

THE  
ATONEMENT:  
ITS EFFICACY AND EXTENT



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**Robert Candlish**

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# PART I

THE QUESTION VIEWED IN ITS RELATION TO HUMAN SYSTEMS AND THE METHOD OF SCRIPTURAL PROOF

## CHAPTER I

THE FORMULARIES OF THE REFORMATION AS DISTINGUISHED, IN REGARD TO THIS SUBJECT, FROM THOSE OF THE PATRISTIC CHURCH

THE question, or set of questions, with which this treatise is occupied belongs, in an especial manner, to the theology of the Reformation, as it is embodied in the symbolic books and academic systems of the sixteenth, and more particularly the seventeenth century.\*

The truth as it is in Jesus is doubtless essentially the same everywhere and always; and the apprehension of it, for salvation, by those to whom it is presented, must everywhere and always be in substance the same act or process. Christ crucified, and faith appropriating Christ crucified, are the unchanging conditions of the spiritual life; the outer or objective power, and the inner or subjective principle, uniting to effect what that formula expresses,—"Christ living in me" (Gal. 2:20).\* But while thus far Christianity, whether doctrinally or practically considered, is identical in all ages, there is room for diversity in respect of the manner, more or less explicit and articulate, in which its several parts or elements may be developed, recognised, and expressed. Circumstances may cause a greater stress to be laid on certain of its doctrinal aspects, or of its practical applications, at one period than at another; and different

habits of mental discipline, as well as different kinds of moral training and experience, may occasion, even where there is real agreement, considerable variety of exposition.

The objective doctrine of the atonement made by Christ, and the corresponding subjective doctrine of belief in that atonement, are, as I think, instances in point. For I am persuaded that such speculations and inquiries as have in modern times gathered round these doctrines can scarcely be understood, or intelligibly dealt with, unless care be taken to keep in view the general character and tendency of the theological era which to a large extent they represent. It is for this reason that I begin, in the outset of my argument, with what in fact originated the train of thought which led to my writing on the subject at all;—a brief general notice, that is to say, of a certain contrast that may be observed between the formularies of the post-Reformation Church and those of earlier date; and a more particular explanation of the importance which came in consequence to be attached to the precise adjustment and balancing of verbal statements,—in a somewhat more evangelical and more spiritual line, however, than that in which the Fathers used to cultivate the art so skilfully.\* The subject is interesting in itself, as well as in its bearing upon the forms which modern controversies on the Atonement and on Faith have assumed; on which account I hesitate all the less in making some cursory consideration of it the commencement or starting-point of the discussion upon which I am entering relative to these great matters.

I have to observe then generally, in the first place, that an important distinction may be noticed between the Patristic and the Reformation formularies, as regards the circumstances in which they were prepared, and the corresponding character which they came to assume respectively.

And secondly, and more particularly, I have to point out the influence of this distinction, as tending to give a particular turn and direction, in modern times, to the orthodox or doctrinal manner of

viewing the atonement, in connection with that evangelical or practical faith of which it is the object.

To these topics I devote the first two chapters of this first part of my treatise, as preliminary to the discussion of the method of Scriptural proof.

Of the creeds and confessions current before the Reformation, it may be said, in a general view, that they were drawn up while the Church was on her way to the priestly altar, the monkish cell, and the scholastic den\*. She was on her way out of all the three when the Reformation Formularies were prepared. Religion was becoming ritual and ascetic; theology subtle, speculative, and mystical; when the Apostles' Creed passed into the Nicene form, and that again effloresced into the Athanasian.\* Even the Apostles' Creed itself, simple and sublime as it is, may be held in some measure chargeable with a fault, or defect, which afterwards became more conspicuous. It is chiefly, if not exclusively, occupied with the accomplishment of redemption; it says little or nothing about its application. The person and work of Christ, as the Redeemer, are the prominent topics. The Holy Ghost is merely named; his office as the author of regeneration, faith and holiness, is not so much as mentioned; of course, therefore, those inward movements and changes which he effects in the redeemed soul are altogether omitted. For this apparent imperfection, the concise brevity of the document may be pleaded as a reason; and it may be urged, in addition, that even on the subject of the Redeemer's person and work its statements are very meagre. That is true. Still the beginning of that tendency which was soon more fully developed is to be noticed; the tendency, I mean, to exercise and exhaust the intellect of the Church in the minute analysis of such mysteries of the Divine nature as the Trinity and the Incarnation; to the neglect, comparatively, of those views of saving grace which, being more within the range of human experience, appeal not to the intellect only, but to the heart as well.\*

Several causes might be pointed out as contributing to foster this tendency.\* Abstract speculations about the manner of the Supreme Being's essential and eternal existence, as well as about the sense and mode in which divinity and humanity may become one, were but too congenial to the mixed Grecian and Oriental philosophy then in vogue, and found an apt and ready instrument of logical and metaphysical debate in the almost endlessly plastic language in which they were embodied. Hence arose the interminable array of subtle heresies which forced upon the orthodox an increasing minuteness of definition from age to age; successive councils being obliged to meet the ever-shifting forms of error with new guards and fences,—new adjustments of words and syllables, and even of letters, fitted to stop each small and narrow gap at which an unscrupulous, hair-splitting ingenuity of sophistry might strive to enter in. It is not therefore to be imputed as a fault to the Nicene Fathers, or to the followers of Athanasius, that the creeds which they sanctioned set forth the mysteries of the Trinity, and the union of the two natures in one person, with a prolixity of exact and carefully balanced statement, from which we are apt now to recoil,—scarcely understanding even the phraseology or terminology employed.\* On the contrary, it is to be regarded as, upon the whole, matter of thankfulness, that, at the risk of being charged with prying too presumptuously into things too high for them, men of competent learning, and sufficiently skilled in the philosophic gladiatorship of their day, were led by the keen fencing of adversaries to intrench in a fortress at all points so unassailable, the fundamental verities of the Christian faith.

At the same time the remark holds true that, while rendering this service to doctrinal Christianity, they were far less at home in its experimental departments.\* It may have been their misfortune, as much as, or more than, their fault. But certainly the Church which they were guiding so truly among the quicksands of Arian and semi-Arian subtlety, and anchoring so firmly on the "great mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh" (1 Tim. 3:16), was fast losing hold, in another direction, of the living spirit of the gospel of Christ.



In fact, the growing minuteness of scholastic speculation in the transcendental region of essences, human and divine, simply kept pace with a growing ignorance of divine grace in the practical region of Christian experience and the Christian walk.\* Here, ritualism and asceticism divided the field between them;—ritualism for the vulgar; asceticism for the initiated;—ritualism for the general body of the baptized, whom it was the business of priestcraft to amuse, to overawe, to soothe, to manage, by a system of imposing ceremony and convenient routine; and asceticism, again, for more earnest souls, for whom, if they are to be managed, something more real than the husks of ordinary formality must be found. Between the two, the gospel of free grace, giving assurance of a present, gratuitous, and complete salvation; and the new birth of the soul in the believing of that gospel; were thrust out of the scheme of practical religion. Regeneration and Justification, in the evangelical sense of these terms, were set aside, in favour of the sacramental virtue of the Font and the Altar, the discipline of penance, and the mediatorship of the Virgin and the saints. They find no place, therefore, in the Creeds; which, after going into the nicest details respecting the Trinity, the Incarnation, and the hypostatical union of the two natures in the one person of Christ, leave almost untouched the entire field of the sinner's personal history, in his being turned from sin to the living God, and fitted for glorifying and enjoying him for ever.

Hence these high mysteries are presented in an academic, theoretical form, almost as if they were algebraic signs or expressions, to be adroitly shifted and sorted upon the scholastic board, but with little or no reference to the actual business of the spiritual life.\* It must ever be so, when they are handled in this abstract way. The distinction of persons in the Godhead is a truth which comes home to the heart, when it is viewed in theology, as it is set forth in Scripture, not theoretically, in itself, but practically, in its bearing upon the change which a man must personally undergo, if he is to be renewed, sanctified, and saved. Then the love of the Father, the righteousness and grace of the incarnate Son, and the indwelling

power and fellowship of the Spirit, are felt to be not notions, but facts;—facts, too, that may be matter of human experience as well as of divine discovery. Otherwise it is only the skeleton of divinity that is exhibited, to be dissected and analyzed; without the flesh and blood,—and above all, without the warm breath of life,—which it must have if it is to be embraced.

I might refer, in proof and illustration of this remark, to the Anglican Theology of the last century, and to the manner in which the doctrine of the Trinity, with its dependent truths, was discussed by its ablest defenders, at a time when confessedly salvation by grace alone was not the common theme of the pulpits of our land.\* With all our grateful admiration of those giants in Patristic learning and logic—such as Bishop Horsley and others—whose vindication of the faith will never become obsolete, we cannot but be sensible of a certain hard, dry, formal and technical aspect or character imparted to their treatment of the whole subject. The incomprehensible sublimities of heaven were so subjected to the manipulation of the limited human understanding,—and that, too, irrespectively of their practical bearing on the wants and woes of earth,—as to be repulsive, in certain quarters, rather than attractive; and, in fact, without excusing, we may perhaps thus explain, the difficulty which some sensitive minds felt to those minutiae of Trinitarian definition which might seem adapted rather to the subtleties of doubtful disputation in the schools, than to the anxieties and exigencies of the divine life in the soul. At all events, the analogy now suggested is instructive. And it is fitted, I think, to confirm the truth of the representation which I have been giving of the circumstances in which the Church formularies that arose out of the controversies of the early centuries were compiled; the influences to which the compilers of them were exposed; and the character which, in consequence, they have impressed upon them,—especially in what may be called the latest edition of them,—that which bears the justly honoured name of Athanasius.

