part of God, so, also, it must be the prerogative of God to fix, by his own will and appointment, not only the degree of suffering to be endured by the substitute, in order that the law may be "magnified and made honorable," and salvation be made possible to man, but also the condition upon which, and the plan according to which, pardon and salvation are to be extended.

(4) Therefore it is clear that the atonement of Christ, taken in the abstract, does not bring God under obligation to extend pardon and salvation, absolutely and unconditionally, to any. The obligations of God to pardon and save the sinner, upon any terms, result not necessarily from the atonement, as such, but from the gracious promise which God has been pleased freely to make. Now it will follow that, as God has not been pleased to promise that all for whom the atonement was made shall be immediately and unconditionally pardoned and released from the penalty of the law, there is no ground for cavil against the doctrine of atonement because all men in the present life suffer to some extent, and some in a future state shall suffer to the full extent, the penalty of the law.

Thus it is clear that the objection taken to the view of the atonement, from the admitted fact that all for whom it was made are not at once and forever released from the penalty of the law, falls to the ground.

The great truth is, that salvation, through the atonement, is not a system either of *prevention*, or of *absolute and immediate deliverance*, but of deliverance, according to a *prescribed plan*, which the Scriptures sufficiently unfold.



## QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER XVIII.

- QUESTION 1.** What is admitted in reference to the death of Christ, by Socinians, Arians, Unitarians, etc.?
2. What are the points in dispute contended for in this chapter?
  3. What is the first argument presented to prove that Christ died *as a substitute*?
  4. What are the scriptures adduced?
  5. What is the proof from the use of the Greek preposition *anti*?
  6. What is the first class of texts appealed to, to prove that the death of Christ was both *vicarious* and *expiatory*?
  7. What are the scriptures adduced?
  8. What passages speak of reconciliation, propitiation, etc., as connected with the death of Christ?
  9. What passages speak of salvation under the appellation of *redemption*?
  10. What passages connect justification, remission, sanctification, etc., with the death of Christ?
  11. After man had sinned, what was the only way by which he could be released from the penalty?
  12. How can it be shown that the sufferings of Christ in our room and stead meet the ends of divine government?
  13. What are these ends?
  14. What is said in reference to the exalted character of Christ?
  15. In reference to the freeness with which he suffered?
  16. In reference to the nature and extent of his sufferings?
  17. What is the first objection mentioned to the view taken of the atonement?
  18. How is it answered?
  19. What is the second, and how is it answered?
  20. What is the third, and how is it answered?
  21. Is God under obligations to save the sinner on any terms?
  22. Whence do those obligations originate?
  23. Is salvation through the atonement a system of prevention?



## CHAPTER XIX.

## THE ATONEMENT—ITS EXTENT—VARIOUS THEORIES EXHIBITED.

A CONSIDERATION of the *extent* of the atonement, or an examination of the question, *For whom are the benefits of the death of Christ designed?* opens to our view one of the most interesting and important subjects connected with Christian theology.

From a very early period, upon this subject, the Church has been much divided in sentiment; and from the days of Calvin and Arminius to the present time, the great contending parties, in reference to the subject now before us, have been designated as Calvinists and Arminians.

Without, in this place, entering into consideration of the origin and history of the controversy here referred to, suffice it to say that the two great and learned men above named so systematized and arranged the peculiar views for which they contended, in reference to the extent of the atonement, and so impressed them with the indelible marks of their comprehensive and gigantic minds, that posterity, by common consent, have hitherto connected, and perhaps will still continue to connect, the names of Calvin and Arminius with the peculiar systems of doctrine for which they respectively contended.

When we reflect on the great number, extensive erudition, and eminent piety, of the divines who have been enrolled on either side in this controversy, we are at once admonished of the propriety of caution and calmness in the investigation of this subject, and of respectful forbearance of feeling toward those with whom we differ in judgment. Yet, at the same time, as this is a subject upon which the Bible is by no means silent, and one which must be decided by that book alone, and as it is made the duty of all to "search the Scriptures" for themselves, we may venture, in the fear of God, impartially to examine for ourselves, and to bring the points at issue to the test of reason and Scripture.

To enter minutely into the consideration of all the shades of difference in the sentiments, and technicalities of the arguments, which have been presented, by such as have been denominated Calvinists or Arminians, would be an interminable task. Upon no subject in divinity



has controversy been more voluminous, and it has seldom been more virulent, than too frequently it has been, in the discussion under consideration.

Before we enter particularly into the merits of the main question between Calvinists and Arminians, it may be proper briefly to advert to some of the views entertained by some who have properly belonged to neither of the two great divisions of Christians above named.

With regard to Arians, Socinians, Unitarians, etc., it may here be observed, that as they deny the proper divinity of Christ, without which he would be incapable of making an atonement, so they deny the native depravity of man, without which the atonement would not be necessary; and, in perfect consistency with these principles, they also deny the reality of the atonement itself, and consequently there is no place in their system for the application of its benefits.

There is, however, another scheme that we will here briefly notice, which, while it admits the native depravity of man, and the reality of the atonement through Christ, yet, so far as the application of the benefits of the atonement is concerned, it is essentially different both from Calvinism and Arminianism. We refer to a certain class of Universalists, who have so construed the extent of the atonement as thereby to secure absolute and unconditional salvation to all mankind. As the general system of Universalism will be a subject of special consideration in another place, a very brief reply to the particular feature of that system above named is all that we here deem necessary. The scheme itself is evidently based upon an erroneous view of the whole matter.

So to understand the atonement as thereby necessarily to secure the absolute and unconditional salvation of all mankind, would represent the work of redemption as a commercial transaction between the Father and the Son, by which the Son made a fair purchase of the human family, by paying down on the cross of Calvary an adequate price for the unconditional redemption of the whole world; and that, consequently, justice can never have any claim upon any to punish them hereafter. It is true, as hereafter may be more fully seen, that many Calvinists take the same view of the atonement, only that they limit it to the elect portion of the human family, and, so far as they are concerned, secure, by the death of Christ, their absolute and unconditional salvation, while the rest of mankind are "passed by," and left to perish in their sins, without the possibility of escape.

But the whole scheme, whether adopted by Universalists or Calvinists, we conceive to be based upon a false and unscriptural assumption. The Scriptures nowhere represent the atonement in the light of a



*commercial transaction*, but everywhere it is presented as a *governmental arrangement*. Were we to admit the premises, and take the view here presented of the nature of the atonement, then it would inevitably follow that all for whom the atonement was made would necessarily be saved; and the only controversy between Calvinists and Universalists would be, to determine whether the atonement was made for *all*, or only for a *part*; as both parties would be compelled to admit that all for whom Christ died to atone would most assuredly be saved.

That this commercial or credit-and-debtor view of the subject is erroneous and unscriptural, will be obvious when we reflect that it tends directly to banish from the scheme of redemption the whole system of grace. If the Saviour has purchased, by the payment of an equivalent, the salvation absolute of all for whom he died, then it follows that the Father is under obligations, in strict justice, to save them; consequently their salvation, so far as God the Father is concerned, cannot be of mercy or grace, but of debt; and the entire display of the divine benevolence, in the eternal salvation of sinners, is reduced to a fiction.

The truth is, the atonement, of itself, brings the Almighty under no obligations to extend salvation to the world. It is true, that without the atonement none could be saved; but *that* alone does not secure inevitably and necessarily the salvation of any. Salvation is emphatically of *grace*. The atonement removes the difficulties which stood in the way of man's salvation. These difficulties were, a *broken law*, and *the unsatisfied claims of divine justice*. While these barriers were in the way, God could not, however much he might have been disposed, consistently with his nature, extend mercy to man. The removal of these impediments—the magnifying of the broken law, and the satisfying of the demands of justice—was the great work of the atonement.

But the great difficulties which, without the atonement, rendered it impossible for God to extend mercy to man, being by the atonement removed, it does not necessarily follow that God is under obligations to extend mercy to man: it only follows that he *may*, if he *please*. And thus it appears that salvation is all of the free, unmerited grace of God. The atonement, *considered in the abstract*, leaves the Almighty free either to extend or withhold pardoning mercy; whereas, without the atonement, he was not free to extend mercy, but was bound to withhold it. All the obligations which God is under, even now, to save the sinner, flow not *necessarily from the atonement*, as a matter of debt, but from the *gracious promise of God*, which he has been pleased to make, through his mere mercy and benevolence. Hence we perceive that the



idea that God is under obligations to save all men, unconditionally, on account of the atonement of Christ, is so far from being correct, that he is, on that account, under no necessary obligations to save any.

And if the Almighty be free to extend or withhold mercy, according to his good pleasure, it necessarily follows that he has a right to fix the conditions of salvation as he may please. And as he has promised salvation to those who repent and believe, and threatened destruction to those who refuse, it is clear that there is no hope for such as reject the conditions of salvation as presented in the gospel, but they must perish everlastingly; and as we have clearly shown, the Universalist delusion must perish with them.

We will proceed to the consideration of the extent of the atonement, in which is involved the great matter of controversy between Calvinists and Arminians. We shall not attempt to amplify the subject, so as particularly to examine every thing which able divines have presented, either as illustration or argument, on either side. It shall be our main object to arrange and condense, so as to bring the essential point of inquiry to as narrow a compass as possible.

Notwithstanding Calvinists have differed with each other considerably in their manner of presenting this subject, yet we think this difference has generally consisted either in words, or in points not materially affecting the main question. There is *one great point* upon which every Calvinistic author of note, so far as we have been able to ascertain, has differed from all genuine Arminians. In that great and leading point is concentrated the substance of the whole controversy, and upon its settlement depends the adjustment of all questions of any real importance connected with the subject. The point referred to is embraced in the following question: *Does the atonement of Christ so extend to all men as to make salvation possible for them?* By all genuine Calvinists this question is answered in the negative; but by all genuine Arminians, it is answered in the affirmative.

I. Before we proceed directly to the discussion of the question here presented, we will notice *several different views of the subject, taken by learned and eminent Calvinists*, and show that they all perfectly harmonize when they come to the question above presented.

The following will be found to contain the substance of the principal Calvinistic theories upon this subject, viz.:

1. *That the atonement of Christ is specially limited, in its nature, design, and benefits, to the elect portion of mankind, so that Christ died for them alone; that he represented them alone in the covenant of redemption, and that "neither are any other redeemed by Christ."*



And that consequently none but the elect have any possible chance of salvation.

The foregoing is, no doubt, the strict Calvinistic view, as contained in the writings of Calvin himself, and set forth in the "Westminster Confession of Faith," which is at once the standard of the Church of Scotland and of the English and American Presbyterians. Yet it must be admitted that even the abettors of this system acknowledge that all men, by virtue of the atonement of Christ, are favored with temporal mercies, and what they term a "common call" of the gospel, which, however, they contend, cannot possibly lead to, nor are they designed to result in, their eternal salvation.

2. A second scheme is, *that the atonement of Christ possessed sufficient value in its nature to satisfy fully for all the sins of the whole world; but that it was not designed, nor can it possibly be extended in its application, so as to make salvation possible to any but the elect.*

It will be readily perceived that this scheme is not essentially variant from the first. Indeed, it has been advocated by a goodly number of the most eminent divines of the strictly Calvinistic Churches. The only point in which it might seem to differ from the first is, that it allows a sufficiency in the *nature* of the atonement to avail for the salvation of all; but that sufficiency in nature is completely neutralized by the declaration that, according to the intent and purpose of God, the *application* cannot possibly be made to any but the elect. This system is what has sometimes been termed *general redemption*, with a *particular application*. But to call this a scheme of *general redemption* is a palpable abuse of language; for if, according to the design and decree of God, it is absolutely impossible for any but the elect to obtain the benefits of the atonement, redemption, so far as the rest of mankind are concerned, is only in name, and amounts to a perfect nullity; so that there is no real difference between this and the first system.

3. A third system is, *that the atonement was not only sufficient, but was also designed for the salvation of all mankind; and that the gospel should therefore be preached with sincerity alike to all; but that none but the elect can ever possibly be saved by it, because none others will believe and obey it; and that this is certain, because none can possibly believe unless God, by the invincible influence of his Spirit, give them faith, and this he has decreed from all eternity to withhold from all but the elect.*

The substance of this system is this:—Christ has purchased a conditional salvation for all men. Faith is this condition; but, according to the decree and arrangement of God, this faith cannot possibly be obtained by any but the elect.



The above is substantially the scheme advocated by the pious Baxter, which he adopted from Camero, and introduced with the avowed purpose of steering a medium course between rigid Calvinism and Arminianism. It is, likewise, little different from the views advocated by Dr. Samuel Hopkins, and many other divines, of the last and the present century, both in Europe and America.

Calvinists of this class appear, to persons not well versed in the technicalities of their system, to exhibit the gospel call with as much unreserved fullness and freeness to all mankind as Arminians possibly can do. They offer salvation to all, urge all to repent and believe, and assure all that they have a sufficiency of grace to enable them to repent and believe, and that if they are not saved they will be condemned for their unbelief, and it will be their own fault. When their discourses are richly interlarded with such expressions as the above, it is not surprising that many should be unable to distinguish their doctrine from genuine Arminianism; but although they, no doubt, think they can, consistently with their creed, express themselves as they do, and should therefore be exonerated from any intention to mislead, yet it is most evident that, when we allow their own explanation to be placed upon their language, so far from harmonizing in sentiment with genuine Arminians, they differ in nothing essentially from rigid Calvinists of the Old School.

That we may understand correctly what they mean when they use such language as we have above quoted, it will be necessary for us to attend strictly to their own interpretation of the terms.

(1) Then, when they offer salvation indiscriminately to all, they sometimes tell us that they are justified in doing so, because the elect, who only have the power, in the proper sense, and who *only* are really intended to embrace it, are so mixed up among the general mass of all nations to whom the gospel is sent, that none but God can determine who they are; therefore the gospel call is general, and should be indiscriminately presented, that all for whose salvation it was really designed may embrace it, and that others may have the opportunity of willfully rejecting it, which they will most certainly do, because God has determined to withhold from them that *faith* without which the gospel cannot be properly received.

(2) When they urge all to repent and believe, they endeavor to justify themselves by alleging, that although man has lost the power to obey, God has not lost the right to command; that it is still the duty of all men to repent and believe the gospel; that salvation is sincerely offered to all upon these conditions; and that, if they do not comply



with the conditions, God is not to blame, for he is under obligations to confer saving faith upon none.

(3) When they say that all have a sufficiency of grace to enable them to repent and believe, and consequently to be saved, we must look narrowly at their own interpretation of the term *sufficiency*. When they use this word, and kindred terms, such as *power*, *ability*, etc., they do not attach to them their full import, according to their usual acceptation in language, but by resorting to the subtleties of philological distinction, and applying to these terms several different meanings, they fix upon a certain sense in which they think they can be used in reference to the salvation of all men. This sense, although it may be different from the generally received import of the terms, we may reasonably suppose is always present with their minds when they use the terms as above specified.

By the phrase "*sufficient grace*," as used by these divines, in reference to such as are not of the elect portion of mankind, we are not to understand invincible effectual grace, such as they affirm is given to the elect, but merely "*sufficient ineffectual grace*," as Baxter himself termed it. What he understood thereby, is sufficiently evident from his own words, as follows: "I say it again, confidently, all men that perish, (who have the use of reason,) do perish directly for rejecting sufficient recovering grace. By grace, I mean mercy contrary to merit. By recovering, I mean such as *tendeth* in its own nature toward their recovery, and leadeth, or helpeth, them thereto. By sufficient, I mean, *not sufficient directly to save them*, (for such none of the elect have till they are saved;) *nor yet sufficient to give them faith, or cause them savingly to believe*. But it is sufficient to bring them *nearer* Christ than they are, though not to put them into immediate possession of Christ by union with him, as faith would do." (Universal Redemption, p. 434.)

These words of Baxter may be considered a just comment on the language of all Calvinists, when they speak of a sufficiency of *grace* being given to all men. They mean a sufficiency to do them some good, "to bring them *nearer* Christ," and even a sufficiency to save them, if they would believe; but this they cannot do, because God withholds saving faith from them. It is difficult to understand the term "*sufficient grace*," as used above, to signify any thing different from *insufficient grace*. So far as the question of salvation is concerned, which is the only point of any importance herein involved, the term *sufficient* is entirely explained away, so as to be made a perfect nullity. And thus this system is left, notwithstanding it professes to give a sufficiency of *grace* to all mankind, in no essential point different from rigid Calvinism.



(4) Again: when Calvinists present the offer of salvation to all, and declare that God willeth not the damnation of any, in order to reconcile these terms, which seem to imply a real provision and possibility for the salvation of all, with the true principles of their creed, they resort to a distinction between what they term the *revealed* and *secret* will of God. It is, say they, according to the revealed will of God that all men should repent and believe, and consequently be saved; but it is according to the secret will of God that none shall receive the grace to enable them to repent and believe, but the elect; and consequently that salvation is, in the proper sense, *possible to none others*.

As a farther illustration, and as an evidence that we have not here misinterpreted the true sentiments of Calvinists, we present the following quotation from a late Calvinistic author of great learning and eminence:

"The Calvinists say that these counsels and commands, which are intended by God to produce their full effect only with regard to the elect, are addressed indifferently to all for this reason: because it was not revealed to the writers of the New Testament, nor is it now revealed to the ministers of the gospel, who the elect are. The Lord knoweth them that are his; but he hath not given this knowledge to any of the children of men. We are not warranted to infer from the former sins of any person that he shall not, at some future period, be conducted by the grace of God to repentance; and therefore we are not warranted to infer that the counsels and exhortations of the divine word, which are some of the instruments of the grace of God, shall finally prove vain with regard to any individual. But although it is in this way impossible for a discrimination to be made in the manner of publishing the gospel, and although many may receive the calls and commands of the gospel who are not in the end to be saved, the Calvinists do not admit that even with regard to them these calls and commands are wholly without effect. For they say that the publication of the gospel is attended with real benefit even to those who are not elected. It points out to them their duty; it restrains them from flagrant transgressions, which would be productive of much present inconvenience, and would aggravate their future condemnation; it has contributed to the diffusion and enlargement of moral and religious knowledge, to the refinement of manners, and to the general welfare of society. And it exhibits such a view of the condition of man, and of the grace from which the remedy proceeds, as magnifies both the righteousness and the compassion of the Supreme Ruler, and leaves without excuse those who continue in sin.



“The Calvinists say farther, that although these general uses of the publication of the gospel come very far short of that saving benefit which is confined to the elect, there is no want of meaning or of sincerity in the expostulations of Scripture, or in its reproaches and pathetic expressions of regret with regard to those who do not obey the counsels and commands that are addressed to all. For these counsels and commands declare what is the duty of all, what they feel they ought to perform, what is essential to their present and their future happiness, and what no physical necessity prevents them from doing. There is, indeed, a moral inability—a defect—in their will. But the very object of counsels and commands is to remove this defect; and if such a defect rendered it improper for the Supreme Ruler to issue commands, every sin would carry with it its own excuse, and the creatures of God might always plead that they were absolved from the obligation of his law, because they were indisposed to obey it. It is admitted by the Calvinists that the moral inability in those who are not elected is of such a kind as will infallibly prevent their obeying the commands of God; and it is a part of their system that the Being who issues these commands has resolved to withhold from such persons the grace which alone is sufficient to remove that inability. In accounting for these commands, therefore, they are obliged to have recourse to a distinction between the secret and the revealed will of God. They understand by his revealed will that which is preceptive, which declares the duty of his creatures, containing commands agreeable to the sentiments of their minds and the constitution of their nature, and delivering promises which shall certainly be fulfilled to all who obey the commands. They understand by his secret will, his own purpose in distributing his favors and arranging the condition of his creatures—a purpose which is founded upon the wisest reasons, and is infallibly carried into execution by his sovereign power, but which, not being made known to his creatures, cannot possibly be the rule of their conduct.” (Hill’s Lectures.)

There is, perhaps, only a *shade* of difference between the theory of Baxter and Hopkins, as above delineated, which has been held by a large portion of the Calvinistic Churches since their day, and the more modern phase of the subject called “New Divinity,” and advocated generally by New School Presbyterians, and the Congregationalists of New England. We must, however, reserve the examination of this subject for our next chapter.



## QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER XIX.

- QUESTION 1. Has there been much diversity of sentiment in the Church relative to the *extent* of the atonement?
2. Into what two great parties have Christians been divided on this subject?
3. Why should caution and forbearance be exercised on this subject?
4. Has this controversy always been conducted in a proper spirit?
5. What is the view of Arians, Socinians, etc., in reference to the extent of the atonement?
6. What peculiar view is taken by a certain class of Universalists?
7. Upon what false assumption is this scheme based?
8. Has the same view of the nature of atonement been adopted by any others?
9. Do the Scriptures present the atonement in the light of a commercial transaction?
10. In what light, then?
11. To admit this view of the nature of atonement, would the salvation of all for whom it was made necessarily follow?
12. What, then, would be the controversy between Calvinists and Universalists?
13. How is this scheme refuted?
14. In what great question is embraced the substance of the controversy between Calvinists and Arminians?
15. What are the three different views taken by Calvinists on this subject?
16. Is there any essential difference in these schemes on the subject of the main question?
17. What distinguished divines are mentioned as having advocated the latter?
18. How have Calvinists endeavored to justify themselves in offering salvation to all?
19. Have they in this way successfully vindicated their consistency?
20. What does Mr. Baxter mean by the phrase "sufficient grace"?
21. What does Dr. Hill mean by *moral inability*, and by the *revealed* and the *secret* will of God?



## CHAPTER XX.

### THE ATONEMENT—ITS EXTENT—MORE MODERN PHASES OF CALVINISM EXAMINED.

IN the controversy which, for a century past, has been conducted with so much zeal between Calvinism and Arminianism, it cannot be denied that the advocates of Calvinism have greatly changed their form of presenting, and their method of defending, that system. The phase of Calvinism, as generally set forth in this country at the present day, is materially modified from what it was half a century ago. An exemplification of this fact is, perhaps, nowhere more clearly witnessed than in connection with the New School Presbyterians. Indeed, it was the introduction of a new method of setting forth the Calvinistic doctrines which mainly contributed to the division of the Presbyterian Church in the United States into the New and the Old School branches.

In our preceding chapter, we think we have clearly shown that Calvinism, in all its different phases, and in all its various costumes, in the same Churches at different times, and in different Churches at all times, has ever been, and still continues to be, essentially the same: the changes having been merely modal, its identity essential. We have, however, deemed it proper to devote a brief chapter to the consideration of that system, as presented generally in the present day, and especially by the New School Presbyterians, and the New England Congregationalists.

I. *We will first explain this "new divinity," as it pertains to the essential feature in question.*

We choose to do this by a few citations from some reputable authors.

The Rev. Albert Barnes, an accredited exponent of the doctrine in question, in his sermon entitled "The Way of Salvation," expresses himself thus: "This atonement was for all men. It was an offering made for the race. It had not respect so much to *individuals*, as to the *law* and *perfections* of God. It was an opening of the way for pardon—a making forgiveness consistent—a preserving of truth—a magnifying of the law; and had no particular reference to any class of men. We judge that he died for all. He tasted death for every man. He



is the propitiation for the sins of the world. He came, that whosoever would believe on him should not perish, but have eternal life. The full benefit of this atonement is offered to all men. In perfect sincerity God makes the offer. He has commissioned his servants to go and preach the gospel—that is, the good news that salvation is provided for them—to every creature. He that does not this—that goes to offer the gospel to a part only, to elect persons only, or that supposes that God offers the gospel only to a portion of mankind—violates his commission, practically charges God with insincerity, makes himself ‘wise above what is written,’ and brings great reproach on the holy cause of redemption. The offer of salvation is not made by *man*, but by *God*. It is his commission; and it is his solemn charge that the sincere offer of heaven should be made to every creature. I stand as the messenger of God, with the assurance that all that *will* may be saved; that the atonement was full and free; and that, if any perish, it will be because they choose to die, and not because they are straitened in God. I have no fellow-feeling for any other gospel: I have no right-hand of fellowship to extend to any scheme that does not say that God sincerely offers all the bliss of heaven to every guilty, wandering child of Adam.”

From this extract, who would suppose that its author was not an Arminian of the boldest type? Here is exhibited a general, a *universal*, atonement for every child of Adam—a provision, rich, full, and free, to be sincerely tendered to *all mankind*. Is not this real Wesleyan Arminianism? Such, truly, it seems! But, strange to think! the author is still a Calvinist. Subscribing to the “Westminster Confession of Faith,” he still holds to predestination, the eternal decrees, foreordination, effectual calling, in the strict, unconditional sense. When he exclaimed, “I stand as the messenger of God, with the assurance that all that *will* may be saved,” he inserted the little emphatic word “*will*,” which still enables him to moor his bark in the Calvinistic harbor.

It is the theory of Mr. Barnes, and of the New School Calvinists generally, that Christ died for *all*; that the atonement is ample for *all*; that God invites *all*; that God wills that *all* should come to Christ and be saved. They proclaim these Bible truths with impassioned earnestness, so that one could hardly suppose it possible that they did not believe that God had provided a *possible* salvation alike for all men. But yet, their theory admits no such thing. They hold that while the atonement is ample to save all, *if* they would but accept it, that yet, such is the native depravity of the human heart, that no man *will*, or *can*, accept of the salvation offered, unless God first, by invincible sov-



ereign grace, imparts the *will* to repent, believe, and obey the gospel; and they farther hold, as strictly as do Calvinists of the Old School, that God has determined from all eternity to impart this sovereign converting grace only to the elect of God embraced in the covenant of redemption. They farther admit that these elect of God, until God visits them with his invincible converting grace, are quite as wicked, and as *averse* to the exercise of true repentance and faith, as the rest of mankind whom God sees fit to "pass by," and leave to perish for their sins.

Yet they still contend strenuously, that if men perish, it is altogether their own fault; and that God in perfect sincerity makes the offer of salvation to all men alike. But how do they reconcile all this with the doctrine of the "Confession of Faith" to which they all subscribe? This is the point now to be examined.

Calvinists of this class play upon the word *will*, telling us that all the inability of the reprobate sinner to come to Christ results from his own perverse *will*; that he *might* be saved *if he would*, but as he freely *wills* to reject Christ, he is justly accountable for his unbelief and sin, though they can show us no way, according to their theory, by which this unbelief and sin, for which they are held responsible, may be removed, or overcome. When they speak of the *ability* of all men to believe and be saved, they understand by the term *ability* something far short of the full import of that word as commonly used. They resort to the subtlety of philosophy, and make a distinction between *natural* and *moral* ability. By the former, they mean the *physical powers* necessary to the performance of any specific act; by the latter, they mean the *mental state, or condition of the will or heart*, necessary to the performance of the act in question. Hence, when they say that all men may believe and be saved, they only mean that they have the *natural powers* necessary to saving faith; but that those natural powers must necessarily be unavailing in all except the elect, because they cannot be exerted without the *moral ability*, which none can possess unless God see proper, by his invincible sovereign grace, to confer it. But as he has decreed from all eternity to withhold this grace from all except the elect, it is certain, according to this theory, that none others will, or can, be saved.

To show that we do not misstate their views in reference to *natural* and *moral* ability, we make a few quotations from their own writers.

Dr. John Smalley says: "*Moral inability* consists only in the want of heart, or disposition, or will, to do a thing. *Natural inability*, on the other hand, consists in, or arises from, want of understanding, bodily strength, opportunity, or whatever may prevent our doing a thing when we are willing, and strongly enough disposed or inclined, to do it."



Andrew Fuller says: "We suppose that the propensities of mankind to evil are so strong as to become invincible to every thing but omnipotent grace. . . . It is *natural* power, and that only, that is properly so called, and which is necessary to render men accountable beings."

In the Princeton Review, (April, 1854, page 246,) *moral inability* is defined as "a rooted propensity to evil, and aversion to good; a moral bias, which man has not the requisite power to remove."

Mr. Barnes, in the sermon from which we have quoted, in speaking of *natural ability*, says: "It is not to any want of physical strength that this rejection is owing, for men have power enough in themselves to *hate* both God and their fellow-men: it requires *less* physical power to *love* God than to *hate* him." Here the position assumed by Mr. Barnes is, that because men have the requisite "*physical power*" to "love God," therefore they are responsible for rejecting Christ; although, according to his own theory, they are by nature involved in a *moral inability* which must forever neutralize that "*physical power*." We might multiply quotations from Calvinistic writers, both Old and New School, on this point, but we have said enough to evince clearly what they mean by their distinction between *natural* and *moral* ability, and that they ground human responsibility *solely on natural ability*.

We, however, with special reference to New School divinity, present a few additional remarks.

The following propositions, which we quote from the *Bibliotheca Sacra*, were subscribed to by a number of the New School divines, for the express purpose of demonstrating that their theory of Calvinism was consistent with the "Confession of Faith."

1. "While sinners have all the faculties necessary to a perfect moral agency and a just accountability, such is their love of sin and opposition to God and his law, that, *independently of the renewing influence or almighty energy of the Holy Spirit, they never will comply with the commands of God.*" (April No., 1863, page 585.)

2. "While repentance for sin and faith in Christ are indispensable to salvation, *all who are saved are indebted from first to last to the grace and Spirit of God.* And the reason that God does not save all, is not that he lacks the power to do it, but that *in his wisdom he does not see fit to exert that power farther than he actually does.*" (July No., 1863, page 585.)

3. "While the liberty of the will is not impaired, nor the established connection between means and end broken by any action of God on the mind, he can influence it according to his pleasure, and *does effectually determine it to good in all cases of true conversion.*" (July No., 1863, page 586.)



4. "While all such as reject the gospel of Christ, do it not by coercion, but freely, and all who embrace it, do it not by coercion, but freely, *the reason why some differ from others is, that God has made them to differ.*" (July No., 1863, page 586.)

It is not to our purpose to inquire into all the shades of difference in opinion between New and Old School Calvinists. We have numbered the foregoing propositions, and have italicized parts of them, for our own convenience in commenting upon them. In general terms, we remark that they are so ingeniously framed, that while the superficial examiner might construe them as favoring Arminianism, yet, upon closer scrutiny, it may be clearly seen that they are so worded as to admit of being dove-tailed into old-fashioned Calvinism, as homogeneous to the same system.

In No. 1, the "*almighty energy* of the Holy Spirit" is referred to, without which the sinner "*never will* comply with the commands of God." This means, in Old School dialect, the "effectual call"—the "secret, invincible, regenerating grace"—without which none can *will* to come to Christ. None without this grace can be saved; consequently the salvation of those from whom this grace is withheld, is *beyond the range of possibility*.

In No. 2, the Calvinistic dogma that the sinner *can do nothing* toward his salvation, but that he is as passive and helpless in the case as the clay in the hand of the potter, is fully implied in the terms, "*are indebted from first to last to the grace and Spirit of God*"—that is, repentance and faith on the part of the sinner have nothing to do with his salvation, whether as *conditions* or otherwise. And more plainly still, we are here taught that the *reason why all are not saved* is this: God "in his wisdom does not see fit to exert that (his saving) power any farther in that way"—that is, the reason of their not being saved is altogether with God; it results solely from *his sovereign will*.

In No. 3, the "invincible sovereign grace which God sees fit to bestow upon the *elect*, but to withhold from all others," is clearly secured. God can "influence" the *will* "according to his pleasure, and does *effectually determine it to good*:" this is only the "invincible grace" of "effectual calling," with the phraseology slightly modified. The language is changed—the sense is identical with Old Calvinism.

In No. 4, the entire question of salvation or damnation is removed from the door of the sinner, and devolved solely upon God. If men "differ" in moral or religious character, it is because "*God has made them to differ.*" The sinner is not the custodian of his own moral character. If one is *good*, and another *bad*—if one is a *believer*, and the



other an *infidel*—we are taught that “the reason why is, that *God has made them to differ.*”

It is plain, from the quotations given, that the New School as well as the Old hold that none ever *will*, or, in the proper sense of the word, *can*, be saved, except God, by the exertion of his power, in a manner in which he does not see fit to exert it upon others, *makes them willing to repent and believe, thus making them to differ from others.* Hence, according to this theory, as God has determined not to exert this power on *any* but the “elect,” and as none *can be saved* without it, it follows that salvation is not made possible for all men.

II. *We now proceed to show that their whole theory, with their distinctions about natural and moral ability and inability, is erroneous—inconsistent with the philosophy of language, and the nature of things.*

The terms, *natural* and *moral ability*, have evidently been coined and pressed into this discussion by Calvinists to answer a purpose. They are used in a variety of acceptations—some proper, and some improper. Often they are ambiguous—convenient handmaids of sophistry, serving to obscure the truth, or to make error pass for truth. They are, as used in theology, an outbirth of Augustinian predestination—a material out of which has been woven a fabric to cover up some of the most rugged and distasteful features of Calvinism.

Allowed to occupy their proper place, *natural* and *moral* are adjectives of very plain import. *Natural*, says Webster, means “pertaining to nature; produced or effected by nature, or by the laws of growth, formation, or motion, impressed on bodies or beings by divine power.” *Moral*, says Webster, “denotes something which respects the conduct of men—something which respects the intellectual powers of man, as distinct from his physical powers.” Webster defines *ability* to mean “power,” whether *physical, intellectual*, or of whatever kind.

Hence it is easy to understand these terms in their proper literal import. To have *ability* for any thing, is to possess all the power requisite for it. Ability to *do* any thing, implies all the power necessary to the performance of the act. If several powers are necessary to the performance of a specific act—if it can only be performed by the possession of *all those powers*—we cannot have *ability* for it while we lack *any one* of those powers.

The distinction made by Calvinistic divines between *natural* and *moral* ability, is not only at war with the philosophy of language, but with the nature of things. Agreeably to Webster, or any good lexicographer, the *moral* powers (so called) are as *natural* as the *physical*. Is not the intellect, the will, or the moral sense, as *natural*—as much an



element of our constitution—as our physical powers? Are not the *moral* powers really only one phase or species of the *natural*? In a word, is not the *moral ability* of these divines as much *natural* as their *natural ability*? And if so, is not the dividing of ability into *natural* and *moral*, manifestly inaccurate?

“The will,” says Dr. Whedon, (see Whedon on the “Freedom of the Will,”) “is as natural a power as the intellect or the corporeal strength. The volitions are as truly natural as any bodily act. The will is a natural part of the human soul. The ability or inability of the will is a natural ability or inability. There is no faculty more natural than the will, or that stands above it, or antithetical to it, as more eminently natural. On the other hand, to make moral volitional is absurd; for many acts of the *will* belong not to the sphere of morals. They are not moral or ethical acts, and therefore they exert no moral ability; and so, again, the power to will is not a moral, but a natural, ability.”

The same author continues: “This misuse of terms infringes upon and tends to supplant their legitimate application to their proper significates. There is a proper natural ability, moral ability, and *gracious ability*, to which these terms should be exclusively applied.

“Natural ability, or abilities, include all the abilities or powers with which a man is born, or into which he grows. Natural is hereby often antithetical to acquired. The term ability includes capabilities of body or mind; of mind, including intellect, will, or moral sense.

“*Moral ability*, being a species under natural ability, is every power of the body or mind viewed as capable of being exerted for a moral or immoral purpose.

“*Gracious ability* is an ability, whether of body or soul, conferred by divine goodness over and above the abilities possessed by man by nature—that is, as a born and growing creature.”

The purpose for which the Calvinistic thesis respecting natural and moral ability was invented, was to find a plausible ground of human responsibility, consistently with the tenets of Calvinism. In addition to the abuse of terms which, as we have shown, the scheme involves, we now proceed to show that—

III. *The scheme itself is not only absurd and self-contradictory, but that it fails to furnish any rational ground of human responsibility; and, consequently, does not essentially differ from the doctrine of the Old School, on the main question between them and Arminians.*

1. The gist of the whole thesis about natural and moral ability with these divines, whether they rank as New or Old School, is, that they assume that man has *natural ability* to embrace salvation, and that *this*



alone furnishes ample ground of responsibility. The fallacy lies in this: they assume that because a man possesses a *kind* of ability, therefore he is responsible for not performing a certain duty, which can only be performed by the exercise of *another kind* of ability which he does not possess—that is, because we have a *natural* ability, we are responsible for not doing what it is impossible for us to do without a *moral* ability.

Now, we demand, is it not clear that if responsibility connects with *power* to do what is required at all, it must be an *adequate power*? Mr. Barnes endeavors to show that, because a man has “physical strength,” he is responsible for not receiving Christ into his heart.” The power to perform any given act amounts to nothing, unless it can avail in reference to that act. Unless it can do *this*, it is *no power* at all in the case. Because a child has power to read a verse in his English Testament, will you chastise him for not reading it in the Greek, of which he is perfectly ignorant? No man *can* receive salvation by the exercise of mere *natural ability*, any more than he can create a world. How, then, can he be justly responsible for not accepting salvation, merely because of his natural ability? Must the sinner be “punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord” for not obeying the gospel, merely because he had *natural ability*, though he had not *moral ability*, without which he could no more obey the gospel than he could stop the course of nature?

2. But again, this scheme is as self-contradictory as it is absurd. Ability to do any particular thing, means all the power essential to the performance of that thing. Hence, if I have a natural ability to accept salvation, I must also have moral ability. If natural ability does not include all the ability essential to the act in question, it is *no ability*; for ability for any thing includes all the power essential to its performance.

In the nature of things, I can have no natural ability to do any thing, unless I first have the moral ability. Moral ability implies the *will*—the *state* or *disposition* of the heart. Now, how can I get up and walk, unless I am *willing* to do so? I must first have the *will* before I can perform any act of duty whatever—that is, I must first have the *moral* before I *can* have the *natural* ability for it. If I lack the *moral* ability to come to Christ for salvation, I can have *no ability* whatever for that duty. *Natural ability* in the case is an absurdity. I can have no *natural* ability in opposition to, or in the absence of, moral ability. Hence, to found human responsibility upon *natural*, in the absence of *moral*, ability, is to found it upon a *nullity*—upon *no ability*—upon an *impossibility*.



Dr. Whedon pertinently remarks: "Where there is no *moral ability*, there can be no *natural ability*. Where there is no power to will, there is no power to execute the behest of the will. That behest cannot be obeyed if it cannot exist. If there be no adequate power for the given volition, there is no volition to obey, and so no power to obey. An impossible volition cannot be fulfilled. If a man through counter motive force has no power to *will* otherwise than sin, he has no sequent power to *do* otherwise than sin. If a man has not the power to will right, he has not the power to act right. An agent can perform a bodily act only through his will. And as it is a universal law that no agent can *do* what he cannot *will*, so it is a universal truth, that where there is no power of will, there is no bodily power to fulfill the volition which cannot exist. What a man cannot *will*, that he cannot *do*—that is, where there is no *moral ability*, there can be no *natural ability*. Hence it is helplessly absurd to propose 'natural ability,' in the absence of 'moral ability,' as a ground of responsibility."

3. But again, there is another kind of ability of vastly more consequence than either *natural* or *moral* ability. We mean *gracious ability*. To speak of responsibility in reference to salvation being founded on natural or moral ability, or both of them together, is to ignore the express teachings of the Saviour, who says: "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light." Responsibility, it is true, depends to some extent on all these powers—physical, intellectual, and volitional—so far as they can aid us in the service of God; but all *these* powers together cannot make up that ability, out of the use or abuse of which our responsibility mainly arises. The salvation or destruction of the soul turns solely upon the use or abuse of that *gracious ability* which God, through the atonement of Christ and the influence of the Holy Spirit, imparts to every sinner. Here is the ground of that responsibility which all must meet in the final judgment. If *there* condemned, it will be because we rejected offered mercy, refusing to use the *gracious ability* furnished us by the gospel. If saved, it will be because we accepted that *gracious ability* so freely provided. In connection with the eternal destiny of the soul, all other ability, if it includes not *this*, is light as a feather. No other ability—call it natural, moral, or by what name we please—can enable us to believe and be saved, or to reject Christ and perish.