The Reformation formularies originated in the life, rather than in the teaching, of Luther.\* His conversion may be said to be their type and model, as well as their source and parent. They are the issue of it. Joining hands with the Fathers, through Augustine, and with the Apostles, through Paul, he did for theology what Socrates boasted to have done for philosophy;—he brought heavenly into contact with earthly things. The whole movement with which he was associated was eminently spiritual and practical. It was cast in the mould of our Lord's conversation with Nicodemus, as the principle of that conversation is explained by our Lord himself: "If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you of heavenly things?" (John 3:12.)\* The earthly things,—the facts or doctrines connected with the new birth, its necessity, its nature, and its cause,—however they may be discovered or revealed, are yet such as, when discovered or revealed, fall within the range and cognizance of human thought, and touch a chord in the deepest feelings of human nature. The soul, awakened to reflection upon itself and upon its Maker, recognises, as if instinctively, the solemn truth, that nothing short of a new creative energy or impulse on the part of its Maker, can restore the right relation in which it should stand to him, and re-establish harmony where otherwise hopeless discord must ever continue to reign. To a spirit thus convinced, the heavenly things—the facts or doctrines of redemption, the love of the Father in the gift of his Son, and the power that there is to heal in the lifting up of the eyes to Him of whom the serpent lifted up in the wilderness was the type—come home as not inanimate and abstract speculations in divinity, but living realities bringing life to humanity.\* The whole plan of salvation now assumes a practical and, if one may say so, a personal character. It is not a theory about God; it is God himself interposing to meet the miserable case of man.\* There is still, indeed, a need of definitions and propositions, in setting it forth systematically and defending it against the subtleties of error. These, however, are now framed with a far more direct reference than before to the great and urgent business of the sinner's salvation. What God is in himself, and what God does out of himself, are considered as questions immediately affecting the lapsed state and

possible recovery of the human family; and the particulars of the change effected in and upon the individual man when he is saved, as well as the acts or habits of the spiritual life to which he is called, form the main substance of the dogmatic articles in which the truth is henceforth to be embodied.\*

I am persuaded that a minute comparison of the Reformed Confessions with one another, and with the older Creeds, will fully verify the representation which I have been giving. And the explanation, I am persuaded also, is to be found in the position occupied by the Reformers when they burst the bands of servile subjection to man, and came forth in the liberty with which Christ makes his people free. Religion was then making her escape out of the school, the cloister, and the confessional; and she was making her escape—as her great champion made his escape—not easily and lightly, but through a painful and protracted exercise of soul, amid sin's darkest terrors and the most desperate struggles of the awakened conscience for relief.\* When she began, after the joy of her's first direct dealing with the free grace and full salvation of what we may almost call a rediscovered gospel, to realize herself,—to ascertain and gather up, as by a sort of reflex or reflective process of faith, the attainments and results of her first love,—it was natural, and indeed unavoidable, that she should give prominence to those views of the origin, accomplishment, and application of redemption, which touch the region of the practical and experimental.\* Hence the compilers of her formularies, while they entered thoroughly into the labours of their predecessors, and adopted implicitly the Patristic modes of thought and speech on such subjects as the Trinity and the Incarnation,—thus rendering due homage to the orthodoxy of former generations,—assigned comparatively little space to these mysteries, and dwelt far more largely on those doctrines of saving grace which the earlier creeds scarcely noticed. The Atonement, as the method of reconciliation between God and man, was considered more than before in its connection with the divine purpose appointing it, and the divine power rendering it effectual. Redemption was viewed, not merely as a sort of general influence from above, telling on mankind

collectively and universally; but as a specific plan, contemplating and securing the highest good of "such as should be saved."\* The sovereignty of God, carrying out his eternal decree, in the person and work of Christ, and in the personal work of the Spirit, was the ruling and guiding idea. The rise and progress of evangelical faith, penitence, and love, in the soul of man,—the dealings of God with the individual sinner, and the dealings of the individual believer with God,—formed in large measure the substance of the theology taught in the divinity halls, and defined in the symbolic books, of the Protestant Churches; and gave a distinctive turn to the questions and controversies which arose among them. These, indeed, were almost as apt as the discussions of the early centuries, to degenerate into hard and dry logomachy, or word-fighting.\* Accordingly, as the first fresh evangelical life of the Reformation times decayed, and barren orthodoxy to a large extent took its place in the pulpit and in the chair, a certain cold and callous familiarity in handling the counsels of God and the destinies of men began to prevail,—as if it had been upon a dead body that the analytical dissecting knife was ruthlessly operating;—and this may have contributed to bring the system which took shape in the hands of Calvin into disrepute with sensitive or fastidious minds, acquainted with it only in its hard, dogmatic, logical form, after Calvin's spirit had gone out of it.\* But the system was in its prime of spiritual life and power when nearly all the Reformation Confessions and Catechisms were fashioned in accordance with it. The Westminster Standards, in particular, which were about the last of these compositions, were the product of an agitation as instinct with practical earnestness as it was skilful in controversy and profound in learning. They were elaborated, moreover, in an Assembly in which all the various shades of evangelical opinion were represented, and in which the utmost pains were taken to avoid extreme statements; while the relative bearings of divine revelation and human consciousness were, if not with the formality and ostentation which modern science might desire, yet in fact so carefully weighed and balanced, as to impart a singularly temperate and practical tone to the Calvinism of the creed which it ultimately sanctioned.\* This all intelligent students of the

Westminster Formularies will acknowledge to be one of their most marked characteristics. It is, indeed, the feature which has fitted them for popular use, as well as for being the test and the testimony of a Church's profession; so that they may profitably be read for private, personal edification, as well as erected into a public ecclesiastical bulwark of the truth. Of them especially, as of the Reformed Confessions generally, it may be truly said that they teach divinity in its application to humanity. The "heavenly" mysteries of the Atonement and of Election are brought into contact with what we may venture to call the "earthly" mysteries of conversion and justification,—repentance, faith, and holiness; and all throughout, these heavenly and earthly things are viewed, not with a vague reference to mankind at large, but with a special reference to individuals, as one by one they are to be either lost or saved.

It is not wonderful that out of this way of handling the doctrines of grace, there should arise questions touching the transcendental problems of fate and free will, such as cannot but occasion difficulty and embarrassment in defining these doctrines separately, and still more in adjusting them harmoniously together.\* Inquiries into the exact nature and extent of the Atonement, and into the nature, office, and warrant of faith,—deep-searching as they must necessarily be, and on that account distasteful to those who will accept nothing but what is on the surface,—may thus be seen to be inevitable.\* And thoughtful minds may learn to be more and more reconciled to the prosecution of such inquiries, in proportion as they come practically nearer the stand-point, or point of view, from which—instead of a yoke laying all individual life prostrate at the feet of a general crushing tyranny over the thoughts and feelings of mankind—the emancipated soul welcomed the gospel of the sovereign and free grace of God, as a proclamation to each and every one of the children of men, that "whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Acts 2:21); in terms of the Lord's own comprehensive saying—"All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out" (John 6:37).

## CHAPTER II

### THE WESTMINSTER STANDARDS—RELATION BETWEEN THE ATONEMENT AND FAITH—THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD

THE design of this second preliminary chapter will be best accomplished, as I think, and the point of view in which the subject of the atonement and faith is considered in the present treatise will be best indicated, if I begin with some remarks on the alleged complexity of modern creeds.\* This is often urged as an objection to these creeds, and especially to the Westminster Standards, with reference to the important object of Christian union. The acknowledged harmony of the Reformed Confessions among themselves, is undoubtedly a fact highly favourable to that object. But it is said there is, on the other hand, an unfavourable characteristic common to them all, and at least as marked in those of Westminster as in any others. They are long, prolix, and minute. And this is carried, as it is argued, to such an extreme as to present a serious obstacle to what in these days is felt to be so desirable,—the merging of minor differences in the great essential truths which make all believers one in Christ. I am far from thinking that nothing may or ought to be attempted in the direction of simplifying and shortening the Church formularies now in use.\* But the attempt must always be a difficult and delicate one; and it should never be contemplated without a most reverential and scrupulous regard to the spirit of the Reformation revival which originated them,—nor without an anxious study of the mutual bearings and relations of the parts of the evangelical system among themselves, as well as of the consistency of the system as a whole.\* In this view, the observations

which follow seem to me to be practically of very considerable importance.

The use of human standards generally is alleged to be unfavourable to Christian unity, inasmuch as they embrace so wide a field, and contain such minute statements of doctrine, that it is impossible to expect a hearty and unanimous concurrence in so many various particulars on the part of all true believers. A sufficient answer to the objection may be found, I think, in the consideration that these standards are intended to shut out error; and that in proportion to the consistency and harmony of the truth of God, is the all-pervading subtlety of the error of Satan.\* The truth of God is perfectly harmonious, and is one complete whole; all the parts of it fit into one another, and are mutually dependent upon each other. And as this edifice, thus reared by God, is complete and compact in all its parts, so the subtle influence of Satan is often applied to the undermining of one part of the building, in the knowledge that if he succeed in that, he can scarcely fail to effect the destruction of all the rest.

I might illustrate this policy of the adversary by showing how error, in what at first sight may appear an unimportant detail of Christian theology, affects the whole system, and essentially mars the entire scope and spirit of the gospel.\* It may seem, for instance, that the discussion regarding the precise nature of saving faith is a comparatively unimportant one,—that it is a discussion on which Christian men may afford to differ; and yet an error on this point might easily be shown to affect the doctrines of the Divine sovereignty,—of human depravity,—of the extent and nature of the atonement, and of justification by faith alone.\* I might show, for example, that those who make justifying faith to consist in the belief of the fact that they are themselves pardoned and accepted,—and who maintain, consequently, that in order to his being justified, a man must believe that Christ died personally for him as an individual—are, in consistency, compelled to adopt a mode of statement in regard to the bearing of Christ's death upon all men indiscriminately, and particularly upon the lost, which strikes at the root of the very



idea of personal substitution altogether,\* making it difficult, if not impossible, to hold that Christ actually suffered in the very room and stead of the guilty. According to such a definition or explanation of faith as is given in the Shorter Catechism, in which it is described as "a saving grace, whereby we receive and rest upon Jesus Christ alone for salvation, as he is offered to us in the gospel," it is unnecessary to define the precise relation which the death of Christ has to mankind universally, and its precise bearing on the condition of the finally impenitent and the lost.\* For it must be admitted, I apprehend and maintain, that the death of Christ has a certain reference to all men universally;—such a reference as to impose upon all men universally the obligation to hear and to believe. The offer of salvation through the death of Christ is made, in the gospel, to all men universally. It is an offer most earnest and sincere, as well as most gracious and free on the part of God. But it could scarcely be so, without there being some sort of relation between the death of Christ and every man, even of those that ultimately perish, who is invited, on the credit and warrant of it, to receive the salvation offered. What may be the nature of that relation—what may be the precise bearing of Christ's death on every individual, even of the lost, I presume not to define. My position is—that it is unnecessary to define it. For I do not ask the sinner to believe in the precise definition of that relation respecting himself. Even if the sinner could put into articulate language his theory of the exact bearing of the death of Christ on himself, he would still be an unreconciled sinner, unless he complied with the proposal of reconciliation founded upon it, in terms of the gospel call and gospel assurance, indicated by the apostle: "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.\* For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (2 Cor. 5:20, 21).