4. But we now inquire, *Does this New School theory harmonize with that of the Old School, in reference to the great essential question between Calvinists and Arminians?* Or does it poise itself upon the Arminian platform, and teach a *possible salvation* for all men? We think it only



necessary to scrutinize this theory closely, to perceive that it escapes none of those serious objections which have been urged against rigid Calvinism. It is liable to all those absurd and revolting consequences.

(1) *In reference to the eternal destiny of the soul, it devolves the responsibility, not upon the sinner, but upon God.*

The doctrine set forth by the theory teaches, that while the atonement is ample for *all*, intended for *all*, and the gospel should be preached alike to *all*, and the invitation to repent, believe, and be saved, should be sincerely addressed to *all*, that yet, such is the native depravity and moral inability of all sinners, that no one of the race will ever repent and believe, if left to himself, and to the common influences of the gospel and the Spirit. It farther teaches that God, looking upon all men as alike utterly sinful and helpless, sees proper to extend to a part (the elect) a secret invincible influence, making them *willing* and *able* (imparting the indispensable moral ability) to accept of salvation; and that the impartation of this influence absolutely secures the salvation of all to whom it is given; and that if this influence were in the same way extended to *all*, *all* would be saved.

Now, we demand, of what avail can it be to the sinner to be told that Christ died to save him; that atoning mercy, ample, rich, and free, is provided for him, and that he may come to Christ and be saved, *if he will*, when he is assured that he is possessed of an inherited nature so **corrupt** and obdurate that none possessed of that nature ever did, or ever will, come to Christ, till God sees proper to impart the secret invincible influence of his Spirit, and thereby regenerate that nature? If the nature of all men is alike depraved, and if God imparts to a portion, who are no better than the rest, this influence, which, if imparted alike to all, would save all, but withholds it from others, then are not "the ways of God" *unequal*? Is not God a "respector of persons"?

If it is certain that the sinner never will, nor can, be saved without this secret influence, which God of his own sovereign pleasure withholds, then where rests the responsibility? Whose fault, whose doing is it that the sinner is not saved? He inherits this moral inability which is certain, while it remains, to keep him from Christ. Can he be responsible for the nature with which he was born? Or how can he change this nature? He has natural ability, it is allowed. But is this adequate to the work? Can the native powers of this fallen body and depraved soul overcome this moral inability—this perverseness of will—which cleaves to the native moral constitution, like "the skin to the



Ethiopian, or the spots to the leopard"? And while this *moral inability* remains, the sinner can no more come to Christ than he can dethrone Omnipotence. If this moral inability can only be overcome in the heart of the sinner by a secret invincible influence (the effectual call) which God has determined to withhold, then may the preacher as well waste his sermons and his exhortations upon the insensate rocks as upon him! It affords no palliation to tell him he may come to Christ if he *will*. The question is, *How can he get the will?* Can he change that corrupt nature, one of whose essential attributes excludes that will?

If we admit that God imparts to the sinner a *gracious ability* by which this corrupt nature may be restrained, and this moral inability so counteracted as to enable the sinner to come to Christ—if we take this position, then the difficulty all vanishes. But by so doing, we step fairly upon the Arminian ground, and the last plank of the Calvinistic platform has been deserted. Here is the dividing line between these two renowned systems of theology. If God has provided a *gracious ability* for every sinner, by which this soul-destroying *moral inability* may be counteracted, and the sinner saved, then is Arminianism true: the responsibility is thrown upon the sinner, and "the ways of God are justified to men." But if we reject this position, then do we hitch on to the system of Calvinism; and we must embrace it in all its essential features, however rugged and revolting they may appear, or involve ourselves at every step in palpable inconsistency and self-contradiction.

(2) Again: if, as the theory teaches, God gives to a part the moral ability to come to Christ, and withholds it from the rest, when all are alike depraved and helpless, does not this prove that God *primarily wills* the destruction of those that are lost—preferring their destruction to their salvation? All must admit that God *could*, were he so disposed, just as easily impart this secret invincible grace to *all* as to a *part*. It will be admitted also, that if God would but impart this grace alike to *all*, then *all* would infallibly be saved. Now we ask, according to this theory, *Why* is not the sinner saved? The answer must be, because God primarily wills that he should be lost. He wills to withhold that grace, without which he cannot be saved, and with which he infallibly would be saved; consequently he wills that the sinner should be lost. And thus it is clear that this theory destroys the proper ground of human responsibility, taking it from the sinner, and throwing it back on the primary will of God. Hence, by clear logical sequence, this theory is liable to all the objectionable features of rigid



Calvinism. It denies that the atonement provides a *possible salvation for all men*.

(3) If the ground be taken, as has been done by some claiming to be Calvinists, that the sinner may, by the exercise of his mere native powers, change his "purpose," or his "preference," and thus, on the principle of self-conversion, come to Christ, repent, believe, and be saved, independent of this secret invincible grace—the effectual call)—if any choose to occupy this position, then they are neither Calvinists nor Arminians, but have rushed to the extreme of Pelagianism. For the refutation of their theory, we refer to the appropriate department in this work.

We think it must now be clearly apparent that, however much Calvinists may vary on points of little or no importance, yet, when they come to the main question involved in their controversy with Arminians, they perfectly harmonize.

It is only necessary for us particularly to inquire for the sense in which they use scholastic and technical terms, and we may readily see that, however diversified the course of illustration and reasoning which they pursue, they arrive at the same ultimate conclusion. Whether they speak of a universal or limited atonement; whether they present the offer of gospel grace in terms the most general and unlimited, or with marked restriction and reservation; whether they be supralapsarian or sublapsarian in their peculiar views of the covenant of redemption; whether they be ranked with Antinomians or moderate Calvinists; whether they be designated as Baxterians or Hopkinsians, as New or Old School; whether they dwell mostly on free agency and sufficient grace, or on divine sovereignty and philosophic necessity; or in whatever else they may differ, they arrive at the same ultimate conclusion on the great question we have proposed, as containing the gist of the controversy between Calvinists and Arminians. They do not believe that *the atonement of Christ so extends to all men as to make salvation possible for them*.



## QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER XX.

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| <p>QUESTION 1. Where do we witness the most striking development of the new phases of Calvinism?</p> <p>2. What is the purport of the quotation from Mr. Barnes?</p> <p>3. How do Calvinists attempt to reconcile the universal offer of salvation with their theory?</p> <p>4. How do they explain <i>natural</i> and <i>moral</i> ability?</p> <p>5. How may it be shown that their definitions on the subject are erroneous?</p> <p>6. What three kinds of ability are presented, and how is each defined?</p> | <p>7. In what may be summed up the gist of the Calvinistic theses on the subject?</p> <p>8. With what kind of power is responsibility connected?</p> <p>9. How is the theory of Calvinists on the subject of ability shown to be absurd and self-contradictory?</p> <p>10. Upon what kind of ability is human responsibility properly founded?</p> <p>11. Wherein do the New and the Old School theories harmonize?</p> <p>12. How is it shown that the New School theory escapes none of the most revolting consequences of rigid Calvinism?</p> |
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## CHAPTER XXI.

THE ATONEMENT—ITS EXTENT—THE ARMINIAN VIEW EXHIBITED  
AND PROVED BY SCRIPTURE.

HAVING, in the preceding chapters, presented the true attitude of Calvinists in regard to the main point at issue, and shown their essential agreement, we proceed briefly to define the genuine Arminian ground with regard to the same leading question. Preparatory to this, however, we first present a brief account of that system of Christian doctrine denominated Arminianism.

“Arminianism, strictly speaking, is that system of religious doctrine which was taught by Arminius, professor of divinity in the University of Leyden. If, therefore, we would learn precisely what Arminianism is, we must have recourse to those writings in which that divine himself has stated and expounded his peculiar tenets. This, however, will by no means give us an accurate idea of that which, since his time, has been usually denominated Arminianism. On examination, it will be found that, in many important particulars, those who have called themselves Arminians, or have been accounted such by others, differ as widely from the nominal head and founder of their sect, as he himself did from Calvin and other doctors of Geneva.

“The tenets of the Arminians may be comprised in the following five articles, relating to predestination, universal redemption, the corruption of men, conversion, and perseverance, viz.:

“1. That God from all eternity determined to bestow salvation on those whom he foresaw would persevere unto the end in their faith in Christ Jesus; and to inflict everlasting punishment on those who should continue in their unbelief, and resist unto the end his divine succors; so that election was conditional, and reprobation in like manner the result of foreseen infidelity and persevering wickedness.

“2. That Jesus Christ, by his sufferings and death, made an atonement for the sins of all mankind in general, and of every individual in particular; that, however, none but those who believe in him can be partakers of the divine benefits.

“3. That true faith cannot proceed from the exercise of our natural



faculties and powers, nor from the force and operation of free will; since man, in consequence of his natural corruption, is incapable either of thinking or doing any good thing; and that therefore it is necessary, in order to his salvation, that he be regenerated and renewed by the operation of the Holy Ghost, which is the gift of God through Jesus Christ.

"4. That this divine grace or energy of the Holy Ghost begins and perfects every thing that can be called good in man, and consequently all good works are to be attributed to God alone; that, nevertheless, this grace is offered to all, and does not force men to act against their inclinations, but may be resisted and rendered ineffectual by the perverse wills of impenitent sinners.

"5. That God gives to the truly faithful, who are regenerated by his grace, the means of preserving themselves in this state; and though the first Arminians made some doubt with respect to the closing part of this article, their followers uniformly maintain that the regenerate may lose true justifying faith, forfeit their state of grace, and die in their sins." (Watson's Biblical and Theological Dictionary.)

From the foregoing account of the general principles of Arminianism, we conclude, in reference to the great question which we have proposed, that all genuine Arminians agree—

1. That, notwithstanding the atonement has been made, those to whom the gospel is addressed cannot be saved without faith in Christ.

2. That mankind, by the exercise of their own natural powers, are incapable of believing in Christ unto salvation, without the supernatural influence of divine grace through the Holy Spirit.

3. That the assisting grace of God is, through the atonement, so extended to every man as to enable him to partake of salvation.

Thus it may be seen, that while the Arminians discard the merit of works, or the ability to save themselves, yet they all agree in believing that the atonement of Christ *so extends to all men as to make salvation possible for them.*

As we have now shown that all genuine Calvinists and Arminians are fairly at issue with regard to the *extent of the atonement* so as to make salvation possible to all men, and as the substance of the entire controversy between them is plainly involved in that single question, we are now prepared to appeal "to the law and to the testimony." On a subject of so great importance, we can confidently rely on nothing short of "Thus saith the Lord." And happy for the honest inquirer after truth, upon no subject is the holy volume more copious and explicit.



We trust that no unfairness has been exercised in the exhibit which we have made of the peculiar views of Calvinists and Arminians, and that we may now impartially examine the question.

We proceed, then, to the discussion of the following question: *Does the atonement of Christ so extend to all mankind as to make salvation possible for them?* Upon this question we endeavored to show that all genuine Calvinists assume the *negative*, and all genuine Arminians the *affirmative*.

That the *affirmative* is the real doctrine of Scripture, we shall now endeavor to prove.

I. Our first argument on this subject is founded upon those passages of Scripture in which, in speaking of the death or the atonement of Christ, *terms of universality are used*, such as, "*the world*," "*the whole world*," "*all men*," etc.

This class of texts is so numerous, that we need only select a few of many. John i. 29: "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of *the world*." John iii. 16, 17: "For God so loved *the world* that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into *the world* to condemn *the world*, but that *the world* through him might be saved." John iv. 42: "This is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of *the world*." John vi. 51: "And the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of *the world*." 2 Cor. v. 14: "For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for *all*, then were *all* dead." Heb. ii. 9: "That he by the grace of God should taste death for *every man*." 1 John ii. 2: "And he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of *the whole world*." 1 Tim. iv. 10: "Who is the Saviour of *all men*, especially of those that believe." 2 Cor. v. 19: "God was in Christ, reconciling *the world* unto himself." 1 Tim. ii. 6: "Who gave himself a ransom for *all*, to be testified in due time."

It has already been shown, in the discussion of the *nature* of the atonement, what is implied in Christ's dying "for us," or "for the world." With Calvinists, at least, there can be no evasion on this point; for none have more successfully than they, when contending against the Socinians, demonstrated that the phrase "to die for," as used in application to the death of Christ, means *to die instead of, as a vicarious and expiatory sacrifice*. This point, then, being settled, which Calvinists will cheerfully admit, we may ask, How is it possible for language more clearly and forcibly to teach that Christ died for *all men*, so as to make salvation possible for them, than it is taught in the passages adduced?



He is said to have died "for all," "for the world," "for every man," and, as if expressly to preclude all possibility for cavil, either in reference to the nature or the extent of his atonement, he is said to have given himself a "*ransom for all*," to be "*reconciling the world unto himself*," and to be the "*propitiation for the sins of the whole world*."

The reply of the Calvinists to this argument is, that the terms "all men," "the world," etc., are sometimes used in Scripture in a limited sense.

In reference to this, we may observe that it cannot be admitted as a principle in criticism, that because a term is *sometimes* used in an unusual sense, and one different from the most obvious and general meaning, therefore it must so be understood in other places, even when there is nothing in the context to justify or require that unusual sense. Although we may admit that the terms "world" and "all men" may sometimes be used in a restricted sense, the conclusion which the Calvinists would draw from this admission is a *non sequitur*—it does not follow that the terms are to be restricted in the passages above quoted. So far from the context requiring this restriction, which would be necessary to the validity of the Calvinistic plea in question, we may confidently affirm that the entire connection and scope of the passages forbid the possibility of the terms being restricted.

When our Saviour says, "God so loved *the world* that he gave his only begotten Son, that *whosoever believeth* in him," etc., it is clear that the world for whom the Saviour was given cannot be restricted to the elect; for the restriction which immediately follows, and promises "eternal life," not to the world, but to such of the world as should believe, is positive evidence that the world for whom the Saviour was given would not all be saved.

When St. Paul says, "We thus judge, that if one died *for all*, then were *all dead*," he proves the universality of spiritual death, or, (as Macknight paraphrases the passage,) of "condemnation to death," from the fact that Christ "died for all." Now if Christ only died for the elect, the apostle's argument could only prove that the elect were spiritually dead, or condemned to death, which would be a violent perversion of the sense of the passage.

When the apostle calls Christ the "Saviour of *all men*, especially of those that believe," believers are evidently specified as only a part of the "all men" of whom Christ is said to be "the Saviour." When St. John declares that Christ is "the propitiation for *our sins*, and not for *ours only*, but also for the *sins of the whole world*," believers are first specified, as identified with the apostle, by the phrase, "our sins;" and



hence, when it is added, "not for ours only, but also for the sins of *the whole world*," it is evident that the term should be taken in the widest sense as embracing all mankind.

The Scriptures are their own best interpreter; and, where it can be done, one passage should be explained by another. If, therefore, it could be shown that the same writers have, in other places, used these general terms to designate the *elect*, or believers, as such, there would be more plausibility in the restricted construction of Calvinists; but this is so far from being the case, that the elect, or believers, as such, are constantly in the Scriptures contradistinguished from "the world." The terms of universality, in the passages quoted, are never in Scripture applied to the elect, or believers, as such.

When St. John says that Christ is "the propitiation for the sins of *the whole world*," the sense in which he uses the term may be learned from that other expression of his, where he saith, "*the whole world* lieth in wickedness." When St. Paul says that Christ "tasted death for *every man*," he uses the phrase "every man" in as wide a sense as when he informs us that "every man" is to be raised from the dead "in his own order."

When the Saviour informs us that he came "not to condemn *the world*, but that *the world* through him might be saved," he refers to the same world of which he speaks when he says to his disciples, "If ye were of *the world*, *the world* would love his own; but because ye are not of *the world*, but I have chosen you out of *the world*, therefore *the world* hateth you." We may therefore arrive at the conclusion, from those passages of Scripture in which, in speaking of the death of Christ, terms of universality are used, that the atonement of Christ so extends to all mankind as to make salvation possible for them.

II. Our second argument is founded upon *those passages which contrast the death of Christ with the fall of our first parents*.

1 Cor. xv. 22: "For as in Adam *all die*, even so in Christ shall *all be made alive*." It is admitted that in this passage the resurrection of the body is the principal topic of discussion; nevertheless, there is here a clear inferential proof that Christ died for all men, so as to make salvation attainable by them. For if, by virtue of his death and resurrection, all men are to be redeemed from the grave, then it will follow that all men were represented by Christ in the covenant of redemption; and if so, he must have died as an expiation for their sins; and how he could do this without intending to make salvation attainable by them, will be difficult to reconcile with reason and Scripture.

Rom. v. 15, etc.: "But not as the offense, so also is the free gift. For



if through the offense of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. Therefore, as by the offense of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation, even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life." Here the "free gift" is represented as transcending, or going beyond, the "offense," which it could not do if it were only designed to make salvation possible to a part of those who fell by the "offense." Again: as "all men" are here represented as being brought into condemnation by "the offense of one," even so the "free gift" is said to come upon all men unto (*εἰς*, in order to) justification of life." This implies a possibility of salvation; and, from this passage, it is just as plain that all may be saved through Christ, as that all are condemned in Adam.

III. Our third argument is founded upon *those passages which teach that Christ died for such as do or may perish.*

2 Pet. ii. 1: "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that *bought* them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction." 1 Cor. viii. 11: "And through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, *for whom Christ died.*" Rom. xiv. 15: "Destroy not him with thy meat, *for whom Christ died.*" Other passages of this class might be adduced, but we think these are sufficient to show that some of those who have been bought by Christ, and for whom he died, do or may perish. Now, as they were bought by Christ, and as he died for them, according to what has already been shown, their salvation was once possible; and if the salvation of some who perish was possible, the reasonable inference is that the salvation of all mankind is made possible through the atonement of Christ.

IV. Our fourth argument is founded upon *those passages which authorize the preaching of the gospel to all men, and require all men to repent and believe.*

Here we will first notice the grand commission of Christ to his apostles. Matt. xxviii. 19, 20: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." Mark xvi. 15, 16: "Go ye into *all the world*, and preach the gospel to *every creature*. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." Again: to show farther that it is made the duty of all men to repent and believe, we refer to the following passages:—John iii. 18, 36: "He that *believeth*



on him is not condemned; but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he *hath not believed* in the name of the only begotten Son of God. He that *believeth* on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that *believeth not* the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." John xx. 31: "But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through his name." Acts xvi. 31: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Acts xvii. 30: "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now *commandeth all men everywhere to repent.*"

We quote the above passages merely as a sample of the general tenor of the gospel proclamation and requirement. That we may perceive the irresistible force of the proof from these texts that salvation is made attainable to all men, we observe—

1. The gospel means *good news*. It is a message of peace and salvation.

2. The commission to preach this gospel is given in *terms of universality*. The apostles are commanded to "go into *all the world*, and preach the gospel to *every creature.*" They are commanded to go and "teach all nations," and to teach them "to observe *all things whatsoever*" has been commanded.

3. Repentance toward God, and faith in the gospel message and plan of salvation, *are required of all to whom the gospel is preached.*

Nothing can be plainer than these positions, from the passages adduced. "*All men everywhere*" are commanded "*to repent.*" The promise to him that believeth is, that he "shall be saved," he "shall not be condemned," and he "shall have life" through the name of Christ. Now, upon the supposition that salvation is made attainable to all mankind, the propriety and consistency of all this are apparent; but upon the supposition that salvation is made attainable only to the elect portion of mankind, (according to the tenets of Calvinism,) we must deny every principle above stated as being proved by the Scriptures, or inevitably involve ourselves in manifest inconsistency and absurdity. This may be clearly shown in the following manner:

(1) The gospel is *good news*; or, as it is plainly expressed in Scripture, it is "glad tidings of great joy to all people." Now, if the gospel only proposes a possible salvation to the elect, it cannot be good news to those for whose salvation it contains no possible provision. If it be said that it provides at least temporal mercies, and the common "ineffectual" calls and influences of the Spirit, for all men, we reply, that the admission of this, according to the Calvinistic scheme, so far from



rendering the condition of the non-elect more tolerable, or furnishing the least evidence that the gospel can be good news to them, only aggravates the misery of their condition, and furnishes an additional evidence that the gospel cannot be to them good news, or "glad tidings of great joy."

If all the temporal blessings of life, as Calvinists do not deny, flow from the covenant of redemption, then it will follow that but for the atonement of Christ the blessing of personal existence itself never could have been enjoyed by any but the first sinning pair, and consequently none others could have been exposed to personal suffering; therefore, as it is clear that non-existence itself would be preferable to a state of inevitable, conscious, and eternal misery, so it is also evident that life, with its attendant mercies, according to Calvinism, is not a blessing, but a curse, to the non-elect; and if they derive this through the gospel, or atonement of Christ, that gospel itself must be to them a curse.

Again: if, as Calvinism teaches, these temporal mercies, and the common call and influence of the Spirit, cannot possibly be effectual with any but the elect, and the abuse of these mercies, and the rejection of this "common call" of the gospel and the Spirit, will tend to greater condemnation and misery, then it follows that, as the non-elect cannot possibly avoid this abuse and neglect, the mercies of life, and the calls and influences of the gospel and the Spirit tend inevitably to the aggravation of their misery, and must be to them a real curse.

(2) The commission to preach this gospel is given in terms of *universality*.

Now if all men are required to believe, this is reasonable and consistent; but if this is the duty only of the elect, then the non-elect do right in refusing to believe, and, of course, cannot consistently be condemned for their unbelief; which conclusion is flatly contradictory to the Scriptures. But if it be said that the non-elect are required to believe, although they cannot possibly do so unless God see proper to give them the moral ability, which he has from eternity determined to withhold, then it will follow that God, who is said not to be a "hard master," requires more of his creatures than they can possibly perform, and condemns and punishes them eternally for not doing absolute impossibilities; which is alike repugnant to reason, justice, and Scripture.

(3) *Repentance and faith* are required of *all men*.

If this be denied, the whole tenor of the gospel is flatly contradicted, and such as can be driven to so fearful a position we may justly apprehend are beyond the reach of reason or Scripture. But if it be



admitted that all men are required to repent and believe, then we ask according to Calvinism, for what purpose is this requirement made? If the salvation of the non-elect is absolutely impossible, how could they be saved, even if we were to suppose them to believe? Could their faith effect that which God has decreed never shall be effected? Surely not. And how, we ask, can salvation be promised on the condition of faith, and damnation be threatened as the consequence of unbelief, if neither the one nor the other depends in the least upon the agency of man?

We are driven to the conclusion that, according to Calvinism, both *salvation* (the *end*) and *faith* (the *means*) are absolutely impossible to the non-elect; and that therefore we must either deny that the gospel commission addresses them, and makes it their duty to repent and believe, or admit that they are to be eternally punished, by a just and merciful Creator, for not attaining an impossible end by the use of impossible means. The latter alternative involves horrible absurdities; the former contradicts the Bible: for Calvinists there is no middle ground; and they may be left to choose their position for themselves.

V. Our fifth argument is founded upon *those passages which show that salvation is offered to all, and that men's failure to obtain salvation is attributable to their own fault.*

Deut. xxx. 19: "I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live." Isa. lv. 7: "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." Ezek. xxxiii. 11: "Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways, for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" Prov. i. 24, 25: "Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand and no man regarded; but ye have set at naught all my counsel, and would none of my reproof."

In the New Testament, we read the following:—John v. 40: "And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life." John iii. 19: "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." Matt. xxiii. 37: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" 2 Pet. iii. 9: "The Lord is not slack concern-



ing his promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." Rev. xxii. 17: "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come; and let him that heareth say, Come; and let him that is athirst come; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

The passages of Scripture belonging to the present class are very numerous, but the above are so explicit that it is needless to multiply quotations. It only remains for us to inquire in what manner the effort is made by Calvinists to evade their force. As there are no texts of a like plain and explicit character to oppose to these, and show that Christ *did not* so die for all men as to authorize the offer of salvation to *all*, and to render the damnation of those that perish attributable to their own fault, the truth of this leading position is seldom denied by Calvinists of the present day. But the great difficulty is, to reconcile the principles of Calvinism with the doctrine here so clearly established. Their general course **has** been, to descant upon the nature of general and effectual calling, the distinction between natural and moral ability, the invincibility of divine grace, etc., and then, as if conscious that they had failed in their attempt to reconcile their principles with this Bible truth, they have begged the question, and taking it for granted that the tenets of Calvinism (the very thing in dispute) are true, they have launched forth in a strain of pathetic admonition concerning the imbecility of human reason and the impiety of "man's replying against God."

That such may clearly be seen to be the course taken by Calvinists on this subject, I will here present a quotation from one of their standard writers:

"Several distinctions have been proposed, in order to throw some light on this dark subject. The external call, it has been said, is extended to the elect and the reprobate in a different manner. It is addressed to the elect primarily and directly, the ministry of the gospel having been instituted for their sake, to gather them into the Church, insomuch that, if none of them remained to be saved, it would cease. It respects the reprobate secondarily and indirectly, because they are mixed with the elect, who are known to God alone, and consequently it could not be addressed to them without the reprobate being included. This dispensation has been illustrated by rain, which, descending upon the earth, according to a general law, the final cause of which is the fructification of the soil, falls upon places where it is of no use, as rocks and sandy deserts. Again: it has been said that the end of the external call may be viewed in a twofold light, as it respects God, and as it



respects the call; and these may be distinguished as the end of the worker and the end of the work. The end of the work, or of the external call, is the salvation of men, because it is the natural tendency of the preaching of the gospel to lead them to faith and repentance. But this is not the end of the worker, or God, who does not intend to save all who are called, but those alone to whom he has decreed to give effectual grace. I shall not be surprised to find that these distinctions have not lessened the difficulty in your apprehension. While they promise to give a solution of it, they are neither more nor less than a repetition of it in different words. I shall subjoin only another observation, which has been frequently made, that although God does not intend to save the reprobate, he is serious in calling them by the gospel; for he declares to them what would be agreeable to him, namely, that they should repent and believe, and he promises, most sincerely, eternal life to all who shall comply. The call of the gospel does not show what he has proposed to do, but what he wills men to do. From his promises, his threatenings, and his invitations, it only appears that it would be agreeable to him that men should do their duty, because he necessarily approves of the obedience of his creatures, and that it is his design to save some of them; but the event demonstrates that he had no intention to save them all; and this should not seem strange, as he was under no obligation to do so. Mr. Burke, in his treatise concerning the sublime and beautiful, has observed, when speaking of the attempt of Sir Isaac Newton to account for gravitation by the supposition of a subtle elastic ether, that 'when we go but one step beyond the immediately sensible qualities of things, we go out of our depth. All we do after is but a faint struggle that shows we are in an element which does not belong to us.' We may pronounce, I think these attempts to reconcile the universal call of the gospel with the sincerity of God, to be a faint struggle to extricate ourselves from the profundities of theology. They are far, indeed, from removing the difficulty. We believe, on the authority of Scripture, that God has decreed to give salvation to some, and to withhold it from others. We know, at the same time, that he offers salvation to all in the gospel; and to suppose that he is not sincere, would be to deny him to be God. It may be right to endeavor to reconcile these things, because knowledge is always desirable, and it is our duty to seek it as far as it can be attained. But if we find that beyond a certain limit we cannot go, let us be content to remain in ignorance. Let us reflect, however, that we are ignorant in the present case only of the connection between two truths, and not of the truths themselves, for these are clearly stated in the Scriptures. We ought there-



fore to believe both, although we cannot reconcile them. Perhaps the subject is too high for the human intellect in its present state. It may be that, however correct our notions of the divine purposes seem, there is some misapprehension, which gives rise to the difficulty. In the study of theology, we are admonished at every step to be humble, and feel the necessity of faith, or an implicit dependence upon the testimony of Him who alone perfectly knows himself, and will not deceive us." (Dick's Theology, Lecture 65.)

In reference to the foregoing, we may observe that Dr. Dick fully admits the universality of the calls and invitations of the gospel, but contends, at the same time, that God "intends to save those alone to whom he has decreed to give effectual grace." To reconcile this with the sincerity of God, after repeating several of the commonly used Calvinistic solutions, he intimates is beyond the powers of man, and the attempt should be placed among "the faint struggles to extricate ourselves from the profundities of theology."

This, while it speaks well for the candor of the learned author, is a fair acknowledgment that human reason cannot reconcile the leading principle of Calvinism with the leading principle of the gospel. The leading principle of Calvinism, which distinguishes it from Arminianism, is, that *salvation is not made possible to all men*. The leading principle of the gospel is, that *salvation is offered to all, and those who perish do so through their own fault*. Now these two propositions, it is admitted, are irreconcilable by human reason. If so, when it shall be clearly proved from the Bible that the gospel does not make salvation possible to all men, then the attempt to reconcile them may be styled "a faint struggle to extricate ourselves from the profundities of theology." But as that proposition is the very point in dispute, which we contend never has been, and never can be, proved, this, *we would say*, is only "a faint struggle" by Calvinists "to extricate themselves," not from "the profundities of theology," but from the *absurdities of Calvinism!*

Either it is the duty of all men to believe the gospel, or it is not. If we say it is not, we plainly contradict the Scriptures which we have quoted. If we say that it is, then it follows that it is possible for all men to believe, or it is the duty of some men to do what is absolutely impossible—which is absurd. But if we admit that it is possible for all men to believe, then it follows, either that those from whom God has decreed to withhold the moral ability to believe, may believe, or he has not so decreed in reference to any. To admit the former proposition implies a contradiction; to admit the latter, destroys Calvinism.



Again, if we admit that all men may attain unto faith, then it follows that all men may attain unto salvation, or that some believers may perish. The latter is contradictory to Scripture; the former is contradictory to Calvinism.

Farther: as we have shown from the Scriptures that those who fail to obtain salvation do so through their own fault, and not through any fault of God, then it follows either that some may be saved without faith, or that all who lack saving faith do so through their own fault; but if all who lack saving faith do so through their own fault, then their not believing cannot result solely from the decree of God to withhold from them the moral ability to believe; otherwise they are made answerable, and even punishable, for the divine decrees. To suppose that men are answerable and punishable for the divine decrees, is either to suppose that the decrees are wrong, which is impious, or to suppose that men are to be eternally punished for what is right, which is alike unscriptural and absurd.

Calvinists sometimes, in order to evade the consequences resulting from their position, (that the reprobate are justly punishable for their unbelief, notwithstanding God has decreed to withhold from them that ability without which it is impossible for them to believe,) endeavor to elude the question, by asserting that the reprobate continue in unbelief willingly, and in rejecting the gospel act according to their own choice. But this, instead of removing the difficulty, only shifts it one step farther; for if, as the Calvinists say, they have *no power to will, or to choose differently from what they do in this case*, they can no more be punishable for their perverse will and wicked choice than if they were as destitute of all mental and moral powers as a stock or a stone. To pursue this argument farther is needless. It is impossible, by any evasion or philosophical distinction, to avoid the conclusion that, according to those passages of Scripture which we have adduced to show that men's failure to obtain salvation is attributable to their own fault, the atonement of Christ has made salvation attainable to all mankind.

VI. Our next argument is founded upon *those passages which teach the possibility of final apostasy from the faith, and warn Christians against it.*

As the subject of apostasy will be particularly considered in its proper place, our remarks here shall be brief, and principally designed to show the necessary connection between those two great Bible doctrines—the *possibility of final apostasy*, and the *possibility of salvation to all*. These two doctrines mutually strengthen and support each other, inasmuch that, if we admit the one, we cannot deny the other, without manifest



inconsistency. As the Calvinistic scheme denies any possibility of salvation to the reprobate, so it secures absolutely and infallibly the salvation of the elect.

If, then, it can be shown that any have finally apostatized, or are in danger of finally apostatizing, from a state of gracious acceptance, or even from a *hopeful* state, in reference to eternal salvation, to a *hopeless* one, it will follow that, as some who perish were in a state of possible salvation, even to those termed reprobates by the Calvinists, salvation is attainable; and if this be proved, the possibility of salvation to all men will not be denied.

As the Scriptures present instances of some who have fallen from a hopeful to a hopeless state, so they are full of warnings to the righteous, which show that they are not secure against the possibility of a similar apostasy. 2 Thess. ii. 10-12: "Because they received not the love of the truth that they *might be saved*. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie; that they all *might be damned*, who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." From this passage it is evident, 1. That these characters were once in a hopeful state; they "might" have been "saved;" consequently their state was superior to that of the Calvinistically reprobate. 2. They fell from that state to a state of hopeless abandonment; they were judicially given over, and divinely visited with "strong delusion, that they should believe a lie, that they all *might be damned*;" consequently they could not have belonged to the Calvinistically elect.

Heb. vi. 4-6: "For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, ('and yet have fallen away'—Macknight,) to renew them again unto repentance."

We here enter into no discussion of the peculiar character of these apostates, farther than to observe, 1. That their apostasy was *hopeless*—it was "impossible to renew them again unto repentance;" this the Calvinists admit. 2. Their state had been *hopeful*. This is evident from the reason given for the subsequent hopelessness of their condition. If, as here stated, the hopelessness of their condition arose from the impossibility of "renewing them again unto repentance," it necessarily follows that if they could have been thus "renewed," their case would have been hopeful. And if so, then their case once was hopeful; for the hopelessness of their condition is made to appear, not from the "impossibility" of "renewing them" unto a genuine repentance, which (according to Calvinism) they had never experienced, but the *same*



repentance which they once had. This is evident from the import of the word "AGAIN"—"It is impossible to renew them *again* unto repentance." Therefore it follows that their former repentance was genuine; and these apostates had evidently passed from a *hopeful* to a *hopeless* condition. As the condition of the Calvinistically reprobate is *never hopeful*, they could not have belonged to that class; and as the condition of the Calvinistically elect is *never hopeless*, so neither could they have belonged to that class. It thus appears that the above passage cannot be interpreted on Calvinistic principles; nor in any way, with consistency, without admitting the possibility of salvation to all men.

Again, that the Scriptures are full of *cautions* to the righteous, and *warnings* against apostasy, is admitted by Calvinists. From this it may be conclusively argued, 1. That, upon the supposition that the righteous are in no danger of final apostasy, there can be no propriety in warning them against it. 2. If the righteous are in danger of final apostasy, then it follows, either that the reprobate, according to Calvinism, may obtain pardon here, or that the elect may perish everlastingly: either of which is destructive to the Calvinistic tenets, and demonstrative that the cautions and warnings given to the righteous in the Scriptures, can only be consistently interpreted upon the supposition that salvation is attainable by all men.

The sum of what has been said is briefly this: The Scriptures prove the proposition with which we set out—

1. By those texts in which, in speaking of the death or atonement of Christ, terms of universality are used.
2. By those which contrast the death of Christ with the fall of our first parents.
3. By those which teach that Christ died for such as do, or may perish.
4. By those which authorize the preaching of the gospel to all men, and require all men to repent and believe.
5. By those which show that salvation is offered to all, and that men's failure to obtain it is attributable to their own fault.
6. By those which teach the possibility of final apostasy from the faith, and warn Christians against it.

According to the plain and unsophisticated meaning of all these classes of Scripture texts, we think it has been made to appear that the atonement of Christ so extends to all men as to make their salvation attainable.

In this discussion, we have appealed directly to the Scriptures, and although we have only adduced a small number of the passages which



directly bear upon the question, yet we deem farther quotations on this head unnecessary.

It remains yet to consider those passages from which Calvinists deduce inferential proofs of their peculiar views of predestination, election, etc., and the bearing of those subjects upon the great question before us, as well as to examine the prominent reasons by which the view herein presented has been defended or assailed. But these points we defer for another chapter.

### QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER XXI.

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| <p><b>QUESTION 1.</b> What is the substance of the brief account given of Arminianism?</p> <p><b>2.</b> In what three points connected with the proposed question do all genuine Arminians agree?</p> <p><b>3.</b> Why may we appeal with confidence to the Scriptures on this question?</p> <p><b>4.</b> What is the main proposition considered in this chapter?</p> <p><b>5.</b> Upon what class of texts is the first argument based?</p> <p><b>6.</b> What are the passages adduced?</p> <p><b>7.</b> In what way do Calvinists attempt to evade their force?</p> <p><b>8.</b> What is the reply to their reasoning on this subject?</p> <p><b>9.</b> Upon what class of texts is the second argument based, and what are they?</p> <p><b>10.</b> Upon what class of texts is the third argument based?</p> <p><b>11.</b> What are the texts, and how is the proof deduced?</p> <p><b>12.</b> Upon what class of texts is the fourth argument based?</p> <p><b>13.</b> What are the texts, and how is the proof deduced?</p> | <p><b>14.</b> Upon what class of texts is the fifth argument based?</p> <p><b>15.</b> What are the texts adduced?</p> <p><b>16.</b> In what manner have Calvinists replied?</p> <p><b>17.</b> From whom is a quotation made for illustration?</p> <p><b>18.</b> What is said in reference to this quotation?</p> <p><b>19.</b> In what manner is the argument from these passages of Scripture carried out?</p> <p><b>20.</b> Upon what class of texts is the sixth argument based?</p> <p><b>21.</b> What two great doctrines are here said to be intimately connected?</p> <p><b>22.</b> What are the texts adduced?</p> <p><b>23.</b> How is the argument founded upon them?</p> <p><b>24.</b> How is an argument founded upon the cautions given to Christians?</p> <p><b>25.</b> How is the whole argument of this chapter summed up?</p> <p><b>26.</b> What grand proposition does it establish?</p> <p><b>27.</b> What important points are deferred for another chapter?</p> |
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## CHAPTER XXII.

## THE ATONEMENT — ITS EXTENT — PREDESTINATION, ELECTION, FORGIVENESS, KNOWLEDGE, AND SOVEREIGNTY.

In the preceding chapter, we endeavored to prove, by a direct appeal to the Scriptures, that *the atonement so extends to all men as to make salvation possible for them.*

That there are no texts of a direct and positive character in the Bible to disprove this position, has, by Calvinists themselves, generally been admitted. Yet, by inferential evidence from Scripture, as well as by a train of philosophical reasoning, they have endeavored to build up and sustain a system of doctrine exhibiting a partial atonement, or, at least, an atonement which *does not make salvation possible for all mankind.*

In order to sustain this system, Calvinists argue from the subject of the divine prescience, predestination, election, the divine sovereignty, etc., as they conceive them to be taught in the Bible. A particular examination of those subjects, so as to show that, according to the true interpretation of Scripture, no good reason can be deduced from that source in opposition to the general position which we have endeavored to sustain, is the matter now claiming our attention.

That the doctrines of the *divine prescience* and *divine sovereignty*, of *predestination* and *election*, are taught in the Bible, is admitted by Arminians as well as Calvinists. None who admit the truth of revelation can deny them. Yet, with regard to their true import, there has been much controversy; nor is it likely that, on these difficult questions, a unity of sentiment among professed Christians is soon to be realized.

The Arminian understands these subjects, as presented in the Scriptures, in perfect consistency with the great doctrine of general redemption, which provides, according to the proposition established in our last chapter, a possible salvation for all men; whereas the Calvinist understands them in such sense as to deduce from them arguments, satisfactory to his mind, for the establishment of his peculiar views of *particular*



*redemption, and a special provision for the salvation of the elect, to the exclusion of any possibility of salvation to the rest of mankind.*

Whether the Calvinists can really establish their peculiar views upon these subjects from the Scriptures, we shall presently consider. But, in order that we may proceed with as much fairness as possible, we choose, first, briefly to state the leading features of their system, in the language of their own acknowledged standards.