Such a view of justifying and saving faith relieves and exempts those who hold it from the necessity of prying too curiously into the relation between Christ's death and impenitent and unbelieving sinners, to whom God has made a free, unconditional, and honest

offer of the blessing of reconciliation. For if we hold that faith is the actual personal closing with God's free and unconditional gift, on the part of the individual sinner, we are not required to state, in the form of a categorical proposition, what is the precise relation between the death of Christ and all mankind. And so we are left free to maintain, that while, in some way unknown to us,—the effect of which, however, is well known, namely, that it lays the foundation for the free offer in the gospel of salvation universally to all men,—Christ's death has a bearing on the condition even of the impenitent and lost; yet, in the strict and proper sense, he was really, truly, and personally, a substitute in the room of the elect, and in the room of the elect only.\*

On the other hand, if I hold the doctrine that faith is the belief of a certain fact concerning Christ's death and my interest in it,—that it is the mere belief of a certain definite proposition, such as that Christ died for me,—I am compelled to make out a proposition concerning Christ's death which shall hold true equally of believers and unbelievers, the reprobate and the saved; which proposition I am to believe, simply as a matter of fact, necessarily true in itself, whether I believe it or not. But how is this to be done? I am to believe that Christ died for me. Then, I must believe that in a sense which shall be true independently of my belief,—in a sense, therefore, which shall be equally true of me whether I am saved or lost. Does not this compel me to make Christ's dying for me, though I should be one of the chosen, amount really to nothing more than what is implied in his dying for the finally reprobate? Accordingly, it is to be observed, that those who take this view of saving faith carefully avoid the use of any language respecting the atonement which would involve the notion of personal substitution. They do not like to speak of Christ being put actually in the room of sinners, considered as personally liable to wrath.\* They use a variety of abstract and impersonal phrases—such as, Christ's dying for sin—his death being a scheme for removing obstacles to pardon, or for manifesting God's character and vindicating his government,—with other expressions, all studiously general and indefinite, and evading the distinct and articulate

statement of Christ having died as a substitute in the actual room and stead of guilty sinners themselves.\*

The illustration now suggested of the intertwining, or interlacing, as it were, of the several parts of the one divine system of truth, might be extended; and it might be shown how the scheme of the sovereign mercy of God—the entire, radical, and helpless corruption of human nature—the utter impotency of man's will—the perfection of God's righteousness—the freeness of God's grace—the simplicity and child-like nature of a holy walk—how all these things are intimately associated together, so that unsoundness in one runs through all. In fact, it may be said of every error, that, if traced to its ultimate source, it will be found to take its rise in a denial of the doctrine which is the leading characteristic of the Westminster Standards—the doctrine of the absolute sovereignty of God.\*

For it is unquestionably this doctrine of the absolute sovereignty of God that in the Westminster, as in the other Reformed and Calvinistic Confessions, rules in every part, and gives consistent unity to the whole.\* It is not, however, as an abstract and speculative notion about God, the result of a lofty attempt to sit, as it were, behind his throne, and scan beforehand (a priori) his eternal plan of government, that this doctrine is thus exalted to pre-eminence; but rather as a truth of practical application, gathered (a posteriori) out of those personal dealings of God with mankind generally, and with individual men, of which it is the one ultimate solution or rationale; suggesting the law or principle common to all of them, and therefore fitted to silence, if not to satisfy, all who reverently accept the divine teaching. It is not as gratifying a theoretical inquisitiveness that it is put forward, but as meeting practically a real case of need.

The question, How is God to treat the guilty?—as an urgent anxiety of the conscience, and not merely a curious speculation of the intellect,—must be ever kept in view, as that which originates the Evangelical theology, and is in fact its starting-point, whatever may be the systematic arrangement adopted in its symbolic books. It is

this very circumstance, indeed, that distinguishes the theological school which I have ventured thus to designate by the term Evangelical, from what may be called the Scholastic or the Orthodox;—that whereas this last, as it might seem, has for its theme chiefly the nature of the Supreme Being and his providence, considered as a sort of theorem to be demonstrated, the other aims from the first, and all throughout, at some tolerable working out of the problem of man's necessity, and the way in which God proposes to deal with it.\* Sin, as the transgression of law,—and that not a law of nature merely, whether physical or spiritual, or both, but a law of government, the authoritative, commanding will of a holy and righteous Ruler;—sin, as an offence or crime to be penally visited in terms of law;—criminality, guilt, demerit, blameworthiness;—judicial condemnation and wrath;—judgment, punishment, vengeance or retribution;—these ideas, together with the sense of personal degradation and pollution, and of the unloveliness as well as the unrighteousness of a godless and selfish spirit, enter deeply into the foundation on which the evangelical divinity rests.\*

It is in the light of these ideas that two all-important inquiries, in particular, present themselves for consideration; the one, as to what God has done and does; the other, as to what man has to do. On the one hand, the atonement, with the sort of treatment of us on the part of God for which it makes provision; and on the other hand, faith, or the response on our part which God's movement toward us calls for; must be viewed as bearing upon what consciousness and Scripture alike attest to be the realities of the sinner's position before God.\* So viewed, they cannot be slurred over or disposed of under any vague generality of expression—any broad, undistinguishing formula—setting forth, for example, some undefined universal expression or exercise of God's holy love, and some undefined universal regeneration of humanity, as if that were all the grace and salvation presented in Christ to the acceptance of sinful men. Somewhat more of definition, even in detail, is craved.\* I desire to know, if it please God in his word to reveal it, as I rejoice to find that it has pleased him to reveal it, what it is that the atonement really does for such a

one as I am—a sinner in the sight of the Holy God—a criminal at the bar of the Righteous Judge? Is it a real judicial transaction, in which an infinitely sufficient Substitute really and actually takes the place of the breakers of God's law, and consents, in their stead, to fulfil the obligations which they have failed, and must ever fail, to fulfil; and to suffer in his own person the penalty of their disobedience, taking upon himself their responsibilities, having their guilt reckoned to his account, and submitting to be so dealt with, in the character and capacity of their representative, as to meet that necessity of punishment which otherwise must have entailed upon them retribution without redress or remedy? Is that the sort of atonement which a gracious God and Father has provided, in the voluntary incarnation, life, and death of his only-begotten and well-beloved Son, for his children who, like me, have rebelled against him? Certainly, I feel at once that it is such as to meet my case.\* But I soon perceive, also, that if that, or anything like that, is a true representation of its nature, the question of its extent is necessarily forced upon me. I cannot help myself. Whether I will or not, I must come up to and face that question, if my notion of the atonement is thus articulate and unequivocal;—as I now see it must be if it is to satisfy either God's justice or the sinner's conscious need. The substitution of the Son of God, in the sense and for the purpose now defined—is it for all men? And if not for all men, then how is it determined for whom it is? Then again, if it shall appear, as I apprehend it must appear, upon reflection, that the very fact of such a substitution precludes the idea of its being designed for any whom it does not save, there are other pressing practical questions which force themselves upon me.\* How am I, in ignorance of its destination,—with no means of discovering or even guessing who they are for whom the Surety and Substitute made atonement,—to arrive at anything like a satisfactory persuasion that I may rely on his having made atonement for me? How am I to regard that universal offer of a free and full salvation, based upon the atonement, which is so unreservedly and earnestly announced in the Gospel? And how am I, on the sole warrant of that universal offer, and with no pointing of it personally to me, to be emboldened, nevertheless, to

appropriate the salvation as really mine? Still further, yet another question may occur to perplex me.\* The sense of my own helpless incapacity and distaste for anything like spiritual life—the feeling of that evil heart of unbelief in me that is ever departing from the living God—may incline me to welcome the thought of a divine agency being put forth to produce in me that state of mind, whatever it may be, which insures my personal interest in Christ, as an atoning Substitute for me.\* But how is such an interposition of the Spirit to fit into the exercise of my own faculties of reasoning and choice? Or what is there, in the assigning of this divine origin to faith, to explain or get over the difficulty of my taking home to myself personally a call addressed equally to all men, in connection with an atonement which, from its very nature, must be limited to those—how many or who they may be I cannot tell—whom he who made it actually and personally, in law and judgment, represented?

These are questions which touch the region of what is practical and experimental in religion; and that not merely in a selfish point of view, or as bearing on one's own peace and happiness and hope, but also, and at least equally, in connection with that mission of evangelical love to which every real Christian feels himself called.\* They are not questions meeting us in any transcendental sphere of ontological speculation, into which an attempt to scan the mysteries of the Divine existence might introduce us. They lie along the path which we have ourselves to tread, and which we would have all our fellow-men to tread with us, that a haven of satisfying rest may be reached—a shelter from the thick clouds of guilt and wrath. It is not, therefore, theoretically, but chiefly in its practical aspects and bearings, that the whole subject to which they relate falls to be considered. Such, at least, is the way of considering it which, as it seems to me, is most needed for earnest minds and in earnest times. And if, in thus considering the subject, we find that our inquiries, when prosecuted by the light which divine discoveries shed upon the darkness of human experience, shut us up at last to a recognition of the unexplained decree and absolute sovereignty of the Most High, as the final resting-place of the tempest-tossed soul; if at every turn,

and in every branch of the investigation, we find that in the last resort we must be fain to content ourselves with the assurance, that He whom we have learned to trust and love as the only wise God, and as our Friend and Father, rules supreme, and that his will, simply as his will, must, for the present, be accepted always as the ultimate reason of all things; the conclusion will be to us, amid the perplexities and apparent anomalies of the reign of grace on earth, as satisfying as it was to Christ himself,—when, contemplating the rejection of his gospel by the proud, and its warm welcome among the poor, he "rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight" (Luke 10:21.)\*

## **CHAPTER III**

### **THE METHOD OF SCRIPTURAL PROOF—CLASSIFICATION AND EXAMINATION OF TEXTS USUALLY ALLEGED AGAINST THE CALVINISTIC DOCTRINE**

I DO not intend to discuss in detail the Scriptural evidence of the doctrine of the atonement, or to attempt anything like a direct, full, and formal exposition of all that Scripture teaches regarding its nature and extent, or regarding the saving faith of which it is the ground and object. Enough of this will, as I trust, be brought out, in dealing with the practical difficulties of the question, whether viewed on the side of God and his free gift of salvation, on the one hand, or viewed on the side of man and his acceptance of that free gift, on the other hand. The statements and indications of the divine word may

thus be best understood when contemplated in their application to the facts and necessities of human experience.\* But it is desirable to clear the way, by indicating at this stage, however imperfectly, the right method of using the Bible as an authority in this whole inquiry. This, accordingly, I shall endeavour to do in the remaining chapters of this first part of my treatise;—not by any means so as to exhaust the subject, but rather with a view to offer hints and suggestive specimens for its further discussion. For it demands some sense and intelligence to handle the divine word, as an umpire in controversy, with the reverence and deference to which its infallibility entitles it. The mere citing of texts on this side, or on that, is but a poor and doubtful compliment.\* Too often has Holy Writ been treated like a stammering or prevaricating rustic in the witness-box, whose sentences and half sentences unscrupulous, brow-beating advocates on either side delight to twist and torture at their pleasure. It is chiefly as a protest against such a mode of dealing, with reference to the questions raised about the atonement, and about faith, that my observations are offered.\* These observations will be directed to the following points:—

In the first place, To indicate the proper classification of texts commonly quoted in this controversy as decisive against the Calvinistic view, and the proper principles of their interpretation when classified.

Secondly, To state generally the method of proof on the other side, as illustrating the fair and legitimate way of gathering intelligently, from various incidental notices and references, as well as from express declarations and formal arguments, what is to be received as, upon the whole, the teaching of Scripture on the subject; and,

Thirdly, To give a particular instance of the direct teaching of Scripture, by the exposition of one passage, in which the harmony of the Old and New Testaments, in asserting the efficacy of an atoning sacrifice, conspicuously appears.



Under the first of these three heads, I shall deal in the present chapter with the texts—most, if not all of them—which are usually alleged in support of the universality of the atonement, or the doctrine that the efficacy of Christ's atoning work, his obedience and death, is co-extensive with the human race; my object being to show that, when rightly classified and interpreted, according to their several contexts, they do not really touch the question at issue, or decide anything the one way or the other, in regard to it.\*

Under the second head, I propose in chapter fourth to show how, not mere isolated texts, but unequivocal doctrinal statements and arguments, require or favour the opposite view of the atonement, making it clear that some of the most important positions of Scripture, relative to the life of God in the soul of man, cannot otherwise be maintained.\*

The third head I devote to giving a specimen, as it were, in chapters fifth and sixth, of what the Old and the New Testaments alike teach as to the actual effect of an atonement, or of an atoning sacrifice offered, accepted, and applied.\* I do so, because, to my mind, the whole stress of the controversy lies in that direction. I am chiefly anxious to fix attention on the inquiry—What is it that the atonement really does, or effects? To this inquiry I regard every other question as subordinate. And, therefore, I would attempt to indicate the line of Scriptural testimony regarding it, before I proceed, in the second part of the treatise, to grapple with the subject in some of its practical bearings, and in the view of some of its practical difficulties.

The word of God is the sole and supreme authority upon all religious questions. "To the law, and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isa. 8:20);—that is the universally applicable watchword of sound theological study.\* It ought especially to be held sacred in its application to topics which, from their very nature, admit and invite a considerable amount of philosophical argument into the discussion of them. The risk of "philosophy, falsely so called," being suffered to

mar the simplicity of a purely Biblical faith, cannot be too scrupulously kept in mind and guarded against. Psychology and metaphysics, as neighbours at least, if not handmaids of divinity, need to be carefully watched. But the jealous dread of human reasoning may become itself an unreasoning prejudice, when it shrinks from anything like a clear and comprehensive view of the logical bearings of such a controversy as that relating to the extent of the atonement; and the appeal to the Bible may come to be according to the sound rather than the sense, and may degenerate into little more than a sort of lip homage, if particular expressions are seized upon, isolated, and appropriated by disputants, apart from those general considerations, of a Scriptural as well as rational authority and weight, on which it may be found, after all, that the settlement of the meaning of these very expressions themselves must, for the most part, largely depend.\*

For it is a great mistake to imagine that to treat a subject scripturally means merely to string together a catalogue or concordance of quotations; or that the mind of the Spirit is to be ascertained, on any matter, by a bare enumeration of some of his sayings with regard to it. His meaning is to be known, as the meaning of any other author is to be known.\* In the case of an ordinary writer of books, especially if he is a man of diversified tastes and talents,—a voluminous writer also, and one of vast compass and variety,—having many different styles for different uses and occasions, and personating by turns many different characters, real or imaginary, whom he makes the vehicles for conveying his sentiments,—we gather his real and ultimate mind on any particular subject, not so much from separate sentences and phrases, culled and collected, perhaps, to serve a purpose, as from an intelligent and comprehensive study of his leading train of thought, with special reference to the scope and tenor of his reasoning on those large and wide views of truth which from time to time occupy and fill his soul.\* Surely when the Divine Spirit is the author with whose very miscellaneous works we have to deal, the same rule of simple justice and fair play ought to be observed. This seems to be what is meant by "the analogy of the

faith;" to which, as a rule or canon of Scriptural interpretation, sound and judicious divines are accustomed to attach considerable value.\* It is substantially the principle sanctioned by the Apostle Peter when he wishes, as it would seem, to guard against a garbled, disjointed, and piecemeal mode of quoting the words of revelation: "No prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation; 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" (2 Peter 1:20, 21).\* He, not they, is virtually the author. And it is not as detached utterances of different persons, but as, in all its varied parts and fragments, the manifold and multifarious work of one person, the Divine Spirit, that the "sure word of prophecy" is to be read and understood.

Unquestionably, the rule, as I have stated it, is a right one. At the same time, it must be frankly admitted that there is danger of excess or of error in the use and application of the rule. It may lead to a habit of dogmatical theorizing, and vague, presumptuous generalizing, on the one hand; or, on the other hand, to a loose exegesis and a careless way of handling and examining texts; or to both of these evils together.\* The appeal must uniformly be sustained as relevant and legitimate when it is demanded that particular passages shall be consulted, as being the real tests or touch-stones by which all general views must be tried. Nor may the natural import and literal force of such passages, taken simply as they stand in the places where they occur, be sacrificed or evaded, out of deference to any system, however apparently Scriptural, or to any foregone conclusion of any sort.\* All that any one is entitled to insist upon is, that general views of truth, if they seem to have a bearing on the interpretation of particular passages, shall not necessarily be kept out of sight in the examination of them; and above all, that when particular passages are alleged as having a bearing upon general views of truth, care shall be taken to ascertain how far the Great Author meant them to be authoritative for the end alleged; or how far he may not rather, on the contrary, have intended them to serve quite another purpose altogether.

It is in strict accordance with these notions, safe enough, surely, and sufficiently honouring to the Bible, that I wish now to enter upon the consideration of those texts, of which there is a considerable number, that are very often brought forward as asserting the universality of the redemption purchased by Christ; and asserting it so expressly and explicitly, in words the most unequivocal, as to preclude all arguments on the other side;\* as when it is said that Christ is "the propitiation" for "the sins of the whole world" (1 John 2:2); or that he "died for all" (2 Cor. 5:14); or that "by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life" (Rom. 5:18); or that Christ must needs "taste death for every man" (Heb. 2:9);—all of which, together with other similar statements, are continually urged as if they were in terms decisive of the question, and as if nothing but a reckless tampering with the language of inspiration could blunt the edge of their testimony. Against so summary a procedure, and on behalf of a more cautious and humble style of criticism, I venture to protest; and in support of my protest, I ask the attention of common readers of the Bible, first to what may be said of the statements now referred to collectively, and then to what may be said of some of them more in detail.

Considering the entire series of texts collectively, or in the mass, I may in the outset avail myself, in a general way, of the judicious observations of Professor Moses Stuart, who, as the closing sentence of the very paragraph I am about to quote sufficiently proves, can scarcely be suspected of any undue leaning to the strict Calvinistic doctrine.\* I refer to the passage for the sake of the general principle it contains. As to the particular text in connection with which he introduces it, I shall presently give my own view of its interpretation; a view which seems to me to exhaust its meaning more fully than that suggested by this eminent commentator. In his Commentary on Heb. 2:9, he thus writes: "Ὑπὲρ πάντων means, all men without distinction—i.e., both Jew and Gentile. The same view is often given of the death of Christ. (See John 3:14–17; 4:42; 12:32. 1 John 2:2; 4:14. 1 Tim. 2:3, 4. Tit 2:11. 2 Pet. 3:9. Compare Rom. 3:29, 30; 10:11–13.) In all these, and the like cases, the words all, and all men,

evidently mean Jew and Gentile. They are opposed to the Jewish idea, that the Messiah was connected appropriately and exclusively with the Jews, and that the blessings of the kingdom were appropriately, if not exclusively, theirs. The sacred writers mean to declare, by such expressions, that Christ died really and truly as well, and as much, for the Gentiles as for the Jews; that there is no difference at all in regard to the privileges of any one who may belong to his kingdom; and that all men, without exception, have equal and free access to it. But the considerate interpreter, who understands the nature of this idiom, will never think of seeking, in expressions of this kind, proof of the final salvation of every individual of the human race. Nor do they, when strictly scanned by the *usus loquendi* of the New Testament, decide directly against the views of those who advocate what is called a particular redemption.\* The question, in all these phrases, evidently respects the offer of salvation, the opportunity to acquire it through a Redeemer; not the actual application of promises, the fulfilment of which is connected only with repentance and faith. But whether such an offer can be made with sincerity to those who are reprobates (and whom the Saviour knows are and will be such), consistently with the grounds which the advocates for particular redemption maintain, is a question for the theologian, rather than the commentator, to discuss."