As the "Westminster Confession of Faith" is not only in doctrine the standard of the Church of Scotland, but also of the English and American Presbyterians, we quote from that volume, Chapter III., as follows:

"3. By the decree of God, for the manifestation of his glory, some men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting life, and others fore-ordained to everlasting death.

"4. These angels and men, thus predestinated and foreordained, are particularly and unchangeably designed; and their number is so certain and definite, that it cannot be either increased or diminished.

"5. Those of mankind that are predestinated unto life, God, before the foundation of the world was laid, according to his eternal and immutable purpose, and the secret counsel and good pleasure of his will, hath chosen in Christ, unto everlasting glory, out of his mere free grace and love, without any foresight of faith or good works, or perseverance in either of them, or any other thing in the creature, as conditions or causes moving him thereunto; and all to the praise of his glorious grace.

"6. As God hath appointed the elect unto glory, so hath he, by the eternal and most free purpose of his will, foreordained all the means thereunto. Wherefore, they who are elected, being fallen in Adam, are redeemed by Christ, are effectually called unto faith in Christ, by his Spirit working in due season; are justified, adopted, sanctified, and kept by his power through faith unto salvation. Neither are any other redeemed by Christ, effectually called, justified, adopted, sanctified, and saved, but the elect only.

"7. The rest of mankind, God was pleased, according to the unsearchable counsel of his own will, whereby he extendeth or withholdeth mercy as he pleaseth, for the glory of his sovereign power over his creatures, to pass by, and to ordain them to dishonor and wrath for their sin, to the praise of his glorious justice."

To complete more fully the account of this doctrine, we also quote from the "Larger Catechism," adopted by the Church of Scotland, the answers to the twelfth and thirteenth questions:



"God's decrees are the wise, free, and holy acts of the counsel of his will; whereby, from all eternity, he hath, for his own glory, unchangeably foreordained whatsoever comes to pass in time, especially concerning angels and men.

"God, by an eternal and immutable decree, out of his mere love, for the praise of his glorious grace to be manifested in due time, hath elected some angels to glory; and, in Christ, hath chosen some men to eternal life, and the means thereof; and also, according to his sovereign power, and the unsearchable counsel of his own will, (whereby he extendeth or withholdeth favor as he pleaseth,) hath passed by and foreordained the rest to dishonor and wrath, to be for their sin inflicted, to the praise of the glory of his justice."

As a comment upon the foregoing articles, and as a brief and comprehensive summary of the principal features in the Calvinistic scheme, we subjoin the following from Dr. Hill:

"These quotations suggest the following propositions, which may be considered as constituting the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination, and in which there is an explication of most of the terms:

"1. God chose out of the whole body of mankind, whom he viewed in his eternal decree as involved in guilt and misery, certain persons who are called the elect, whose names are known to him, and whose number, being unchangeably fixed by his decree, can neither be increased nor diminished; so that the whole extent of the remedy offered in the gospel is conceived to have been determined beforehand by the divine decree.

"2. As all the children of Adam were involved in the same guilt and misery, the persons thus chosen had nothing in themselves to render them more worthy of being elected than any others; and therefore the decree of election is called in the Calvinistic system absolute, by which word is meant that it arises entirely from the good pleasure of God, because all the circumstances which distinguish the elect from others are the fruit of their election.

"3. For the persons thus chosen, God from the beginning appointed the means of their being delivered from corruption and guilt; and by these means, effectually applied in due season, he conducts them at length to everlasting life.

"4. Jesus Christ was ordained by God to be the Saviour of these persons, and God gave them to him to be redeemed by his blood, to be called by his Spirit, and finally to be glorified with him. All that Christ did in the character of Mediator, was in consequence of this original appointment of the Father, which has received from many



divines the name of the covenant of redemption—a phrase which suggests the idea of a mutual stipulation between Christ and the Father, in which Christ undertook all that work which he executed in his human nature, and which he continues to execute in heaven, in order to save the elect—and the Father promised that the persons for whom Christ died should be saved by his death. According to the tenor of this covenant of redemption, the merits of Christ are not considered as the cause of the decree of election, but as a part of that decree—in other words, God was not moved by the mediation of Christ to choose certain persons out of the great body of mankind to be saved, but having chosen them, he conveys all the means of salvation through the channel of this mediation.

“5. From the election of certain persons, it necessarily follows that all the rest of the race of Adam are left in guilt and misery. The exercise of the divine sovereignty in regard to those who are not elected, is called reprobation; and the condition of all having been originally the same, reprobation is called absolute in the same sense with election. In reprobation there are two acts, which the Calvinists are careful to distinguish. The one is called preterition, the passing by those who are not elected, and withholding from them those means of grace which are provided for the elect. The other is called condemnation, the act of condemning those who have been passed by, for the sins which they commit. In the former act, God exercises his good pleasure, dispensing his benefits as he will; in the latter act, he appears as a judge, inflicting upon men that sentence which their sins deserve. If he had bestowed upon them the same assistance which he prepared for others, they would have been preserved from that sentence; but as their sins proceeded from their own corruption, they are thereby rendered worthy of punishment, and the justice of the Supreme Ruler is manifested in condemning them, as his mercy is manifested in saving the elect.” (Hill’s Lectures, Book IV., Chap. vii., Sec. 3.)

According to the foregoing account, it appears that the following are leading tenets in the Calvinistic scheme, viz.:

1. That by *predestination*, *foreordination*, or the decrees of God, all things, whether great or small, whether good or evil, whether they relate to the physical or moral universe, whether they relate to the history of angels or to the actions of men, were, from all eternity, or before time began, firmly and unalterably fixed and determined, according to the will of God.

2. That by this predestination, or foreordination, “some men and



angels" were elected or chosen to everlasting life, and others reprobated or set apart to everlasting death.

3. That the election of some, and the reprobation of others, had no regard to faith and obedience on the one hand, or unbelief and disobedience on the other, as foreseen conditions, or causes leading thereunto.

4. That this election and reprobation are *personal, unconditional, and absolute*, insomuch that the "number of the elect" or of the reprobate can "neither be increased nor diminished."

5. That the election of some, and the reprobation of others, is the sole originating cause of the faith and obedience of the elect, on the one hand, and of the lack of faith and obedience of the reprobate on the other.

To sustain the peculiarities of the system which we have thus briefly sketched, the Calvinists appeal to the scriptures in which the doctrines of predestination and election are taught, and institute a course of reasoning founded mainly on the divine prescience and sovereignty. That we may have a clear view of the subject, and understand the nature of their arguments, we now proceed particularly to the investigation of the Scripture doctrine of election, predestination, etc.

I. GENERAL IMPORT OF ELECTION. The term *election*, in the Greek Testament, is *ἐκλογή*, a choice, from the verb *ἐκλέγω*, to choose; hence the signification of the verb *to elect* is *to choose*, and the noun *election* signifies a choice. According to this definition of the term, we may easily perceive that, upon principles of rationality, several things are indispensable to constitute *election*.

1. There must be an *intelligent agent* to choose. As the act of choosing can only be performed by an intelligent being, to suppose an election to exist without such an agent would be absurd.

2. This intelligent being must be possessed of the principle of *free moral agency*. Choice necessarily implies freedom; hence, if the supposed agent be not morally free or unnecessitated in the act, he cannot, in the proper sense, be an agent at all, but is only an instrument, wielded by impelling forces; and in such case, as there could be no choice, in the true import of the term, so there could be no election.

3. In the next place, there must be *objects* presented to the mind of this intelligent agent, in order that he may make the choice, or selection. To suppose an election to exist where there are no objects in reference to which to make the choice, would be as absurd as to suppose that there could be color, division, or figure, without something colored, divided, or figured.



4. Next, there must be a *difference*, real or imaginary, in the objects, in reference to which the choice is made. Where there is no difference, in the proper sense, there can be no choice. It is true, that two or more objects may be presented to the mind, and the one may be taken, and the others left, merely because it is not convenient or proper to take all; but in this case, there cannot properly be any rational choice. A choice or election implies a reason on which it is founded; and this reason, or ground of choice, must be supposed to exist in the objects in reference to which the choice is made.

5. There must be a *time* in which the act of choosing takes place. To suppose that an act has been performed, and yet to suppose that there was no time in which it was performed, is manifestly absurd. Hence, we must either deny that to choose or elect is an act at all, or we must admit a time for its performance.

Now, we think it must be so plain that all the above specified particulars are essential to constitute election, that farther illustration or proof would be needless. Wherever the five particulars above enumerated are found to unite, an election must exist; but if any one of the five be lacking, an election cannot, on rational principles, exist. With these remarks upon the general definition of election, we proceed to examine the Scripture illustration of this doctrine.

II. SPECIFIC KINDS OF ELECTION. In opening the Bible upon this subject, we find that there are several different kinds of election presented to our view.

1. There is a *personal election of individuals to a special office or work*.

*Christ* was chosen, or elected, to the great office of *Mediator and Redeemer*, that he might enter upon the great work of saving an apostate world. In reference to this election, we read, in Isa. xlii. 1: "Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine *elect*, in whom my soul delighteth."

*King Cyrus* was also chosen, or elected, for the special work of rebuilding the temple. In reference to this work, he was "called" by the Lord, and designated as his "shepherd" and "his anointed."

The "*twelve apostles*" were elected to their peculiar office by the Saviour; and *St. Paul* was specially chosen, or elected, to be the "apostle of the Gentiles."

In reference to this species of election, a little reflection will evince that it perfectly accords with the general definition of the subject given above. All the five requisites to constitute election may readily be seen to meet in each case specified. And although it is *personal, individual,*



and, in a certain sense, absolute, yet it has no reference whatever to the fixing of the eternal destinies of men.

The Saviour was chosen as the great Redeemer of the world, because he was the only proper and adequate Being for the accomplishment of the exalted work.

Cyrus was selected as a suitable character for the instrumental accomplishment of the divine purpose in the rebuilding of the temple; but this election neither secured nor prevented the eternal salvation of the Persian monarch.

The "twelve apostles" were chosen by our Lord, as suitable persons to accompany him in his itinerant ministry, to be witnesses of his miracles and of his resurrection, and to be the first ministers of his religion; but this election did not absolutely secure their eternal salvation, for one of their number grievously apostatized and went to perdition.

St. Paul was elected as a suitable minister to bear the gospel message to the learned Gentiles; but this election did not absolutely secure his eternal salvation, for we hear him strongly expressing his fears "lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a *castaway*." So that it is clear that, from this personal and individual election to a peculiar office or work, no countenance is given to the Calvinistic notion of personal and unconditional election, from all eternity, to everlasting life.

2. The second species of election presented in Scripture is *that of NATIONS, or BODIES OF PEOPLE, to the participation of peculiar privileges and blessings, conferred upon them for the accomplishment of some great object of divine benevolence, in reference to others as well as to themselves.*

(1) Thus, *Abraham and his descendants* were anciently chosen as the peculiar people of God, to receive the divine law, to become conservators of the true worship, and to be the means of illumination, and of great and numerous blessings, to the world at large. In reference to this election, we read, Amos iii. 2: "You only have I *known* of all the families of the earth." 1 Chron. xvi. 13: "Ye children of Jacob, his *chosen ones*." Acts xiii. 17: "The God of this people of Israel *chose* our fathers, and exalted the people when they dwelt as strangers in the land of Egypt." Deut. x. 15: "The Lord had a delight in thy fathers to love them, and he *chose* their seed after them, even you, above all people." Deut. xiv. 2: "The Lord *hath chosen* thee to be a peculiar people unto himself, above all the nations that are upon the earth."



Thus we discover that the Jews, as a nation, were, in a certain sense, an elect, chosen, and peculiar people; but this election, as all must admit, did not absolutely secure their eternal salvation. Their election, as a nation, had no such design, as we may see from the fact that many of them were not saved. This truth the Apostle Paul abundantly teaches. He says that "with many of them God was not well pleased for they were overthrown in the wilderness." He specifies that some of them were "idolaters," some were "fornicators," some "tempted Christ," and that God "swore in his wrath that they should not enter into his rest." These were the "chosen, elected," and "peculiar people" of God. How vastly different is this from the Calvinistic, eternal, and unconditional election and reprobation, by which the everlasting destiny of "men and angels" is said to be unalterably fixed!

In this national election of the Jews there is also implied a corresponding national *rejection*, or *reprobation*, of the Gentiles. Election and reprobation are inseparable: the one necessarily implies the other. In the same sense in which the Jews were elected, the Gentiles were reprobated. As the former were elected to the enjoyment of peculiar privileges, so the latter were reprobated in reference to those privileges—that is, they were not called to their enjoyment, or placed in their possession. This national election, though we may admit that it conferred peculiar blessings upon one nation, which were denied to all others, yet it appears to present nothing in the divine administration revolting to the most pleasing and exalted view that can be taken of the principles of justice, equity, and benevolence. For be it remembered, that in proportion as the Jews were exalted above the Gentiles in point of privilege, even so, on that very account, more was required at their hands.

It is one of the unalterable principles of the divine government, that "unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required," and *vice versa*. The man to whom "five talents" had been given, was required to improve all that he had received, while he to whom but "one talent" had been given, was only required to improve the same. Thus, while the Jews, to whom had been "committed the oracles of God," and to whom "pertained the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises," were required to serve God with a fidelity and devotedness proportionate to their superior light and privileges, the Gentiles were only required to improve the privileges which had been conferred upon them, and to live up to the degree of light they possessed. Notwithstanding this election of the Jews to privileges so exalted, yet, as we have seen.



they were liable to misimprove them, and many of them did so misimprove and abuse them as to perish everlastingly; and finally, this chosen, elect, and peculiar people, for their wickedness and idolatry, their unbelief and rebellion, were severed and overthrown as a nation, their civil polity uprooted, their ecclesiastical establishment demolished, and the once favored tribes of Abraham doomed to wander in degradation and ~~grievance~~ <sup>grievance</sup> for centuries beneath the ban of Heaven.

But how was it with the Gentiles? Did this national election and reprobation, according to the Calvinistic interpretation of this doctrine, consign them to inevitable and eternal destruction? By no means. The supposition is not only repugnant to reason, and revolting to the feelings, but destitute of the least shadow of support from Scripture. In allusion to God's method of dealing with the ancient Gentiles, St. Paul says: "And the times of this ignorance God *winked at*"—that is, sent them no prophets to instruct them better, and consequently, in judging them, only required of them according to what they had.

St. Paul, in the second chapter to the Romans, clearly shows that "there is no respect of persons with God;" and that "the Gentiles, which have not the law," may "do by nature (that is, by the assistance which God affords them, independent of the written law) the things contained in the law," act up to the requirements of "their conscience," and be esteemed as "just before God." That those whom God saw proper to leave for a season in a state of Gentile darkness—destitute of written revelation—were not thereby precluded from all possibility of eternal salvation, is farther evident from several instances recorded in Scripture of pious heathen—such as Melchizedek, Job, and Cornelius; but the language of St. Peter must set this question at rest: "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons; but in every nation, he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him."

Since, then, it is obvious from what has been said, that the national election of the Jews, and reprobation of the Gentiles, did not absolutely secure the salvation of the former, or the damnation of the latter, it is plain that from this election Calvinism can derive no aid. Indeed, so far was the calling of Abraham, and the establishment of the Church in his family, from implying the absolute dereliction of the Gentiles to eternal ruin, that it was designed as a means of illumination, and an unspeakable blessing, even to them. The establishment of the true worship in the family of Abraham was designed to counteract the prevalence of idolatry among the surrounding nations; and the entire Jewish system of jurisprudence and religion was indeed a "light shining in



a dark place." The peculiar position of their country, their intercourse with surrounding nations, both through commerce and by reason of their frequent captivities, with many concurring circumstances, tended to diffuse abroad the lights and blessings of Judaism. Even at their temple, there was found "the court of the Gentiles," where the "stranger from a far country" might join in the worship of the true God. How plain then must it be, that this election of one nation to peculiar privileges was designed also to "bless," though in a less degree, "all the families of the earth."

(2) A second example of this species of election is presented in *the calling of both Jews and Gentiles to the privileges of the gospel Church*.

There is a reference to this election in the following passages:—1 Pet. v. 13: "The Church that is at Babylon, *elected* together with you." 1 Pet. ii. 9: "But ye are a *chosen* generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people." 1 Thess. i. 4: "Knowing, brethren beloved, your *election* of God."

That we may the better understand this election, be it remembered that the Jews, in many respects, were a typical people. Their calling and election to the peculiar privileges of the Mosaic dispensation were typical of the calling and election of both Jews and Gentiles to the superior privileges of the gospel. In the days of the apostles, the old dispensation gave place to the new. The Mosaic institution received its fulfillment; and vast multitudes of both Jews and Gentiles were called and elected to the glorious privileges of the gospel Church; not by virtue of natural descent from Abraham, but through the medium of "faith in our Lord Jesus Christ." The privileges to which they were here elected were both external—embracing all the means of grace, and outward blessings of Christianity; and internal—embracing the spiritual enjoyments and blessings of pure and heart-felt religion. Many were externally embraced in the Church, and in that sense elected to its privileges, who were not elected to the full enjoyment of the spiritual blessings of the gospel. The cause of this distinction is obvious. The condition upon which they could be elected to the external privileges was that of a formal profession; but the condition of election to the full privileges of the Church, both external and internal, both temporal and spiritual, was that of faith in God's Messiah. Many, no doubt, enjoyed the privileges of the former, who never attained unto the privileges of the latter, election. In reference to this, it may be said that "all were not *Israel* who were of *Israel*"—all were not elected to the spiritual who shared the external privileges of the gospel; but election in the external sense was in order to, or designed to promote, election



in the more proper sense, to the full enjoyment of the blessings of the gospel.

But let us inquire, in the next place, how this election to the privileges of the gospel Church, both external and spiritual, comports with the Calvinistic scheme. The election taught in that system is, 1. *Eternal*—"from all eternity." 2. It is *unconditional*—"without any foresight of faith or good works, or perseverance in either of them, or any other thing in the creature, as conditions or causes moving him thereunto." 3. It absolutely secures their eternal salvation—"their number is so certain and definite that it cannot be either increased nor diminished."

Now, it can easily be proved that the election under consideration contains not one of the attributes of Calvinistic election as just presented.

(1) It is not *eternal*. Jews and Gentiles are called and elected to the privileges of the gospel, not "from all eternity," but in time. They are called by the gospel and elected, as the apostle has said, "through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience."

(2) It is not *unconditional*. "Repentance toward God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ," are everywhere presented as the condition upon which the privileges of the gospel Church are to be enjoyed.

(3) It does not *absolutely secure the eternal salvation of those thus elected*. That this is true so far as it is applied to the election to the external privileges of the gospel, Calvinists themselves will admit; and that it is also true as applied to the election of true believers to the spiritual, as well as the outward, privileges of the gospel, is evident from the numerous warnings given to such characters against "turning back to perdition," making "shipwreck of the faith," or "departing from the living God;" and especially is it evident from the language of St. Peter, where he exhorts believers to "give diligence to *make their calling and election sure*." Now, if it had been made sure "from all eternity," their "diligence" could not possibly have any tendency to make it sure. Again: the Calvinistic view of election absolutely precludes the non-elect from all possibility of salvation; but this election of collections of persons to gospel privileges has no such bearing whatever. Thousands who were not thus elected, or who were not of the Church in the apostles' days, have been brought in in subsequent times; and the gospel is still spreading more widely its influence, and swelling the number of its elected members. This Calvinists cannot deny.

Again, this election of Christians to Church privileges, so far from



being an evidence that others, not yet thus elected, are thereby excluded from the favor of God, has a direct tendency, and is really designed, to extend to them the same blessing of gospel fellowship. The Church is styled "the light of the world," and "the salt of the earth." This necessarily implies that those beyond its pale may become partakers of the same "light," and be purified by the same preservative grace, of which the actual members of the Church are now possessed. Hence we may arrive fairly at the conclusion that this election of nations, or large bodies of people, to the enjoyment of peculiar privileges affords no support to Calvinistic election.

3. The third and last species of election which we shall notice, as presented in the Bible, is that of *individuals chosen, or elected, to eternal life*.

This is brought to view in the following passages of Scripture:—Matt. xxii. 14: "For many are called, but few are *chosen*." Eph. i. 4: "According as he *hath chosen* us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy, and without blame before him in love." 1 Pet. i. 2: "*Elect* according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ." Col. iii. 12: "Put on therefore, as the *elect* of God, holy and beloved," etc.

These, and many other passages, although they may apply to that "collective" election already described, yet we admit that they also express the peculiar favor by which God calls and elects to eternal life all the finally faithful. That election of this personal and individual kind is frequently alluded to in the Scriptures, is admitted by Arminians as well as Calvinists; but the great matter of dispute relates to the sense in which the subject is to be understood. Calvinists say that this election is "from all eternity;" this Arminians deny, except so far as the foreknowledge or purpose of God to elect may be termed election.

Upon this question, then, concerning the *eternity* of personal and individual election, we remark, first, that to suppose that actual election can be "from all eternity," appears *manifestly absurd*, and inconsistent with the import of the term to elect. It signifies to choose: this implies *an act* of the mind, and every act implies a *time* in which it took place, and consequently a time *before* it took place. Hence it would appear that, unless we make the act of election an essential part of the divine nature, (which is absurd,) it cannot be eternal; for that attribute will apply properly to the *divine essence* only.



Again, the eternity of actual election is not only absurd, as we have seen, but it is also *unscriptural*.

St. Peter calls the saints, "elect, *through sanctification of the Spirit*," etc. Now, if they are elected "through sanctification of the Spirit," they could not have been elected till they were sanctified by the Spirit, unless we say that the end precedes the means leading to that end, or that the effect precedes the cause, which is absurd. St. Paul styles the saints, "chosen through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." Now, according to the same reasoning, they could not have been actually chosen before they believed the truth; consequently their actual election cannot be "from all eternity." We know that St. Paul, in the passage quoted, says: "God hath *from the beginning* chosen you," etc. But this cannot prove the eternity of actual election, without, as we have seen, contradicting what immediately follows; and we may be sure that the apostle did not mean to contradict himself.

The meaning of St. Paul may be explained by the language of St. Peter, when he styles the saints "elect *according to the foreknowledge of God*"—that is, in the purpose of God. So, St. Paul may mean that "God hath from the beginning (according to his foreknowledge, or in his purpose) chosen you," etc.

But even if we take the phrase "from the beginning" to refer to the commencement of the world, when God first laid the plan of salvation through Christ, it will not follow that the personal election of the Thessalonians was unconditional. The words may merely imply that God, from the very first institution of the covenant of grace, determined, from a foresight that they would believe and embrace the gospel, through that means to save them from their sins, and admit them to the heavenly felicity. So, then, we perceive that, whether we understand the texts in question to refer to the unconditional election of the believing character, according to the settled principles of the gospel, or to the conditional election of individual persons, according to the same divinely established condition of faith, in either case, there can be nothing derived from this source to justify the Calvinistic scheme of eternal, unconditional, and personal election to ever lasting life.

That the Calvinistic view upon this subject is *self-contradictory and absurd*, may easily be shown by adverting to the true definition of election, and calling to mind the several indispensable requisites for its existence, according to what has already been shown.

In view of these principles, then, we will briefly consider this *personal* election to eternal life.



1. Before an election can exist, according to the principles of rationality, there must be an *intelligent agent* to perform the act of choosing. In reference to the election in question, God is this agent. St. Paul says: "According as he (God) hath chosen us in him," etc. On this point there can be no controversy. All agree that God is the *great* intelligent agent who chooses, or elects, whom he will to eternal life.

2. The second requisite to an election is, that the agent who performs the act of choosing be possessed of *moral freedom*. Here, also, there can be no controversy. All must agree that the Divine Being possesses moral freedom in the highest possible acceptation. He doeth "his good pleasure," and "worketh all things after the counsel of his own will."

3. The third thing requisite to constitute election is, that *objects* be presented to the mind of the intelligent agent, in reference to which he may make the choice. Here the Calvinistic scheme begins to limp; for if election be "from all eternity," it took place before the objects or persons existed concerning whom it was made. But if it be said that it took place in the purpose of God, who, looking forward into futurity, "seeth the end from the beginning," then it will follow that it was not *actual* election at all, but only a determination to elect in futurity, and Calvinism falls to the ground. The former position is absurd, the latter gives up the question; and Calvinists may *elect* either horn of the dilemma.

4. The fourth thing requisite to constitute election is, that there be a *real* or *imaginary difference* in the objects in reference to which the choice is made. The word *imaginary* is here inserted in order to make the definition apply to election universally, whether fallible man or the Infinite Mind be the agent in the choice; but as God is infinite in knowledge, it is clear that the term can have no application when the choice is performed by him; therefore, before the election in question can exist, there must be a real difference in the objects or persons concerning whom the choice is made. Even an intelligent creature can make no rational choice where no supposed difference exists; and can we suppose that the infinite God will act in a manner that would be justly deemed blind and irrational in man? The thought is inadmissible. However far beyond the ken of the puny intellect of man the principles may lie which sway the divine determinations, yet we may be well assured that every act of Deity is based upon a sufficient and infallible reason. If God selects, or chooses, some men to eternal life, and rejects others, as all admit to be the fact, there must be a good and sufficient reason for this election.



It will not do for Calvinists piously to tell us that "the Judge of all the earth will do right," and to think that this will put out of sight the difficulty which their doctrine here involves. That God will "do right," all admit; but the question is, *How can he do right if Calvinism be true?* Nor will it do for them to tell us that this election is "according to the good pleasure of God's will." This we admit; but the question is, *How can the Calvinistic presentation of this subject be reconciled with the declarations of Scripture in reference to the divine will?* Does not Calvinism, by telling us that this election of some men to eternal life is "without any foresight of faith, or good works, or perseverance in either of them, or any other thing in the creature, as conditions or causes moving him thereunto," render this election perfectly irreconcilable with the divine character?

If, as Calvinism teaches, this choice of some men and rejection of others is made without any reference whatever to moral character, but according to the "good pleasure of God," we might perhaps still suppose that there was a sufficient reason to justify it, though concealed from our view; were it not that we are immediately informed that the moral character of the elect and reprobate, as contemplated by the Almighty in his electing love, was precisely the same. This tenet of Calvinism not only puts the reason of the choice beyond our reach, but it does more—it puts it out of existence; for if the reason be not founded on moral character, there is no consideration left, according to the Scriptures, upon which it can be founded. Agreeably to the Bible, in the awards of the judgment-day, moral character alone is taken into the account; and this is the only ground of distinction by which God can be influenced, in determining one person for glory and another for perdition. As Calvinism disavows this distinction as having any influence in election, it deprives the Divine Being of any possible reason worthy of his character for the personal election of men to everlasting life.

If it be said, Calvinists themselves declare that God always acts rationally, and has an infinite reason for all his acts, we reply, that this only proves that their system is *self-contradictory*; for, as we have already shown, their scheme discards any difference in the moral character of men as influencing election; and the Scriptures everywhere show that God, in his dealings with men in reference to eternity, can be swayed by no other consideration.

We arrive at the conclusion, therefore, that however different the teachings of Calvinism, if one man is elected to everlasting life and another consigned to perdition, it is not the result of an arbitrary, capri-



cious, and unreasonable partiality, but accords with reason, equity, and justice, and is a glorious display of the harmonious perfections of God. It is because the one is good and the other bad; the one is righteous and the other unrighteous; the one is a believer and the other an unbeliever; or the one is obedient and the other rebellious. These are the distinctions which reason, justice, and Scripture recognize; and we may rest assured they are the only distinctions which God regards in electing his people to glory, and sentencing the wicked to perdition.

5. The last thing requisite to constitute election is, that there be a *time* at which the act of choosing takes place. As has already been shown, the election of individuals to eternal life may be considered as existing only in the *foreknowledge* or *purpose of God*, or it may be viewed as *actual*. There is no possible middle ground between these positions. If we adopt the former, and say that election is only "from all eternity" when viewed as the divine *purpose* to elect, we renounce one of the favorite dogmas of Calvinism, which holds that election is absolute from all eternity, and in no sense dependent on, or resulting from, foreknowledge. If we adopt the latter, we are involved in the absurdity of saying that an *actual choice* has been made, and yet that there was *no time* in which the act took place. And more than this, we also contradict the Scripture, which plainly teaches that men are actually chosen to eternal life when they accede to the conditions of the gospel; their election is "through faith"—"sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth." From what has been said, we think it evident that neither the election of individuals to a particular office or work, nor the election of nations, or bodies of people, to peculiar privileges, nor that of individuals to eternal life, gives the least sanction to the Calvinistic scheme.



## QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER XXII.

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| <p>QUESTION 1. From what subjects do Calvinists argue, to sustain their system?</p> <p>2. Are election, predestination, etc., Scripture doctrines?</p> <p>3. How are they understood by the Arminian?</p> <p>4. How by the Calvinist?</p> <p>5. What summaries of Calvinism are quoted?</p> <p>6. From what is the term <i>election</i> derived?</p> <p>7. What five particulars are presented, as essential to constitute election?</p> <p>8. What is the first election mentioned?</p> <p>9. What instances of it are given?</p> <p>10. Why does it give no support to Calvinism?</p> <p>11. What is the second species of election specified?</p> | <p>12. What is the first instance given of this?</p> <p>13. What scriptures contain it?</p> <p>14. How does it appear that it gives no support to Calvinism?</p> <p>15. What is the next instance given?</p> <p>16. In what scriptures is it contained?</p> <p>17. How does it appear that it gives no support to Calvinism?</p> <p>18. What is the third species of election?</p> <p>19. In what scriptures is it contained?</p> <p>20. Does it afford any support to Calvinism?</p> <p>21. Do the five requisites of election apply to it?</p> <p>22. Do they in the Calvinistic sense?</p> <p>23. How may this be shown?</p> |
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## CHAPTER XXIII.

THE ATONEMENT—ITS EXTENT—ELECTION AND PREDESTINATION—  
SPECIAL SCRIPTURES EXAMINED.

IN the preceding chapter, we progressed so far in the investigation of the subject of election, predestination, etc., as, first, to exhibit a brief view of the Calvinistic scheme, as set forth in the acknowledged standards of several Calvinistic Churches; and, secondly, to present what we conceive to be the scriptural account of this subject.

We now proceed to examine the *Scripture testimony* which Calvinists have alleged in support of their doctrine. To enter upon an exegetical discussion of every passage which they have quoted upon this subject, would be unnecessarily tedious; as the entire weight of their argument may be fully seen by an attention to those few prominent texts, which they almost invariably quote when they touch the Arminian controversy, and on which they mainly rely. Here the Bible of the Calvinist will almost instinctively open upon the ninth, tenth, and eleventh chapters of the Epistle to the Romans.

I. We notice their argument from *what is said in reference to Jacob and Esau*.

Rom ix. 11-16: "(For the children being not yet born, neither having done either good or evil, that the purpose of God, according to election, might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;) it was said unto her, (Rebecca,) The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated. What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid. For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then, it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy."

After the unanswerable refutations of the Calvinistic construction of this passage, furnished by such commentators and divines as Whitby, Taylor, Benson, Fletcher, Adam Clarke, etc., it is a little surprising that any intelligent Calvinist should continue to argue from it in favor of absolute personal election. This is more especially remarkable, as



several of the most acute divines of the Calvinistic school have been impelled by candor to adopt the Arminian interpretation of the passage now before us—among whom we might mention Dr. Macknight of Scotland, and Professor Stuart of Andover. The latter, however, appears not so fully to renounce the Calvinistic interpretation as the former; but that he yields one of the principal points, may be seen from the following remarks on the thirteenth verse. “The precedence, then, of Jacob is established by this declaration; but in what respect? In a temporal one, it would seem, so far as this instance is concerned. That the whole refers to the bestowment of temporal blessings, and the withholding of them, is clear, not only from this passage, but from comparing Gen. xxv. 23, xxvii. 27, etc. As to *ἐπισημα*, its meaning here is rather *privative* than *positive*. When the Hebrews compared a stronger affection with a weaker one, they called the first love, and the other hatred.”

After referring such as desire a critical and minute exposition of this passage to the commentators already mentioned, we may observe that the argument for personal and absolute election to eternal life, from this passage, is entirely dependent upon two positions, which, if they can be fairly proved, will establish the Calvinistic view; but a failure to establish either of them, will be fatal to the whole scheme. These positions are, 1. That the election here spoken of referred to Jacob and Esau, *personally and individually*. 2. That it referred to *the absolute determination of their eternal destiny*. Now, if either of these positions is seen to be untenable, notwithstanding the other may be established, it will inevitably follow that the election here presented to view, so far from establishing the Calvinistic doctrine, tends directly to its overthrow. How much more signal, then, must be the defeat of the Calvinist, if, upon examination, both these principles are found to be not only unsustainable, but positively disproved! Such, we think, will be the result of an impartial investigation.

1. Then we inquire whether this election referred to Jacob and Esau *personally and individually*.

That it did not, but was intended to apply to two *nations*—the posterity of Jacob, (the Jews,) and the posterity of Esau, (the Edomites)—is evident, 1. From *the language of the entire passage*, of which the apostle, in accordance with his manner, only quotes as much as was essential to his argument. The passage is recorded in Gen. xxv. 23: “And the Lord said unto her, *Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve*



the younger." So far, then, from the apostle referring to Jacob and Esau personally, we here have the direct Scripture to prove that although the names of Jacob and Esau are used, it is in a representative sense. "Two nations," or "two manner of people," were the subject of the prophecy. Concerning them, and not concerning Jacob and Esau, personally, it was said, "the elder shall serve the younger," and that "one shall be stronger than the other." 2. As it is contrary to the language of the prophecy that this passage should apply personally to Jacob and Esau, so it is *contrary to the truth of history*. Esau never did "serve" Jacob personally.

Again: from the first chapter of Malachi, it may be clearly seen that the *nations* of the Israelites and Edomites, and not the *persons* of Jacob and Esau, were the subject of the prophecy. "The burden of the word of the Lord to *Israel* by Malachi. I have *loved you*, (Israel, not Jacob,) saith the Lord. Yet ye say, Wherein hast thou loved us? Was not Esau Jacob's brother? saith the Lord; yet I *loved Jacob* and I *hated Esau*, and laid his mountains and his heritage waste for the dragons of the wilderness. Whereas *Edom* (not Esau personally) saith, We are impoverished," etc. Thus we see, from the Scriptures themselves, that the passage under consideration determines nothing in reference to Jacob and Esau, personally. Hence there can be no ground here for establishing the doctrine of personal and unconditional election.

2. We inquire whether this election referred to *the determination of the eternal destiny* of the persons concerned.

Now, even if it could be made appear (which we have just seen to be contrary to Scripture) that Jacob and Esau are here personally referred to, Calvinism can derive no support, unless it be also shown that this election and reprobation, or this *loving of Jacob* and *hating of Esau*, referred to their eternal destiny. That it had no reference whatever to their eternal destiny, either as individuals or nations, but that it related entirely to temporal blessings, we might almost leave to the testimony of the most intelligent Calvinistic commentators themselves.

The decision of Professor Stuart on this point we have already seen. His words are, "The whole refers to the bestowment of temporal blessings, and the withholding of them," and he directly sanctions the interpretation that the term *ἐμίσησα*, in the phrase, "Esau have I hated," implies not positive hatred, but only a less degree of love.

Macknight says: "What God's *hatred* of Esau was, is declared in the words of the prophecy which immediately follow, namely, '*and laid*



*his mountains waste.'*" As Macknight was himself a Calvinist, and taught the doctrine of absolute and personal election, though he acknowledged it was not contained in the scripture before us, his testimony may, on that account, be deemed the more valuable; hence we quote from him the following acute observations:

"1. It is neither said, nor is it true, of Jacob and Esau personally, that the 'elder served the younger.' This is only true of their posterity. 2. Though Esau had served Jacob personally, and had been inferior to him in worldly greatness, it would have been no proof at all of Jacob's election to eternal life, nor of Esau's reprobation. As little was the subjection of the Edomites to the Israelites in David's days a proof of the election and reprobation of their progenitors. 3. The apostle's professed purpose in this discourse being to show that an election bestowed on Jacob's posterity by God's free gift might either be taken from them, or others might be admitted to share therein with them, it is evidently not an election to eternal life, which is never taken away, but an election to external privileges only. 4. This being an election of the whole posterity of Jacob, and a reprobation of the whole descendants of Esau, it can only mean that the nation which was to spring from Esau should be subdued by the nation which was to spring from Jacob; and that it should not, like the nations springing from Jacob, be the Church and people of God, nor be entitled to the possession of Canaan, nor give birth to the seed in whom all the families of the earth were to be blessed. 5. The circumstance of Esau's being elder than Jacob was very probably taken notice of, to show that Jacob's election was contrary to the right of primogeniture, because this circumstance proved it to be from pure favor. But if his election had been to eternal life, the circumstance of his age ought not to have been mentioned, because it had no relation to that matter whatever."

We deem it useless to detain upon this subject. From what has been said, we arrive at the conclusion—

1. That this election was not *personal*, but *national*.
2. That it related, not to *eternal life*, but to *temporal blessings*.

The opposite of both these positions is essential to Calvinistic election; therefore it follows that this stereotyped argument of Calvinism, from the mooted case of "Jacob and Esau," so far from being sustained by Scripture, has been doubly confuted.

II. The second argument which we shall notice, as relied upon by the Calvinist, is based upon *what is said in reference to Pharaoh, and the "potter and the clay."*

The passage is recorded in Rom. ix. 17-24: "For the Scripture



saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might show my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth. Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will? Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor? What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction; and that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory, even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?"

That the argument attempted to be based upon this passage may be clearly seen in all its force, and fairly tested in as small a compass as practicable, we propose, first, to specify the several points insisted upon by Calvinists, the establishment of some, or all, of which is essential to the support of their doctrine, and then to examine the evidence by which these several points are assumed to be established. These points are—

1. That Pharaoh is given as an instance of unconditional and eternal reprobation, being created for the express purpose that the "power of God" might "be shown" in his eternal destruction.

2. That the hardening of Pharaoh's heart was effected by a direct influence, or positive influx, from God.

3. That in the reference to the parable of "the potter," the making of the "one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor," is designed to represent the right of God to create one man expressly for eternal life, and another for eternal destruction.

4. That the "vessels of wrath fitted to destruction," are designed to represent persons expressly and designedly created and prepared by the Almighty for eternal death.

5. That the object of the apostle, in referring to the case of Pharaoh, and to the parable of the "potter and the clay," was to illustrate the doctrine of personal, unconditional, and eternal election and reprobation.

Were it necessary, it might easily be shown by a reference to numerous Calvinistic commentators and divines, that the above is a fair presentation of the positions assumed by them, when they would establish their system by a reference to the passage in question; but this, we



presume, cannot be denied; for it must be perceptible to every reflecting mind that, so far as reliance is placed on the scripture now before us, the peculiar dogmas of Calvinism must stand or fall with the above propositions.

And we may now be permitted in candor to say, that it will not be a difficult task to show that the above propositions resemble far more a gross perversion than a fair exposition of Scripture. This we shall endeavor to evince, by examining each proposition separately. But, first, we would frankly acknowledge that all the above propositions have not been fairly avowed by all who have been considered Calvinists; but at the same time it must be conceded, on the other hand, that so far as any of them have been renounced, all dependence for the support of Calvinism from that source has also been relinquished.