With this high authority we who hold the Calvinistic doctrine might be satisfied. And when, in the face of it, we find men still reiterating these particular texts, as if the mere sound of the words were to be conclusive, and they had nothing to do but to accumulate "alls" and "everys," taken indiscriminately out of the Bible, very much as children heap up at random a pile of loose stones, without regard to context, or connection, or analogy,—the *usus loquendi* of the New Testament, as Professor Stuart calls it,—we might simply appeal to this testimony of an adversary, as proving, at the very least, that our opponents are not entitled to make such short work of this argument as they are so very much inclined to do.\*

But, for sake of further illustration, I shall take up several of these passages separately. In doing so, I shall make it my first inquiry, in each case, what is the precise point under discussion. For I must here advert to another maxim or principle of interpretation, quite as important as the one which I have been insisting on.\* It is a good general rule, well known, though, alas! not so well observed, among controversialists, as a rule which ought to regulate their discussions of one another's views, and their citations of other parties to bear them witness: That a writer's authority, in any given passage, does not extend beyond the particular topic which he has on hand.\* You may appeal to him as pronouncing a judgment on the matter before him, but not as deciding another question which may not, at the time, have been in his mind at all. Nothing can be fairer, or more necessary, than this maxim; which may be regarded as a fair extension or explanation of the general canon of interpretation already indicated. An earnest and simple-minded man offers his opinion frankly on what is submitted to him, without being careful always to guard and fence himself round on every side, lest some incidental remark or phrase he may happen to let fall, in the warmth and energy of his feeling, on a subject, perhaps, in which he takes a deep interest, should be laid hold of and brought up as the expression of his deliberate judgment on some collateral topic, which, all the while, may have been miles away from his thoughts.\* He relies on your intelligence and honesty—on your good sense and your good faith. If he did not,—if he felt himself bound to be ever qualifying and defining his terms and statements and arguments, lest what he gives you as his mind on one point should be used by you as authority on another,—all the freshness and fairness, the generosity and cordiality, of friendship and friendly converse or correspondence, would be at an end; and stiff and strait-laced ceremony would rule the day.\* This remark pre-eminently applies to the style and manner of Holy Scripture. For there is no one feature of the Spirit's communications to us more signally conspicuous than this, that he always gives himself to one thing at a time. Using as his instruments earnest and simple-minded men, who speak as they are moved by him, the Holy Ghost, identifying himself with each, in turn

of thought and style of writing, and entering into the very mind of the individual whom he inspires, gives forth, through him, a frank and full utterance on each subject as he takes it up, with the same unstudied ease and unsuspecting freedom—often even with the same impetuous rapidity of involved grammar and abrupt rhetoric—with which the writer himself, if left alone, would have poured out his whole soul. Hence the ease with which anomalies and inconsistencies may be raked together, for the use, or abuse, of minute critics who have no mind, and subtle cavillers who have no heart, to understand what the Spirit says, through honest men, to their fellow-men. But "Wisdom is justified of her children." "He that hath ears, let him hear."

The separate passages which I mean to notice may be conveniently brought together in five distinct classes:—

I. Take, in the first place, these two texts, namely, first, that in the Epistle to the Romans: "Therefore, as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation;\* even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men to justification of life" (5:18);—and, secondly, that in the Second Epistle to the Corinthians: "For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again" (5:14, 15).

In the first of these passages (Rom. 5:18) the sole object of the apostle is to explain, or assert, the principle of imputation,—the principle upon which God deals with many as represented by one, or with one as representing many. For this end, he draws a parallel between the imputation of Adam's sin and the imputation of Christ's righteousness. Evidently, however, the whole value of the comparison turns upon the nature of the transaction on either side, not upon its extent. The identity, or agreement, or correspondence, intended to be pointed out, is an identity in respect of principle. To stretch the language used, so as to make it decide the question of

extent, is to represent the apostle as inconsistent with himself in the very matter which he is formally and expressly discussing.\* For what is the principle of imputation, as he lays it down? It implies these two things: first, That a vicarious headship be constituted in one person; and, secondly, That the whole result or consequence of the trial upon which that one person is placed, whether it be success or failure, be actually and in fact communicated and conveyed to all whom he represents. Of this last condition, he is most careful to prove that it was realized in the imputation of Adam's sin; and for this purpose he insists very specially on the universality of death,—its having reigned "even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression" (ver. 14.) But it is a condition which, if insisted on at the other side of the antithesis,—and without it the parallel wholly fails and the doctrine of imputation is gone,—is positively irreconcilable with the notion of a general or universal redemption, except upon the hypothesis of universal salvation. For it is of the very essence of the principle of imputation, according to this parallel, that precisely in the same manner in which the guilt of Adam's sin, with the death which it entailed, did, in point of fact, as well as in law, pass from him to those who were represented by him and identified with him; so, the righteousness of Christ, with the life and salvation which it involves, must be really and actually, in its consequences as well as in its merit, made over to all the parties interested. Hence, if the parallel is pressed, in regard to the extent as well as the nature of the two transactions, life and salvation by Christ must actually be as universal as death by Adam. Thus, if this text be unwisely pressed beyond the purpose which the writer, at the time of writing, had in his view,—in a manner contrary to the rule of sound criticism and sound sense,—it is really not the limitation of Christ's work to his people that will come to be called in question, but the fact of the final condemnation of any of the wicked.

An observation nearly similar may be made in reference to the second of the two passages in this class (2 Cor. 5:14, 15). There, the apostle's theme is the union and identification of believers with Christ in his death and in his life.\* His object is, to remind them that



as Christ's death has become theirs, so also has his life. Hence it is to his purpose to argue thus: First, "If one died for all, then were all dead;" all became dead, or literally, died,—namely, in and with him, through participation in his death. And, secondly, "He died for all, that they which live"—the living—those who through participation of his death become partakers also of his life—"should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them and rose again." Such reasoning is relevant and conclusive for the apostle's object. He thus brings out the principle of imputation,—that whatever befalls the Head must be held to pass, and must actually pass, efficaciously, to all whom he represents; and he connects with it the principle of vital union,—that all thus represented are partakers in all things, in his death and in his life, with the Head. The whole argument in the context depends on these two principles. The question of the extent of the atonement is not once before the writer throughout the whole of his fervid practical appeal, in which he is not dogmatizing, but simply enforcing the high standard of spiritual privilege and duty. The bearing of Christ's death on the unregenerate is not within the scope of his reasoning; and to regard him as giving a decision on that point, instead of urging home its bearing upon believers, is to introduce an element altogether heterogeneous. Not only is the argument thus hopelessly perplexed, but, as in the former case, it is found to tell in favour of the notion of universal salvation rather than anything else; making actual salvation, through the death and life of Christ, co-extensive with death through the sin of Adam. For in that case we must interpret the expression "then were all dead," as referring to this death of all men through Adam's sin. Such, however, is not really in the apostle's view. What he has before him is the death which the "all" for whom Christ died do themselves die, in and with him, when, in virtue of their being united to him, they are "crucified with him" (Gal. 2:20).

II. A second class of texts may embrace the following, namely, first, that in the First Epistle to Timothy: "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time" (2:5, 6);—

secondly, that in the Epistle to Titus: "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men;" or, "The grace of God that bringeth salvation to all men, hath appeared" (2:11, marginal reading);—and thirdly, that in the First Epistle of John: "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world" (2:1, 2).

Of these and the like passages it may be confidently affirmed that the universality asserted in them is plainly a universality of classes, conditions, and characters of men, not of individuals.

Thus, in the first of these three passages (1 Tim. 2:1–6), the apostle is exhorting that prayer be made for all men, kings and rulers as well as subjects. This was a very necessary specification at a time when those in authority, being too often oppressors, might seem to have little claim on Christians for such kindness. Notwithstanding that consideration, the apostle would have intercession offered for kings and rulers; and, in short, for men of all ranks, and all situations and circumstances in the world. It is to enforce this universality of intercessory prayer, in opposition to the idea of excluding or omitting any set of men, even the most undeserving, that he introduces as an argument, first, the universality of the Father's love, who has no respect of persons, but "will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth" (ver. 4); and, secondly, the universality of the Son's mediation, which has regard to men, as such, without excepting any portion of the race; for he "gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time" (ver. 6).

In the second passage, also (Tit. 2:1–11), admitting the marginal reading of the eleventh verse to be preferable—"The grace of God that bringeth salvation to all men hath appeared"—the design of the apostle evidently is to gather and collect together, in one company, those whom he has been distributing into detachments, according to age, sex, office, and station. Aged men; aged women; young women;

young men; Titus, the pastor; servants;—these he has been, in the preceding part of the chapter, directing severally as to their several duties (ver. 2–10). And now, at the eleventh verse, having adverted to the things wherein they are separated from one another, he closes with an appeal to that wherein they agree. For he would have them to remember, and deeply feel, that though their relations in society, with their corresponding trials and obligations, may be, and must be, diversified, calling for different modes of applying the principles and maxims of the Gospel to the practical details of the everyday business of life,—still their position, as believers, is one, and the motive to obedience is one and the same—"the appearing of the grace of God." For that grace "bringeth salvation to all men" alike—however in age, sex, office, or station, they may differ from one another. And it teaches and binds them all alike to a sober, righteous, and godly life, in the hope of the glorious appearing of Him whose saving grace has appeared already;—"For the grace of God that bringeth salvation to all men hath appeared; teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" (ver. 11–13). Such is the argument. The very force and beauty of it as an appeal to the intermediate place, or middle stage, which all believers in common occupy, between the two "appearings," the gracious and the glorious, must be admitted to turn upon these being, as to extent, commensurate. The universality, therefore, of the former, or gracious appearing, must be measured by that of the latter, or glorious appearing: as to which there can be no room for question, since it is "unto them that look for him that he is to appear the second time, without sin, unto salvation" (Heb. 9:28).

In the third text cited as falling under the second class (1 John 2:2), the matter is, if possible, still more plain and certain. Let it be noted that in his first chapter, of which the beginning of the second chapter should form a part,—for there is no pause in the sense till the close of the second verse of the second chapter at the soonest,—the apostle's discrimination of the persons—"we," "you," "they"—is very accurate

and exact. In the beginning of the first chapter, he speaks of what he and his fellow-apostles witnessed of the manifestation of THE LIFE; and at the third verse he takes in those whom he is immediately addressing: "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us;" that is, may have the same fellowship which we have, or be partakers with us in "our fellowship," which "truly is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ" (1:1-3). Thereafter, the apostle associates those to whom he thus writes with himself and his fellow-apostles—the taught with the teachers—and speaks in the first person, as now comprehending both: "If we walk in the light," you and we together, "as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another"—we with him and he with us, or you and we together with him—"and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (ver. 7). Twice, indeed, he briefly keeps up the distinction, when, as a master, he tells them, as his disciples, what he would have them to learn, and what is the great object of his testimony and teaching. First, he says, "These things write I unto you, that your joy may be full" (1:4); and again he adds, "These things write I unto you, that ye sin not" (2:1). As their teacher, he would have them, as his scholars, to apprehend more and more that these two attainments constitute the twofold end of all Christian doctrine and Christian influence;—fulness of joy, on the one hand; and on the other hand, freedom from sin. But the "you" and the "I" or "we," are soon again merged in one, "we." The apostle puts, as, alas! he must put, the possible case of those to whom he writes, with all their knowledge of Christian doctrine and subjection to Christian influence, being tempted to sin. Even you, my little children, notwithstanding your holy faith and heavenly fellowship, are in danger of contracting new guilt, and needing new and fresh forgiveness continually. I cannot, therefore, but make the supposition that you may sin, so long as you are in this present body, and in this present evil world. I dare not hope that you will be altogether sinless. I cannot but anticipate that you may fall into sin. For though you have in you that divine seed of the new life, which, in so far as it abides in you, makes sin impossible (3:9), you are still liable to the lusting of the flesh against the Spirit. I must remind you,

therefore, that you are still apt to sin: not as if I would make allowances or grant indulgences beforehand for sin; but that I may tell you of your constant need of that cleansing blood which has been shed, and exhort you, on the very first instant of your being overtaken in a fault, to flee anew to that fountain, and to flee to it hastily, "lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin" (Heb. 3:13). Therefore, "if any man sin,"—any one—any of you.—But stay. We as well as you may be, and indeed are, in the same predicament. "If any one sin"—any of you, shall I say? Nay, let me correct my phraseology. Let me make common cause with you. Let us apostles and you disciples together own our continual liability to sin. "If any man"—any one—"sin"—any of us—"we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, who is the propitiation for our sins."