Some Calvinistic writers have based the defense of their system on one, some on another, and some on several, of the above positions; but seldom, if ever, has the same writer expressly avowed his reliance on all of them. Still it should be borne in mind, that if Calvinism can derive any support whatever from the passage in question, it must be by a reliance on some of the positions above presented; consequently, if we can show that none of them can fairly be sustained, this stronghold of Calvinistic defense will be demolished. But to proceed—

1. The position is assumed that *Pharaoh is given as an instance of unconditional and eternal reprobation, being created for the express purpose that the "power of God" might be shown in his eternal destruction.*

If this proposition can be sustained by a fair exegesis of the Scripture, then it would seem to follow that, as Pharaoh had been created expressly and designedly for eternal death, it would not be inconsistent with the divine attributes to suppose that the reprobate in general were created for the same purpose; and this, we confess, would go far toward establishing Calvinistic reprobation. What, we ask, is the evidence here relied upon? It is this sentence: "Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might show my power in thee." Now, before this passage can be made to sustain the proposition in question, it must be shown that the phrase, "I have raised thee up," implies, I have created thee; and that the phrase, "that I might show my power in thee," implies that I might eternally punish thee. That neither of these positions can be sustained, we shall immediately show.

(1) The word here rendered "raised up," is *ἐξήγειρά*, from *ἐξεγείρω*. That this word does not mean to create, but merely to rouse up, or to excite, or (as seems most in accordance with *διετηρήθης*, the word used in the Septuagint) to make to stand, or to preserve, is a point conceded



even by Macknight and Prof. Stuart. The following is the language of the latter, *in loc.*: "What, then, is the sense of ἐξέγειρω, as employed in Hellenistic Greek? In the Septuagint it is a very common word, being used some seventy times. In none of these cases does it mean to create, to produce, to raise up, in the sense of bringing into being, etc.; so that those who construe ἐξήγειρά σε, I have created thee, or brought thee into existence, do that which is contrary to the Hellenistic *usus loquendi*."

Whitby translates the sentence thus: "I have made thee to stand." The Targum of B. Uziel: "I have kept thee alive." Macknight favors the sense of "having preserved thee" from the plagues, etc. He paraphrases the words as follows: "Even for this same purpose I have raised thee and thy people to great celebrity, and have upheld you during the former plagues, that, in punishing you, I might show my power, and that my name, as the righteous Governor of the world, might be published through all the earth."

If, in addition to the literal import of the original word, we take into consideration the connection of the passage in the ninth of Exodus, from which the apostle quotes, we may readily be convinced that there was no reference here to the creation of Pharaoh for a specific purpose. The allusion evidently was to the preservation and prosperity of the Egyptian king and people, and especially to their deliverance from the plagues with which they had been visited. These had not only been brought upon them by the hand of God, but the same hand was alone able to remove them. And but for the "long-suffering" of God, the king and people of Egypt must have perished under the first plagues; but God bore with them: he "made them to stand;" he preserved them for farther trial, and for a farther display of his glory. So that, without a violent and palpable perversion of the sense, there is not found the least shadow of ground for the notion that Pharaoh was here said to be created for a special purpose. There is nothing here said or implied on that subject whatever. Hence we discover that the first branch of this position of Calvinism, so far from being sustained, is clearly refuted. It cannot be argued from the case of Pharaoh, that the reprobate were created with the express design that they might be unconditionally destroyed; and any thing short of this, fails in sustaining the Calvinistic scheme.

(2) The second branch of the position is, that the phrase, "*that I might show my power in thee,*" implies, *that I might eternally punish thee.*

This the language of the text itself contradicts. The import of the phrase, "*that I might show my power in thee,*" is clearly inferable from what immediately follows, which is exegetical of, or consequent upon.



what precedes. It does not follow, and that thou mightest be eternally punished; but the language is, "and that my name might be declared in all the earth." The grand design of the Almighty, then, was not a display of his power in the eternal destruction of Pharaoh, but a declaration of his own name "throughout all the earth." For the accomplishment of this "purpose" of mercy, Pharaoh and his people were raised up and preserved, as suitable instruments. And this purpose God would accomplish through them, whether they repented and submitted to his authority or not.

Had Pharaoh not hardened his heart, but yielded to the evidence of the miracles and power of the true God, he might have been the honored instrument of proclaiming, from his commanding position on the throne of Egypt, that the God of Israel was the true God, and that therefore all nations and people should honor and serve him; and in this way the "power of God might have been declared," and some knowledge of the true worship disseminated among all the Egyptians, and all the nations with whom they had intercourse. But as the king of Egypt voluntarily resisted the truth, refused to acknowledge the dominion of Jehovah, and impiously demanded, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go?" God determined to show forth his power in Pharaoh, by sending plague after plague, and still affording him longer trial and additional testimony, that the fame of these wonders, and of the signal overthrow of the Egyptians, might be spread far and wide among the nations. But in all this, there is not one word, either said or implied, about Pharaoh's being created, or even "raised up," expressly that God might display his power in his eternal destruction. The design was, according to the plain declaration of Scripture, not that God "might show his power" in the eternal destruction of Pharaoh, but in the "declaring of his own name throughout all the earth." Thus we see, then, that this first position of Calvinism, in neither of its branches, finds any support in the Bible; but, on the contrary, is fairly disproved.

2. The second position of Calvinism is, *that the hardening of Pharaoh's heart was effected by a direct influence, or positive influx, from God.*

This position, on which is based the strength of the Calvinistic argument from the case of Pharaoh, has been assumed, but never has been proved. Indeed, the evidence is very plain to the contrary. There are two senses in which God may be said to harden the hearts of men; and it is probable that this took place, in both senses, with Pharaoh and the Egyptians.

(1) The first is, by sending them mercies, with the express design



that they may be melted into contrition and led to reformation; the natural consequence of which, however, will be, that if they resist these mercies, they will be left harder and more obdurate than they were before. In this sense it is that the gospel is said to be (2 Cor. ii. 16) "in them that perish, a savor of death unto death," and (Rom. ii. 4, 5) the ungodly are said to "despise the riches of the goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering" of God, and "after their hardness and impenitent hearts," to treasure up "wrath against the day of wrath." And in the same sense the Lord "endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath"—that is, he waited long with the Egyptians, and delivered and "raised them up" from many plagues, that they might see "his power," and be led to own his dominion.

(2) The second sense in which God may be said to harden the hearts of men is that of a judicial dereliction, or a righteous withholding, of his restraining grace. This takes place after men have had a fair trial been faithfully warned, and long borne with; and is not effected by any active exertion of divine power upon them, or any positive infusion of evil into them, but results necessarily from God's ceasing to send them his prophets and ministers, and withholding from them his Holy Spirit. The remarks of Macknight on this subject deserve special regard:

"If this is understood of nations, God's hardening them means his allowing them an opportunity of hardening themselves, by exercising patience and long-suffering toward them. This was the way God hardened Pharaoh and the Egyptians. Ex. vii. 3: 'I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and multiply my signs and my wonders in the land of Egypt.' For when God removed the plagues one after another, the Egyptians took occasion from that respite to harden their own hearts. So it is said, Ex. viii. 15: 'But when Pharaoh saw that there was a respite, he hardened his heart, and hearkened not unto them, as the Lord had said. (See Ex. viii. 32.)

"If the expression, 'whom he will he hardeneth,' is understood of individuals, it does not mean that God hardens their hearts by any positive exertions of his power upon them, but that by his not executing sentence against their evil works speedily, he allows them to go on in their wickedness, whereby they harden themselves. And when they have proceeded to a certain length, he withholds the warnings of prophets and righteous men, and even withdraws his Spirit from them, according to what he declared concerning the antediluvians, Gen. vi. 3: 'My Spirit shall not always strive with man.' The examples of Jacob and Esau, and of the Israelites and the Egyptians, are very properly appealed to by the apostle on this occasion, to show that, without injus



tice, God might punish the Israelites for their disobedience, by casting them off, and make the believing Gentiles his people in their place."

Hence it is clearly evident that from the Scriptures we have no ground for believing that God hardened the heart of Pharaoh by a direct influence, and positive infusion, of evil; and therefore the second position of Calvinism falls to the ground.

3. The third position of the Calvinist, which we proposed examining, is that in the reference to the "parable of the potter," the making of "one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor," *is designed to represent the right of God to create one man expressly for eternal life, and another for eternal destruction.*

This position contains the very essence of the Calvinistic peculiarity. If it can be sustained, there is nothing left between Calvinism and Arminianism worthy of contention; but if it cannot be sustained, then it will follow that this hackneyed argument of the Calvinist, drawn from the parable of "the potter and the clay," is "weighed in the balances and found wanting." Now we think that it is only necessary to examine carefully the entire passage in Jeremiah, from which the apostle quotes, in order to see that it has no reference whatever to the eternal destiny of individuals.

The whole passage reads thus:—Jer. xviii. 1-10: "The word which came to Jeremiah from the Lord, saying, Arise and go down to the potter's house, and there I will cause thee to hear my words. Then I went down to the potter's house, and, behold, he wrought a work on the wheels. And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter: so he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it. Then the word of the Lord came to me, saying, *O house of Israel*, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the Lord. Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in mine hand, *O house of Israel*. At what instant I shall speak concerning a *nation*, and concerning a *kingdom*, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it; if that nation against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them. And at what instant I shall speak concerning a *nation*, and concerning a *kingdom*, to build and to plant it; if it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good, wherewith I said I would benefit them." In regard to this parable, we may observe—

(1) It has no reference to the *creation of individual persons*, but to God's sovereign dominion over nations or kingdoms. God does not say, "at what time I shall speak concerning" an individual person; but "concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom."



(2) It has no reference to the *eternal destiny of men*; but to the overthrow or prosperity of kingdoms in this world. The language is, "to pull down and to destroy"—that is, to overturn the polity, or destroy the power, of a nation as such; or "to build and to plant"—that is, to establish, strengthen, and prosper, an earthly kingdom.

(3) This calamity and prosperity are not presented as the result of the mere arbitrary will of God, absolute and unconditional, but it is clearly expressed that they are *conditional*—subject to be influenced by the conduct of the nations referred to.

(4) It is not intimated that the potter made even the "vessel unto dishonor," *expressly to destroy it*. The reverse of this is most certainly true. Although all vessels are not designed for a purpose of equal honor or importance, yet none are formed merely to be "dashed in pieces."

(5) The potter did not change his design in making the vessel, so as to form it "another vessel," which we may suppose to be a "vessel unto dishonor," till it first "was marred" in his hand. It failed to answer his first intention.

(6) This whole parable was designed to express God's sovereign right to deal with the Jews as seemed good in his sight. Not to prosper or destroy them according to an arbitrary will; but to govern them according to the fixed principles of his righteous administration. To permit them to be carried into captivity, when they became wicked and rebellious, and to restore them to their own land and to their former prosperity when they repented.

(7) As this parable was originally used to justify the dealings of God in reference to the Jewish nation in the days of Jeremiah, so it was strikingly illustrative of the justice of God in destroying the idolatrous Pharaoh and the Egyptians after having long borne with them, and it was also well adapted to show the propriety of God's rejecting the unbelieving Jews from being his Church, and receiving into its pale the believing Gentiles, in the apostle's day; and this was the very subject which the apostle was considering. From all this, we arrive at the conclusion that, so far from this parable being designed to teach an unconditional and absolute election and reprobation of individuals to eternal life and eternal death, it is only intended to exhibit a conditional election and reprobation of nations, in reference to the present world. And thus we perceive that this third position of Calvinism, in reference to the subject before us, is plainly contradicted by the Scriptures.

4. The fourth position of Calvinism which we proposed to consider is, that the "vessels of wrath fitted to destruction," *are designed to repre*



sent persons expressly and designedly created and prepared by the Almighty for eternal death.

The comment of Calvinists generally on this subject is, that God not only determined from all eternity to sentence a portion of mankind to eternal death, but that he preordained the means as well as the end. Hence those who by the decree of God are designed for eternal death, are, by the same decree inevitably operating in their case, "fitted," or prepared, for their unalterable and unavoidable destiny.

The manner in which many Calvinists speak in reference to this dark feature of their system is a little curious. Some, like the bold and independent Calvin himself, look it full in the face, and frankly confess that "it is a horrible decree," whilst others conduct themselves warily, and neither directly avow, nor plainly deny, the consequences of their doctrine; but at the same time indirectly evince that even in this matter they are Calvinists still.

The controversy in reference to the phrase, "fitted to destruction," regards the agency by which this is effected. On this passage, Prof. Stuart remarks: "Now, whether they came to be fitted merely by their own act, or whether there was some agency on the part of God which brought them to be fitted, the text of itself does not here declare. But in our text how can we avoid comparing *κατηρτισμένα*, in verse 22, with *ἀ προητοίμασε*, in verse 23? The two verses are counterparts and antithetic; and accordingly we have *σκεύη ὀργῆς*, to which *σκεύη ἐλέους* corresponds, and so *εἰς ἀπώλειαν* and *εἰς δόξαν*. How can we help concluding, then, that *κατηρτισμένα* and *ἀ προητοίμασε* correspond in the way of antithesis?"

Although there is here apparent some reserve in the mode of expression, yet the clear inference is, that according to Prof. Stuart, there is a perfect antithesis between the "vessels of wrath fitted to destruction," in the 22d verse, and "the vessels of mercy prepared unto glory," in the 23d verse; and that God exercised a similar agency in both cases—that is, that God not only directly prepares his people for eternal life, but that he directly fitteth the wicked for eternal death.

We may suppose, however, that if the learned Professor had not felt some concern for the cause of Calvinism, he might have told us that it is not necessary in every case where antithesis is used, that the figure should be applied to every part of the subject. There may be antithesis between the "vessels of wrath" and the "vessels of mercy;" but it does not follow that both must have been fitted, or prepared, in the same way. Indeed, the very opposite of this is fairly inferable from the language itself. The "vessels of mercy" are said to have been "afore



prepared unto glory" by the Lord; but the "vessels of wrath" are merely said to be "fitted unto destruction." It is not said by whom. Hence the plain inference is, that as God is expressly said to be the agent in preparing "the vessels of mercy," had he also been the agent in fitting the "vessels of wrath," a similar form of speech would have been used in both cases. To suppose that God exercises a direct agency in "fitting" men for destruction, is contrary to the scope of this passage, which declares that he "endured with much long-suffering" these "vessels of wrath;" and also at war with the general tenor of Scripture, which, in the language of Mr. Fletcher, represents "salvation to be of God, and damnation to be of ourselves." Hence we find that this fourth position of Calvinism is contrary to the Scriptures.

5. The last position of the Calvinist which we proposed to consider is, that the object of the apostle, in referring to the case of Pharaoh and to the parable of the potter and the clay, *was to illustrate the doctrine of personal, unconditional, and eternal election and reprobation.*

That the apostle had quite a different object in view, we think is plain from the whole connection. It was *national* and not *personal* election and reprobation of which he was speaking. This is evident from the 24th verse of the chapter which we have been considering: "Even us whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles." The object of the apostle was to silence the objecting Jew, and to justify the divine procedure in the establishing of the gospel Church, of believers, whether Jews or Gentiles. Hence it is plain that the entire argument of the Calvinist, for personal and unconditional election and reprobation, from the Epistle to the Romans, is founded on a misapplication of the whole subject—applying what is said of nations to individuals, and what is said in reference to time to eternity.

The apostle continues the discussion of this national election throughout the tenth and eleventh chapters; but to follow him farther we deem unnecessary, as the principles already presented and established will sufficiently illustrate the whole subject. We thought it only necessary to examine the passage mainly relied upon by the Calvinist; and the result is, that we find therein no support for Calvinistic election and reprobation.

III. The third and last Scripture argument relied upon by the Calvinist, which we shall here notice, is founded upon *what is said in reference to predestination*, etc., in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians, and the eighth chapter to the Romans.

The passages read as follows:—Eph. i. 4, 5, 11, 12: "According as he hath chosen us in him, before the foundation of the world, that we



should be holy and without blame before him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will. . . . In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: that we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ." Rom. viii. 28-30: "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren. Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified."

Perhaps no word in the whole range of theology has given rise to a greater degree of intricate speculation and ardent controversy than the word *predestinate*, which occurs in the above passages. The words here rendered "did predestinate," and, "having predestinated," in the Greek Testament, are *προώρισε* and *προορίσας*, and are derived from *πρό*, before, and *ορίζω*, I define, finish, bound, or terminate. Hence we have the English word horizon, from *ὅρος*, a boundary, or limit. The literal import of predestinate is therefore to *define, describe, limit, or fix the boundaries beforehand*.

In the language of Calvinists, *predestination* is a term of more extensive import than *election*. By the latter, they understand the divine selection from all eternity of a portion of mankind for eternal life; by the former, they understand not only the predetermination of the elect for eternal life, but also the preordaining of the reprobate to eternal death; and in a still wider sense, they understand it to mean God's eternal decree, by which he "hath foreordained whatsoever comes to pass."

The Arminians, although they discard predestination in the absolute and unconditional sense of the Calvinists, yet acknowledge that there is a sense in which it is a true doctrine of revelation.

1. They understand by predestination, *the divine predetermination in reference to nations*. Thus they hold that the Jews were predestinated to be the Church of God, under the Old Testament dispensation, and that, under the gospel, it was predestinated that the Church should consist of both Jews and Gentiles, admitted on the condition of faith.

2. By predestination, they understand *the divine predetermination to save the believing character, as declared in the gospel*.

3. By predestination, they understand *the divine predetermination to*



*save all persons who will believe the gospel, upon the condition of persevering faith.*

Here, then, are three different senses in which Arminians admit that predestination may scripturally be understood. The first relates to *nations*, or bodies of people; the second relates to *certain characters*; and the third relates to *individuals conditionally*. As the last is the only view of the subject in which the eternal destiny of individual persons is embraced, and as that is conditional, it follows that predestination, in any of these acceptations, is essentially variant from the Calvinistic theory.

The three essential attributes of Calvinistic predestination are, 1. That it relate to *individual persons*. 2. That it be *unconditional*—not dependent on the foresight of faith and obedience, or unbelief and disobedience. 3. That it relate to the *eternal destiny of men*.

Now it will be perceived that all these attributes meet in no one of the views presented as held by Arminians. National predestination, and that which relates to certain characters, may be unconditional; but here the eternal destiny of individuals is not fixed. Personal predestination, which alone fixes the destiny of individuals, is always understood by the Arminian as being *conditional*—founded upon the divine prescience, which fully contemplates and strictly regards the condition of faith and good works, as presented in the gospel.

We will now inquire, briefly, whether the Calvinistic or the Arminian view of this subject accords with the above quoted scriptures.

1. We notice the passage in Ephesians. This Dr. Macknight, a Calvinist, acknowledges is a national predestination, (though he still contends for a higher meaning.) And that it refers especially to the calling of the Gentiles to the fellowship of the gospel, is evident from the entire scope of the Epistle. In continuation of the same subject, the apostle proceeds, and in the third chapter speaks of the "mystery" that was "made known to him by revelation," and this he defines to be "that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel;" and he adds that this is "according to the eternal purpose which he (God) purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord." Here, then, is the plain comment by the apostle himself, on the import of the "predestination," and "the mystery of God's will," according to his good pleasure, purposed in himself, which were spoken of in the first chapter. If it still be contended, as Macknight thinks it should, that there is a reference here to personal predestination to eternal life, the fact is not denied; although the national predestination of the Gentiles is the point directly referred to



by the apostle, yet this always contemplated, and was designed to promote, the eternal salvation of individuals. But the moment we contemplate it as personal predestination to eternal life, it becomes conditional. The Gentiles were only embraced in this sense as they became believers, and upon the condition of their faith. This is plain from the 12th and 13th verses of the first chapter: "That we should be to the praise of his glory who *first trusted in Christ*. In whom ye also *trusted*, after that ye heard the word of truth." So we perceive that in no sense in which the subject can be viewed, is any countenance here given to the Calvinistic version of predestination.

2. Equally difficult will it be found to construe the passage in the eighth chapter to the Romans, according to Calvinistic principles.

Arminians have differed somewhat in the construction of this passage. Dr. Clarke seems to confine it to the national call of the Gentiles to gospel fellowship: in this, he followed the comment of Dr. Taylor. But Mr. Watson thinks personal election to eternal life is here embraced. We think that both national and personal predestination are included.

1. The Gentiles, as a people, because God foreknew that they would believe and embrace the gospel, were predestinated to the enjoyment of its privileges. 2. Genuine and persevering believers, because God foreknew them as such, were predestinated to be "conformed to the image of his Son." They were "called, justified, and glorified." But all this was conducted according to the regular gospel plan. Their predestination was founded upon the foreknowledge of God, which contemplated them as complying with the condition of faith as laid down in the gospel. Here, then, we can see no ground at all for the Calvinistic notion of absolute and unconditional election or predestination to eternal life, irrespective of faith or good works.

We have now briefly examined those texts which have ever been considered as the strongholds of Calvinism, and think we have clearly shown that they are susceptible of a different and much more consistent interpretation. There are other passages which they frequently urge in support of their doctrine; but we deem it useless to detain longer. We have selected the principal and most difficult; and from the solutions already furnished, the proper explanation of others will be readily presented, in perfect consistency with a *possible salvation for all mankind*.



## QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER XXIII.

- QUESTION 1.** Upon what scripture do the Calvinists found their *first* argument which is here noticed?
2. What commentators are named as having refuted the Calvinistic construction of this passage?
3. What Calvinistic commentators are named as having favored the Arminian construction?
4. Upon what two positions is the Calvinistic argument here dependent?
5. How is it proved that this election and reprobation did not refer to Jacob and Esau *personally*?
6. How does it appear that it did not refer to the *eternal destiny* of those concerned?
7. Upon what passage is the *second* Calvinistic argument here noticed, founded?
8. What are the several positions here presented as essential to sustain the Calvinistic argument from this passage?
9. How is the first position disproved?
10. How the second?
11. The third?
12. The fourth?
13. The fifth?
14. Upon what is founded the *third* Calvinistic argument here noticed?
15. What is the literal meaning of *pre-destinate*?
16. In what sense do Calvinists understand this doctrine?
17. How is it understood by Arminians?
18. What is the essential difference between *Calvinistic* and *Arminian* predestination?
19. How is it shown that the texts quoted accord with the Arminian theory?
20. Have Arminians all agreed in their explanation of the passage quoted from Rom. viii.?
21. What is the probable meaning of that passage?
22. Are there any other passages appealed to by Calvinists?
23. Are they more difficult than the ones selected?
24. Upon what principle may they be explained?



## CHAPTER XXIV.

## CALVINISM AND ARMINIANISM COMPARED.

HAVING progressed so far in the investigation of the extent of the atonement as, first, to consider the Scripture testimony in favor of the Arminian view, and, secondly, to examine some of the principal Scripture proofs relied upon by Calvinists for the establishment of their system, we now proceed to institute a comparison between Calvinism and Arminianism, by an examination of the *leading difficulties* with which each of these systems has been said, by the opposite party, to be encumbered.

I. We will notice the principal objections which Calvinists have alleged against the system of Arminianism. The following are all that we deem worthy of consideration :

1. Calvinists allege that *Arminianism is contrary to fact.*
2. *That it is contrary to grace.*
3. *That it is inconsistent with the divine sovereignty.*

These difficulties we will present in the language of Dr. Hill, as follows :

"1. It does not appear agreeable to fact that there is an administration of the means of grace sufficient to bring all men to faith and repentance.

"2. The second difficulty under which the Arminian system labors is this, that while in words it ascribes all to the grace of God, it does in effect resolve our salvation into something independent of that grace.

"3. This system seems to imply a failure in the purpose of the Almighty, which is not easily reconciled with our notions of his sovereignty."

The three difficulties above specified are more fully expressed by the same author in another place, as follows :

"1. It is not easy to reconcile the infinite diversity of situations, and the very unfavorable circumstances, in which many nations, and some individuals of all nations, are placed, with one fundamental position of



the Arminian system, that to all men there are administered means sufficient to bring them to salvation.

"2. It is not easy to reconcile those views of the degeneracy of human nature, and those lessons of humility and self-abasement in the sight of God, which both Scripture and reason inculcate, with another fundamental position of that system, that the faith and good works of those who are elected did not flow from their election, but were foreseen by God as the grounds of it.

"3. It is not easy to reconcile the immutability and efficacy of the divine counsel, which enter into our conceptions of the First Cause, with a purpose to save all, suspended upon a condition which is not fulfilled with regard to many." (Hill's Lectures, Chap. ix., Sec. 1, and Chap. vii., Sec. 4.)

We know of no difficulty urged by Calvinists, as involved in the Arminian view of the extent of the atonement, meriting a serious reply, which may not properly be embraced under one or the other of the preceding divisions. The difficulties above described, it must be confessed, are of so grave a character, that a clear demonstration of their real existence must be a sufficient refutation of the system to which they adhere. The system of revealed truth is perfectly consistent throughout, and completely harmonious with the correct view of the divine attributes. If, then, it can be satisfactorily shown that the Arminian system really labors under any one of the above difficulties, however plausible the argument for its support may have appeared, we shall be compelled to renounce it; but we think a close examination of the subject will evince that the objections named by Dr. Hill are entirely groundless. We will examine them separately.

1. The first alleges that the Arminian system is *contrary to fact*.

The great distinguishing feature of Arminianism, as has been exhibited in the preceding chapters, is a belief in the truth of the following position: that the atonement of Christ so extends to all men as to render their salvation attainable. That this is inconsistent with fact, is argued by the Calvinist, both from the supposed *destitution of the means of grace in heathen lands*, and from the *great inequality in the distribution of those means in those countries where the gospel is published*.

(1) First, we will consider the subject in reference to the *case of the heathen*.

We think it must be clear that the objection to a possible salvation for all men, as deduced from the condition of the heathen, can only be sustained upon the supposition that the destitution of their condition is



such as to render their salvation utterly impossible. Hence Calvinists have generally, so far as they have expressed an opinion upon this subject at all, consigned the entire mass of the heathen world to inevitable destruction. That this bold stand is assumed by all Calvinists, cannot be affirmed; for many of them hesitate to express any opinion on the subject, and others clearly intimate that there may be, even among the heathen, some elect individuals, upon whose hearts divine grace may, in some incomprehensible manner, so operate as effectually to call and prepare them for glory. But then it must be plain that such as assume this ground can charge upon the system of Arminianism no inconsistency with fact, in relation to the heathen, that does not pertain equally to their own system.

As, therefore, the objection itself rests upon the assumed position that the heathen are necessarily precluded from the possibility of salvation, it is an obvious begging of the question. The very position upon which it depends for all its force, is what is denied, and ought first to be proved. But what entirely destroys the objection is, that this position never has been, and never can be, proved. In relation to the heathen, we may freely admit, 1. That their privileges are far inferior to those conferred upon nations favored with the light of the gospel. 2. That this national distinction is fairly attributable to divine sovereignty, which, for wise and inscrutable reasons, may dispense peculiar blessings, in an unequal degree, to different nations and communities, and even to different individuals.

But the great question is, Does it follow, from this inequality in the distribution of privilege, that the least favored are entirely destitute of a sufficiency of grace to render their salvation possible? This none can with safety affirm. In reference even to the heathen, the Scriptures declare that God "left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave" them "rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling" their "hearts with food and gladness." Acts xiv. 17.

And again, in the first chapter to the Romans, St. Paul informs us, in reference to the heathen, that "that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath showed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse." And in Romans ii. we read: "For there is no respect of persons with God. . . . For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their



conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing, or else excusing one another."

In the first chapter of St. John, Christ is said to be "the true Light, which lighteth *every man that cometh into the world.*" And St. Peter declares, Acts x. 34, 35, "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons; but in *every nation* he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him." Thus we clearly see that, according to the Scriptures, the heathen themselves are not left destitute of a possibility of salvation.

But the Calvinist may rejoin that, notwithstanding the Scriptures show forth a possible salvation for the heathen, this does not reconcile the facts in their case with the principles of Arminianism; for still it must be admitted that they are far less favored, in point of privilege, than Christian nations. To this we reply, that it follows, at least, from the possibility of salvation to the heathen, that the objection under consideration falls to the ground; for it rests for its support on the assumed position "that it does not appear agreeable to fact that there is an administration of the means of grace sufficient to bring all men to faith and repentance." The point upon which the objection stands or falls, is not the *equality* or *inequality* in the means of grace, but the sufficiency or insufficiency of those means *to result in salvation*. That such a sufficiency of the means of grace extends to the heathen, we have seen from the Scriptures. Hence the assumed fact by which the Calvinist would involve the Arminian system in difficulty, is shown to be contrary to Scripture.

But if we confine ourselves to the bare inequality in the distribution of the means of grace, Calvinism, as well as Arminianism, is compelled to admit this inequality, even in reference to the elect; for it is undeniable that some of them are much more highly favored than others. If, then, a bare inequality in the distribution of the means of grace is evidence that God does not intend the salvation of the less favored, it would follow that, according to Calvinism, he does not intend the salvation of some of the elect! But if Calvinism did not recognize this inequality, it could involve the Arminian in no difficulty for which he is not furnished with a scriptural solution.

The Bible illustration of the subject is, that God will require of men according to what they have, and not according to what they have not. If to the heathen only "one talent" has been disbursed, the improvement of "five" will never be required at their hands. It matters not, so far as the supposed difficulty now under consideration is concerned, whether the means of grace extended to the heathen be explained to



mean the teachings of tradition, the light of nature, or the secret influence of the Spirit; or whether all these are thought to be connected. Nor does it at all matter how great or how small the degree of faith, or what the character of the obedience essential to the salvation of a heathen. These are questions which cannot affect the point in hand. That the heathen cannot believe the gospel in the same sense, and to the same extent, as Christians, may readily be admitted; but this cannot affect the question concerning the possibility of their salvation, unless it first be proved that the same is required of them, which is a position alike repugnant to reason and to Scripture. We hence conclude that, so far as the case of the heathen is concerned, there is no evidence that Arminianism is *inconsistent with fact*.

(2) But Dr. Hill also urges this objection from "the very unequal circumstances in which the inhabitants of different Christian countries are placed."

Some have the gospel in greater purity than others, and, in many respects, are more highly favored. Perhaps it is a sufficient reply to this objection to say, that it bears with equal force upon Calvinism. Indeed, it is a little surprising that it did not occur to the learned author above quoted, that this same *inequality*, which he here adduces as a fact to disprove a possible salvation for all men, would, upon the same principle, prove far more than he would desire: it would prove the impossibility of the salvation of some of the *elect*.

If this inequality of circumstances, in reference to different Christian countries, and different individuals in the same country, were invariably found to preponderate in favor of the Calvinistically elect, there might seem more propriety in the objection; but such is evidently not the case. Will the Calvinists affirm that all the elect of God are found in those portions of Christendom which are favored with the gospel in its greatest purity? Or will they pretend that the electing grace of God always searches out the most highly privileged individuals in the same community? Surely not. It is admitted that while many in the most highly favored countries, and of the most highly favored individuals, in point of external privilege, live and die reprobate sinners, there are to be found in the darkest corners of Christendom, and among the least distinguished individuals in point of external privilege, some of the faithful elect children of God.

If, then, this inferiority in point of privilege, which applies to some of the elect when compared with their more highly distinguished brethren, argues nothing against the possibility of the salvation of all the elect, by what mode of reasoning is it that a similar



inequality amongst mankind, or Christian nations in general, is appealed to as a fact inconsistent with a possibility of salvation for all men? That the inequality appealed to by Dr. Hill is precisely the same when applied to the elect people of God as when applied to mankind in general, is so obvious a truth that it is astonishing that a discerning mind should glance at the subject without perceiving it; and, when perceived, it is still more astonishing that this inequality of circumstances should be cited as one of the peculiar difficulties of Arminianism.

(3) Dr. Hill next argues that Arminianism is irreconcilable with the fact, "that amongst those to whom the gospel is preached, and in whose circumstances there is not that kind of diversity which can account for the difference, some believe, and some do not believe."

This diversity, Calvinists infer, results entirely from "an inward discriminating grace." But this we view as a gratuitous assumption, not countenanced by Scripture; while the Arminian method of accounting for the faith of some, and the unbelief of others, by reference to their own free agency, and making the unbelief of the one result entirely from the *willful rejection* of a sufficient degree of grace to result in saving faith, presents a solution of the difficulty at once satisfactory, and consistent with the general tenor of the gospel.

2. Arminianism is said to be *contrary to grace*.

Dr. Hill's words are: "The second difficulty under which the Arminian system labors is this: that while in words it ascribes all to the *grace* of God, it does in effect resolve our salvation into something independent of that grace."

From the days of Calvin to the present time, the term *grace* has been pronounced with a peculiar emphasis, and dwelt upon as a hobby, by those who have borne the name of Calvinists. They have designated their own peculiar views of predestination, election, divine sovereignty, etc., by the imposing title of "doctrines of grace;" and all who have differed from them on this subject have been characterized, by them at least, as enemies of salvation *by grace*, and abettors of salvation *by works*. But that the "doctrines of grace," scripturally understood, belong peculiarly to Calvinism, is a position which Arminians have always denied, while they have disavowed most strenuously the doctrine of salvation by works. Indeed, none who acknowledge the Bible as their standard can deny the position, that salvation is of grace, and not of works. The important point is, to ascertain the Bible import of the doctrines of grace, and to determine the sense in which salvation is not of works, but of grace.



If the system of Arminianism really involve the inconsistency imputed to it in the above-named objection, it cannot be true. The objection represents that, "while in words it ascribes all to the grace of God, it does in effect resolve our salvation into something independent of that grace." Now it is clear that our salvation cannot be all ascribed to grace, and at the same time, and in the same sense, be all ascribed to, or "resolved into, something independent of that grace," without a manifest contradiction.

If it be meant that Arminianism plainly contradicts itself, by representing salvation to be, at the same time and in the same sense, *in words*, of grace, and *in effect*, of something else, it should be shown in what sense it is represented to be of grace, and that, in the same sense, it is represented to be of something else; and then the inconsistency would be fairly proved upon the system itself; but this Dr. Hill has not attempted to do. We are therefore induced to believe that we are not to infer from the objection, that one part of Arminianism is inconsistent with another part of the same system, but only that it is inconsistent with Calvinism. Unless the premises in the objection, as stated by Dr. Hill, are utterly false and good for nothing, we must understand the language to imply, that while Arminianism ascribes salvation to *grace*, in the Arminian acceptance of the term, in the Calvinistic sense, it ascribes it to *something else*. Then the only controversy will be, whether the Calvinistic or the Arminian view of the sense in which salvation is of grace, is in accordance with the Scriptures.

That salvation is of grace, in the sense in which that term may be explained by Calvinists, is perhaps more than Arminians can admit, either in *words* or in *effect*. For if by salvation of grace, Calvinists understand that faith and obedience have no connection whatever with salvation, either as conditions or otherwise, this view of salvation by grace must be rejected by Arminians, as directly contradictory to the Scriptures. And this, we are persuaded, is the sense in which salvation by grace is understood, when it is said that the Arminian system does, in effect, deny it. If the Scriptures are true, salvation cannot be of grace, in such sense as to be entirely irrespective of repentance and faith, and to supersede the necessity of good works.

The plain difference between Calvinism and Arminianism, on this subject, is this: Calvinists cannot see how salvation can be entirely of grace, if it have any respect to faith, or any thing else, as a *condition*; whereas Arminians, while they understand that "repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ," are indispensable conditions of salvation with all to whom the gospel is addressed, understand, at



the same time, that salvation itself is entirely, from beginning to end, a work of God through grace.

If it still be insisted that salvation cannot be ascribed to grace, if it be suspended upon a condition, then the charge of inconsistency or heterodoxy must be made upon the Bible itself; for nothing can be plainer than that God has promised to save the believer upon the condition of faith, and threatened to punish the unbeliever in consequence of his unbelief and voluntary rejection of the gospel. Notwithstanding salvation is thus suspended upon conditions, and, in a certain sense, man, by his own agency, must determine his eternal destiny, yet it may easily be shown that salvation itself is all the work of God through grace.

(1) Man is by nature utterly helpless, incapable of any good whatever, only as he is visited and strengthened by divine grace.

(2) It is attributable to grace alone that a plan of mercy has been devised and proposed to man.

(3) Nothing that man can do can avail any thing toward purchasing salvation by merit; for "when we have done all that we can do, we are unprofitable servants."

(4) The work of salvation, in all its stages, can be performed, either in whole or in part, by none but God; and this is entirely a work of grace, for none can claim it at the hand of God as a matter of right, and it is of his mere grace that God has promised to save the sinner, according to the plan of his own devising.

This subject may be illustrated by a reference to the case of the man with the "withered hand." He had no strength to lift his hand, yet, in his effort to obey the command, strength was imparted. Now, none can certainly say that, if he had refused to obey the command, his hand would have been restored, and yet how absurd would it have been for him to boast that his cure was of himself, merely because the Saviour saw proper to effect the work in a certain way, and the man received the benefit in accordance with that plan! Even so, if God see proper to save one man and to damn another, under the dispensation of his gospel, it will be because the one accepted and the other rejected the gospel message; and still the work of salvation will be a work of God through grace. Thus we think it clear that there is no just ground to impugn the Arminian system as being inconsistent with the doctrines of grace.

3. The last difficulty alleged against the Arminian system is, "*that it proceeds upon the supposition of a failure of the purpose of the Almighty,*" which is irreconcilable with the divine sovereignty.



That God is an independent sovereign, and governs the material and moral universe according to his will, is a truth so fully developed in Scripture, and so conformable to our best conceptions of the divine character, that no system of divinity which denies it can be admitted as true. Calvinists have generally represented Arminians as denying the divine sovereignty; but Arminians, so far from acknowledging that they deny this doctrine, have ever contended that their system recognizes it in a more scriptural and consistent acceptation than the Calvinistic theory admits. That Arminianism is inconsistent with the Calvinistic presentation of that doctrine, will not be denied; but the question is, Can the Arminian system be reconciled with the correct and scriptural view of the subject? We think it can.

The point in reference to which Dr. Hill alleges that Arminianism is inconsistent with the sovereignty of God, is that, according to the Arminian system, the will of God is absolutely defeated; for in that system it is declared that God wills the salvation of all men; but if, as Arminians admit, all men are not saved, then, according to the objection, the divine will is defeated, and the sovereign dominion of God is overthrown. This difficulty, which, indeed, at first view, wears a formidable aspect, upon a closer examination will be seen to originate entirely in a misunderstanding of the import of the term *will*; or, rather, from the use of the term in two different senses.

For illustration of these two acceptations of the *will*, the one may be termed the *primary*, or *antecedent*, will of God, and the other his *ultimate* will. The primary, or antecedent, will of God contemplates and recognizes the contingencies necessarily connected with the actions of free moral agents; but the ultimate will of God is absolute and unencumbered by any conditions whatever. Thus it is the primary, or antecedent, will of God that *all men should be saved*, but it is the ultimate will of God that none shall be saved but *those who comply with the conditions of salvation*.

The question will here be asked, Has then God *two* wills, the one inconsistent with the other? We reply, No: there is really but one will, contemplated in two different points of view; and the terms *antecedent* and *ultimate* are merely used for the convenience of describing two different, but perfectly consistent, aspects of the same will, under different circumstances.

This may be familiarly illustrated by the analogy of parental government. The father prescribes a law for his children, and threatens chastisement to all who disobey. Now it is very clear that the affectionate father does not *primarily* will that any of his children should



suffer chastisement. It is his desire that all should obey, and **escape** punishment. But some of them disobey: the will of the father is that they be chastised according to his threatening. This is necessary in order to the maintenance of his authority. But we demand, Has any change really taken place in the will of the father? Surely not. Is not his *ultimate* will, which orders the punishment, perfectly consistent with his *primary* will, which desired not the punishment of any? Or, rather, is it not the same will, under a different modification?

The perfect consistency, or, more strictly, the identity, of the primary and ultimate will, may be clearly seen by adverting to the conditionality of the primary will, necessarily resulting from the principles of government suited to moral agents. Thus the father primarily willed that none of his children should be punished. This is his first desire, flowing from the benevolence of his nature. But he does not will this absolutely and unconditionally. He only wills it *conditionally*—that is, he wills that they should escape punishment only in a certain way—by obeying his law; but if they violate his law, his will is that they consequently be punished.

Let it be remembered, also, that the primary will or desire of the parent is not in the least weakened by the strength of his apprehension that some of his children will, in the abuse of their agency, disobey, and incur the penalty. Indeed, if the mind of the father should fix upon one more refractory than the rest, his affection would naturally desire more ardently the obedience, and consequent escape, of that child. Now it must be confessed that the affection of an earthly parent, though exceedingly ardent, is but a faint representation of the extent of the love and compassion of God for all his intelligent creatures. But yet the illustration thus presented may aptly serve the purpose for which we have used it.

The *primary* will of God is that all men should be saved. This he has most solemnly declared, and the benevolence of his holy nature requires it. But he does not thus will *absolutely and unconditionally*. He only wills it according to certain conditions, and in consistency with the plan of his own devising. He wills their salvation, not as stocks or stones, but as moral agents. He wills their salvation through the use of the prescribed means; but if, in the abuse of their agency, they reject the gospel, his *ultimate will is that they perish for their sins*. This is essential to the maintenance of his moral government over his creatures.

Thus we may clearly see how the Almighty can, according to the system of Arminianism, primarily will the salvation of all men, and through the atonement of Christ render it attainable, and yet maintain



his absolute sovereignty over the moral universe. But it is not the sovereignty of an arbitrary tyrant, nor yet such a sovereignty as that by which he rules the material universe, according to principles of absolute and fatal necessity, but the sovereignty of a righteous and benevolent Governor of moral and intelligent agents, according to holy and gracious principles. If this be the sovereignty for which Dr. Hill and the Calvinists contend, they can find nothing in the system of Arminianism inconsistent therewith; but a sovereignty variant from this would not only be inconsistent with Arminianism, but it would be repugnant to Scripture, and derogatory to the divine character.

We have now briefly considered the three leading difficulties under which, according to Calvinists, the Arminian system labors; and we think we have shown that they are all susceptible of a rational and satisfactory solution.

II. We shall now briefly sketch some of *the principal*, and, as we think, *unanswerable objections to the Calvinistic system*.

That we may more clearly perceive the force of these objections, it will be necessary to keep still in view the great distinguishing principle in the Calvinistic system, viz.: *That salvation is not made possible to all mankind; and that this impossibility depends not upon the divine foresight of the conduct of men, but upon the eternal decree and inscrutable will of God.*

That this is a correct presentation of the Calvinistic scheme, has been abundantly shown in the preceding chapters. But we think that, notwithstanding the number of learned and pious divines who have exerted their utmost ability and zeal in the support of the above system, they have never succeeded in extricating it from the following weighty objections:

1. *It is contrary to the prima facie evidence and general tenor of Scripture.* This has been shown—

(1) By appealing to those numerous and plain declarations of Scripture, in which, in speaking of the atonement, or of the death of Christ, terms of the widest possible import are used—such as *all, all the world, all mankind, the whole world*, etc.

(2) By appealing to those passages which place in direct contrast Adam, and the extent of the effects of his fall, with Christ, and the extent of the effects of his death.

(3) By appealing to those passages which teach that Christ died for such as do, or may, perish.

(4) By referring to those plain declarations which authorize the preaching of the gospel to all men, and require all men to repent and believe.



(5) By appealing to those passages which unreservedly offer salvation to *all men*, and declare that men's failure to obtain it is their own fault.

(6) By referring to those passages which teach the possibility of final apostasy, and warn Christians of their danger of it.

This is only an index of the classes of texts with which the Scriptures are replete upon this subject. Considering their great number, and plain and pointed character, it is clear that they present a *prima facie* evidence in opposition to Calvinism little less than irresistible to the unsophisticated mind. With such a mass of plain Scripture, the most natural and common-sense interpretation of which is against them, Calvinists have ever been trammelled, and have based the defense of their system mostly on philosophic speculation and abstract theoretic reasoning.

2. *The Calvinistic system is irreconcilable with the character of man as a free moral agent.*

This characteristic of our nature has been already considered. At present, we assume it as one among the most plain and undeniable truths of philosophy and religion. Calvinists have generally admitted that to reconcile their views of the eternal and absolute decrees of election and reprobation with the free agency of man, is a task too difficult for their finite powers. Hence they have seldom attempted it. Their course on this subject has not been uniform. While some have boldly repudiated the doctrine of man's free agency, and therein battled against common sense itself, the greater portion have contended that the doctrines of the eternal and unconditional decrees, and of man's free agency, though to human comprehension irreconcilable, are nevertheless both true; and they have referred the solution of the difficulty to the revelations of eternity!

If, indeed, the difficulty now before us belonged legitimately to that class of Bible truths which are too profound for human wisdom to fathom, a reference to the developments of eternity would certainly be an appropriate disposition of the subject. But when we consider the true character of the difficulty in question, it may well be doubted whether such a reference has any thing to justify or recommend it, except that it is an easy method of dismissing a troublesome difficulty. What would we say of the individual who would pretend to believe that light and darkness are both the same, and refer to eternity for their reconciliation? Or what would we think of him who should profess to believe in both the following propositions, viz., 1. Man is accountable to God; 2. Man is not accountable to God; or in any two positions



plainly contradictory to each other, and refer to the revelations of eternity for their reconciliation? We think very few would tamely accede to an opponent the right to dispose of such difficulties by that summary and easy process. And with just as little propriety can the Calvinist refer to eternity for the reconciliation of his system with the free agency of man.

The doctrines of the eternal and absolute decrees of Calvinism, and the free agency of man, are plainly and directly contradictory; and although their reconciliation is a task too difficult for finite minds, yet a limited capacity may clearly perceive that, in their very nature, they are *absolutely irreconcilable*. Nothing can be plainer than that, if all the actions of men are absolutely and unconditionally decreed from all eternity, it is impossible for man to act otherwise than he does. And if man is *necessarily* determined to act precisely as he does, he cannot be free to act differently; and if so, he cannot be a free agent. It will avail nothing to say that man may act according to his own will, or inclination; for if the will be *necessarily determined*, man can be no more free, though he may act in accordance with that necessary determination, than a falling stone, which moves in accordance with the necessary laws of gravity. As the doctrine of free agency has been fully discussed in former chapters, we will now dismiss this subject by the single remark, that when two propositions directly antagonistic to each other can be harmonized, then, and not till then, may Calvinism and man's free agency be reconciled.

3. *The Calvinistic system is inconsistent with the love, or benevolence, of God.*

"God is love." "He is loving to *every man*; and his tender mercies are over *all his works*." It is the nature of the feeling of love to seek the happiness of the object beloved; and if God loves all men, as the Scriptures declare, he will, in his administration toward them, seek to promote their happiness, as far as it can be done consistently with his own perfections and with the character of man. But if one part of mankind have been "passed by" in the covenant of redemption, and doomed to inevitable destruction, when another portion, equally undeserving, have been selected as the favorites of Heaven, and set apart to eternal happiness, and this distinction, as Calvinists say, is founded upon the sovereign will of God alone, no reason can be assigned for the salvation of the elect, that did not equally exist in reference to the reprobate, unless it be that God *willed arbitrarily* the salvation of the former, but *did not will* the salvation of the latter. [In willing the salvation of the elect, he necessarily willed their happiness, and in willing



the damnation of the reprobate, he necessarily willed their misery. Hence it follows that he loved the former, but did not love the latter; and the position that "God is loving to every man," must be discarded, or Calvinism must be renounced. Thus it is manifest that the Calvinistic system is irreconcilable with the love, or benevolence, of God.

4. *The Calvinistic scheme is inconsistent with the justice of God.*

No just government can punish an individual for doing what he never had the power to avoid. Such conduct would be universally execrated as the basest of tyranny. But, according to Calvinism, it is impossible for any man to act differently from what he does. The reprobate never had it in their power to embrace the gospel, or to avoid sinning; therefore, if they are punished for the rejection of the gospel and the commission of sin, they are punished for doing what they never had the power to avoid; and such punishment is not in accordance with justice, but is an infliction of tyranny. Hence it is clear that Calvinism is irreconcilable with the justice of God.

5. *The Calvinistic scheme is irreconcilable with the sincerity of God.*

To see this, it is only necessary to contemplate the general invitations, commands, and exhortations of the gospel. With what earnestness is it proclaimed, "Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters." "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts." "Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die, O house of Israel?"

In reference to the many such invitations and ardent entreaties as are to be found in the Scriptures, it may well be inquired, if Calvinism be true, how can they be the language of sincerity? Can God in sincerity command those to obey who have no more the power to obey than to make a world? Can he in sincerity offer salvation to those for whom he has never provided it? Can he entreat to "come unto him and be saved" those whom he has never designed to save, and whose salvation he knows to be absolutely impossible; and *that* through no fault of theirs, but by his own eternal decree, according to his sovereign will?

Calvinists endeavor, it is true, to reconcile these commands, entreaties, etc., which are addressed alike to all men, with the sincerity of God, by alleging that, if the reprobate have no power to come to Christ and be saved, this results only from a *moral* inability—they are unwilling themselves. But this cannot alter the case in the least, when it is remembered that, according to Calvinism, this "moral inability" can only be removed by the influence of *that grace which God has determined to*



*withhold.* The numerous subtilties by which Calvinists have endeavored to reconcile their system with the sincerity of God, have made no advance toward removing the difficulty. It may be shifted from one ground to another, but by no artifice can we reconcile with sincerity the offer of salvation to all men, if it be only possible to a few.

6. *The Calvinistic system tends to destroy the distinction between virtue and vice, and to render man an improper subject for future judgment, and for reward or punishment.*

Virtue or vice can only exist in man, as he is supposed to have the power to do right or wrong, according to his own determination. If, according to the theory of Calvinism, all the actions of men are determined by an absolute and eternal decree of God, so that the virtuous man cannot but be virtuous, and the vicious man cannot but be vicious, virtue and vice, so far as they determine the moral character of men, must be the same. They are both in accordance with, and result from, the will of the Divine Sovereign; and flow as impulsively from the eternal decree, which determines the means and the end, as the effect does from the cause. And it necessarily follows that virtue and vice are essentially the same, and no man can be a proper subject of praise or blame.

Again: we look at the solemn process of the general judgment; we see all men assembled at the bar of God, and called to account for all their actions here; and then see the reward of eternal life bestowed upon the righteous, and eternal punishment inflicted on the wicked; and we ask the question, why, according to Calvinism, are men called to account, and rewarded or punished for their actions? If all things were unalterably fixed by the eternal decrees, the judgment process is only an empty show, and no man can be a proper subject either of reward or punishment. For what, we ask, in view of the Calvinistic theory, can the wicked be punished? If it be said, for their sins, we ask, had they the power to avoid them? If it be said, for their unbelief, we ask, in whom were they required to believe? In a Saviour who never designed, or came, to save them? Surely it must be evident that if salvation never was possible for the reprobate, by no process of reasoning can it be shown to be proper to punish them for their failure to attain unto it. We think, therefore, that it is impossible to reconcile the Calvinistic system with the real distinction between virtue and vice, and with the doctrine of future judgment and rewards and punishments.

We have now noticed some of the leading difficulties with which the systems of Calvinism and Arminianism have been thought respectively to be encumbered; and, in conclusion, we would say that, notwithstanding, according to our showing, Calvinism labors under some very serious



difficulties, and leads to some revolting consequences, it likewise embodies much evangelical truth; and the most objectionable consequences which have been deduced from the system have not been fairly acknowledged by all its advocates; yet, as we think they necessarily follow, as logical conclusions, it is but fair that they be plainly presented. We now close our discussion of the extent of the atonement, and present, as the substance of what we have endeavored to establish, the leading position with which we set out—*“that the atonement so extends to all men as to render salvation possible for them.”*

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#### QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER XXIV.

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| QUESTION 1. What three leading objections have been urged by Calvinists against Arminianism? | 7. What is the third, and how is it sustained?  |
| 2. What is the substance of the answer to the first?   | 8. What is the fourth, and how is it sustained?   |
| 3. The second?   | 9. What is the fifth, and how is it sustained?  |
| 4. The third?  | 10. What is the sixth, and how is it sustained?   |
| 5. What is the first objection to Calvinism, and how is it sustained?                        | 11. What is the substance of what has been established in reference to the extent of the atonement? |
| 6. What is the second, and how is it sustained?  |   |



## PART I.—DOCTRINES OF CHRISTIANITY.

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### BOOK IV.—THE REMEDIAL SCHEME—ITS BENEFITS

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#### CHAPTER XXV.

##### THE INFLUENCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

HAVING considered, in the preceding chapters, the great and leading doctrines of theology, so far as they relate more directly to the character of the Divine Being, the history of the creation, and of the fall of man, and of the dreadful consequences of that fall, together with the glorious provision made for his recovery in the atonement of Christ, we now enter upon the examination of some of those doctrines of revelation in which the *benefits* of redemption are more directly connected with man, as a fallen, but accountable, moral agent. As a subject appropriate to be discussed at this stage of our general investigation, we propose *the influence of the Holy Spirit*.

The doctrine of *divine influence* is clearly revealed in the sacred Scriptures, and stands connected with every dispensation and every leading topic of religion. Against this great Bible truth infidelity has hurled her keenest shafts of ridicule, and manifested a most irreconcilable enmity. It is a subject upon which there has been a diversity of sentiment among the confessedly orthodox, while pseudo-Christians have exercised their ingenuity to explain it away. Yet we think it will appear in the sequel, that a renunciation of this doctrine is a renunciation of all vital religion, and that any modification or abatement of its full scriptural import is a proportionate surrender of the essentials of godliness.

The importance of this doctrine, considered in its connection with the scheme of human salvation, as well as the great extent of controversy which it has elicited in almost every age of the Church, should deeply



impress our minds with the necessity of the most implicit and devout reliance on the teachings of inspiration, that we may, upon this radical doctrine, be delivered from all dangerous error, and guided into the knowledge of all essential truth. The influence of the Holy Spirit is a doctrine so repeatedly and explicitly recognized in the Bible, that a formal renunciation of it would amount to a rejection of revelation. Hence all who have acknowledged the truth of the Scriptures have admitted under some modification, the doctrine now proposed for discussion. But when the subject is closely scrutinized, and critical inquiry made concerning what is understood by the influence of the Spirit, it is manifest that the phrase is far from being of the same import in the lips of all who use it. Hence it is very important that we inquire carefully concerning the sense in which this doctrine is presented in Scripture.

#### I. THE DOCTRINE DEFINED.

1. *The Scriptures were inspired and confirmed by the miraculous agency of the Holy Spirit.*

On this point, we refer to the following passages of the holy word:—2 Pet. i. 21: "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." Acts xxviii. 25: "Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers." Acts i. 16: "This Scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas." So far as the inspiration of the prophets is concerned, the above texts are conclusive.

In reference to the inspiration of the apostles, the following passages may be consulted:—Matt. x. 19, 20: "When they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak; for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you." John xiv. 26: "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." 1 Cor. ii. 10, 12, 13: "But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit; for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." "Now we have not received the Spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things we also speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual."

From the foregoing passages, it is evident that the apostles were immediately inspired, by the Holy Ghost, to make known the truths of the gospel as recorded in the New Testament. To qualify them for the



great work assigned them, of publishing, and confirming by "signs and wonders, and divers miracles," the truths of the gospel, they were supernaturally endued with the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost. Thus commissioned and prepared, they went forth, and spoke, "as the Spirit gave them utterance," the wonderful things of God, and were enabled to heal the sick, raise the dead, and perform many notable miracles, by the power of the Holy Ghost, and "in the name of Jesus of Nazareth."

2. The Scriptures teach, *that the Holy Spirit operates on the minds and hearts of men, in convicting, regenerating, and converting the sinner, and in comforting, guiding, and sanctifying the Christian.*

Perhaps all professed Christians will admit the truth of this proposition; but all do not construe it in the same way. Therefore much care is requisite that we may perceive clearly the sense in which this subject is understood by different persons.

(1) The first theory that we shall notice upon this subject is that which *denies the personality of the Holy Spirit altogether, and explains the phrase to imply nothing but the manifestation of a divine attribute.*

The abettors of this theory reject the doctrine of the Trinity; and when they speak of the Holy Spirit, they do not mean a personal intelligence, but merely the manifestation or exercise of some of the divine attributes. Thus, by the indwelling of the Spirit in the heart of the Christian, they mean no more than this: that a disposition or quality somewhat resembling the divine attributes exists in the heart of the believer. Their view may be fairly illustrated by reference to a common figure of speech, by which, when an individual is possessed in an eminent degree of any quality for which another has been peculiarly celebrated, he is not only said to resemble him, but to possess his spirit. Thus the brave are said to possess the spirit of Cesar; the cruel, the spirit of Herod or of Nero; while the patient, faithful, affectionate, or zealous Christian, is said to possess the spirit of Job, of Abraham, of John, or of Paul.

In the same sense, say the advocates of this theory, he who is meek, humble, harmless, compassionate, and benevolent, is said to possess "the Spirit of Christ"—that is, he possesses qualities resembling those which shone so illustriously in the character of our Lord. So, when the Spirit of God is said to "dwell in the hearts" of Christians, it is merely to be understood that they partake, to a limited extent, of that disposition of love, goodness, holiness, etc., which, in infinite perfection, belongs to the divine character. Or, when the Christian is said to be influenced, operated upon, or "led by the Spirit of God," we are taught that he is merely actuated, in a limited degree, by those principles



of righteousness and holiness which pertain to the perfections of the Godhead.

In reference to this theory, we remark, that it appears to us to be nothing better than infidelity in disguise. While it acknowledges, in words, the doctrine of divine influence, it in reality denies it; and while it professedly bows to the majesty of inspiration, it in reality contradicts, or perverts, the plainest declarations of the Bible. So far from this theory acknowledging the *real influence* of the Holy Spirit, it denies his *real existence*; and would represent all that is said of the important offices, influences, and personal acts of the Holy Ghost—all that is said of his dwelling in the Father and in the Son—of his proceeding from them—of his abiding with, instructing, comforting, leading, and sanctifying the Christian, as mere rhetorical figures, by which actions, never really performed, are attributed to a being having only an imaginary existence.

As this theory is based upon the denial of the personality of the Holy Ghost, and as that notion has, we trust, been clearly refuted in a former chapter, we think it needless to dwell upon this point. Suffice it to say that, when a person is now said to be moved by the spirit of Nero, it is not implied that the ghost of that departed tyrant has literally entered the heart of the man, and exercises a real agency in instigating his cruel actions: when John the Baptist was said to have come in the "spirit and power of Elijah," we do not understand that there was a literal transmigration of spirit from the one to the other; it is most palpable that no real influence of the spirit of Nero or of Elijah is supposed in the above cases. And hence; according to this theory, the real influence of the Holy Spirit is positively discarded. And if the existence of the agent and his influence are both imaginary, it necessarily follows that the effect attributed to that influence, in convicting, regenerating, comforting, and sanctifying the soul, must also be imaginary. Thus it appears that this theory, in explaining away the personality and operations of the Holy Spirit, has really denied the actual existence of the change attributed to that agency, and explained experimental and practical godliness out of the world!

(2) A second theory upon this subject is that which contends that *all the influence of the Holy Spirit, since the age of miracles, is mediate and indirect through the written word.*

This, and the preceding view, are properly modifications of the same theory. The only distinction in the sentiments of the advocates of these theories is, that some deny, while others admit, the personality of the Holy Spirit; but they all agree in rejecting any direct divine influence on the hearts of men, and in confining the operation of the Spirit



to the medium of the written word. We think nothing is needed but a clear conception of the nature of this theory, in order to see that it amounts to a real denial of all divine influence, in the proper sense of the term. We will endeavor to ascertain the real import of this theory.

There is some ambiguity in the term *medium*, when it is said that "the Spirit operates through the medium of the written word." A medium may either be instrumental and passive, or efficient and active. In the former case, that which operates through the medium is a real agent, and performs a real operation; in the latter case, that which operates through the medium is no agent in the case, and performs no real operation, but is only said to operate by a figure of speech.

For an illustration of these two acceptations of the term medium, we would suppose a soldier to slay his enemy with his sword, and then to command his servant, and he buries the dead man. In this case, there are two different acts which may be properly attributed to the soldier—the slaying of the enemy, and his burial; each act is performed through a different medium—the sword is the medium through which the man is slain, but the servant is the medium through which he is buried. In the case of the sword, the medium is merely instrumental and passive; it only moves as it is wielded by the hand of the soldier, who is the real agent, and performs the real operation. In the case of the servant, the medium is an efficient and active one; it moves and acts of itself, independent of any direct assistance from the soldier; and although, in an accommodated or figurative sense, the burial of the man may be attributed to the soldier, it is obvious that the real agent is the servant; and the operation of burial is properly not performed by the soldier, but by his servant. Now, if it be understood that the "written word" is the medium through which the Holy Spirit operates, in the same sense in which the sword is the medium through which the soldier operates to the destruction of his foe, it is clear that there must be a *real* operation or exercise of the divine influence at the time. And such is, unquestionably, the scriptural view; but it is not the sense in which the abettors of this theory understand the subject. They admit no direct exertion of the divine influence at the time. They understand *the word* to be an efficient and active medium, acting as an agent in producing conviction, conversion, sanctification, etc., without any immediate exercise of divine influence at the time.

The sense in which they also understand the subject may be illustrated by reference to the influence of uninspired writings—such, for instance, as the writings of Baxter, or of Fletcher, which still exert an influence on



the minds of thousands who read them, long after the authors have become silent in death. Here, in an accommodated sense, Baxter and Fletcher are still said to be operating through their writings on the minds of men; but is it not clear that all the real operation performed by them ceased when they "ceased at once to work and live?" They put forth no direct energy at any subsequent time.

Just so, the advocates of this theory tell us, the Spirit of God inspired the Scriptures—wrought miracles for the establishment of the gospel—but that the direct influence of the Holy Ghost then ceased; and that the Spirit only operates through the word in the same sense in which the spirit of Baxter operates through the volume entitled, "The Saint's Rest." Now we think it must be clear that this is no real operation of the Holy Spirit at all. It is only understood in such sense as that in which a master workman may be said to be the builder of a house which was reared by his under-workmen, when he, perhaps, was hundreds of miles distant from the spot; or in such sense as an uninspired author, long since dead, may be said to operate through his writings, which he produced while living; or as the ingenious artisan may be said to operate through the machinery which he formed, while it may continue to move after it has passed from his hand. In such, and only such, sense as this, we are told, the Spirit of God now operates on the minds and hearts of men. Against this theory we enter our solemn protest.

(3) The third theory upon this subject is that which we believe to be the true scriptural view of the doctrine. It admits the *indirect* influence of the Spirit through the "written word," as contended for in the scheme above explained; and *maintains that there is likewise a direct and immediate divine influence, not only accompanying the written word, but also operating through the divine providence and all the various means of grace.*

That the real point of controversy on this subject may be clearly seen, we remark—

1. That the advocates of this last theory freely admit that the Holy Spirit does operate on the minds and hearts of men through the medium of the written word—they do not deny that the arguments and motives of the gospel are designed as means, or instrumentalities, leading to salvation.

2. It is admitted, farther, that the direct influence of the Spirit contended for is not designed to reveal new truths, but merely to arouse, quicken, or renew, the unregenerate heart; or to impress, apply, or give, efficiency to truths already revealed, and thus to exert an efficient



agency in the great work of convicting, regenerating, and converting sinners, and illuminating, comforting, and sanctifying believers.

3. It is admitted also, that the word of truth is the ordinary instrumentality by which the Spirit operates on those to whom the gospel is addressed.

Therefore the real point of dispute is, whether there is any *direct influence of the Spirit*, distinct from the *indirect* or *mediate influence*, through the truths, arguments, and motives of the gospel.

II. THE DOCTRINE PROVED. That there is a direct influence of the Spirit, as contended for by the advocates of this theory, we will now proceed to show.

1. The Scriptures in numerous places speak of a divine influence being exercised over the minds of persons, which, from the circumstances of the case, must have been distinct from arguments and motives presented in words to the eye or the ear.

Prov. xxi. 1: "The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord: as the rivers of water, *he turneth it whithersoever he will.*" Ezra vi. 22: "For the Lord had made them joyful, and *turned the heart* of the king of Assyria unto them, to strengthen their hands in the work of the house of God, the God of Israel." In these passages the Lord is represented as operating on the hearts of kings, when, according to the context, the influence must have been direct and distinct from written or spoken language.

Luke xxiv. 45: "Then *opened he their understanding*, that they *might understand* the Scriptures." Acts xvi. 14: "Whose *heart the Lord opened*, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul." Here the *understanding* and the *heart* are said to be *opened* by the Lord—not *by the Scriptures*, but that they "might understand the Scriptures," and "attend unto the things which were spoken." Consequently there must have been a divine influence, distinct from the mere word uttered or heard.

2. Prayer is presented in Scripture as efficacious in securing the influence of the Spirit.

Ps. cxix. 18: "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law." Ps. li. 10: "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me." Rom. x. 1: "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they might be saved." From these scriptures it is clear that both the prophet and the apostle offered prayer to God as though they expected a direct answer to their petitions. Now, upon the supposition that there is no influence of the Holy Spirit except through the word, it is wholly incon-



ceivable how prayer can be of any avail in securing the blessings desired.

Again, in Luke xi. 13, we read: "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him." Here is a general promise, restricted to no class of persons, or age, of the world. Upon the hypothesis that there is no direct influence of the Spirit, how can such language be consistently understood? Are we to expect the written word to be miraculously bestowed in answer to prayer? No one, surely, can so understand this promise; and yet, if we deny the direct influence of the Spirit, how else can it be interpreted?

3. Again: if the Spirit of God operates only through the word, all idiots, infants, and pagans, who die without hearing that word, must perish everlastingly. We proved in a former chapter that all mankind are by nature totally depraved, and that a radical change of heart is essential to their admission into heaven. If, then, this change can only be effected through the medium of the word, or truth, of God, those who are incapable of hearing that word never can realize the change, and consequently must be doomed to inevitable destruction. From this consequence of the doctrine we oppose, there is no possible escape.

III. OBJECTIONS ANSWERED. We will now notice some *objections* which have been urged against the direct influence of the Spirit for which we have contended:

1. It has been argued that, from *the constitution of the human mind*, it is impossible that it can be influenced except by words, arguments, or motives, which can only be communicated in language addressed to the eye or the ear.

To this objection we reply, that the premises here assumed are not true. It cannot be proved that there is *such* a constitution of our nature. Indeed, it is most evident that there can be no such thing. Is the power of the Holy One thus to be limited by us, where he himself has placed no limit? As man was originally created holy, independently of arguments, or motives, addressed to his understanding, why should we suppose it impossible that the same Almighty Power should "create him anew," and restore him to his pristine purity, by a similar direct energy?

Again: it is admitted that Satan can tempt, seduce, and influence the minds of men to evil, in a thousand different ways. We ask, has the prince of darkness a Bible—has he a written revelation, by which, through the eye or the ear, he addresses the human race? Or is it so



that *he* possesses greater power over man than God himself? Can Satan reach the human mind, so as to instil his deadly poison, and exert his soul-destroying influence, separate and distinct from a direct revelation, but must God himself be restricted to words, arguments, or motives? The position is too monstrous to be entertained.

2. It is objected that if God can, and does, operate on the minds of men, separate and distinct from his word, *then his word is rendered useless.*

To this we reply, that the objection is good for nothing, because the conclusion does not follow from the premises. It is what logicians call a *non sequitur*. The word of God is the ordinary instrument with those to whom it is addressed; but the Holy Spirit is the efficient agent by whom the instrument is wielded. Now, is it logical to argue that because the instrument cannot accomplish the appropriate work of the agent, therefore it can be of no use in reference to the work for which it is assigned? As well might we argue that because the hand cannot perform the office of the eye, it is therefore useless, and should be cast away. Because God can work, and, where means are not appropriate, does work without means, shall we therefore conclude that he shall be precluded from the use of means in all cases?

3. It is objected that regeneration, conversion, etc., are said in Scripture to be *through, or by, the word of truth.*

To this we reply, that they are in no place said to be through, or by, *the word alone.* That the word is the ordinary *instrumental* cause, with those to whom the gospel is addressed, is admitted; but it is in no case the *efficient* cause of either regeneration or sanctification. "*It is the Spirit which quickeneth.*" We "*must be born of the Spirit.*" And it is "*through sanctification of the Spirit*" that we must be prepared for heaven. When the apostles received their grand commission to "go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature," it was connected with the promise, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." On this promise they relied in faith, and prayer to God for success.

IV. We will now consider more particularly *the direct influence of the Spirit in the conviction and regeneration of sinners.*

The Bible clearly teaches that, through the successive ages of the world, the minds of men have been quickened and illuminated by the agency of the Holy Spirit. It has, however, been denied by some, that *sinners* have a right to pray or look to God for any influence of the Spirit, till they first believe, repent, and submit to baptism. What is quite singular is, that these same persons who tell us that baptized



believers are entitled to the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and that such only are authorized to pray for the influence of the Spirit, contend also, most strenuously, that there is no divine influence except that which is mediate, through the written word. Now to us it seems manifestly inconsistent, for such as deny the direct influence of the Spirit, to say that "the Holy Spirit dwells in all the faithful," and is only promised to baptized believers, and that for any others to pray for it is unauthorized and preposterous. What! is it so that none but baptized believers can read or hear the word of God? Or is there a veil upon every man's understanding till removed by baptism, which so obscures his intellect, and indurates his moral faculties, that he can neither perceive the evidence nor feel the force of truth? To contend that the Spirit operates only through the word of truth, and then to speak of an indwelling influence of the Spirit as being restricted to baptized believers, is perfectly puerile. For if a mediate influence, through the written word, be the only sense in which the operation of the Spirit is to be understood, surely it is alike accessible to all who read or hear the word, whether baptized or unbaptized. But we think the Scriptures themselves will settle this point.

1. The *direct* influence of the Spirit, by *promise*, extends to sinners.

God, by the mouth of his prophet, (Joel ii. 28,) declares, "And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh." Here observe—

(1) This influence of the Spirit is promised to sinners; for the terms are of the widest possible import—"all flesh." Now, to pretend that sinners are not included in that phrase, is not to expound the sacred word, but most unceremoniously to push it aside.

(2) The influence of the Spirit was intended to convict, and lead to salvation; for the prophet directly adds, "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord *shall be delivered*." It will not avail to appeal to the words of Peter on the day of Pentecost, to prove a restriction in the application of the universal phrase, "all flesh." It is true Peter says, "This is that which was spoken by the Prophet Joel"—but does he say that the prophet spoke in reference to the day of Pentecost alone? Does he say that the words of the prophet were to have no farther fulfillment? He makes no such statement. Indeed, we have the most conclusive evidence that he had no such meaning. For, in the fifteenth chapter of The Acts, he speaks of the "gift of the Holy Ghost" having been afterward granted to the Gentiles, even as it had been conferred on the Jews; and in the eleventh chapter of The Acts, the apostle says, respecting the Gentiles, "The Holy Ghost fell on them *as on us at the beginning*."



Here, then, is positive proof that if the affusion of the Spirit at Pentecost was a fulfillment of Joel's prophecy, so was the affusion of the Spirit on the Gentiles. The argument of the apostle is, that the Gentiles have received the same spiritual blessing; therefore they are entitled to the same Church privileges—the same reasoning would demonstrate that, as the blessings were similar, if one was a fulfillment of the words of the prophet, so was the other. Hence we perceive the plea for restricting the application of the prophet's words cannot be sustained. He uses language of universal application; the apostle has not attempted, nor dare we attempt, to limit the application. The words still stand, and will continue to be fulfilled, as long as the gospel shall endure.

As an additional proof that they are intended for universal application, throughout the entire dispensation of the gospel, we remark, that St. Paul quotes, in Rom. x., a part of the same prophecy of Joel, and uses it as a stereotyped truth, of universal application, "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

But suppose us to admit, for the sake of argument, that Joel's prophecy had its entire fulfillment on the day of Pentecost, will it then appear that the influence of the Spirit was not, in that prophecy, promised to sinners? The very reverse will be clearly apparent. To whom was Peter preaching on that occasion? Was it not to a congregation of wicked sinners, whom he directly charges with the crucifixion of the Lord? To this very congregation of sinners, Peter declares, "*The promise is unto you and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.*" What promise is this? Most evidently it at least *includes* the promise of the outpouring of the Spirit, which he had quoted from Joel. This argument cannot be evaded by saying that Peter only promised them the Holy Ghost on the condition of repentance and baptism; for it is admitted that the promise of the Holy Ghost as a Comforter cannot be claimed by the sinner, as such. Yet, that sinners had the promise of the Spirit's influence, even before their repentance, in the prophecy of Joel, we have already proved; and that these very sinners were so affected by the operation of the Spirit as to be convicted of sin, and made to cry out, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" the context most plainly evinces. X

Again, in the sixteenth chapter of John, our Saviour declares that when the Comforter is come, "he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they believed not on me," etc. On this passage we remark that our Saviour uses terms of X



universality—"the world," without any limitation; and (as if to show that he means especially the world of sinners) he adds, "of sin, because they *believe not* on me." Here, then, the unbelieving world has the promise of the Holy Spirit, in his reproving or convicting influences.

2. *The Scriptures furnish instances in which the Spirit has operated directly on the minds of sinners.*

In Gen. vi. 3. we read: "And the Lord said, My Spirit shall **not** always strive with man, for that he also is flesh; yet his days shall be a hundred and twenty years." Connect with this the language of Peter, in the third chapter of his first Epistle: "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit; by which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison; which sometime were disobedient, when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing." Here it appears that for "one hundred and twenty years" the Spirit of God *strove with* that wicked people to lead them to repentance; but, as they resisted its influence, they were swept off by the flood.

Christ is said to have "preached" to the antediluvians "by the Spirit." Now, unless we admit that the Spirit directly operated on the minds of that ungodly race, how can these words be interpreted? To say that nothing is meant, but simply the preaching of Noah, is perfectly gratuitous. That Noah was a "preacher of righteousness," and warned the people of the approaching deluge, and that he was inspired to do this by the Holy Spirit, is freely admitted; but here Christ is said to have preached to them, not through Noah, but "by the Spirit." That Noah, while busily employed in the preparation of the ark, preached to every individual of the race then upon earth, cannot be proved, nor is it reasonable to be inferred. But to those "spirits" now "in prison," without exception, "Christ preached by the Spirit."

Again, in reference to this, God said, "My Spirit shall not always strive with man"—that is, with the *entire race* then existing. Those who can explain these passages by reference merely to the personal ministry of Noah, without admitting the *direct* influence of the Spirit in addition to the mere words and arguments of Noah, may well be considered persons of easy faith. So far from founding their belief on a "Thus saith the Lord," they shape it according to their own fancy, in direct contradiction to the written word.

Again: that the Holy Spirit operated on the minds and hearts of the Jewish nation, through the successive ages of the Mosaic dispensation, is evident from Acts vii. 51: "Ye stiff-necked, and uncircumcised in



heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost; as your fathers did, so do ye."

Here the first martyr, in his last sermon to his incensed and wicked persecutors, charges them with "resisting the Holy Ghost," which they could not have done had he not first operated upon them.

As an evidence of the wickedness of the Jews of former times, in thus "resisting the Holy Ghost," they are directly charged with having "persecuted and slain the prophets;" showing a malignant and rebellious disposition, such as actuated the betrayers and murderers of our Lord. Now, to understand this as only implying that they had resisted the words of the prophets, who were inspired by the Holy Ghost, is not to expound the sacred word, but most presumptuously to shape it according to our own notion. The Jews are charged with "resisting," not the words of the prophets, but "the Holy Ghost." The language, in its plainest import, signifies a direct resistance of the real agency of the Holy Spirit. Before we venture the assertion that the divine influence in question was only indirect, through the written or spoken word, we should have explicit authority for such a departure from the most obvious sense of the language.

3. That the Holy Spirit operates directly on the hearts of sinners, may be very conclusively argued from the fact that conviction, regeneration, and the entire change of moral character produced by the influence of religion, is in Scripture attributed to the Spirit's agency. The Spirit is said to "convict;" it is declared that we "must be born of th Spirit;" and all the graces constituting the Christian character, such as "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance," etc., are said to be "the fruit of the Spirit." From all this it is clear that, as conviction, the new birth, and all the graces of the Christian, are attributed to the influence of the Spirit, there must be an operation of the Spirit on the heart previous to their existence, in order to produce them; and if so, the Spirit must operate on the hearts of sinners.



## QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER XXV.

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| <p>QUESTION 1. How has this doctrine been viewed by infidels?</p> <p>2. How by the different classes of Christians?</p> <p>3. What is said of its importance?</p> <p>4. What is the first theory noticed on the subject, and how is it illustrated?</p> <p>5. Does this theory admit the <i>real</i> influence of the Spirit?</p> <p>6. What is the second theory noticed, and how does it differ from the first?</p> <p>7. In what two senses may the term <i>medium</i> be used?</p> <p>8. What is the distinction between an <i>instrument</i> and an <i>agent</i>?</p> | <p>9. Does this theory imply any <i>real</i> operation of the Spirit?</p> <p>10. What is the true <i>scriptural</i> view of the doctrine?</p> <p>11. Does the Spirit now operate so as to <i>reveal new truths</i>?</p> <p>12. How is it shown that the Spirit operates in <i>conviction</i>?</p> <p>13. How is it shown to be absurd to deny the <i>direct</i> influence of the Spirit, and at the same time restrict its influence to <i>baptized believers</i>?</p> <p>14. What instances are given in which the Spirit did operate on the hearts of <i>sinners</i>?</p> |
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## CHAPTER XXVI.

## REPENTANCE—ITS NATURE, MEANS, AND NECESSITY.

To the subject of *Repentance* great prominence has been given, not only by theologians generally, but also by the inspired penmen. Repentance was not only a theme familiar with the prophets of the Old Testament, but it was the burden of the message of John the Baptist, and an important point in the preaching of Christ himself and his immediate apostles.

In the present investigation we propose to consider—

I. *The Nature of Repentance.*

II. *The Means of Repentance.*

III. *The Necessity of Repentance.*

I. In endeavoring to ascertain *the Scripture doctrine in reference to the nature of repentance*, which is the point proposed as first to be discussed, we hope to be conducted by the plain teachings of the Bible to such conclusions as shall be clear and satisfactory to the candid mind.

1. In inquiring for the Scripture import of repentance, it is natural that our first appeal be made to the *etymology of the word*.

Here we find that two different words in the Greek Testament, varying in their signification, are rendered "repent." These are *μεταμέλωμαι* and *μετανοέω*. The former implies *a sorrowful change of the mind*, or properly, *contrition for sin*; the latter implies all that is meant by the former, together with *reformation from sin*—that is, it implies a *sorrow for*, and a consequent *forsaking of, or turning away from, sin*. Macknight, in reference to these words, makes the following critical remarks: "The word, *metanoia*, properly denotes such a change of one's opinion concerning some action which he hath done, as produceth a change in his conduct to the better. But the word, *metameleia*, signifies the *grief* which one feels for what he hath done, though it is followed with no alteration of conduct. The two words, however, are used indiscriminately in the LXX., for a *change of conduct*, and for *grief* on account of what hath been done." (See Macknight on 2 Cor. vii. 10.)