Is this merely a plausible paraphrase? Is it not rather really the sense and meaning of the apostle, affectionately pouring out his heart to his "little children?" Then, if so, what can be the meaning of the short, abrupt, but most emphatic allusion to a third party—"and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world?" For the apostle instantly returns to the "we" and the "you," and throughout all the chapter, and indeed throughout all the epistle, keeps to that style and manner of warm epistolary familiarity. What, therefore, can the passing introduction of this seemingly extraneous reference to others imply? What, but that the apostle, with his truly catholic love to all brethren in Christ, calls to mind that others, besides himself and those to whom he writes, may be in the same sad case for which he has been making provision? If any of us sin, we have an advocate with the Father—we know where to find relief—we know how we may be restored, and have our backslidings healed. But this is too good news to be kept to ourselves. Many, too many, of the Lord's people, in all successive ages, may and must need the same comfort and revival. For the admonition, therefore, of all, everywhere, and to the end of time, who may be situated as we—says the apostle of himself, his fellow-apostles, and his little children, all alike,—as we, some of us, or all of us, may be situated—overtaken,

that is, in a fault, fallen from their first love, lapsed into sin—the universal efficacy of this remedy is to be asserted, as available, in such circumstances, not for us only, but for all

Who does not see that, when the text is thus interpreted according to its connection, it cannot possibly be any general or universal reference of the atonement to all mankind, whether believers or not, that is meant? The whole propriety, sense, and force of the passage are gone, and all its sanctifying and comforting unction is evaporated, if it be held to denote anything whatever beyond that special efficacy of Christ's blood and intercession which cleanses the believer's conscience anew from the defilement of backsliding, and delivers his heart afresh from the baseness and bondage of corruption.

III. I bring together, in a third class, the following texts.\* First, that prophecy or warning in the Second Epistle of Peter (2:1): "There shall be false teachers among you, who shall bring in damnable heresies, denying the Lord that bought them." Secondly, that solemn appeal which Paul makes to the Hebrews (10:28, 29): "He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?" Thirdly, Paul's tender exhortation in his First Epistle to the Corinthians (8:10, 11): "For if any man see thee which hast knowledge sit at meat in the idol's temple, shall not the conscience of him which is weak be emboldened to eat those things which are offered to idols; and through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died?" And fourthly, a similar exhortation in his Epistle to the Romans (14:15): "But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably. Destroy not him with thy meat for whom Christ died."

We have here a class of texts in which, being "bought by the Lord;" being "sanctified," or cleansed, "with the blood of the covenant;" being interested in Christ as "dying for them,"—would seem to be represented as consistent with men "bringing upon themselves swift destruction" (2 Pet. 2:1); "dying without mercy," and "falling into the hands of the living God" (Heb. 10:28–31); "perishing," and "being destroyed," through the liberty of others becoming to them a stumbling-block (1 Cor. 8:11, and Rom. 14:15).

Now, it is remarkable that in all these passages, the strong and awful appeals made turn on the interest which God has in the parties referred to, rather than on the interest which they have in him.\* They assert God's prerogative, rather than their privilege. They proceed on the consideration, not of any claim which they have upon God, but of the claim which God has upon them. In this view, what gives to these texts, rightly apprehended, their peculiar point, emphasis, and solemnity, is not the assertion, as a matter of fact (*de facto*), on the part of the persons referred to, of the tie, or the relationship, or the obligation, indicated by the expressions used; but rather the assumption of it, as a matter of right (*de jure*), on the part of God.

Thus, the first two of these texts (2 Peter 2:1, Heb. 10:28, 29) bring out, in stern relief, on a background of bright profession and promise, the black guilt of apostasy, and of the bringing in of damnable heresies. The latter of the two, the solemn warning of Paul, is applicable chiefly to the case of private members of the Church, who, beginning with "forsaking the assembling of themselves together"—growing weary of godly fellowship and society—lapse gradually into "wilful sin," and are in imminent hazard of being finally and fatally hardened. The former, again, the prophetic intimation of Peter, has respect to "teachers" in the Church, whose insidious poison of false doctrine tends to eat away as a canker, first the religion of the people, and then their own. For, alas! how often have ingenious innovators in the faith of the gospel, or in the form of sound words which embodies and expresses it, almost unwittingly unsettled and undermined the principles of others, before they have

begun to feel in their own souls the destructive tendency of their speculations. In both of these instances, the object of the Spirit is to paint, as with a lightning-flash across the thunder-cloud, the perilous position of the individuals who are to be warned; to startle them with a vivid insight into the view which God is entitled to take, and in fact cannot but take, of their aggravated sin; to fill them with salutary alarm, by opening their eyes to a clear foresight of the inevitable ruin which their sin, if persevered in, must entail on them. For everywhere throughout Scripture it is intimated that, whatever assurance believers may have of their final salvation, they are to be as sensitively alive to whatever has even the most remote tendency to a separation from Christ, as if they were every instant in danger of perishing. Assurance, indeed, on any other footing, would be a carnal, and not a spiritual boon; it would be disastrous, instead of being helpful and beneficial to the soul. Hence the apostle's language in that remarkable passage in which he intimates, that he was as jealous over himself, in the article of bodily indulgence, as if he had always in his eye the possibility of intemperance becoming, after all, his snare, and its bitter fruit his fate (1 Cor. 9:27). It is on the same principle that the two texts in question are to be understood. They indicate, on the one hand, what true Christians, whether private members or office-bearers in the Church, must always keep before them, as the inevitable issue of an unsteadfast walk, or of false teaching, should they be seduced into either of these snares. And they indicate also, on the other hand, in what light God must regard their sin and danger, and in what character, considering their profession to him and his right over them, he cannot fail to view and visit them, when he comes to judge. Their sin must fall to be estimated, and their judgment must fall to be determined, by the standard of their Christian name. It is as Christians that they are to be considered as sinning. It is on that footing, as reprobate and apostate Christians, that they are to be condemned.

The other two passages in this class (1 Cor. 8:10, 11, and Rom. 14:15) are warnings to those who, on the strength of their own clearer light and more robust conscience, may be tempted to despise or offend the



weaker members of the Church. Evidently, therefore, these texts point out the light in which the parties addressed are to regard those whom they are in danger of vexing or misleading. They are to regard them as brethren; weak, perhaps, but still brethren; interested in the same Saviour with themselves, but yet, notwithstanding that, not so secure as to be beyond the reach of serious and fatal injury, at the hands of their fellow-Christians. The lesson to the strong is twofold. In the first place, do not look on the weak with contempt, as if their scruples were undeserving of your attention and consideration. They are your brethren still, relying, as you do, on Christ as their only surety; and if they lose their hold of him, having no other reliance on which to fall back. And therefore, secondly, beware lest you should be inclined to plead, in excuse for any use of your liberty that may wound or insnare their consciences, that this is no concern of yours, since, if they are Christ's, he will keep them safe from harm. So far as your conduct toward them is concerned, you are to treat them, even as you are to treat yourselves, with all that delicacy and tenderness which the most precarious and uncertain tenure of grace might prompt. To you, the humble believer, on whose unnecessary fastidiousness you are tempted to look down,—and with whose minute cases and questions of casuistry you are provoked to trifle or to be angry,—is still, with all his weakness, a brother. He is to be treated by you as a brother, for whom, as well as for you, Christ died. Whatever may be his security in the Saviour whom he trusts, that can be no reason for your taking liberties and tampering with the eternal interests of his soul. Beware how you deal with him, lest you should have his blood to answer for. Fix deep in your minds and hearts this solemn thought,—if ever, at any moment, you are inclined to follow your own more liberal opinions, without respect to their influence on him,—that at that very moment, whatever God may think of him, he is to you simply a brother, who, through your knowledge, and by your eating, is placed in extreme danger of perishing and being destroyed for ever.

IV. The fourth class of texts to which I have to advert, consists of such as the following: "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away

the sin of the world!" (John 1:29);—"God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16);—the Samaritans "said unto the woman, Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world" (John 4:42);—"I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me" (John 12:32);—"We have seen, and do testify, that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world" (1 John 4:14).\*

In regard to this series of texts, I am disposed most gladly to admit that in them, as in sundry other places, the universal bearing on mankind at large of the exhibition of the cross and the proclamation of the gospel, is graciously and gloriously attested.\* I might observe, indeed, that in strict accordance with the context and the connection, each of these passages might be shown to coincide, in substance, with those of the class first cited, which assert the indiscriminate applicability of Christ's work, without respect of persons, or distinction of "Jew or Greek, barbarian, Scythian, bond or free." They all, therefore, equally with those of that first class, fall under the general remarks of Professor Moses Stuart, already quoted, as to the right and fair exegetical canon for interpreting such indefinite statements. I cannot but think and feel, however, that they go a little further, or rather, that they touch upon a somewhat different topic. They seem to me to have respect, not to the design and efficacy of the atonement, in its accomplishment and application; nor even, strictly speaking, to its sufficiency; but solely to the discovery which, as a historical transaction, or fact in providence, it is fitted to make of the Divine character generally, and especially of the Divine compassion and benevolence. In that aspect, or point of view, they are to be regarded as giving intimation of the widest possible universality. This is particularly the case in that most blessed statement: "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 I confess I am but little inclined to qualify or explain away the term "world," as here employed. I rather rejoice in this text, as asserting

that the gospel has a gracious aspect to the world, or to mankind as such. "God so loved the world"—that is, the world of mankind, in opposition or contradistinction to angels; he so loved mankind as such, without reference to elect or non-elect, that "he gave his only-begotten Son." The giving of his Son was, and is, a display of good-will towards men,—towards men as such,—towards the human race.