Here it may be observed that, although there is a diversity, there is no opposition of meaning in these two words. The only difference is,



the one implies more than the other. *Mataneo* implies all that is implied by *metamelomai*, together with something farther. It is worthy of notice that with us, in common conversation, we frequently use the English word *repent*, merely to denote the idea of sorrow or contrition for the past, whether that sorrow be accompanied by any change of conduct or not. But in the investigation of the Scripture meaning of repentance, the distinction above made is important to be kept in mind.

In reference to the repentance of Judas, spoken of in Matt. xxvii. 3, a form of the verb *metamelomai* is used, from which we conclude that there is no evidence from that expression whether his repentance went farther than mere contrition or not. But generally, where repentance is spoken of in Scripture, connected in any sense with salvation, the word used is a derivative of *metaneo*. Hence we conclude that the proper definition of *evangelical repentance*, or that repentance which the gospel requires, includes both *contrition* and *reformation*.

2. In accordance with what we have said, we find the definition of repentance, as adopted by Dr. Thomas Scott, to be as follows: "A genuine sorrow for sin, attended with a real inclination to undo, if it were possible, all we have sinfully done; and consequently an endeavor, as far as we have it in our power, to counteract the consequences of our former evil conduct; with a determination of mind, through divine grace, to walk for the future in newness of life, evidenced to be sincere by fruits meet for repentance—that is, by all holy dispositions, words, and actions." (Scott's Works, Vol. IV., p. 43.)

Substantially the same, but perhaps better expressed, is the definition of repentance given by Mr. Watson in his Biblical Dictionary, thus: "Evangelical repentance is a godly sorrow wrought in the heart of a sinful person by the word and Spirit of God, whereby, from a sense of his sin, as offensive to God and defiling and endangering to his own soul, and from an apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ, he, with grief and hatred of all his known sins, turns from them to God as his Saviour and Lord."

By attention to the above definitions, as well as from the etymology of the word as already given, it will appear that all that is implied by evangelical repentance is properly embraced under one or the other of the two general heads presented—that is, *contrition* and *reformation*. There may be both contrition and reformation, but if they are not of the right kind—if either of them be spurious—the repentance is not genuine. We may suppose the contrition to be genuine, yet if the genuine reformation does not ensue, the repentance is not evangelical.



Or we may suppose a thorough reformation to take place, at least so far as externals are concerned, yet, if it does not proceed from a right source—if it does not flow from a “godly sorrow, wrought by the Spirit of God”—the repentance cannot be genuine.

It may, however, be necessary to enlarge somewhat upon the definitions given.

✕ (1) First, then, in reference to that part of repentance which we have termed *contrition*, we observe, that it always presupposes and flows from *conviction*.

What we think to be a little inaccuracy of expression has occurred with most theological writers, whether Calvinistic or Arminian, in reference to this point. It has generally been represented that conviction constitutes a part of repentance.

Mr. Watson, than whom, we believe, a more discriminating divine, and one more critically correct, has never written, in speaking of repentance, uses, in his Biblical Dictionary, the following words: “Taken in a religious sense, it signifies conviction of sin, and sorrow for it.” Now, that *conviction* must necessarily precede repentance, and is indispensable to its existence, we readily concede; but that it constitutes a part of repentance, we think is so palpably unscriptural, that it is a little surprising that critical divines should so generally have passed over this point in such haste as to adopt the inaccuracy of expression in which, as we have seen, the penetrating Watson has, though inadvertently, we believe, followed them.

That conviction cannot be a part of repentance, we may clearly see when we reflect that God has never promised to repent for any man. “God is not the son of man that he should *repent*,” but he “has commanded *all men* everywhere to *repent*.” Again: conviction is a work which the Lord performs by the agency of the Holy Spirit, which is promised “to reprove (or convict) the world of sin,” etc. Now, we see from these passages, as well as from the whole tenor of Scripture, that God is the agent who convicts, and man is the agent who, under that conviction, and through divine grace, is called upon to repent. God has never commanded us to convict ourselves, but he has commanded us to repent. Hence we infer that conviction constitutes no part of repentance.

Again: that conviction cannot be a part of repentance is clear, not only from the definitions quoted from Scott and Watson, but also from the etymology of the word *repent*, as already shown. According to all these, “repentance is a sorrow for sin,” etc. Now, “sorrow for sin” ✕ is not conviction, but an effect of conviction. Conviction, unless



resisted, results in repentance; it leads to it, but does not constitute a part of it.

✓ (2) Again, we remark that *contrition, the first part of repentance, when not stifled or resisted by the sinner, results in, and leads to, reformation—the second part of repentance.*

This may be seen from the words of the apostle, in 2 Cor. vii. 10: "For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of." Some have concluded from this passage that "godly sorrow" cannot be a part of repentance, because it is said to "work repentance;" and "repentance," say they, "cannot be said to work, or produce, itself." This seems to be rather a play upon words. We readily admit that a thing cannot be both effect and cause, at the same time and in the same sense; and consequently, in this acceptation, repentance cannot be the cause of itself. But one part of repentance may be the cause of the other; and this we believe is the clear meaning of the passage quoted: "Godly sorrow (that is, contrition, or the first part of repentance) worketh (or leadeth to, the second part of repentance—that is, the completion of repentance—or, as it is expressed in the text) repentance to salvation." Although "godly sorrow" is repentance begun, yet no repentance is "repentance to salvation" till it is completed; or till it extends to a thorough reformation of heart and life. Hence we say with propriety that repentance begun worketh repentance completed; or, which is the same thing, "godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation."

✓ (3) Repentance presupposes *the sinful condition of man.*

"A just person needeth no repentance." As none can repent of their sins till they are first convicted, so none can be convicted of sin but such as have sinned. The general position here assumed—that sinners, and such only are proper subjects for repentance—is clear from the Scriptures. One or two quotations may be allowed. In Matt. ix. 13, the Saviour says: "I am not come to call the righteous, but *sinners*, to repentance." In Luke xiii. 2, 3: "Jesus answering, said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galileans were *sinners* above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay; but except ye *repent*, ye shall all likewise perish." Here the argument is, that as all are sinners, therefore they must repent, or perish.

(4) The last question we shall discuss concerning the nature of repentance, *relates to its connection with faith and regeneration.*

Upon this subject, between Calvinists generally, and Arminians, there is a great difference of sentiment. But this difference relates not to the abstract, but to the relative, nature of repentance. They agree with



regard to what repentance is, considered in itself; but differ with regard to its relative character, as connected with faith and regeneration. The Calvinistic doctrine is, that faith and repentance both flow necessarily from, and are always preceded by, regeneration.

The Calvinistic view on this subject is clearly presented in Buck's Dictionary, thus: "1. Regeneration is the work of God enlightening the mind and changing the heart, and in order of time precedes faith 2. Faith is the consequence of regeneration, and implies the perception of an object. It discerns the evil of sin, the holiness of God, gives credence to the testimony of God in his word, and seems to precede repentance, since we cannot repent of that of which we have no clear perception, or no concern about. 3. Repentance is an after-thought, or sorrowing for sin, the evil nature of which faith perceives, and which immediately follows faith. Conversion is a turning from sin, which faith sees, and repentance sorrows for; and seems to follow, and to be the end of, all the rest." (Buck's Dict., Art. Faith.)

Here we see that, according to the above, which is the view of Calvinists generally, there is, in reference to these graces, in point of time, the following order: 1. Regeneration. 2. Faith. 3. Repentance. 4. Conversion.

Arminians think the Scriptures present a different order on this subject. They contend that, so far from repentance and faith being preceded by regeneration, and flowing from it, they precede, and are conditions of, regeneration. But our business in the present chapter is with the subject of repentance. We shall endeavor to show that it precedes both saving faith and regeneration.

Now observe, we do not contend that repentance precedes the enlightening, and, to some extent, the quickening, influence of the Holy Spirit, and some degree of faith; but we do contend that repentance precedes justifying faith and the new birth, which constitute an individual a new creature, or a child of God.)

We shall examine this subject in the light of Scripture.

X 1. It appears evident from *the total depravity of human nature*, as taught in Scripture, that the soul must first be visited by the convicting grace of God, and that a degree of faith must be produced before the first step can be taken toward salvation.

This we find also clearly taught in the word of God. [In Heb. xi. 6, we read: "But without *faith* it is impossible to please him; for he that cometh to God must *believe that he is*, and that *he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.*" To show that at least a degree of conviction and of faith must necessarily precede evangelical repentance, many



other texts might be adduced; but as this is a point which will scarcely be disputed, we deem the above sufficient.

We proceed now to show that evangelical repentance precedes justifying faith and regeneration. It should, however, be remembered, that we do not contend that there is no repentance after faith and regeneration. It is freely admitted that repentance may and does continue, in some sense and to some extent, as long as there are remains of sin in the soul, or perhaps as long as the soul continues in the body; for even if we suppose the soul to be "cleansed from all sin," a sorrowful remembrance of past sins, which constitutes one part of repentance, may still be properly exercised. But the point of controversy is not whether repentance may succeed, but whether it precedes justifying faith and regeneration. A few passages of Scripture, we think, may determine the question.

× 2. The general custom with the sacred writers, wherever repentance is spoken of in connection with faith or regeneration, is to place repentance first.

Thus we read, Acts xx. 21: "Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, *repentance* toward God, and *faith* toward our Lord Jesus Christ." Acts v. 31: "Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give *repentance* to Israel, and *forgiveness of sins*." Mark i. 15: "*Repent* ye, and *believe* the gospel." In these passages *repentance* is placed *before faith* and *forgiveness*. Now, although we would not rest our argument simply on the fact that repentance is placed invariably foremost by the inspired writers, yet, upon the supposition that it is always preceded by faith and regeneration, it would be difficult to account for the general observance of this order in the Scriptures.

Again: the Scriptures frequently speak of repentance as the first step or commencement of religion. The dispensation of John the Baptist was introductory or preparatory to the gospel; and his preaching was emphatically the doctrine of repentance. He called on the people to repent and be baptized with "the baptism of *repentance*," and this was to prepare the way for Christ—to prepare the people by repentance for the reception of the gospel by *faith*. In Heb. vi. 1, we read: "Not laying again the *foundation of repentance* from dead works, and of *faith* toward God." Here *repentance* is not only placed before faith, but it is spoken of as the "foundation," or commencement, in religion.

3. In Acts ii. 38, St. Peter says: "*Repent*, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the *remission of sins*, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." These persons could not have



been regenerated believers, for if so, their sins must have been already remitted; but they were commanded to "repent and be baptized," in order to remission. Hence it is clear that with them repentance preceded remission; but, as remission always accompanies faith and regeneration, their repentance must have preceded faith and regeneration. It is said in Matt. xxi. 32: "And ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, that ye *might believe* him." Here repentance is presented as a necessary antecedent of faith.

Quotations on this point might be greatly extended, but we will add but one text more—Acts iii. 19: "*Repent* ye, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord." Here repentance, so far from being presented as "an after-thought," following saving faith and regeneration, is presented as one of the conditions in order to remission: and, consequently, in order to faith and regeneration.

4. We here simply add, that the Calvinistic scheme, in requiring regeneration and justifying faith to precede repentance, appears to be not only not countenanced by the general tenor of Scripture, but is likewise seriously objectionable on other grounds. As "all men, everywhere," are "commanded to repent," and that, not after they shall become regenerated, but "now"—at this moment—it follows either that they are commanded to do what God knows they cannot do, or that repentance may precede regeneration.

Once more: as all men are required to repent, and warned that "except they repent, they shall perish," it follows, that if they cannot repent till they are first regenerated, and if regeneration be a work in which "the sinner is passive," as the Calvinists teach, then the finally impenitent may urge a fair excuse for neglecting to repent; they may say: "Truly we never repented, but we are not to blame; repentance could not precede regeneration, and we were compelled to wait for thy regenerating grace." We deem it useless to pursue this subject farther. We have endeavored to illustrate the nature of repentance, both by considering what it implies in the abstract, and by noticing its relation to faith and regeneration.

✱ II. Our second proposition is, to consider *the means of repentance*.

In contemplating this subject, we would here endeavor to guard against presumption on the one hand, and despair on the other. By the former, we may be led to look upon repentance as a work of our own, that we may fully accomplish by the unassisted exercise of our own powers; and thus we may be led to despise the proffered grace of the gospel, and by scornfully rejecting the aid of Heaven, be left to perish.



in our sins. By the latter, we may be led to look upon repentance as a work of God alone, in reference to which the efforts of man are perfectly useless; and thus we may be led to repose our consciences upon the downy pillow of careless indifference, and yield ourselves up to the seducing slumbers of sin, till the door of repentance shall be closed against us forever. A correct understanding of this subject will tend to preserve us from danger from either extreme; and while it will ascribe all "the excellency of the power," in repentance to God, it will place before man, in its proper light, his appropriate duty. To suppose that the carnal mind can turn itself to God, and by its own innate, underived energy, work out "repentance unto salvation," is to set aside the doctrine of human depravity, and contradict those scriptures which refer to God as the author of repentance. To suppose that man can have no agency whatever in the work of repentance, is to deny his responsibility for his actions, and discard those scriptures which call upon "all men, everywhere, to repent."

It is very true, God is the author of all evangelical repentance. He is said "to give" and "to grant repentance;" but, in the same sense, he is the author of all good; for every good gift, and every perfect gift, is from above, and cometh down from the "Father of lights." God gives or grants repentance in the same sense in which he gives us health in our bodies, or the rich harvest in our fields. None, however, are so foolish as to expect these blessings in the neglect of the means. Do men refuse medicine when they are sick, because God is the author of health? or refuse to sow or to plow, because the harvest is the gift of God? In reference to these things, men do not reason with such folly. Why, then, should any excuse themselves from the duty of repentance because it is said to be a gift or grant from the Lord? The truth is that although God is the author of repentance, yet he confers that blessing according to a certain plan; and such as use the prescribed means have the promise that they shall attain unto the proposed end. What are those means?

\* 1. The first that we shall notice is *serious reflection*.

The sinful multitude, immersed in worldly pursuits—allured by the "fictitious trappings of honor, the imposing charms of wealth, or the impious banquets of pleasure"—seldom take time to listen to the voice of religion. Moses laments over the thoughtlessness of an ungodly race, saying: "O that they were wise, that they *understood* this; that they would *consider* their latter end!" The Lord himself exhibits against his forgetful Israel the following solemn accusation: "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel doth not



know, my people do not *consider*." So it has been in every age: the first difficulty in the way of the messenger of salvation has been to arouse and engage the serious attention of the careless sinner. Our holy religion "commends itself to every man's conscience," and will command homage, if once it gain attention. The first thing, therefore, to be accomplished, if we would repent of our sins, is seriously to "*consider our ways*." Let us pause in our headlong rush to destruction, and ponder the paths of our feet; let us give to the religion of Christ that consideration which its importance demands, and to our own conduct that honest reflection which its nature requires, and the impression will be such as is calculated to lead to repentance.

\* 2. The next *means* of repentance which we will notice is *self-examination*.

To repent of our sins, we must first see and feel them. The man must know that he is diseased before he will send for the physician; even so, we must so examine our hearts and lives as to discover that we are indeed sinners, before we will cry, "Lord, save, or we perish." We should so examine ourselves in the light of God's truth as to bring up to our view not only our flagrant transgressions, our outward and more daring crimes, but also our secret faults, our more hidden sins. We should probe the soul to the very center, and bring out to view its naked deformity, its exceeding sinfulness. Well has it been said:

Vice is a monster of so frightful mien,  
As, to be hated, needs but to be seen.

Even so, could we but so examine our hearts and lives as to array our sins before us in all their turpitude, we should be led to cry out, "Woe is me, for I am a man of unclean lips." We should be led to "abhor ourselves, and to *repent* in dust and ashes." But there is, perhaps, no work in which the sinner can engage, more irksome to the feelings than self-examination. As if conscious of our fearful delinquencies, we shun the investigation, lest we should be "weighed in the balances, and found wanting."

\* 3. The next *means* of repentance which we shall notice is *meditation on the goodness of God*.

Paul says: "The goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance." Such is the gracious arrangement of a merciful God, that those inducements which are the best calculated to enlist our attention and engage our affections, are presented us in the gospel. Our hopes and our fears, our affections and our aversions, our reason, judgment, and conscience, are all addressed. But perhaps no emotion is more sweetly captivating to



the better feelings of the soul than *gratitude*. When is it that the child with most emotion dwells upon the character and the actions of a dear departed parent? It is when busy memory calls up to the freshness of life a thousand acts of kindness and affection. When the tender sympathies and watchful concern, which none but a father or a mother can feel, are brought up to our minds as from the solemn grave, then it is that we feel the obligations of gratitude; then the last pious admonition of a departed parent rushes upon the memory and subdues the heart, with an eloquence surpassing the power of the most pathetic sermon.

But if earthly parents, by the ten thousand benefits which we derive from them, can have claims on our gratitude, how much greater are the claims of our heavenly Father! The "goodness and mercy of the Lord have followed us all the days of our lives." We read his mercy in all his works. It is written upon every leaf, and wafted upon every breeze. It glows in every star, and sparkles in every brook. But, above all, in the unspeakable gift of Christ, in his sufferings and death for our sins, we behold, beyond the power of language to tell, the love of God to us. A consideration of this glorious theme should lead us to repentance. Hard, indeed, must be the heart, and fiend-like the soul, that can contemplate such a debt of love, and feel no pang in offending against such goodness. Meditation on the goodness of the Lord should lead us to repentance.

4. The fourth and last means to aid us in the duty of repentance, is *\* an ardent looking to God, and dependence upon him, in faith and prayer.*

In vain may the husbandman plow or sow, unless the fruitful season be given by the Lord. Even so, all our efforts are vain, without the divine blessing upon them. Yet we need not be discouraged, for God hath promised: "Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." And again: "Every one that asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh it shall be opened." We should "come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find" the grace of repentance, that we may live.

*\* III. As the third and last division of our subject, we shall briefly notice the necessity of repentance.*

The broad and comprehensive ground on which the *necessity* of repentance is based, is most forcibly expressed in Scripture in the following sentence: "Except ye repent, *ye shall all likewise perish.*" Here is the ground of its necessity. Without repentance, we can have no hope of happiness. We must inevitably perish. There are, however, various



considerations upon which the truth of this proposition is based. A few of these we shall now briefly notice.

✓ 1. *It results from the nature of that law against which we have sinned, and under whose curse we have fallen.*

Had we violated a law like many of the statutes of earthly monarchs, unreasonable or unjust in its requirements, a righteous administration might remit the penalty, without the requirement of repentance. But the divine law which we have transgressed, required no unreasonable service. It is "holy, just, and good." In sinning against such a law, the eternal fitness of things, the immutable principles of equity and justice, demand the infliction of condign punishment. Hence, without repentance, we can no more hope to escape the sentence of justice, than we can expect the very throne of heaven to be shaken, and the government of God demolished.

✓ 2. *The necessity of repentance appears from the very nature of sin.*

What is sin, both in its essence and consequences? It is direct rebellion against God. It is a renunciation of allegiance to our Maker. It is a surrender of our powers to the service of the grand enemy of God and man; and it brings upon the soul that derangement and contamination of all its powers, which utterly disqualify for the service and enjoyment of God.

It is an axiom of eternal truth, that we "cannot serve God and mammon." We cannot, at the same time, serve the devil, the source and fountain of all evil, and the Lord Jehovah, the source and fountain of all good and of all happiness. To be prepared for the service of God here, for those devout and holy exercises which religion requires, we must renounce the service of sin and Satan. We must "cast off the works of darkness," before we are prepared to "put on the armor of light." And how, we ask, even if we were not required to serve God here, could we be prepared, with hearts which are "enmity to God," and polluted souls, "desperately wicked," to enter upon the high and holy employment of the blood-washed sons of light? How could such rebellious and polluted spirits participate in the heavenly raptures and ceaseless hosannas that thrill the hearts of the countless millions of the redeemed, and swell the symphonies of heaven? Surely an impenitent and polluted soul can have no congeniality of nature or of feeling for heavenly bliss. We must, therefore, repent, or we never can enter the mansions of the blessed.

3. Our last proof for the necessity of repentance is based upon *the express declaration of the word of God*.

"God, that cannot lie," hath declared, "Except ye repent, ye shall



*all likewise perish.*" "All men everywhere are commanded to repent." Such, therefore, as refuse to obey this command, can have no hope in a coming day. As certain as God is true, their final doom to endless misery is fixed. God "shall be revealed from heaven in flaming fire, taking vengeance on" impenitent sinners, "who obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Thus have we considered the *nature*, the *means*, and the *necessity* of repentance. May the Lord give us "repentance to salvation, not to be repented of." Amen!

#### QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER XXVI.

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| <p>QUESTION 1. Does repentance occupy a prominent place in Scripture?</p> <p>2. Was it taught by the prophets?</p> <p>3. By John the Baptist?</p> <p>4. Into what three parts is the chapter divided?</p> <p>5. What two Greek words of the New Testament are rendered <i>repent</i>?</p> <p>6. What is the meaning of each?</p> <p>7. Which word is generally used for evangelical repentance in the New Testament?</p> <p>8. In what two things does evangelical repentance consist?</p> <p>9. How is it defined by Scott and Watson?</p> <p>10. Does <i>conviction</i> constitute a part of repentance?</p> <p>11. Does repentance <i>presuppose</i> conviction?</p> <p>12. Does conviction <i>necessarily</i> result in repentance?</p> <p>13. Is <i>godly sorrow</i> a part of repentance?</p> <p>14. To what character is repentance appropriate?</p> <p>15. What is the connection between repentance, and faith, and regeneration?</p> | <p>16. What is the Calvinistic view?</p> <p>17. How is it proved that repentance precedes justifying faith and regeneration?</p> <p>18. Upon what other grounds is the Calvinistic view objectionable?</p> <p>19. In reference to the <i>means</i> of repentance, wherein is there danger of <i>despair</i>, and of <i>presumption</i>?</p> <p>20. How is this guarded?</p> <p>21. What is the first <i>means</i> given?</p> <p>22. What is the second?</p> <p>23. The third?</p> <p>24. The fourth?</p> <p>25. Upon what is the necessity of repentance based?</p> <p>26. What is the first proof of this?</p> <p>27. The second?</p> <p>28. The third?</p> <p>29. What kind of repentance may we suppose Judas had?</p> <p>30. What is meant when it is said that the Lord repented?</p> <p>31. Can an individual repent without <i>any degree</i> of faith?</p> <p>32. Does repentance continue <i>after justification</i>?</p> <p>33. In what sense may a <i>sanctified person</i> repent?</p> |
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## CHAPTER XXVII.

## FAITH—ITS GENERAL IMPORT—JUSTIFYING FAITH CONSIDERED.

FAITH, the subject now proposed for discussion, is one of the most prominent and important doctrines of the Bible. We find it presented in almost every part of both the Old and New Testament; and it occupies a conspicuous place under the Patriarchal, Jewish, and Christian dispensations. It appears in the confessions and standards of all Christian denominations, and has been extensively discussed by theological writers in every age. From all these considerations, as well as from the intimate connection between faith and salvation which the Scriptures exhibit, we might be led to infer that it is a subject well understood, and one in reference to which Christians are generally agreed. But such is far from being the case. The discordant systems of theology which men have adopted have produced a great diversity of sentiment on the subject of faith; and many of the different denominations, and perhaps some in all, are either under the influence of sentiments exceedingly erroneous, or have no clear and satisfactory views in reference to this important doctrine.

We propose, in the present chapter, to examine with as much care, and present with as much clearness, as our ability will allow, the various aspects of this doctrine, as exhibited in Holy Writ.

## I. WE CONSIDER THE GENERAL IMPORT OF FAITH.

1. The Greek word rendered *faith* in the New Testament is *πίστις*, from the verb *πειθω*, which means *to persuade*. Therefore the proper definition of faith, according to the etymology of the word, is, *belief of the truth*; or, *that persuasion by which a proposition is received as true*. This is the general meaning of the term; and whatever modifications it may receive, or whatever different aspects it may properly assume, the Scriptures themselves must determine. Let it, however, be borne in mind, that the above is the proper meaning of the word; and however much it may be qualified, limited, or extended in signification, according to the peculiar aspect in which the subject may be presented in Scripture, it cannot be understood in any sense contradictory to the



above. It must imply the belief of the truth; but it may imply this to a greater or less degree, and under a diversity of circumstances.

In perfect consistency with the literal meaning of the term, we are furnished with a definition of faith by Paul, in the eleventh chapter of his Epistle to the Hebrews: "Now *faith* is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." The Greek word *ὑπόστασις*, here rendered *substance*, is, by Macknight and other critics, rendered *confidence*; and we find the same original word in Heb. iii. 14, rendered *confidence* in the common translation. This perfectly accords with the etymological meaning of faith above given—that is, faith is the *belief*, or the *confidence*—the *strong persuasion*—of the truth or reality of things hoped for. In the latter clause of the verse, the word *ἐλεγχος*, rendered *evidence*, is, by many critics, translated *conviction*. It signifies a *strict proof* or *demonstration*. The apostle's definition of faith, therefore, may be stated as follows: *Faith is the strong persuasion and clear demonstration of things hoped for, and of things invisible.*

II. With these remarks concerning the *general definition* of faith, we proceed to the *farther investigation of the doctrine, as presented in the Scriptures.*

1. At the very commencement of the investigation, we are met by a question upon which has originated much controversy among theologians in different ages of the Church—"Is faith the gift of God, or is it the act of the creature?"

This question, which is far from being free from ambiguity in itself, has been thrust forth by many as a kind of talisman for the detection of heresy—as something possessing extraordinary powers, by which the orthodoxy of an individual may at once be tested. And with many persons, assuming high claims to soundness in the faith, what they conceived to be an improper answer to the above question, has furnished legitimate grounds for non-fellowship or excommunication.

We think, however, it will be seen, upon a slight examination, that the question itself needs explanation, before any inference of serious importance can be made from the answer. The proper answer to the question must depend upon the meaning attached to the terms used. The words "gift of God," and "act of the creature," may be taken in a diversity of acceptations. Thus the manna which fed the Israelites in the wilderness, and the rich harvest produced by the field of Boaz, were both the gift of God; but no one can say that they were the "gift of God" in the same sense. In the former case, the gift was absolute and direct from Heaven, without the agency of man. In the latter case, the agency of man was required for the cultivation of the field.



Likewise there are different senses in which a thing may be understood to be "an act of the creature." Thus, what Saul of Tarsus did, when he "held the clothes of them that stoned Stephen," and what the "man with the withered hand" did, when, at the bidding of Christ, he "stretched forth his hand," were both acts of the creature; but no one can say that they were such in the same sense. In the former case, an act was performed in the exercise of the native powers, without the assistance of divine grace. In the latter case, the act was performed by the assistance of divine aid imparted at the time. We will now endeavor to determine in what sense "faith is the gift of God," and in what sense it is "the act of the creature."

2. According to the Antinomian theory, faith is the gift of God in the same sense as was the manna from heaven, above referred to—that is, Antinomians understand that faith is a grace, or a something possessing an abstract existence, as separate and distinct from the existence and operations of the believer as the manna in question was from the existence and operations of the people who gathered and used it. This has been the avowed sentiment of Antinomian Calvinists during the last and present century; and, indeed, it is difficult for any interpretation of the subject, essentially variant from this, to be reconciled with Calvinism even in the mildest forms it has assumed.

An idea so absurd and unscriptural as the above, and which has been so frequently disproved by arguments perfectly unanswerable, requires, on the present occasion, but a brief notice. Suffice it to say that, according to this notion of faith, to call upon men to believe, and to hold them responsible for their unbelief, would be just as consistent with reason and Scripture as to call upon them to stop the planets in their course, and to hold them responsible for the rotation of the seasons.

Such a view of the subject is not only inconsistent with the whole tenor of Scripture, which enjoins upon man the exercise of faith as a duty, but it is irreconcilable with the very nature of faith. What is faith? It is no abstract entity which God has treasured up in the magazines of heaven, to be conveyed down to man without any agency of his, as the olive-leaf was borne to the window of the ark by Noah's dove. Faith has no existence in the abstract. We might as well suppose that there can be thought, without an intelligent being to think, as that faith can exist separate from the agent who believes. (Faith is the act of believing: it is an exercise of the mind; and, in the very nature of things, must be dependent on the agency of the believer for its existence.)



There is, however, a sense in which we think faith may with propriety be called the gift of God. What we have already said is sufficient to show that it cannot be the gift of God in such sense as to exclude the appropriate means, or the proper agency of man. The doings and the gifts of God may be performed or imparted either directly or indirectly. God may carry on his works, and confer his favors, either directly, by the exertion of his own immediate agency, or indirectly, by the employment of such agencies or instrumentalities as his wisdom may select. Thus the harvest, which has been the product of much toil on the part of the husbandman, is really the gift of God, though not so directly as the manna from heaven, or even "the showers that water the earth." Whatsoever is the result of a merciful arrangement of God, although our own agency may be requisite to our enjoyment of the blessing, is, in an important sense, the gift of God. For example, the sight of external objects results from a merciful arrangement of God, by which the surrounding rays of light are adapted to the organization of the human eye. Thus sight may be called the gift of God, but not so as to exclude human agency; for we may either open or close our eyes at pleasure; we may look upward to the stars or downward to the earth; we may turn to the right or left at will.

Even so, faith results from a merciful arrangement of God, not independent of, but in connection with, the free moral agency of man. It is of God's merciful arrangement that we are presented with a Saviour, the proper object of faith; that we have access to his word and gospel, unfolding the plan of salvation, and exhibiting the subject-matter of faith; that we are presented with the proper evidences of the truth of our holy religion, serving as the ground or reason of our faith; that we have minds and hearts susceptible of divine illumination and gracious influence, enabling us to engage in the exercise of faith; and, lastly, that the gracious influence, through the agency of the Holy Spirit, is vouchsafed unto us, by which we may, in the exercise of the ability which God giveth, in connection with all these privileges, "believe to the salvation of our souls."

In reference to all these particulars, so far as they are connected with, or enter into, the composition of faith, it is properly the gift of God. And as God is the proper "author and finisher of our faith," because it is thus through his merciful arrangement, and by the aid of divine grace imparted, that we are enabled to believe, we may therefore say with propriety that in these acceptations faith is the gift of God. But all this is far from admitting that faith is in no sense the act of the creature. Indeed, that it is the act of the creature in an important



sense, is implied clearly in what we have just presented. For, after all that God has done, man must act—his agency must be put forth, or faith cannot exist. Not that he can of himself do any good thing—his “sufficiency is of God;” but “through Christ strengtning him,” he can and must exert an agency in believing. God has never promised to believe for any man; nor can any man ever possess faith till through grace he exercise the ability with which God has endowed him. From what has been said, we think it evident wherein faith is both the gift of God and the act of the creature.

It may be objected by some, that, according to the view presented, it is an inaccuracy to term faith the gift of God; for it is only the grace and ability to believe that are the gift of God; and this grace and ability are not faith, but something distinct from it, and from which it results. To which we reply, that although it is true that the grace and ability to believe are not faith, yet, as faith results from the exercise of that grace and ability, and flows from that merciful arrangement of God by which man is enabled to believe, we think there is the same propriety in styling faith the gift of God that there is for so considering the food we eat, and the raiment we put on, for the securing of which our agency in the use of the appropriate means is indispensably requisite.

✕3. Perhaps after all we have said, some may yet think there are a few passages of Scripture which seem to present faith as the gift of God, to the exclusion of the agency of the creature. The two texts principally relied on for that purpose we will briefly notice. The first is Col. ii. 12, where it is said, “Ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God.” Here, it is true, faith is said to be “of the operation of God.” But does this imply that the agency of the creature is excluded? Surely not. God is said to “work in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure;” yet we are commanded to “work out our own salvation with fear and trembling.” According to the scheme we have presented concerning the connection of the gift of God with the agency of man in the work of faith, these texts are perfectly consistent with each other; but if we interpret the one so as to make faith the gift of God independent of man’s agency, the other can only be interpreted in direct opposition.

The next text relied upon is Eph. ii. 8: “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.” Doddridge, and other commentators of the Calvinistic school, take the relative τοῦτο (*that*) to refer to πίστις (*faith*) for its antecedent; and thereby make the apostle to say directly that faith is “the gift of God.”



But Chandler, Macknight, Clarke, and many of the best critics, contend that τοῦτο, which is neuter gender, cannot naturally refer to πίστις, which is feminine; but that the antecedent is the preceding part of the sentence, or the salvation spoken of as being "by grace and through faith." Macknight has supplied τὸ πᾶν (this affair) as the antecedent—that is, "this salvation by grace and through faith is not of yourselves: it is the gift of God." So that we may be well satisfied that this passage affirms nothing in reference to the question whether faith is the gift of God or not. But even if it did, it cannot invalidate the view of the subject which we have presented; for we have shown wherein it is the gift of God, and wherein it is the act of the creature.

✕ 4. The next point which we will present for consideration, is the *progressive nature of faith*.

According to the Scriptures, there are degrees in faith. Faith may not only take a more extensive range in relation to the things embraced, but the degree of confidence with which they are embraced may also be increased. In Matt. vi. 30, our Saviour addresses his disciples, saying, "O ye of *little faith*." In Matt. viii. 10, he says, in reference to the centurion's faith, "I have not found *so great faith*, no, not in Israel." Here "little faith" and "great faith" are both spoken of; hence it must consist of degrees.

In Matt. xvii. 20, the disciples are exhorted to "have faith as a grain of mustard-seed"—clearly implying that, like as that diminutive seed grows to a large tree, so their faith should expand and increase more and more. In Luke xvii. 5, we find the disciples praying, "Lord, *increase our faith*"—clearly implying that it might become greater than it was. In Rom. i. 17, we read: "For therein is the righteousness of God revealed *from faith to faith*." This can only be understood to mean from one degree of faith to another. In 2 Thess. i. 3, Paul says to his brethren, "Your faith *groweth exceedingly*." And in 2 Cor. x. 15, the apostle says to his brethren, "But having hope, when your faith *is increased*," etc. From all which passages the idea is clearly taught that there are degrees in faith; but, as this is a point so plain as scarcely to admit of controversy, we dismiss it without farther comment.

✕ 5. We will next consider *the channel through which faith is derived*.

This is the *hearing of the word*. In Rom. x. 14-17, the apostle says: "How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach, except they be sent? As it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good



things! But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? So then *faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*"

The great appositiveness of the preceding passage to the point in hand will justify the length of the quotation. That the hearing of the word is the medium of faith, will farther appear from the following passages. In John xvii. 20, our Saviour says: "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me *through their word.*" John xx. 30, 31: "And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But *these are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.*" Many other texts, having the same general bearing, might be added; but the above will show that the hearing of the gospel, or the acquiring of the knowledge of the great truths of God's word, is the appointed channel of saving faith. \*6. In the next place, we remark, that faith is not a blind assent of the mind, resting upon no rational foundation; but it is *a well-grounded conviction, and a reasonable confidence, based upon good and sufficient evidence.*

God has never enjoined upon man the duty of faith, without first presenting before him a reasonable foundation for the same. Christ never arbitrarily assumed the prerogatives of the Messiahship, but he appealed for the confirmation of his claims to honorable and weighty testimony; nor are we required to believe the gospel, independent of the evidence it affords of its own divinity.

The proper *ground* or *reason* of faith will appear from the following scriptures:—John x. 37, 38: "If I *do not the works* of my Father, believe me not. But if I *do*, though ye believe not me, *believe the works*; that ye may know and believe that the Father is in me, and I in him." John v. 36: "But I have greater witness than that of John; for *the works* which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me." Acts ii. 22: "Ye men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles, and wonders, and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know." Heb. ii. 3, 4: "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?" 2 Pet. i. 16, 17: "For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you



the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye-witnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honor and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." In all these scriptures, the proper evidences are appealed to as the foundation of faith.

III. WE NOW CONSIDER JUSTIFYING FAITH. Faith, by theological writers, has been divided into different kinds, such as divine faith, human faith, historical faith, the faith of miracles, justifying faith, etc. A particular explanation of each of these kinds of faith we deem unnecessary, as the terms in which they are expressed are sufficiently explicit.

We will close the present chapter by a special consideration of that faith, which in the gospel is presented as *saving* or *justifying* in its nature. St. Paul declares the gospel to be "the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth;" and he said to the jailer, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." These passages clearly exhibit that prominent feature of the gospel—that faith is connected with salvation. The point now before us is to inquire what is implied in that faith.

We know of but two leading views in reference to the nature or degree of the faith in question.

The first is a notion which has found favor with Socinians, Arians, Unitarians, etc., in different ages of the Church; and in modern times, also, with the Rationalists of Germany, and with some New School Presbyterians and some classes of Baptists of the United States. The view referred to is this: *that the faith which the gospel enjoins is simply the assent of the mind, or a mental conviction of the truth of the facts and doctrines of the gospel, resulting from an examination and intellectual apprehension of the evidences of Christianity, without any direct communication of supernatural aid or divine influence, or any trust or reliance of the soul on Christ, farther than what is necessarily implied in the conviction produced in the understanding by rational investigation, that "Jesus Christ is the Son of God," and that the gospel is true.*

The other view upon this subject is that which has been advocated by the great body of orthodox Christians in all ages. It embraces all that is implied in the preceding definition, together with a *special trust or reliance of the soul on Christ for salvation, farther than what is implied in the simple assent of the understanding.*

The former view, it will be perceived, reduces the exercise of faith to a mere intellectual process; the latter, in addition to this, requires a trust or reliance of the heart. The vital importance of settling this



question correctly must be apparent to every one. It is intimately connected with the salvation of the soul. A mistake here may be fatal; and certainly no one can be interested in being in error where so much is at stake. We think the honest inquirer after truth may easily find in the inspired volume a satisfactory decision on the point at issue.

✕ 1. Our first argument on this point is based upon what is said in reference to *the faith of devils*.

St. James, in speaking of a dead, inoperative faith, which can only ✕ imply the assent of the understanding to the truth of Scripture, says: "The devils also *believe* and tremble." In accordance with this is the language of a devil, when our Lord was about to expel him from the man possessed: "*I know thee* who thou art; the Holy One of God." Thus it appears that, so far as theoretical faith is concerned, the devils are possessed of faith; and if the gospel only required of men the belief of the truth with the understanding, it would but enjoin the faith of devils; but as we suppose none will admit that the faith which justifies the sinner is such as devils possess, we infer that justifying faith must imply more than the bare assent of the understanding. If gospel faith be the assent of the understanding only, we may with propriety ask, who is a stronger believer than Satan himself?

2. It appears from the Scriptures that many were convinced in their *understandings* of the Messiahship of Christ, and of the truth of the gospel, who, nevertheless, did not "believe to the saving of their souls."

As instances of such, we might name Nicodemus and Simon Magus. We have the faith of the former in the following orthodox confession: "*We know* that thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do *these miracles* that thou doest, except God be with him." Here, so far as the mere mental conviction of the truth is concerned, it would be difficult to invalidate the faith of Nicodemus. He acknowledged the divinity of the Saviour's mission, and he based his faith on the proper evidence—"the miracles" the Saviour performed. Yet he was not saved; for the Saviour declares unto him, "*Ye must be born again*."

And what can we think of Simon Magus? In the eighth chapter of the Acts, we learn that "Simon himself *believed* also," and "was baptized"—that is, he "*believed* Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ." Yet, immediately afterward, he is said to have "neither part nor lot in the matter;" but to be "in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity." Yet there is no charge brought against the character of his belief; it is not intimated that his mind was not informed in reference to the character and claims of Christ; or that his understanding was not convinced of the



truth of what he had heard. The charge affects not his understanding, or his reasoning, but his moral character. The apostle declares: "Thy heart is not right in the sight of God." The defect was evidently in the heart, and not in the head. So far as the mere assent of the understanding is concerned, it does not appear that there was any defect in the faith of Nicodemus or Simon Magus; but, as neither of them believed "to the saving of the soul," we fairly infer that gospel faith implies more than a mental conviction of the truth from the force of testimony. The head may be as orthodox, and at the same time the heart as wicked, as Satan himself.

✕ 3. *The Scriptures explicitly present justifying faith as implying trust or reliance, as well as mental assent.*

Ps. xxii. 4: "Our fathers *trusted* in thee: they *trusted*, and thou didst deliver them." This is evidently the character of the faith by which "the elders obtained a good report." Again, St. Paul says: "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness"—clearly implying that faith reaches beyond the mere intellect, and lays hold on the moral powers. In Eph. i. 12, we read: "That we should be to the praise of his glory who first *trusted* in Christ," etc. Here the apostle is evidently speaking of embracing Christ by saving faith, and he expresses it by the word trust—implying more than the cold assent of the mind. Rom. iii. 25: "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God." "It is not surely that we may merely believe that the death of Christ is a sacrifice for sin, that he is set forth as a propitiation, but that we may trust in its efficacy. It is not that we may merely believe that God has made promises to us, that his merciful engagements in our favor are recorded, but that we may have confidence in them, and thus be supported by them. This was the faith of the saints of the Old Testament. 'By faith Abraham when he was called to go out into a place, which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed, and he went out, not knowing whither he went.' His faith was confidence. 'Though he slay me, yet will I *trust* in him.' 'Who is among you that feareth the Lord? let him *trust* in the name of the Lord, and *stay* upon his God.' 'Blessed is the man that *trusteth* in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is.' It is under this notion of trust that faith is continually represented to us also in the New Testament. 'In his name shall the Gentiles trust.' 'For, therefore, we both labor and suffer reproach, because we *trust* in the living God,' etc. 'For I know whom I have believed,' (trusted,) etc. 'If we hold the beginning of our *confidence* steadfast unto the end.'" (Watson's Institutes.)



4. In the last place, we remark, that the notion that saving, or justifying, faith implies no more than the assent of the understanding resulting from the force of testimony, is encumbered by *serious difficulties*, in view of reason, experience, and the general tenor of revelation.

(1) From this doctrine it would follow, either that all whose judgments are convinced of the truth of Christianity, by Christ and his apostles, immediately embrace salvation, or some genuine believers are not saved. The former position is contrary to the historic fact; the latter is contrary to the gospel promise.

(2) This doctrine appears to be inconsistent with the depravity and the native inability of man to do any thing toward salvation, without divine grace imparted. For if faith be the condition of salvation, as all admit, and if it be the natural result of a mental exercise in the examination of testimony, then it will follow that, as man can exercise his intellect at pleasure, independent of aid from divine influence, he may believe of himself, and be saved by the mere exercise of his natural powers. According to this idea, to pray for faith, or for the increase of faith, would be absurd; for all that would be necessary would be an increase of diligence in the study of the evidences of Christianity, which might be effected as well without prayer as with it.

(3) Again: this view of the subject would imply that no man can examine the evidences of Christianity so as to perceive their force, and study the doctrines of revelation so as to gain a general theoretical knowledge of their character, without being an evangelical believer or genuine Christian. This is contrary to the experience of thousands. To say that no man in Christendom has ever examined the evidences of Christianity, so as to arrive at the satisfactory conclusion in his mind that the gospel is true, except such as have embraced salvation, is to manifest a far greater regard for a favorite theory than for the plain testimony of experience, observation, and Scripture.

The great Bible truth is, that man is a being possessed of moral as well as intellectual powers. He has a heart as well as a head; and God requires both in the exercise of evangelical faith. That faith which has its seat in the *head*, without reaching the *heart*, will never reform the life or save the soul. It will be as "sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal;" it may embrace "the form," but will be destitute of "the power" of religion. The faith which consists in the assent of the understanding alone is the "dead faith" spoken of by St. James, which includes no works of obedience. The faith which, passing through the understanding, fixes its seat deep in the heart, and trusts or relies on



Christ for present salvation, is that faith which alone can justify and save a sinful soul.

### QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER XXVII.

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| <p><b>QUESTION 1.</b> Is faith a prominent subject in Scripture?</p> <p>2. Is it a subject well understood?</p> <p>3. What is its etymological meaning?</p> <p>4. What is implied in St. Paul's definition?</p> <p>5. In what sense is faith the <i>gift of God</i>?</p> <p>6. In what sense is it the <i>act of the creature</i>?</p> <p>7. In what sense do Antinomians hold this subject?</p> <p>8. How is their notion disproved?</p> <p>9. In what sense is God the author of faith?</p> <p>10. Name some of the principal texts relied on in favor of the Antinomian view.</p> <p>11. How are they explained?</p> | <p>12. Are there degrees in faith?</p> <p>13. How is this proved?</p> <p>14. Through what channel is faith derived?</p> <p>15. How is this proved?</p> <p>16. Upon what ground, or foundation, is faith based?</p> <p>17. How is this proved from Scripture?</p> <p>18. How have theologians divided faith?</p> <p>19. What are the two leading views in reference to the nature of justifying faith?</p> <p>20. By whom has the <i>first</i> been adopted?</p> <p>21. Who have adopted the <i>second</i>?</p> <p>22. How can it be proved that saving faith implies more than mental assent?</p> <p>23. What serious difficulties encumber the opposite theory?</p> |
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## CHAPTER XXVIII.

## JUSTIFICATION—ITS NATURE CONSIDERED

THE inquiry upon which we are now about to enter is of the deepest interest to all mankind. How may a fallen sinner recover from the miseries of his lapsed state? This was substantially the question propounded with so much feeling by the convicted jailer to the imprisoned apostles: "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" And from the earliest ages there may be seen, in the history of all nations, evidences of the general concern of the wisest and most serious of mankind for a satisfactory knowledge of a certain and adequate remedy for the evils of the present state.

The best informed among the heathen have generally exhibited some correct notions in reference to the connection between natural and moral evil. In their zealous pursuit of some mode of escape from the miseries and calamities "that flesh is heir to," they have generally adopted the principle, that natural evil is the effect of moral evil. Hence their systems of philosophy and morals, their rigorous discipline and painful austerities, adopted and pursued with the vain hope that by these means they could eradicate from the soul the principle of evil, destroy the dominion of vice, and, by a restoration of the disordered moral faculties of man, prepare him for the enjoyment of pure and uninterrupted felicity. But every effort of human reason and philosophy to discover a mode of deliverance from the thralldom of sin, however flattering it may have appeared for a season, has terminated in disappointment or despair.

The light of nature may exhibit in its huge deformity the disease of sin; but an adequate remedy it has never been able to descry. It can lead man to the contemplation of what he is; it can show him his sinful and miserable condition, and teach him to sigh over his misfortunes; but it can never unfold the scheme of redemption, and teach him to smile at the prospect of a blissful immortality. To supply this grand *desideratum*, revelation comes to our aid. God alone was able to devise, and he has condescended to make known, the plan by which "he



can be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." In the present chapter, we propose a consideration of the Bible doctrine of JUSTIFICATION.

\* In discussing this subject, there are two leading inquiries naturally presenting themselves to view. First, What is implied in justification? Secondly, How may it be obtained? We will consider these questions in their order.

In this chapter, we will consider *what is implied in justification*.

The Greek word rendered justification in the New Testament, is *δικαίωσις*, which means *a judicial decision, or sentence of acquittal*. The verb is *δικάζω*, which means *to judge, to render sentence, pronounce just, etc.* According to the etymology of the word, *to justify*, in the Bible acceptance, is *to acquit by a judicial sentence or decision*.

I. The term is evidently FORENSIC, *having reference to law and judicial proceedings*. There are, however, several different senses in which it may be taken. Referring to justification in a forensic sense, we would observe, that it may take place in three different ways.

1. A person may be arraigned at the bar of justice to answer to a specific accusation; but, upon the examination of the testimony, it may appear that he has not been guilty of the thing alleged against him: here he is justified by *the force of testimony*, and a correct administration will announce the decision accordingly.

2. After the arraignment of a person before the bar of justice, to answer to a certain accusation, it may appear, in the investigation of the case, that, although the special charge alleged against him may be established by the evidence, it nevertheless is not contrary to the law: here he is justified by *the force of law*, and a correct administration will pronounce the sentence accordingly.

3. A person may be arraigned at the bar of justice, tried and condemned for a crime; yet the executive power of the government may remit the penalty: here he is justified on *the principle of pardon*.

According to any of these three plans, a person may be justified in a civil sense. But in the scriptural acceptance of the subject, agreeably to what has already been established in reference to the fallen and guilty condition of all mankind, it is impossible that any can be justified on either the first or second hypothesis; for all men stand justly charged with, and condemned for, the violation of God's holy law. "All are concluded under sin;" and the Bible declares that "all have sinned;" and that "all the world are guilty before God." Therefore, if justification ever be obtained by any, it must be *on the ground of PARDON*. Here is the only door of hope to a guilty world.



II. But we must inquire more particularly concerning *the nature of that justification, on the ground of pardon, which the Scriptures develop.*

\*“Justification, in common language, signifies a vindication from any charge which affects the moral character; but in theology it is used for the acceptance of one by God who is, and confesses himself to be, guilty. ‘To justify a sinner,’ says Mr. Bunting, in an able sermon on this important subject, ‘is to account and consider him relatively righteous; and to deal with him as such, notwithstanding his past unrighteousness, by clearing, absolving, discharging, and releasing him from various penal evils, and especially from the wrath of God, and the liability to eternal death, which by that past unrighteousness he had deserved; and by accepting him as if just, and admitting him to the state, the privileges, and the rewards of righteousness.’ Hence it appears that justification, and the remission, or forgiveness of sin, are substantially the same thing.” (Watson’s Bib. Dic.)

We here insert the definition of justification as given in the Ninth Article of Religion in the Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church: “We are accounted righteous before God, only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, by faith, and not for our own works or deservings; wherefore that we are justified by faith only is a most wholesome doctrine, and very full of comfort.”

With the above general definition of justification before us, we now proceed to a more minute examination of its most important particulars.

\*1. We will show from the Scriptures that *justification means pardon, or the remission of sin.*

This will appear from the following scriptures:—Acts xiii. 38, 39: “Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you *the forgiveness of sins*; and by him all that believe are *justified* from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.” Rom. iii. 25, 26: “Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness *for the remission of sins* that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time, his righteousness, that he might be just, and *the justifier* of him which believeth in Jesus.” Rom. iv. 5–8: “But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that *justifieth the ungodly*, his faith is counted for righteousness; even as David describeth the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, saying, Blessed are they whose *iniquities are forgiven*, and whose *sins are covered*: blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.”



In these quotations, "justification," "the forgiveness of sins," "the remission of sins," and the "non-imputation of sin," are all used as convertible terms—exegetical of each other; hence, in Scripture language, they are generally synonymous. This leading position here established, will be found to extend throughout the New Testament, wherever the subject of justification is presented, and bearing it in mind will tend greatly to facilitate the investigation.

2. We proceed to remark, *that justification is not an abrogation of law, by the exercise of prerogative.*

The covenant of redemption given to man after the Fall, though different from, is not contradictory to, the covenant of works, under which he was primarily placed. The language of the covenant of works was, "Do this, and live;" its condition was, perfect and perpetual obedience. The language of the covenant of redemption is, "Believe, and be saved;" its condition is, "Faith which worketh by love." The propounding of the covenant of redemption does not imply the abrogation of the law of God as originally delivered to man; but only a suspension of its rigor, in perfect consistency with the honor of God, so as to admit a substitute instead of the actual culprits. But the fact that a substitute was at all required, is sufficient evidence that the law is not abrogated, but rather established—it is "magnified, and made honorable." Although the law be suspended in relation to the full and immediate execution of the penalty denounced against man, yet it is not suspended in reference to Christ. He met the claims of justice, and made satisfaction. Therefore it is clear that justification implies no abrogation of law. It is not an arbitrary process, by which the guilty are pardoned and released at the expense of justice; but a wise and gracious arrangement, by which "God can be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus."

3. *Justification is personal in its character.*

It is a sentence of acquittal, having respect to particular individuals; and in this respect is distinct from the general arrangement of mercy, by which all mankind are so far redeemed from the curse of the broken law as to be graciously placed under the covenant of redemption, so as to have the offer of eternal life, according to gospel terms. The placing of all men in a salvable state, under the covenant of grace, is a merciful legislative arrangement of God, in which a general promise is made and a general condition required. Justification is a judicial decision of God, under that gracious legislation in reference to particular individuals, in view of the prescribed conditions having been complied with. "Justification presupposeth a particular person, a particular cause, a



condition performed, and the performance, as already past, pleaded: and the decision proceeds accordingly."

\* 4. *Justification is a work really performed—a sentence or decision that actually is passed upon individuals.*

The Antinomian notion, therefore, of "eternal justification," is manifestly absurd. If it be a decision or sentence at all, it must take place in time. A mere purpose in the mind of a judge, is no sentence. "A sentence is pronounced; and a sentence pronounced and declared from eternity, before man was created, when no sin had been committed, no law published, no Saviour promised, no faith exercised—when, in a word, no being existed but God himself—is not only absurd, but impossible; for it would have been a decision declared to none, and therefore not declared at all; and if, as they say, the 'sentence was passed in eternity, but manifested in time,' it might from thence be as rightly argued that the world was created from eternity, and that the work of creation in the beginning of time was only a manifestation of that which was from everlasting. It is the *guilty* who are pardoned—'He justifieth the ungodly;' guilt, therefore, precedes pardon; while that remains, so far are any from being justified, that they are 'under wrath,' in a state of 'condemnation,' with which a state of justification cannot consist; for the contradiction is palpable; so that the advocates of this wild notion must either give up justification in eternity, or a state of condemnation in time. If they hold the former, they contradict common sense; if they deny the latter, they deny the Scriptures." (Watson's Institutes.)

5. Justification being the pardon of sin, it is not a work by which we are made actually just or righteous.

\* Justification changes our relation to law—it removes condemnation, but does not change our nature, or make us holy. "This is sanctification, (or, in its incipient state, regeneration,) which is, indeed, the immediate fruit of justification; but, nevertheless, is a distinct gift of God, and of a totally different nature. The one implies what God does for us through his Son; the other, what God works in us by his Spirit. So that, although some rare instances may be found wherein the terms justified and justification are used in so wide a sense as to include sanctification also, yet in general use they are sufficiently distinguished from each other both by St. Paul and the other inspired writers." (Wesley's Sermons.)

\* 6. Keeping in view the definition given—that justification means the pardon of sin—it will be easy to distinguish between this blessing and regeneration, which is properly sanctification begun. The one



removes the guilt of past sin by pardon, the other "creates us anew in Christ Jesus," that we "may go in peace, and sin no more." But we are not to understand, from the fact of our pardon, that God views our past sins in a more favorable light than he did previously to our justification. Pardon cannot change their real nature. Still they are sins; and as such, are an abomination to the Lord. Nor can his immaculate nature view them in any other than their true character. The crime of a culprit is none the less from the fact that he has been pardoned.

Pardon releases from punishment, but does not change either the character of the crime or of the criminal. A pardoned sinner is still viewed as having sinned, though saved by grace. [His sins, considered in themselves, still deserve the wrath of God; but for Christ's sake that punishment is remitted.] Hence, when we use the word *acquittal* in connection with justification, we understand thereby, *merely release or exemption from punishment*, without changing in the least the nature of past sin, or the light in which it is contemplated in the abstract by the Divine Mind.

[By no fiction of law can we suppose that God ever looks upon sin as not being sin, or the sinner as never having sinned, because pardon has been vouchsafed.] Indeed, the very nature of pardon requires that there be something rendering that pardon necessary. Were it otherwise, we might suppose the pardon to be forfeited by the sinner with impunity; for if the nature of his sins and his own character have been so changed that God can no longer view the sinner as having sinned, or his sins as being offensive in their nature, the sinner can derive no benefit from the pardon; nor could it be possible, under this view, for such a thing as pardon to exist.



## QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER XXVIII.

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| <p>QUESTION 1. Have the nations of the earth generally manifested any concern in reference to their deliverance from sin and the miseries of life?</p> <p>2. How does this appear?</p> <p>3. What has been the success of their schemes?</p> <p>4. What grand <i>desideratum</i> does revelation supply?</p> <p>5. Give the etymology of justification.</p> <p>6. In what three different ways may a man be justified in a civil sense.</p> <p>7. Why can no one, in a Scripture sense, be justified on either the first or second plan?</p> <p>8. What does justification mean, as defined by Watson?</p> | <p>9. What is the definition given in the Methodist Discipline?</p> <p>10. What is implied in justification, according to the Scriptures?</p> <p>11. How is this shown?</p> <p>12. How is it shown that justification does not imply the abrogation of law?</p> <p>13. How does it appear that justification is <i>personal</i>?</p> <p>14. How does it appear that justification is a sentence actually passed?</p> <p>15. How does this consist with the notion of <i>eternal justification</i>?</p> <p>16. Does justification make us <i>actually</i> righteous?</p> <p>17. How is it distinguished from regeneration and sanctification?</p> |
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## CHAPTER XXIX.

JUSTIFICATION—FALSE THEORIES REFUTED—JUSTIFICATION BY THE  
IMPUTATION OF CHRIST'S ACTIVE OBEDIENCE CONSIDERED.

HAVING discussed the nature of justification, we now proceed to consider the *method by which it is to be obtained*. Among those who profess to be guided by the Scriptures, there are several different methods or plans by which this blessing is said to be realized.

1. Justification is said to be by the imputation of Christ's active righteousness or obedience.
2. It is said to be by the imputation of Christ's active and passive righteousness or obedience, taken together.
3. It is said to be by works alone.
4. It is said to be by faith and works united, or taken together.
5. It is said to be by faith alone.

The last scheme is the one we believe to be taught in the Scriptures; but we will examine each of them in the order just stated.

I. *Justification is said to be by the imputation of Christ's active righteousness or obedience.*

This scheme has been advocated by high Calvinists, and lies at the foundation of Antinomianism. By it we are taught that Christ's personal obedience to the moral law of God is so imputed to the sinner as to be accounted his own, and that he is thereby justified in view of his having kept the moral law in Christ. Those who advocate this theory do not reject faith as being altogether unnecessary under the gospel; they hold that it flows from a justified state, as an effect from a cause, and is the manifestation, or evidence, of justification. But they reject faith, and every thing else, as having any thing to do in justification, except the personal and active obedience of Christ to the moral law, imputed to the sinner as though he himself had thus obeyed. That this scheme is unscriptural and absurd, must be clearly obvious to such as will carefully weigh the following considerations:

1. *It is perfectly gratuitous, there being not a single text in the Bible to which we can appeal as having announced any such doctrine.*



It is true that it is said, in reference to Messiah, Jer. xxiii. 6: "And this is the name whereby he shall be called, The Lord our Righteousness." And St. Paul, in 1 Cor. i. 30, says that Christ "of God is made unto us wisdom, and *righteousness*, and sanctification, and redemption."

In reference to these passages we remark, 1. There is no evidence that Christ's personal righteousness is here referred to at all—it is rather "his obedience unto *death*, even *the death of the cross*." 2. It is neither here asserted that Christ's righteousness shall be ours, nor that it shall be imputed to us. Only it is said, "The name by which he shall be called is, The Lord our Righteousness;" and, "He shall be made unto us righteousness," etc. The plain meaning is, that he is the source, or fountain, from which our righteousness or justification is derived. But this is vastly different from saying that his keeping of the moral law is imputed to us, or to be acknowledged instead of our having kept it. Christ is said to be "the resurrection," "our life," "our peace," etc. But surely we must not hence infer that his rising from the dead, his living, and his possession of peace, are to be imputed to us as though we had done these things in him, and had no right to any farther resurrection, life, or peace! And yet the argument is precisely the same in this and the former case. Indeed, the entire notion that Christ was our representative in such close sense that what he did or suffered we did or suffered in him, is flatly contradictory to the whole tenor of Scripture on the subject. It is nowhere said that we obeyed or suffered in Christ; but the language is, "He suffered for us." The Scripture doctrine is, not that we obeyed in Christ, but that, through "his obedience unto death," our disobedience is forgiven.

2. *This scheme involves a fiction and impossibility, nowhere countenanced in Scripture, and irreconcilable with the divine attributes.*

An all-wise and holy God must view things as they really are. He never can consider one person as having performed an act, and at the same time as not having performed it. For the all-wise and holy One to consider any thing as being what it is not, or to consider any person as having done what he never did, is perfectly impossible and clearly absurd.

I know it has been argued that there is no more absurdity implied in the active righteousness of Christ being imputed to us, than there is in our sins being imputed to him. But, we ask, in what sense are our sins imputed to Christ? Surely not in reference to the formality of fact. Some have even gone so far on this subject as almost to assume the attitude of blasphemy. It has been even said that "Christ was the greatest sinner that ever lived." This they drew as a necessary conclusion.



from the principle which they had assumed—that all the sins of the whole world were so imputed to Christ, that, in the mind of God, he was considered to have actually committed them.

In reference to such as have thus reasoned, we would say, at least, that their logic is better than their divinity. For, according to the principle assumed, the conclusion, shocking as it certainly is, would be perfectly legitimate. But the position is an absurd and inconsistent fiction. The sins of the world were never imputed to Christ with the formality of the fact, so that the Almighty looked upon Christ as actually having committed them, or upon them as being formally and in fact his sins. They were only imputed to him in reference to their penalty. The sins were not made his, nor considered as such; but he endured the penalty due them—he suffered for them. Indeed, to suppose that they were made or considered his in the formality of the fact, would be to say that he suffered for his own sins, and not for the sins of others. It would overturn the vicarious nature of his death, and at the same time destroy the necessity of pardon. For if all the sins of the whole world were imputed to Christ as his sins, they cannot still be considered as the sins of the world; they, by this absurd fiction, have been passed over to Christ; and if so, they cannot still be considered as the sins of the world, as they were previously to the supposed imputation; and consequently there are no sins left upon the world to be pardoned; for certainly I cannot need pardon, nor can the law punish me, for that crime which it does not consider as mine.

*But this entire position is absurd and unscriptural to the very center.*

3. The Almighty never could have considered the sins of the world so imputed to Christ as to be his; for we hear a “voice from the excellent glory, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom *I am well pleased.*” In no sense could he be considered a sinner; but “the iniquity of all was laid upon him”—that is, the punishment which it deserved. Hence it now appears that, as the sins of the world were not imputed to Christ so as to be considered his, we cannot infer therefrom that the active and personal obedience of Christ is imputed to us so as to be considered ours in the proper sense, as though performed by us. As our sins were imputed to him in reference to the *penalty*, so his “obedience unto death” is imputed to us in reference to its *benefits*. This is the plain scriptural presentation of the subject. The Antinomian hypothesis, that God justifies the sinner by imputing to him the obedience of Christ to the moral law, and considering him as having thus obeyed in Christ, is only an idle dream, without reason or Scripture for its support, involving an absurd fiction, irreconcilable with the divine character.



"The judgment of the all-wise God is always according to truth; neither can it ever consist with his unerring wisdom to think that I am innocent, to judge that I am righteous or holy, because another is so. He can no more confound me with Christ than with David or Abraham." (Wesley.)

Again: "If what our Lord was and did is to be accounted to us in the sense just given, then we must be accounted never to have sinned, because Christ never sinned, and yet we must ask for pardon, though we are accounted from birth to death to have fulfilled God's law in Christ; or if they should say that when we ask for pardon we ask only for a revelation to us of our eternal justification or pardon, the matter is not altered; for what need is there of pardon, in time or eternity, if we are accounted to have perfectly obeyed God's holy law? and why should we be accounted also to have suffered in Christ the penalty of sins which we are accounted never to have committed?" (Watson's Institutes.)

Thus it is clear that the different parts of this monstrous fiction fight with each other. If, by the above kind of imputation, we transfer Christ's personal righteousness to us, his sufferings for us are useless, and pardon is not needed. If our sins are, as above, imputed to him, then he suffered, not "for our sins," but for his own; and the Bible becomes a book of silly dreams, or absurd and inconsistent fictions.

4. This scheme of justification by the imputation of Christ's personal obedience to the moral law, *is irreconcilable with the character of Christ's personal acts, and could not furnish us a righteousness adapted to our condition.*

The supposition is, that all that Christ did in his proper person is to be set to our account, or imputed to us as ours, so as to weave out a robe of perfect obedience exactly suited to our case. If, upon a comparison of his personal acts of obedience, or his righteousness, with the description of righteousness, or the peculiar kind of moral obedience, required at our hands, it be found that the righteousness of Christ contains more than we need, the robe thus woven for us will be found to be more than our strength may be able to bear; but, on the other hand, if, upon the comparison, it appear that the righteousness of Christ, or the obedience he rendered to the moral law, contains less than we need, the robe thus woven for us will not be sufficient to shelter our guilty heads from the sword of justice. Either a redundancy or a deficiency, or a redundancy in some respects and a deficiency in others, will evidence such an unsuitableness in this plan of justification as should cause us seriously to suspect that it is a plan of our own devising, and not the Heaven-stamped



method arranged by Infinite Wisdom for the justification of "the ungodly."

Now, in turning our attention to this subject, we think it will be readily perceived that, while the righteousness of Christ, as above claimed by imputation, will be found to contain too much, in some respects, in other respects it will contain too little, to meet our exigencies.

The greatest portion of the personal acts of Christ were of a very peculiar kind, such as never were, and never could be, appropriate to any being in the universe but himself. He appeared in our world in the peculiar character of God-man Mediator, and took upon himself the regalia of Prophet, Priest, and King, in a peculiar and exalted sense; and in the performance of the duties, and the exercise of the prerogatives, of his official character, he went forth "traveling in the greatness of his strength," to do the will of Him that had sent him, in the accomplishment of the stupendous work of the world's redemption, exhibiting in his sublime career a train of magnificent doings and godlike achievements, calculated at once to strike with awe and fill with amazement both heaven and earth. Will a mortal man indulge in aspirations so lofty, as to pretend that all these personal acts of the Saviour's active obedience are, in the divine mind, considered as having been performed by us, that thereby we may be furnished with a robe of perfect obedience, and thus stand justified before God? Surely actions like these, a righteousness of this peculiar and exalted kind, was never required at our hands: it contains vastly too much, and is far too exalted in its character, to be appropriate to our condition. "He, then, that assumeth this righteousness to himself," says Goodwin, "and appareleth himself with it, represents himself before God, not in the habit of a just or righteous man, but in the glorious attire of the great Mediator of the world, whose righteousness hath heights and depths in it, a length and breadth, which infinitely exceed the proportions of all men whatever. Now, then, for a silly worm to take this robe of immeasurable majesty upon him, and to conceit himself as great in holiness and righteousness as Jesus Christ, (for that is the spirit that rules in this opinion, to teach men to assume all that Christ did unto themselves, and that in no other way, nor upon any lower terms, than if themselves had personally done it,) whether this be right, I leave to sober men to consider." (Treatise on Justification.)

As we have seen, the personal righteousness of Christ, in one sense, is too exalted, and contains vastly too much, to be adapted to our condition, so, in another sense, it contains too little. Infinitely perfect as the moral and personal obedience of Christ was, as pertaining to his own



immaculate character, yet, if we attempt to substitute it for that obedience to moral law which duty enjoins upon us, we should perceive it, in a variety of particulars, not suited to our case.

There are many circumstances and relations in life which never pertained to the Saviour, requiring the performance of peculiar moral obligations. These obligations which rest upon us, and in the neglect of which the law will hold us guilty, the Saviour never performed. Of this class, we might mention parental and conjugal obligations, the reciprocal obligations between master and servant, and magisterial and official duties of various kinds. Here we find not only an endless variety of items under a particular class, but entire classes of duties, which the Saviour was never in a situation to perform. Can he who is deficient in his righteousness in any of these particulars, plead the perfect obedience of Christ? Can the parent or the master who is delinquent in reference to the peculiar duties of that relation, refer to the moral obedience of Christ, and find, in the history of his life, the discharge of the specific obligation with the neglect of which he stands charged? Surely not.

We know it may be urged that, although the personal righteousness of Christ be wanting in reference to many particulars pertaining to us, yet it was perfect as a whole; there was no defect in it, so far as his own moral character was concerned; and this obedience, which was perfect in the aggregate, may be imputed in the aggregate to us.

In reply to this, we would say, that the strictness of law can admit no such fulfillment in the aggregate. The legal requirements are specific; and the sentence against the delinquent is equally particular and minute. In righteousness based upon pardon in view of satisfaction rendered, there may be admitted as satisfaction something equivalent to, though in some respects different from, what the law required; but where righteousness is claimed upon the ground of actual fulfillment of law, to plead the equivalency of one action, or of one course of duties, to another, is perfectly inadmissible. The law can admit no such commutation, but must exact perfect conformity to every jot and tittle of its precepts; and he that "offends in one is guilty of all."

Thus it appears that justification cannot be based on the personal righteousness of Christ imputed to us as our own; because in some respects it contains too much, and in other respects too little, to be appropriate to our peculiar exigencies.

5. Next, we observe that this scheme of justification is objectionable, *because it bases the whole matter upon actual obedience to the moral law,*



*instead of placing it on the ground of pardon, in view of the meritorious death of Christ, as the Scriptures expressly teach.*

(1) That the scheme of justification in question is fatally defective, for the reason just stated, will be obvious when we reflect that there is no Bible truth more prominently and explicitly recognized than this: that our salvation is to be attributed to the Saviour's "obedience unto death." Now, if we ground our justification on Christ's personal obedience to the moral law, it will be, not a comment on the plan of salvation as clearly revealed in the Bible, but an invention of our own. Is it not to be regretted, if men must invent divinity, that they do not, at least, invent something less inconsistent and absurd in itself? The Scriptures nowhere attribute our justification to the moral purity of the Saviour's life. This personal obedience to moral precept was essential, that he might present an example for our imitation; and also for the perfection of his own character, that he might be prepared to offer on the cross, for the sins of the world, a sacrifice "without blemish and without spot." But it is no more to be considered as the direct ground of our justification than the obedience of Abraham or of Paul.

(2) Indeed, this scheme proposes for man righteousness of a kind which it is utterly impossible for him ever to possess. Legal righteousness, or justification in view of law, must be one of two kinds—that is, it must either be based upon perfect obedience, or satisfaction. When once the law is broken, perfect obedience is out of the question. There is, then, no possible chance for justification in the sight of law, but by satisfaction. It will be like "placing new cloth in an old garment"—the breach must first be healed by satisfaction. After the first covenant had been broken, the law no longer demanded perfect obedience; that had been forever set aside by transgression: the demand then was for the execution of the penalty, or satisfaction for the breach. Christ satisfied for the breach, not by keeping the moral precepts, but by "giving his life a ransom for many."

There is a twofold righteousness or justification—*primary* and *ultimate*. The former consists in perfect obedience to law; the latter in satisfaction for the breach of law. Justification in the former sense rests on the fact that we cannot be charged with having violated the command; justification in the latter sense rests upon the fact that, though the law has been broken, satisfaction has been rendered. None can be justified by the same law, and in reference to the same actions, in both these senses, at the same time; for when the law has been kept, satisfaction can have no room. Now the justification presented in the gospel must be of one or the other of these kinds. If we are justified by per-



fect obedience, then we can admit no breach of law, and of course can neither plead satisfaction nor ask for pardon. If we plead satisfaction rendered, or ask for pardon, we thereby confess our guilt, and renounce justification on the ground of perfect obedience.

(3) Again: justification cannot be by the personal obedience of Christ; for the law did not demand the obedience of another for us, but our own obedience. But even if we could admit that we had perfectly kept the law in Christ, yet we could not then be justified on the ground of perfect obedience; for still we have sinned in ourselves, and for this the law would still have its demands upon us.

On the subject in hand, we quote the following from an acute writer: "If our sins have been expiated by the obedience of the life of Christ, either a perfect expiation has been thus made for all of them, or an imperfect one for some of them. The first cannot be asserted, for then it would follow that Christ had died in vain; for, as he died to expiate our sins, he would not have accounted it necessary to offer such an expiation for them, if they had been already expiated by the obedience of his life. And the latter cannot be maintained, because Christ has yielded perfect obedience to the law of God; wherefore, if he have performed that for the expiation of our sins, he must necessarily, through that obedience, have expiated all of them perfectly." (Piscator.)

But hear the language of St. Paul on this subject:—Gal. ii. 21: "If righteousness be by the law, then *Christ died in vain*." This whole scheme of justification by the active obedience of Christ drives necessarily to the dreadful consequence here presented by the apostle. It allows no adequate reason whatever for the death of Christ. The apostle argues that justification by the law renders nugatory the death of Christ. And what, we ask, is this scheme of the imputed active obedience of Christ, but justification by law? Even if we admit that the moral law kept by the Saviour was different from that law spoken of by the apostle when he discards justification by the law, the argument will only be the stronger for that admission; for if justification by the Mosaic law renders the death of Christ unnecessary, how much more must justification by that superior law which the Saviour kept render the death of Christ unnecessary! The argument is plain and simple: if we are perfectly justified in the active moral obedience of Christ, we can need no more.

(4) Again: this scheme confounds the two covenants, and makes the covenant of grace, in every particular, the same as the covenant of works; or, in other words, it denies that there is such a thing as the



covenant of grace, and puts man under the same law, and requires the same mode of justification, before the Fall and under the gospel.

From the arguments which we have briefly sketched, we think it clear that a fallen sinner can never be justified by the imputation of Christ's active obedience. This Antinomian scheme must be renounced as unscriptural and absurd; and we must look to some other quarter for that acquittal in the sight of God from our sin and guilt which alone can fit us for the enjoyment of happiness. The various other methods of justification already named, we must reserve for a future chapter. On a subject of so much importance, we should endeavor to investigate with diligence and care, at the same time relying upon the teachings of Scripture, and invoking the illuminations of the Spirit.

#### QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER XXIX.

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| <p><b>QUESTION 1.</b> What five different plans of justification have been presented?</p> <p>2. Which contains the truth?</p> <p>3. What is the first argument against justification by the imputation of Christ's active obedience?</p> <p>4. What is the second?</p> <p>5. How is the argument illustrated?</p> <p>6. What is the third?</p> <p>7. How is it illustrated?</p> <p>8. What is the fourth, and how is it illustrated?</p> | <p>9. How does it appear that this scheme confounds the two covenants?</p> <p>10. Who have been the advocates of this scheme?</p> <p>11. Have they rejected faith altogether?</p> <p>12. What two kinds of righteousness are described?</p> <p>13. How does it appear that they cannot consist together?</p> <p>14. How does it appear that no man can be justified by the former?</p> |
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## CHAPTER XXX.

JUSTIFICATION — FALSE THEORIES REFUTED — JUSTIFICATION BY  
CHRIST'S ACTIVE AND PASSIVE OBEDIENCE TAKEN TOGETHER,  
CONSIDERED.

IN the preceding chapter, we proceeded so far in the investigation of the different methods of justification which have been advocated, as to examine, and, as we believe, show the absurdity of, the scheme which teaches justification by the imputation of the active obedience of Christ.

The *second* method to be examined is, *that which proposes justification by the imputation of Christ's active and passive obedience, taken together.*

I. We notice *the sense in which this doctrine has been taught.*

1. This is the scheme maintained by Calvin himself; and the great body of those since designated as Calvinists, have, in this particular, followed in his footsteps. That class of Calvinists, however, distinguished as high Calvinists, as well as those called Antinomians, have contended strenuously for the scheme of justification by the imputation of Christ's personal righteousness, which we have already considered.

The scheme of Calvin, which we now propose to examine, differs from the Antinomian plan, as set forth in the preceding chapter, in but one particular—that is, it blends the passive with the active righteousness of Christ, making no distinction between them whatever; and presents this personal obedience of Christ, both active and passive, as being imputed to the sinner in such sense as to be considered his, so as thus to constitute him righteous in Christ.

Some able Arminian divines, such as Wesley, and even Arminius himself, although they disliked the terms used by Calvinists of that class who have advocated this scheme, yet, for the sake of peace, have been willing to allow that the phrase, "imputed righteousness of Christ," might be used in such sense as to be admissible. But when they have proceeded to qualify and explain the sense in which they could use the phrase, it appears that there has still been so important a distinction between their understanding of the subject and that of Calvinists, that the latter could not be willing to adopt the limitations and qualifications of the former.



That we may have a clear view of the real point of difference between them on this subject, we will first present the sentiment of Calvin in his own words, as collected from the third book of his Institutes: "We simply explain justification to be an acceptance by which God receives us into his favor and esteems us as righteous persons; and we say it consists in the remission of sins and the imputation of the righteousness of Christ." "He must certainly be destitute of a righteousness of his own who is taught to seek it out of himself. This is most clearly asserted by the apostle when he says: 'He hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.' We see that our righteousness is not in ourselves, but in Christ. 'As by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.' What is placing our righteousness in the obedience of Christ, but asserting that we are accounted righteous only because his obedience is accepted for us as if it were our own?"

From these words of Calvin, it will be seen that he holds to imputation in the strict and proper sense—in such sense that the righteousness of Christ is considered formally our own. The only difference to be seen between this and the scheme already refuted is, that Calvin makes no distinction between the active and passive righteousness of Christ.

2. We will now present a few quotations from leading Arminians on this subject, that we may see wherein they differ from Calvin.

In Mr. Wesley's sermon on "The Lord our Righteousness," he uses these words: "But when is this righteousness imputed? When they believe. In that very hour the righteousness of Christ is theirs. It is imputed to every one that believes, as soon as he believes. But in what sense is this righteousness imputed to believers? In this: all believers are forgiven and accepted, not for the sake of any thing in them, or of any thing that ever was, that is, or ever can be, done by them, but wholly for the sake of what Christ hath done and suffered for them. But perhaps some will affirm that faith is imputed to us for righteousness. St. Paul affirms this; therefore I affirm it too. Faith is imputed for righteousness to every believer—namely, faith in the righteousness of Christ; but this is exactly the same thing which has been said before; for by that expression I mean neither more nor less than that we are justified by faith, not by works, or that every believer is forgiven and accepted merely for the sake of what Christ had done and suffered."

In reference to this sermon, Mr. Watson very justly remarks, that it



"is one of peace; one in which he shows how near he was willing to approach those who held the doctrine of Calvin on this subject;" yet we think the point of difference is quite palpable. Calvin teaches imputation in a strict and proper sense; so that the obedience of Christ is accepted for us as if it were our own; whereas Wesley teaches imputation in an accommodated sense. He holds that the righteousness of Christ is imputed to us in its effects—that is, in its merits: we are justified by faith in the merits of Christ; or, in other words, we are justified, "forgiven and accepted, for the sake of what Christ hath done and suffered for us." It amounts to no more than this: that the meritorious sacrifice of Christ is the ground upon which God pardons the sinner when he believes.

The sense in which Arminians view this subject is very clearly expressed by Goodwin thus: "If we take the phrase of imputing Christ's righteousness improperly, viz., for the bestowing, as it were, of the righteousness of Christ, including his obedience, as well passive as active, in the return of it—that is, in the privileges, blessings, and benefits purchased by it—so a believer may be said to be justified by the righteousness of Christ imputed. But then the meaning can be no more than this. God justifies a believer for the sake of Christ's righteousness, and not for any righteousness of his own. Such an imputation of the righteousness of Christ as this, is no way denied or questioned." (On Justification.)