Let it be observed, however, that even here nothing is said about God giving his Son for all. On the contrary, the very terms on which the gift of his Son is described imply a limitation of it to them that believe. On that limitation, indeed, depends the fulness of the blessing conveyed by it. The design of Christ's death is, in fact, in express terms, and very pointedly, restricted to them that believe,—to "whosoever believeth in him." And on that very account, this gift by God of his own Son is amplified, intensified, and stretched out, in regard to the amount of benefit intended to be communicated, so as to make it take in not only escape from perishing, but the possession of everlasting life. It is the gift of his Son with this limited design—namely, that "whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life"—which is represented as being an index and measure of his love to the world at large, or to mankind as such. And it is so, through the manifestation which the cross gives, to all alike and indiscriminately, of what it is in the mind and heart of God to do for a race of guilty sinners. As to any further meaning in that text, it can only be this: that it is a testimony to the priority or precedency of God's love toward man, as going before, and not following from, the mediation and work of Christ. I speak, of course, of the order and nature of causation, not of the order of time; for in the counsels of eternity there can be no comparing of dates. But it is important to adjust the connection of sequence or dependence between the love of God to man and the work of Christ for man, as cause and effect respectively. And one main object of this statement of our Lord undoubtedly is, to represent the Father's good-will to men as the source and origin of the whole scheme of salvation; in opposition to the false and superstitious idea of God's kindness being, as it were, purchased and reluctantly extorted by the interposition of one more

favourable and friendly than himself to our guilty and perishing world.

V. Apart from the four different classes of texts which I have been considering, there is a single passage which seems to stand isolated and alone, and which I take by itself, as forming, in a sense, a fifth class.\* It is that passage in the Epistle to the Hebrews in which Christ is spoken of as "tasting death for every man" (2:9).\*

Now, as to this text, one thing, at least, is very clear. The apostle's train of reasoning in the passage in which it occurs has no reference whatever to the question of the extent of Christ's work, but only to the depth of that humiliation on his part which it implied, and the height of glory for which it prepared the way. In other portions of this very chapter Paul distinctly limits to the elect the whole of our Lord's mediatorial character, office, and ministry; as when he is spoken of as standing in the relation of "captain of their salvation" to the "many sons" whom he is "bringing to glory" (ver. 10); and when he is represented as discharging a brother's office, in his incarnation, suffering, and death, and by his sympathy and saving help, to the "children," the little ones, "whom God has given him" to be "his brethren" (ver. 13–17). In the verses now in question, the apostle is expounding the eighth Psalm, in connection with that high argument for the superiority of Christ over the angels which occupies the first two chapters of his epistle. He regards that psalm as a prediction of the Messiah's exaltation, in human nature, far above the visible glory of the moon-lit and starry heavens; and in particular, he interprets it as announcing also his previous and preliminary abasement. He thus turns the lowly appearance of Jesus in the flesh, which might have been urged as an objection against his divine and heavenly rank, into an article of evidence in its favour. It was in accordance with prophecy that the Messiah should be thus humbled, in the first instance, and should thereafter and thereupon be exalted to glory.

But the apostle does not rest merely on the word of prophecy. He appeals to the very nature and necessity of the case, as requiring that

the Messiah's exaltation should be reached through humiliation,—and through humiliation, moreover, in human nature. If he is to be "crowned with glory and honour," it must, in all propriety, be on account of some previous work, or warfare, or suffering of some sort. It is, in fact, on account of, or "for the suffering of death." In order to such "suffering of death," for which he is to be "crowned with glory and honour," he must "be made" in a low estate; low in comparison with his original dignity and rank. In point of fact, he "is made a little lower than the angels." But why lower than the angels? Because, for the carrying out of the purposes of the grace of God, he is "to taste death for every man."

It is quite manifest that the number of those for whom he is to taste death is an element altogether irrelevant to the scope of the apostle's discourse. It is their nature alone that it is in point and to the purpose to notice. Any reference to the universality of the atonement would, therefore, be here entirely out of place.

But this is not all. A reference, so to speak, to the individuality of the atonement will be found to be most significant. And such a reference this text contains. The assertion is, that Christ must taste death for men; one by one, as it were; individually and personally; bearing the sins of each. This is opposed to the notion of his death, or his work of atonement, having a reference merely to mankind collectively and in the mass. Had it been a work of that sort—a method of vindicating the divine justice, and opening a door of pardon, common to all—it does not appear how it might not have been accomplished by him without his becoming lower than the angels. In the angelic nature itself, it might be conceived possible for him to have effected the adjustment required; and that, too, even by some sort of "suffering of death," leading to his being "crowned with glory and honour." But the work being one of substitution, representation, suretiship, and, in fact, identification—in which he is not to sustain a general relation to the race as a whole, but a very special, particular, and personal relation to men one by one—taking the place of each, and meeting all the obligations, responsibilities, and liabilities of each—the necessity

of his manhood becomes apparent. Had it been a general measure for upholding the divine government, and introducing an indiscriminate amnesty for all, there might have been other ways. But when it was to be "the tasting of death for each," there could be but one way. He must take upon him the very nature of the individuals whom, one by one,—or each one of whom,—he is personally to represent.

There is much meaning to believers, and much ground for mourning on the one hand (Zech. 12:10), and for comfort on the other (Gal. 2:20), in this view of the efficacy of Christ's death being distributed among them; and that not in the way of division, as if each got a part, but, as it were, in the way of multiplication, so that each gets all; and every man of them may as truly realize Christ's tasting death specially and personally for him, as if he had been the only sinner, in whose stead, and on whose behalf Jesus was nailed to the cross.

It will be admitted, I think, that I have selected for classification and examination the strongest rather than the weakest of the texts on which opponents of the Calvinistic system are accustomed to rely.\* And it can scarcely be said that I have dealt with them in a perfunctory or evasive manner. I have simply sought to ascertain in each case what it is that the inspired writer is really speaking about, or aiming at; giving him the benefit of the fair and reasonable presumption, that he is not so illogical as gratuitously to introduce extraneous matter into the very heart of his reasoning or discourse. My exegetical skill may fail me in endeavouring to apply a sound general principle of interpretation to particular passages; but I am entitled, on behalf of Calvinism, to demand that whoever calls that system or its apologists to account, on the ground of these passages, shall intelligently apply to them some sound principle himself.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE METHOD OF SCRIPTURAL PROOF—NATURE OF THE EVIDENCE IN FAVOUR OF THE CALVINISTIC DOCTRINE

IT is not my intention to enlarge on the numerous statements in the word of God which explicitly teach, or by plain and necessary inference involve, the doctrine for which, as Calvinists, we are concerned to contend;\* which may be said to be neither more nor less than this: that for whomsoever Christ died at all, for them he died efficaciously and effectually. These statements must, of course, be submitted to the test of the same general rule which has been used as a criterion in the case of those already quoted; and, indeed, they are all such as court and challenge the trial.\* For there is this general difference between the two sets of texts—those which seem to assert a general, and those which rather point to a restricted and limited, reference in the atoning work of Christ—that while the former easily admit of a clear and consistent interpretation, such as makes them harmonize with the doctrine which, at first sight, they might be supposed to contradict, it is altogether otherwise with the latter. It is only by a process of distortion—by their being made to suffer violence—that they can be so explained away as to become even neutral in the controversy. It is remarkable, accordingly, that the opponents of the Calvinistic view rarely, if ever, apply themselves to the task of showing what fair construction may be put, according to their theory, on the texts usually cited against them.\* They think it enough simply to collect an array of texts which, when uttered in single notes, give a sound similar to that of their own trumpet. We, on our part, undertake to prove that in every instance, the sound, even taken alone, is, at the least, a very uncertain one; and that, when combined and blended with the sounds of other notes in the very same bar or cleff, the result of the harmonized melody is such as to chime in with the strain which we think we find elsewhere; or, in

plain terms, and without a metaphor, that the isolated phrase on which, as a separate utterance, they are apt to rely, does really, when taken in connection with its context, agree far better with our view than with theirs. They, however, are very unwilling to follow a similar mode of dealing with the texts on which we are most inclined to rest the opinion which we maintain. And yet, surely it is as incumbent upon them to explain how the texts on our side are to be interpreted consistently with their views, as it is on us to make a corresponding attempt in regard to the texts which they claim as theirs. This, however, it would be by no means easy to do. For, as regards the passages to which we appeal, it may be confidently affirmed, as I shall endeavour to show, that the assertion of a limited or restricted atonement is by no means in them, what I have proved, I think, that the assertion of a universal redemption would be, if admitted, in the other series of passages which I have been considering,—namely, an excrescence upon the argument in hand, not in point or to the purpose, but intrusive and embarrassing—embarrassing, I of course mean, not to the controversialist, but to the critic, in his exegesis or exposition of the particular verses under review. On the contrary, this assertion of limitation or restriction, as being the characteristic feature of Christ's work, is at the very heart of the passages now to be examined. Not only is it essential to the writer's, or the speaker's, argument or reasoning being such as the occasion requires; it is, in fact, essential to what he says having any meaning at all. This will appear evident, I apprehend, as I proceed now to consider some of the principal passages in which the doctrine of a limited atonement is asserted or implied. These may be conveniently classed according to the several practical ends or objects with which the doctrine stands connected, and to which it is made subservient.

1. The certainty of the salvation of believers is in a remarkable manner bound up in Scripture with the doctrine in question.\* This security of theirs—this certainty of their being saved—may be considered in two lights;—as ordained by God, and as realized by themselves. It is, of course, chiefly in the former point of view that the fact stands immediately connected with Christ's dying for them,



and for them alone; although the connection will be seen to touch also their own experimental realization of the fact. They for whom Christ died cannot perish; and as it is his dying for them that makes their perishing an impossibility, so it is their being enabled to apprehend his dying for them that gives them personal assurance of their perishing being an impossibility.

With this explanation, let some of the Scriptural proofs of the connection now alleged be fairly weighed.

It is very clearly brought out in the tenth chapter of John's Gospel, and that in several ways.\*

Thus, in the first place, it is explicitly declared by Christ himself that he was to die for his people: "I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine.\* As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep" (ver. 14, 15). That this declaration is exclusive—implying that he lays down his life for them alone, without any reference to the world at large—is to be inferred necessarily from the connection in which he introduces it. He is enlarging on the security which his people have in him; and it is as the proof of their security—the only tangible proof which he alleges—that he brings in the appeal to the fact of his dying for them. That, however, would be no proof at all, if others besides his sheep were interested in his death; or, which is the same thing, if any for whom he laid down his life might, after all, perish.