"Between these opinions as to the imputation of the righteousness of Christ, (as Mr. Watson observes,) it will be seen that there is a manifest difference, which difference arises from the different senses in which the term imputation is taken. The latter takes it in the sense of accounting or allowing to the believer the benefit of the righteousness of Christ, the other in the sense of reckoning or accounting the righteousness of Christ as ours—that is, what he did and suffered is regarded as done and suffered by us"

II. As we think the Calvinistic notion on this subject is now sufficiently clear and distinct from the Arminian view, we will endeavor briefly to examine *its claims in the light of Scripture and reason.*

It will be found, on close examination, that most of the arguments presented in opposition to the first notion of imputation, are, with a little variation, equally applicable to this scheme.

1. This notion of imputation, by the way in which it blends the active and passive righteousness of Christ, *appears either to confound the two in a manner inconsistent with the Scripture account of the subject, or to present us with a righteousness not adapted to our condition.*



We know it has been admitted by the best Arminian writers that the active and the passive righteousness of Christ are not separated in Scripture, and that they ought not to be separated by us. All this we concede; yet there is certainly a difference between blending or uniting them so as still to preserve the real and distinct nature of each, and so blending or uniting them as utterly to confound them, and destroy all distinction in their nature. The former sense Arminians admit; the latter sense the Calvinistic scheme implies. As this scheme teaches that we are justified by the imputation of Christ's active and passive righteousness to us as our own, it must imply either, 1. That we are hereby furnished with an active and a passive justification—that is, that Christ both kept the moral law and suffered for us, in place of our keeping it and suffering the penalty for having broken it; or, 2. It must imply that Christ's active and his passive righteousness are taken as a whole, and constitute, in the same undivided sense, that satisfaction to justice by the imputation of which we are pardoned or justified. If the former be the meaning, it presents us with a righteousness not adapted to our condition; if the latter be the construction, the active and the passive righteousness of Christ are confounded in a manner inconsistent with the Scripture account of the subject.

In reference to the former interpretation, we remark, that to say that Christ kept the moral law in place of our keeping it, and also suffered in our place the penalty for having violated it, implies that we were required perfectly to keep the law, and then to suffer the penalty for its violation also, which is absurd. We could not be required to do both. So far from the law requiring perfect obedience and suffering both, it could only inflict suffering in our default of perfect obedience. Therefore, as we could not need a righteousness embracing both these branches, it follows that if Christ wrought out for us a righteousness of this twofold character, it was not adapted to our condition. Again: admitting that we could need a righteousness of this kind, the moral acts of Christ, as we saw in the examination of the former theory of imputation, in some respects contain too much, and in other respects too little, to suit our exigencies.

In reference to the latter interpretation we remark, that to suppose that the active and passive righteousness of Christ are to be taken together as a whole, constituting, in the same undivided sense, that satisfaction to justice by the imputation of which to us as our own we are pardoned, would so confound the moral and personal acts of Christ with his sufferings, as to make no distinction between them—which is **contrary** to Scripture. For, although it be true that the active and the



passive righteousness of Christ are both united, and both essential to constitute a satisfaction, in view of which we may be pardoned, yet they are not essential in precisely the same sense. The sufferings of Christ were *directly* essential, as satisfying the claims of justice by enduring what was accepted instead of the specific penalty denounced; the active obedience of Christ was *indirectly* essential, as giving perfection and dignity to the character suffering, that thereby his sufferings might have power to satisfy. Hence, properly speaking, the moral obedience of Christ was only essential in making satisfaction to justice, as it was necessary that the character suffering should be possessed of every perfection, in order to render his sufferings available.

The divinity of Christ was just as essential, and essential in the same sense, in rendering an adequate satisfaction to law and justice, as his active obedience; but will any one say that the divine nature of our blessed Lord was imputed to us as our own, or that God accounted us as actually possessing the infinite attributes of the Godhead? And yet it is quite clear that the divinity and moral obedience of Christ sustain the same relation to his atonement. They give dignity and value to that "obedience unto death" which satisfied for sin; but they constituted no part of the penal infliction of justice. In the Scriptures, Christ is said to have suffered "for us"—that is, in our stead; but he is nowhere said to have possessed proper divinity, or to have obeyed the moral law "for us," or in our stead. The truth is, he possessed divinity, and obeyed the moral law for himself: this was essential to his character as Mediator; but he suffered "for us;" and to say that the moral obedience of Christ is to be imputed to us as our own, and that it, in the same sense with his sufferings, constitutes that satisfaction to justice in view of which we are pardoned, is a confounding of the active and the passive obedience of Christ, implied in the Calvinistic scheme, which the Scriptures do not sanction.

2. This scheme of imputation implies the same absurd fiction embraced in the former one—that is, *that the all-wise and infinite Being should consider the acts and sufferings of another as formally and de facto our own.*

All that was said on this subject in reference to the Antinomian scheme, applies with equal force against the theory of Calvin; hence we add no more here upon that point.

3. Lastly, we remark, that this, as well as the former scheme, is *perfectly gratuitous; there being no Scripture which, by any fair interpretation, affords it the least countenance.*

Although we have admitted that the phrase "imputed righteousness



of Christ" might, with proper explanations, be used in a good sense, yet it may be worth while here plainly to assert that there is in Scripture no authority either for the expression or for the Calvinistic interpretation on the subject; and therefore it were better that both be discarded. In those Scriptures mainly relied upon as teaching the Calvinistic notion of imputation, such terms are used as "impute" or "imputed," "the righteousness of God," "clothed with garments of salvation," "robes of righteousness," "white linen, the righteousness of the saints," "putting on Christ," etc. But in every case a fair exegesis of the text, in consistency with the context, will clearly show that nothing like the imputation of Christ's righteousness to us as our own for justification is taught. And—

(1) We remark, in reference to impute and imputation, that these terms are never used as implying the imputation of something possessed by, or done by, one person to another as his own. But, on the contrary, these words are always spoken in reference to something possessed or performed by the person to whom the imputation is made. Thus it is said, "Abraham believed God, and it (the faith of Abraham) was *imputed* to him for righteousness." Again: "But to him that worketh not, but believeth, his faith is *imputed* to him for righteousness"—that is, his own faith, and not the faith of another man.

(2) "When a thing is said simply to be imputed, as sin, folly, and so righteousness, the phrase is not to be taken concerning the bare acts of the things, as if (for example) to impute sin to a man signified this, to repute the man (to whom sin is imputed) to have committed a sinful act, or as if to impute folly were simply to charge a man to have done foolishly; but when it is applied to things that are evil, and attributed to persons that have power over those to whom the imputation is made, it signifieth the charging the guilt of what is imputed upon the head of the person to whom the imputation is made, with an intent of inflicting some condign punishment upon him. So that to impute sin (in Scripture phrase), is to charge the guilt of sin upon a man with a purpose to punish him for it." (Goodwin on Justification.)

Thus when Shimei (2 Sam. xix. 19) prayeth David not to impute wickedness unto him, he means merely to ask exemption from the punishment which his wickedness deserved; and when the apostle says, "Sin is not imputed where there is no law," he does not mean that sin is not sin wherever it may exist, for that would be a contradiction in terms; but merely that sin is not so imputed as that punishment is inflicted on the sinner.



(3) In those passages which refer to "the righteousness of God," etc., as connected with justification, the allusion is not to the active and passive righteousness of Christ, but to God's method of justifying sinners under the gospel. This is evident from these words:—Rom. x. 3, 4: "For they, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness *to every one that believeth.*" And Rom. iii. 21, 22: "But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all, and upon all them that believe; for there is no difference." Here it is undeniable that "the righteousness of God" spoken of is God's method of justifying sinners under the gospel by faith in Christ.

(4) In those scriptures referring to "robes of righteousness," "putting on Christ," etc., it is very evident from the context that they relate either to temporal blessings, habitual holiness, or to the future rewards of the saints; and in no case is there the least evidence that they refer to the obedience of Christ imputed to the saints as their own.

There are other passages that might be named as having been quoted by Calvinists to sustain their favorite dogma of imputation; but we have presented what appear to be the most pointed, except it be one more, which, as being a peculiarly favorite text with them on this point, we have reserved to the last. It is Rom. v. 19: "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." Here it has been argued that the obedience of Christ is imputed to believers in the same sense as the disobedience of Adam is imputed to his posterity; and assuming that Adam's sin is so imputed to his posterity as to be considered formally their own, Calvinists have rallied around this passage as a triumphant proof of their notion of imputation. To this we shall reply in the language of the learned Goodwin:

"To come home to the imputation of Adam's sin to his posterity, I answer, first, that either to say that the righteousness of Christ is imputed to his posterity, (of believers,) or the sin of Adam to his, are both expressions at least unknown to the Holy Ghost in the Scriptures. There is neither word, nor syllable, nor letter, nor tittle, of any such thing to be found there. But that the faith of him that believeth is imputed for *righteousness*, are words which the Holy Ghost useth. But, secondly, because I would make no exception against words, farther than necessity enforceth, I grant there are expressions in Scripture con



cerning both the communication of Adam's sin with his posterity, and the righteousness of Christ with those that believe, that will fairly enough bear the term imputation, if it be rightly understood, and according to the use of it in Scripture upon other occasions. But as it is commonly taken and understood by many, it occasions much error and mistake. Concerning Adam's sin, or disobedience, many are said to be 'made sinners by it,' and so, 'by the obedience of Christ,' it is said (in the same place) 'that many shall be made righteous;' but if men will exchange language with the Holy Ghost, they must see that they make him no loser. If, when they say 'Adam's sin is imputed to all unto condemnation,' their meaning be the same with the Holy Ghost, when he saith, 'that by the disobedience of one many were made sinners,' there is no harm done; but it is evident, by what many speak, that the Holy Ghost and they are not of one mind touching the imputation or communication of Adam's sin with his posterity, but that they differ as much in meaning as in words. If, when they say 'Adam's sin is imputed to all unto condemnation,' their meaning be this: that the guilt of Adam's sin is charged upon his whole posterity, or that the punishment of Adam's sin redounded from his person to his whole posterity, a main part of which punishment lieth in that original defilement wherein they are all conceived and born, and whereby they are truly made sinners before God — if this be the meaning of the term imputation when applied to Adam's sin, let it pass. But if the meaning be that that sinful act wherein Adam transgressed when he ate the forbidden fruit is in the letter and formality of it imputed to his posterity, so that by this imputation all his posterity are made formally sinners, this is an imputation which the Scriptures will never justify." (Treatise on Justification.)

So in the same manner, the righteousness or obedience of Christ is imputed to us, not by considering it ours in the letter and formality thereof, but by admitting us to share in its merits, blessings, and privileges. From what has been said, we think it will appear evident that the Calvinistic scheme of justification by the imputation of Christ's active and passive obedience to us as our own, must be abandoned as inconsistent with the Scriptures. And as we have seen that neither the doctrine nor the phraseology employed is sanctioned by the Bible; and as the latter is so liable to abuse, sliding so easily into all the absurdities of Antinomianism, it deserves to be at once and forever abandoned.



## QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER XXX.

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| <p><b>QUESTION 1.</b> Who have been the advocates of the scheme of justification by the imputation of Christ's active and passive obedience?</p> <p><b>2.</b> In what does this differ from the Antinomian plan?</p> <p><b>3.</b> Have Arminians admitted the use of the phrase "imputed righteousness" at all?</p> <p><b>4.</b> What is the real point of difference between Calvinists and Arminians on this subject?</p> | <p><b>5.</b> How does it appear that this scheme either confounds in an unscriptural manner the active and passive righteousness of Christ, or provides us a righteousness unadapted to our condition?</p> <p><b>6.</b> Does this scheme imply the same absurd fiction as the former one?</p> <p><b>7.</b> How does it appear that it is perfectly gratuitous?</p> |
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## CHAPTER XXXI.

## JUSTIFICATION—FALSE THEORIES REFUTED—JUSTIFICATION BY WORKS ALONE, AND BY FAITH AND WORKS UNITED, CONSIDERED.

THE *third method of justification which we propose to examine, is that which teaches that we are justified by works alone.*

Justification by *works alone* may be understood in several different senses.

1. It may mean justification by perfect obedience to the original law of God. This, as we have already shown, is absolutely impossible to a fallen sinner. The condition of the first covenant being "Do this, (in your own person,) and live," and "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them, it will hence follow that, as the apostle declares that "all have sinned," and "all the world are guilty before God," to be justified by works of perfect obedience to the first covenant, or original law of God, is absolutely impossible.

2. Justification by *works alone* may mean a perfect conformity to that moral code or law given to the Jews in their own Scriptures, and to the Gentiles by the influence of the Holy Spirit given unto them, to "show the work of the law written in their hearts."

This is substantially the same law that was given to Adam, and, in reference to its subject-matter, is identical with the covenant of works, which is still in force, not as a principle of justification, but as a rule of life, by which to estimate the moral standing of man, and exhibit the magnitude of his delinquencies in the sight of God; for, as the apostle says, "By the law is the knowledge of sin." In reference to this law, it was that the Jews, in St. Paul's day, set up a claim to justification by works.

The great argument in the Epistle to the Romans is to show the utter impracticability of this scheme of justification. We need only in this place quote the words in which the apostle sums up his grand conclusion, or sets forth his main position, thus: "Therefore by *the deeds of the law* there shall no flesh be justified in his sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin." This one passage, to such as are willing to



abide by the teachings of inspiration, must forever explode the old Jewish scheme of justification by the works of the moral law; and as we know not that any respectable authority in the Christian Church since the apostle's days has pleaded for justification in professedly the same way, we may pass this scheme without farther notice.

3. Justification by *works alone* may be understood as implying justification by *works of evangelical obedience under the gospel*, or those works which proceed from faith, and are performed by the assistance of the Holy Spirit.

This scheme has had some advocates in different ages of the Church, and in modern times has found an able patron in Bishop Bull, the impress of whose views upon this subject is still perceptible upon many of the clergy of the Church of England.

The grand argument in support of this scheme has been founded upon the language of St. James, who, it is contended, expressly teaches justification by works; and the effort has been made to reconcile St. Paul to St. James, by alleging that the former, when he denies the possibility of "justification by works," refers only to works of obedience to the Mosaic law; and that, when he teaches justification "by faith," he means the works which spring from faith. We reserve the refutation of this and every other scheme of justification by works, till we come to examine the doctrine of justification *by faith only*; since the establishment of the latter will disprove the former. They cannot stand together.

*The fourth scheme of justification to be considered, is that which teaches that we are justified by faith and works taken together.*

This scheme has had a respectable number of advocates, but they have differed considerably among themselves in reference to the kind of works which are united with faith in justification, and the degree of importance which should be attached to particular works.

Dr. Macknight, perhaps one of the ablest defenders the scheme has ever had, presents a statement of the doctrine in the following words: "And surely it belongeth to God to appoint what conditions or means of justification seemeth to him good. Now that he hath actually made faith and works, not separately, but jointly, the condition of justification, both Paul and James have declared." But Dr. Macknight understood justification to mean, not the pardon of sin in this world, but the sentence of acquittal to be pronounced upon the righteous at the day of final judgment. Hence, according to him, justification is a blessing which no man can attain in this life.

Others, however, who have held to justification by faith and works



have admitted that it takes place in this life; and not a few have attached peculiar importance to some particular works, especially to the ceremony of Christian baptism. This by some has been considered the great *sine qua non* in order to justification. It is true, they have not considered baptism available for justification in an adult, except it be preceded or accompanied by faith; but when connected with faith, they have considered that ordinance not only as the prescribed means, but also as the only legitimate evidence of justification. Indeed, so much importance has been attached to that ordinance in this connection, that it has been strenuously contended that without baptism there can be no remission of sin. It is difficult to determine, from the manner in which a certain class have expressed themselves, whether it would not be more correct to say that they hold to justification by works; for they certainly attach far more importance to baptism than they do to faith, inasmuch as they say that a proper faith may exist without justification, but a proper baptism cannot.

Closely allied to this notion is the doctrine of the Roman Catholics on the subject of satisfaction, penance, etc. They not only hold that works are essential to the complete remission of sin, but they teach that they are meritorious. They confound justification with sanctification, and contend that we must be inherently righteous before we can be just in the sight of God; and this inherent righteousness, according to them, is derived from the merit of good works. Hence their peculiar views on the subject of penance, indulgences, purgatory, etc.

But the full refutation of all these variant schemes of justification by faith and works united, we trust will be sufficiently apparent in the discussion of the scheme of justification by faith only. We will, however, remark at this time, that the *prima facie* evidence of Scripture is against them, as we read nothing there in reference to justification by faith and works taken together: to be justified "by faith," and to be justified "by works," are both terms used in Scripture; but justification *by faith and works* is a phrase not found in Holy Writ. We presume the advocates of this doctrine will not pretend that it is taught by St. Paul, and unless they can find something to sustain it in the Epistle of St. James, we know of no text in the Bible upon which they can base a plausible defense of their theory. But as that passage will be particularly examined in the discussion of justification by faith only, we will close the present chapter by presenting one leading objection to all these schemes of justification *by works*, and *by faith and works*—it is this:

*All these schemes are either based upon an entire misapprehension of the*



*nature of justification as presented in Scripture, or else they labor under most of the difficulties connected with the schemes of imputation already exhibited.*

We have already shown that, in the Bible acceptation, to *justify* is to *pardon* or *forgive sin*; or, in other words, it is a sentence by which the punishment due to sin is remitted. This is a great and prominent truth, most clearly presented in the New Testament; and most of the difficulties and inconsistencies on the subject of justification may be traced to a disregard of this leading principle; therefore we should, while on this subject, endeavor to keep it still in view.

The proofs on this point already presented we think are very conclusive, but as there is scarce an erroneous scheme of justification but what must necessarily battle with this truth for its own existence, we beg leave at this time to ask a careful attention to the concluding part of the fourth chapter of 2 Corinthians. Here we learn that "reconciliation to God," the "non-imputation of trespasses," and being "made the righteousness of God," are phrases that are all used as expressive of the same thing, and as synonymous with justification. The passage admits no other sensible interpretation. If, then, we admit that to justify means to pardon or forgive sin, the schemes now in question are involved at once in inextricable difficulties.

1. As justification means *pardon*, then, as the Scriptures declare, "God justifieth the *ungodly*," for none others can need pardon. Hence we must be pardoned before we become righteous by personal obedience or inherent holiness; therefore we cannot be justified by those works of obedience which none but the righteous can perform. This would be to require us to do, in order to justification, what can only be done by such as are already justified, which is absurd.

2. If we are justified by works at all, these works must either embrace perfect obedience to the law of God, or they must not: if they do, then the law can demand no more, and we have no need for the death of Christ: if they do not, then we cannot be justified by them; for the law saith, "Cursed is every one who continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them."

3. If we are justified by faith and works taken together, then these works must either be performed before or after justification. If they are performed before justification, then they must be performed while we are in unbelief; "for all that believe are justified;" and if in unbelief, they must be sinful; for "whatsoever is not of faith is sin;" and if so, it would follow that we are justified by sin, which is absurd. But if the works are performed after justification, then it will follow that



the effect precedes the cause, which is also absurd. Indeed, if we are justified by works of evangelical obedience in connection with faith, it would seem inconsistent to say that we can be justified in this life; but if, with Dr. Macknight, we deny this, we deny the Scriptures. But we reserve the full refutation of these schemes for the next chapter.

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QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER XXXI.

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| <p><b>QUESTION 1.</b> In what three different senses may justification <i>by works alone</i> be understood?</p> <p>2. How is the first seen to be impossible?</p> <p>3. Who have advocated the second?</p> <p>4. Who have advocated the third?</p> <p>5. How does Bishop Bull endeavor to reconcile St. Paul and St. James?</p> <p>6. Have the advocates for justification <i>by faith and works</i> been agreed among themselves?</p> <p>7. What was the peculiar notion of Dr. Macknight?</p> <p>8. In what respect has peculiar importance been attached to a particular work?</p> | <p>9. What is the peculiarity of the Roman Catholic view?</p> <p>10. What is the <i>prima facie</i> evidence of Scripture in reference to these plans?</p> <p>11. What leading objection is presented to them?</p> <p>12. How is this objection sustained?</p> <p>13. What proof is adduced in reference to the Scripture meaning of justification?</p> <p>14. What three difficulties are presented as being connected with all these systems?</p> |
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## CHAPTER XXXII.

## JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH ONLY, ILLUSTRATED AND PROVED.

IN the preceding chapters we have considered and endeavored to refute all the different methods proposed for the attainment of justification, except the last, viz., *justification by faith only*, which we named as the method presented in the Scriptures. The present chapter, therefore, will be devoted to the consideration of justification by faith only. We think the evidence already presented contains a satisfactory refutation of all the different schemes of justification which we have considered; but if we can succeed in establishing the position which we now propose—that is, that justification by faith only is the only scheme which the Scriptures authorize—all other schemes will necessarily be thereby disproved, and should be discarded as being doubly refuted.

If we can select any doctrine contained in the Scriptures as occupying in the scheme of salvation a more prominent and important position than any other, it is the one now proposed to be established. The great principles upon which it is founded, and with which it is connected, extend throughout the entire gospel system, insomuch that a misapprehension of this leading doctrine will necessarily interrupt the harmony of the parts, and destroy the symmetry of the entire scheme of redemption. As if with a special eye to the importance of the subject, and as if God would exhibit a peculiar concern to render a serious error on so vital a point almost impossible, we find this doctrine not only plainly stated in the Scriptures, but it is repeated again and again in various places; it is particularly dwelt upon, presented in a diversity of aspects, and sustained by a variety of arguments.

But notwithstanding the explicitness and fullness of the Scriptures upon this point, as we have already seen, it is a subject on which there has, from the apostles' day to the present time, been much controversy. St. Paul complains of the Jews of his day, that "they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness," were unwilling to "submit themselves to the righteousness of God," or to God's plan of justification. Even so it has been the case, up to the present time, that the plan of salvation revealed in Scripture,

which proposes unmerited pardon to the ungodly but penitent sinner, upon the simple condition of evangelical faith in the vicarious sacrifice of Christ, has not only had to contend against the settled enmity of the human heart, but many of the most learned and pious have, to some extent, misunderstood the true scriptural doctrine of justification by faith. Upon this, as well as upon every other doctrine of Christianity, the teachings of inspiration must be our guide; and we now appeal to their infallible testimony, with the strongest confidence of finding a satisfactory account of the doctrine before us.

I. That we may perceive clearly the force of the Scripture proof that we are *justified by faith only*, we will first *define the sense* in which we understand that doctrine.

On this subject, we first quote the clear and forcible language of Mr. Wesley. In his sermon on "Justification by Faith," he speaks thus: "Surely the difficulty of assenting to the proposition that faith is the only condition of justification, must arise from not understanding it. We mean thereby thus much, that it is the only thing without which no one is justified—the only thing that is immediately, indispensably, absolutely, requisite in order to pardon. As on the one hand, though a man should have every thing else without faith, yet he cannot be justified; so on the other, though he be supposed to want every thing else, yet if he hath faith, he cannot but be justified. For suppose a sinner of any kind or degree, in a full sense of his total ungodliness, of his utter inability to think, speak, or do good, and his absolute meetness for hell fire—suppose, I say, this sinner, helpless and hopeless, casts himself wholly on the mercy of God in Christ, (which, indeed, he cannot do but by the grace of God,) who can doubt but he is forgiven in that moment? Who will affirm that any more is indispensably required, before that sinner can be justified?"

By faith as a *condition* of justification, we are not to understand that it is absolutely, and in every sense, the cause of justification. Far from it. [The love, or grace, of God is the original *moving* cause. The *efficient* cause is the Holy Spirit, "who takes of the things of Jesus, and shows them unto us." The *meritorious* cause is the death of Christ. The *instrumental* cause, on God's part, is the word of God; but the *conditional* cause, on our part, is faith.]

As we have seen, justification by works, which implies perfect conformity to the first covenant, is to us impossible: Christ hath satisfied for our breach of the first covenant, by suffering "for us," and we are now placed under the new covenant of grace. To become personally *righteous* under this covenant, we must comply with its conditions.



God, who graciously placed us under this covenant, has a right to prescribe the condition upon which we shall be accepted under it. This, we have shown, is faith. By the satisfaction or atonement of Christ we are not to understand that men are absolutely and unconditionally freed from the demands of the covenant of works. They are only unconditionally freed so far as to be placed under the new covenant. Those of whom conditions are required, can only be delivered from the curse of the law by complying with the condition of faith; hence Christ is said to be "the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." When we believe, faith is imputed to us for evangelical righteousness. [Had Jesus Christ done all that he did for sinners without prescribing faith as the condition of justification, faith then could not have been imputed to us for righteousness.] It derives its efficacy from the appointment of God; and had the wisdom of God prescribed love to God, or any thing else, as the condition of pardon, instead of faith, it is very clear that love to God, or whatever else had been prescribed, would then have sustained the same relation to our justification that faith now sustains.

But the question may be asked, Are not other duties enjoined in Scripture as well as faith? and if so, how can it be said that we are justified by faith *only*? To this we may reply, that other duties, it is true, are enjoined, but the Scriptures nowhere make them, like faith, the absolute and invariable condition of justification.

Indeed, as we have seen from the Scriptures that faith is the condition, in such sense that none can be justified without it, and all who have it are that moment justified, it necessarily follows that nothing else can be a condition, in the same sense, without a contradiction. Suppose, for illustration, that Christ had made the taking of the sacrament of the Lord's-supper the condition of justification in the same sense in which we have proved faith to be the condition; then it would follow that none can be justified without partaking of that sacrament, and that all who do partake thereof are that moment justified. Now, is it not manifest that an individual might partake of the supper without faith? and if so, he must that moment either be justified, or not. If we say he *is* justified, then it follows that faith cannot be the condition of justification in the sense specified; but if we say he *is not* that moment justified, then it follows that partaking of the supper cannot be the condition of justification in the sense specified. The two conditions cannot be reconciled; they imply a manifest contradiction.

If the Scriptures exhibit faith to be the condition of justification, in the sense above, then it follows that, unless the Scriptures flatly contra



dict themselves, they cannot teach that any thing else, separate and distinct from faith, is a condition in the same sense. And thus it is evident that, in showing that we are justified by faith, in the sense above, it is clearly implied that justification is by faith *only*—that is, faith is the thing made the *condition* of justification, in this important sense.

Other things, such as *repentance, prayer, etc.*, may be, in a correct sense, said to be required; but it is only as they are connected with faith, and because they are thus connected, as being presupposed as necessary antecedents, as contained in it, as implied as its immediate fruits, or as necessary subservient means or consequents. In a principal action, all its parts, necessary antecedents, subservient actions, and immediate and necessary consequents, are properly implied. Thus: "If the besieged be bound by articles to surrender the town to the besiegers at such a time, it need not be expressed in the articles that they shall withdraw their guards and cease resistance—open the gates, and yield up this house, or that street: all this is implied clearly in the articles of capitulation." Even so faith, the great condition of justification, may imply all the rest in a certain sense.

Hearing the word and repentance may be necessary antecedents; knowledge of Christ, assent to the truth of the gospel, relying on the merits of Christ, and coming to and receiving Christ as an almighty, all-sufficient, present Saviour, are necessary concomitants or properties of faith; denying ourselves and taking up our cross daily, hearing, praying, meditating, and attendance upon the ordinances of the gospel, may be connected with faith, either as antecedents or consequents. Yet none of these external means, nor all of them taken together, are made the *condition* of justification, in the same important sense in which, as we have seen, faith is presented. Except so far as some of them are synonymous with, or implied in, faith, they may all exist without justification, or justification may take place in the absence of any or all of them.

## \* II. *Justification by faith only, expressly proved by Scripture.*

1. The first class of texts on which we rely embraces *those passages in which faith is directly and expressly presented as the condition or means of justification.*

In Acts xiii. 39, we read: "And by him *all that believe are justified* from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." Here justification is promised to "all that believe," which clearly implies (if none can be justified without faith, as all will admit) that faith is presented as the condition.



In the Epistle to the Romans, St. Paul treats expressly of the subject of justification. From that masterly discourse we next make some quotations. Rom. iii. 26, 28, 30: "To declare, I say, at this time, his righteousness; that he might be just, and the *justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.*" "Therefore we conclude that a man is *justified by faith* without the deeds of the law." "Seeing it is one God which *shall justify* the circumcision *by faith*, and uncircumcision *through faith.*" Rom. v. 1, 2: "Therefore *being justified by faith*, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom also we have access *by faith into this grace* wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." Gal. iii. 8, 9: "And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would *justify* the heathen *through faith*, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. So then they which be of *faith* are blessed with faithful Abraham." Gal. iii. 22-24: "But the Scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise *by faith* of Jesus Christ might be given to *them that believe.* But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterward be revealed. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be *justified by faith.*"

In all these passages, St. Paul most clearly and explicitly declares that justification is by faith. Now let it be remembered that in the Epistles to the Romans and Galatians, from which the quotations are made, the apostle is expressly discussing the subject of justification, and is not the conclusion irresistible, that faith is presented as the condition of justification? If the apostle did not design to convey this idea, surely his language is well calculated to mislead. Had he meant that justification was either *by works*, or *by faith and works united*, why did he not so express it? The argument from this class of texts, in which quotations might be greatly multiplied, we think must be satisfactory with such as are disposed to abide by the plain declarations of inspiration.

✗ 2. Our second argument is based upon *those passages which represent what is manifestly synonymous with justification, as being through faith.*

This, it will readily be perceived, is substantially the same argument as the former, the only difference being that, in this argument, the term justification is not used; but if the terms used are of the same import, the evidence is quite as conclusive.

The terms referred to, as used synonymously with justification, in the scriptures to be adduced, are the following:—"Righteousness," "The righteousness of God," "The remission of sins," "The counting, or



reckoning, for righteousness." "The imputation of righteousness," "The non-imputation of sin," "Deliverance from condemnation," etc. That these terms, in the passages we shall adduce, are synonymous with justification, can scarcely be doubted. The evidence of this fact is palpable upon the face of the texts to be quoted. We will, however, say a few things respecting the second phrase presented, which has perhaps given rise to more controversy than any of the others. It is, "The righteousness of God."

In reference to this phrase, which occurs in Rom. i. 17, Whitby remarks: "This phrase, in St. Paul's style, doth always signify the righteousness of faith in Christ Jesus's dying or shedding his blood for us." Doddridge paraphrases it thus: "That is, the method which God hath contrived and proposed for our becoming righteous, by believing his testimony, and casting ourselves on his mercy." Wesley, Benson, Clarke, Macknight, Watson, Stuart, and indeed the great body of learned commentators, perfectly accord with the exposition as quoted from Whitby and Doddridge. To this we might add the testimony of Paul himself, who, in Rom. iii. 22, gives precisely the same comment upon the phrase in question. "Even," says he, "the righteousness of God, which is *by faith of Jesus Christ*."

As we think a particular examination of each of the phrases presented, so as to show that it is synonymous with justification, will be rendered unnecessary by the clearness of the evidence which the passages to be quoted will exhibit, we proceed to present the Scripture testimony under this head.

Rom. i. 17: "For therein is *the righteousness of God* revealed from *faith to faith*; as it is written, The just shall live *by faith*." Rom. iii. 21, 22, 25: "But now *the righteousness of God* without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets: even *the righteousness of God*, which is *by faith of Jesus Christ*, unto all and upon all them that *believe*." "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation *through faith in his blood*, to declare *his righteousness* for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God." Rom. iv. 3, 4, 5, 9: "For what saith the Scripture? Abraham *believed God*, and it was counted unto him for *righteousness*. Now to him that *worketh* is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that *worketh* not, but *believeth* on him that *justifieth the ungodly*, his *faith is counted for righteousness*." "For we say that *faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness*." Rom. iv. 11, 13: "And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the *righteousness of the faith* which he had, yet being uncircumcised; that he might be the father of all them *that*



*believe*, though they be not circumcised; that *righteousness might be imputed unto them also*." "For the promise that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham or to his seed, through the law, but through the *righteousness of faith*." Rom. iv. 22-24: "And therefore *it* (faith) *was imputed to him for righteousness*. Now it was not written for his sake alone, that *it was imputed to him*; but for us also, to whom *it shall be imputed*, if we *believe on him* that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead." Rom. ix. 31, 32: "But Israel, which followed after the *law of righteousness*, hath not attained to the *law of righteousness*. Wherefore? Because they sought it not *by faith*, but as it were by the *works of the law*; for they stumbled at that stumbling-stone." Rom. x. 4-10: "For Christ is the end of the law *for righteousness to every one that believeth*. For Moses describeth the *righteousness which is of the law*, that the man which *doeth those things* shall live by them. But the *righteousness which is of faith* speaketh on this wise, Say not in thy heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above;) or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart; that is, the word of *faith*, which we preach; that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and *shalt believe in thy heart* that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man *believeth unto righteousness*; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." Gen. xv. 6: "And he (Abraham) *believed in the Lord*; and he *counted to him for righteousness*." Gal. iii. 6: "Even as Abraham *believed God*, and *it was accounted to him for righteousness*." Gal. v. 5, 6: "For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of *righteousness by faith*. For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but *faith* which worketh by love." Phil. iii. 9: "And be found in him, not having *mine own righteousness which is of the law*, but that which is *through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith*." Heb. xi. 7: Noah, it is said, "*became heir of the righteousness which is by faith*." Acts x. 43: "To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name *whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins*." John iii. 18: "He that *believeth on him is not condemned*; but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."

We think it impossible for any unprejudiced mind carefully to examine the scriptures here quoted, without being satisfied that the terms, "Righteousness," "Righteousness of God," "Remission of sins," "Counting, or reckoning, for righteousness," "The imputation of



righteousness," "The non-imputation of sin," and "Deliverance from condemnation," all imply the same thing as justification; but as all these are said to be by, or through, faith, it necessarily follows that justification is by faith.

3. Our third argument is based upon *such passages as present what are necessary and inseparable concomitants of justification as being by, or through, faith.*

There are presented in the Scriptures several blessings, which, though distinct in their nature from justification, invariably accompany it, and never can exist but in connection with it. Now, it must be admitted that, if two or more things never exist except in connection with each other, whatever is indispensable to the existence of one must be indispensable to the existence of the others. Whatever would lead to the existence of one would necessarily lead to the existence of the others; or, in other words, whatever is the grand indispensable condition to the existence of the one, must sustain the same relation to the others.

For illustration of this argument, we refer to the familiar relations of husband and wife. These relations necessarily imply the existence of each other. They are inseparable concomitants. Although the two relations are not identical—the husband is not the wife, nor the wife the husband—yet the relation of husband cannot exist without that of wife, nor the relation of wife without that of husband. Now, is it not clear from this, that whatever would necessarily lead to the existence of the one relation, would also lead to the existence of the other; and whatever would prevent the existence of the one relation, would necessarily prevent the existence of the other?

✕ Apply this principle of reasoning to the subject in hand: regeneration, adoption, and salvation, in a certain sense, are inseparable concomitants of justification—the one cannot exist without the others. Whoever is justified, is born of God, or regenerated, adopted, and, in a certain sense, saved; and none can be regenerated, adopted, or saved, in that sense, but the justified. From this it will follow that whatever leads to the one of these concomitant blessings, must lead to the others; and whatever would prevent the one, must prevent the others; or, in other words, whatever is the grand condition to the existence of the one, sustains the same relation to the others.

Now, if we can show from the Scriptures that we are *regenerated, adopted, and saved, through, or by, faith*, it will necessarily follow that we are *justified* through, or by, *faith*. This, we think, will be evident from the following Scriptures:—

ROM. i. 16. "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; for it



is the power of God unto *salvation* to every one that *believeth*; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek." Eph. ii. 8: "For by grace are ye *saved through faith*; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God." Luke vii. 50: "And he said to the woman, *Thy faith hath saved thee*; go in peace." John xx. 31: "But these are written that ye *might believe* that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that *believing* ye *might have life* through his name." Mark xvi. 16: "He that *believeth* and is baptized *shall be saved*; but he that *believeth not* *shall be damned*." Acts xvi. 31: "*Believe* on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou *shalt be saved*." 2 Tim. iii. 15: "And that from a child thou hast known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise *unto salvation, through faith* which is in Christ Jesus." John i. 12, 13: "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to *become the sons of God*, even to them that *believe on his name*. Which *were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God*." Acts xv. 9: "And put no difference between us and them, *purifying their hearts by faith*." Acts xxvi. 18: "That they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which *are sanctified by faith* that is in me." Gal. iii. 26: "For ye are all the children of God *by faith* in Christ Jesus." 1 John v. 1: "Whosoever *believeth* that Jesus is the Christ *is born of God*." 1 John v. 10: "He that *believeth* on the Son of God *hath the witness in himself*."

From the preceding scriptures, it is undeniable that faith is the necessary condition of regeneration, adoption, and salvation; but as these are inseparable concomitants of justification, it follows that faith is the necessary condition of justification.

\*4. Our fourth argument is based upon *such passages as show that justification is by grace, and not by works*.

In Romans xi. 6, we have these words: "And if by *grace*, then it is no more of *works*: otherwise *grace* is no more *grace*. But if it be of *works*, then it is no more *grace*: otherwise *work* is no more *work*." From this scripture it is evident that *grace and works are opposed to each other*. Whatever is of *grace* cannot be of *works*, and whatever is of *works* cannot be of *grace*. In Rom. iv. 16, we read: "Therefore it is of *faith*, that it might be by *grace*." From this text, it is evident that faith and grace are so connected that justification cannot be by grace unless it is of faith. Hence, if we can prove that justification is not of works, but of grace, it will follow that it must be by faith.

This we think will appear from the following scriptures:—Rom. iii 20, 27, 28: "Therefore by the *deeds of the law* there shall no flesh be *justified* in his sight; for by the law is the knowledge of sin." "Where



is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay; but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law." Rom. iv. 4, 5: "Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." Rom. iii. 24: "Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." Gal. iii. 2, 11: "This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?" "But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident; for, The just shall live by faith." Gal. ii. 16: "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified." Gal. v. 4: "Christ is become of no effect unto you. Whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace."

From the foregoing scriptures, it is evident that justification is not of works, but of grace; therefore it must be by faith. We think the evidence we have produced proves conclusively that justification by faith is the plain doctrine of the Bible.

#### QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER XXXII.

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| <p>QUESTION 1. How is justification by faith only defined?</p> <p>2. What is the character of the first class of texts adduced?</p> <p>3. Repeat some of them.</p> <p>4. What is the second class?</p> <p>5. In what does this differ from the former argument?</p> <p>6. What are some of the principal texts of this class?</p> <p>7. What is the third class of texts?</p> <p>8. How is this argument explained?</p> <p>9. What are some of the texts in reference to salvation by faith?</p> <p>10. In reference to regeneration?</p> <p>11. In reference to adoption?</p> <p>12. Upon what class of texts is the fourth argument based?</p> | <p>13. What are some of the principal texts?</p> <p>14. What is the efficient cause of justification?</p> <p>15. The meritorious cause?</p> <p>16. The moving cause?</p> <p>17. The instrumental cause or God's part?</p> <p>18. The conditional cause, or our part?</p> <p>19. From what does the justifying efficacy of faith result?</p> <p>20. In what sense are prayer and other duties necessary to justification?</p> <p>21. Can there be two absolute and distinct conditions of justification?</p> <p>22. How can this be proved?</p> |
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