Hence, let it be observed secondly, in a subsequent part of the chapter the Lord expressly gives this as the reason why some believe not, and therefore are lost,—that they are not of his sheep, for whom he lays down his life: "Jesus answered them, I told you, and ye believed not: the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me.\* But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you" (ver. 25, 26). Again, on the other hand, the safety of believers, or the security that they shall never perish, is made to depend on their being his sheep, to whom he gives eternal life: "My

sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand" (ver. 27, 28). Not only so; their safety is further made to depend on their being the sheep whom the Father hath given to him: "My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and none is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand" (ver. 29). Let the connection of the two gifts here indicated be noticed; and let it be noticed also how they stand related to Christ's laying down his life for the sheep. His giving them eternal life follows as a consequence from his laying down his life for them; and that again follows as a consequence from their being given to him by the Father. They are his sheep, given to him, while others are not given to him, by the Father; he lays down his life for them as such; he giveth to them, as such, eternal life. He lays down his life for those whom the Father hath given him; and to those for whom he lays down his life, he giveth eternal life.\* This is that threefold cord, not to be quickly broken, which fastens believers to the Rock of Ages: the Father's gift of a people to the Son to be his sheep; the Son's dying for his sheep thus given to him by the Father; and his giving to them, as the fruit of his dying for them, eternal life. But unless all the three lines in this cord are of equal extent, it cannot hold fast—it must yield, or warp, or break. Nor, on any supposition of a wider purpose in the death of the Son than in the gift which the Father makes to him of a chosen number to be his sheep, is there any value in the assurance with which the Lord rivets the cord of saving grace to the eternal throne: "I and my Father are one" (ver. 30). For though it is undeniable that oneness of nature between the Father and the Son is involved in that great saying,—which, but for that oneness of nature, would be high presumption in the mouth of any teacher, and poor comfort for his scholars,—still it is with a very special reference to the oneness of counsel between himself as giving eternal life to those for whom he lays down his life, and the Father as giving them to him, that the Lord says so emphatically, "I and my Father are one."

2. The connection now asserted is clearly indicated in the closing verses of the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, in which the Father's

faithfulness is represented as being pledged in covenant to the Son for the success, if one may so say, of his undertaking as Redeemer.\* In these verses the Divine promise to the Messiah,\* that "he shall see his seed," is specially represented as turning upon "his soul being made an offering for sin." It is said of him that "he bare the sin of many," when "he poured out his soul unto death." And that the "many" whose "sin he bare" are identical with that "seed" of his which he is to "see," is as clearly to be gathered from the whole strain of the passage, as that the "many" whom, as "the righteous servant of God," he is to "justify, through the knowledge of himself," are identical with those "whose iniquities he is to bear."

As regards the interpretation of this whole passage, I own it seems amazing that any can read that single marvellous and momentous clause: "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied"—knowing what "the travail of his soul" means, and believing it to have been his really taking upon himself the guilt, and enduring the curse, of a broken law—and yet admit it to be possible that any for whom he can be said, in any sense, to have died on the cross should, after all, perish for ever. Was his soul in travail for any of the lost? Was it in travail for any who are not given to him to be his seed? Would this have been consistent with his seeing the fruit of that travail of his soul, so as to be satisfied?—adequately satisfied, according to the measure of the Father's satisfaction in him? "He shall see his seed;" "he shall see of the travail of his soul." The two things go together. The "pouring out of his soul unto the death" is, as it were, the very birth-pang, through which the relation of his people to himself, as "his seed," is constituted, and his life is communicated to them. His anguish is their quickening. So "seeing his seed,"—seeing them begotten, as it were, through "the travail of his soul,"—he is to be "satisfied." Can anything be clearer than this identification? His seed are they for whom his soul travailed; and all for whom his soul travailed are his seed; so called, as being the recompense and result of his agony—the purchase of his pain—the fruit of the grievous labour of his spirit on their account.

Nor does the view here indicated turn upon the precise meaning of the word rendered "travail," as if it denoted the pang of child-birth, any more than does the meaning of that other expression which the Apostle Paul uses, when, claiming such a tender interest in his converts as a mother has in those whose birth has cost her sorrow (John 16:21), he thus affectionately appeals to them: "My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you" (Gal. 4:19).<sup>\*</sup> It may be allowed that the term here employed by Isaiah means grief and labour generally. Still, this sorrow of Messiah's soul, of which he is to see a satisfying issue, stands connected with his "seeing his seed;" and still, therefore, it would appear that they for whom this sorrow is endured must be identified with his seed; and that they are his seed, because his agony of soul, endured on their behalf, is the very cause of their life.

3. In the sixth chapter of the Gospel by John, we may conceive of our Lord as appealing, almost in express terms, to that very promise of the everlasting covenant to which Isaiah refers, as a guarantee that the Messiah shall not live and die in vain: "He shall see his seed; he shall see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied."<sup>\*</sup> The Man of Sorrows virtually pleads that promise as his ground of confidence and comfort, amid his "endurance of the contradiction of sinners against himself." And, on that ground, we find him asserting very strongly the impossibility of any of his people being lost.

He is speaking to the unbelieving Jews;<sup>\*</sup> and, taking a high tone of sovereign authority, he exposes, with withering severity, the impotency of their unbelief. They were apt to regard him as, in some sort, a candidate for their favour; as if he were presenting himself to their choice, and soliciting their suffrages, like one dependent upon them, and standing at their mercy,—a view which sinners are still too generally apt to take of Him with whom, in the gift and offer of himself and his salvation, they have to do. The Lord gives no countenance to such trifling and dallying with his paramount claims, and his peremptory commands and calls. Let not these unbelievers imagine that he has need of them, or that they can either benefit or

injure him. They may reject, they may oppose, they may persecute his person and his cause; but they hurt only themselves. His triumph is certain, whatever they may do; he is sure of having followers and friends enough. Such, in substance, is his remonstrance, and exhortation addressed to unbelievers in the thirty-sixth and following verses; and such the assurance which he has, that, notwithstanding their unbelief, "he shall see his seed."

In further support of that assurance, he first cites the Father's deed of gift, as the ultimate source of his security on this head,—as making it infallibly certain,\* both that "all that the Father giveth him shall come unto him," and also, that "whosoever cometh to him he will in no wise cast out" (ver. 37). And then he goes on to explain, with special and exclusive reference to them, the precise meaning of those general statements respecting himself which so much scandalized the Jews. This he does in such statements as these: "The bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven and giveth life unto the world" (ver. 33);—"I am that bread of life" (ver. 48);—"I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread he shall live for ever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world" (ver. 51). Do these announcements convey the impression of his death having a wide and general reference to all mankind indiscriminately? Are we to understand what he says about his coming down from heaven to "give life unto the world," and his "giving his flesh for the life of the world," as pointing to a universal atonement? Where, then, so far as his own confidence was concerned, would he have any security that his death might not be in vain? In the decree of the Father, it may be replied, and his deed of gift, promising to his Son a chosen seed. True, he is to "give his flesh for the life of the world;" and if that expression is to be pressed as proving the universality of his atonement, many of those for whom he died are to be lost—many "see him, and believe not" (ver. 36). Still, it is certain that some will take advantage of the general provision of grace; for "all that the Father giveth him shall come to him." Such is the view which is sometimes given. But it is only one-half of what satisfies Christ. Their coming to him is made

sure by the sovereign will of the Father; and so also is his not casting them out, but receiving them in order to give them life. That, however, he can do only by giving his life for them.\* "I came down from heaven," he says, "not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day" (ver. 38–40). It is the will of the Father that they whom he has given me should come to me. It is the will of the Father also that I should in no wise cast them out; that I should lose none of them; that every one of them, in me, should have everlasting life; and that I should "raise him up at the last day." And this will of the Father, under which both their coming to me, and my receiving them and giving them life, fall—and by which both are rendered certain—is not merely his will of good pleasure, or what he desires, but his will of decree, or what he determines. That Christ came to give life to the world, as such—the world of mankind, without respect of persons, Gentiles as well as Jews—is a declaration similar to those other announcements: "He came to seek and to save the lost"—"he is the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world;" and, like them, it is full of encouragement to sinners of all descriptions and of all degrees.\* Were it left on that footing, however, there would seem to be an element of indistinctness and precariousness introduced into the transaction. But the certainty of his work being effectual is infallibly secured, by there being a people given to him by the Father, and by his "giving his flesh" as "the living bread" being a service or sacrifice restricted to them; since now, whatever others do, they are sure to come; and coming, they are sure of being received by him and having life in him.

I may observe, in leaving this passage, that it bears very closely on that personal and practical point of view in which the doctrine of the certainty or security of the salvation of Christ's people is to be considered as most important; its being not merely ordained by God,

but capable of being realized by themselves.\* This the Lord presses as a strong inducement to sinners to come to him; assuring them, that coming unto him, they never can be, in any wise, cast out—they shall be, and must be, infallibly safe. And what constitutes their security? Is it not the will of the Father specially ordaining for them, and therefore restricting to them, the life-giving work of the Son?

4. As bearing upon the same personal and practical point of view, I might refer to other portions of Scripture in which the atoning death of Christ is represented as securing the salvation of his people. For indeed, in every instance in which they are called upon to realize their security at all, it is upon the footing of his dying for them, and in respect of the exclusive reference which his work of propitiation has to them.

On this footing the Lord himself places the matter in his farewell intercessory prayer, as recorded in the seventeenth chapter of John's Gospel.\* Nothing, one would think, can well be clearer, to an earnest student of that prayer, than this, that it proceeds throughout upon the idea of the limitation of the entire work of Christ to the people given to him by the Father. Of the design of his interposing as mediator at all, he intimates that it is with a view to his "giving life to as many as the Father hath given him:" "Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee: as thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him" (ver. 1, 2). When speaking of his "obedience unto death," or "the work given him to do," which he "finished" ere he left the world, and by which he "manifested the Father's name," he expressly restricts it all to "the men which the Father gave him out of the world:" "I have glorified thee on the earth; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word" (ver. 4, 6). And of his ministry of intercession, which he began on earth, and now prosecutes in heaven, he speaks, if possible, still more explicitly: "I pray for them; I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast

given me; for they are thine. And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them" (ver. 9, 10).

The intercession of Christ, it is to be remembered, is inseparably connected with his work of atonement—that work being the very ground or substance of it, the most essential ingredient in it.\* For his intercession is not a mere ministry of persuasive pleading, making a merit, as it were, of his atonement. It is the actual presenting of the atonement itself before God his Father. This consideration alone might of itself suffice to prove that these two works of Christ, his work of intercession and his work of atonement, must be co-extensive; since it is plain that, if he intercede for some only of those for whom he died, he must have some additional plea to urge on their behalf, beyond the efficacy of his death. "I pray for them: for they are thine." That, and that alone, is the reason why I take so deep an interest in them—that is the reason why I lay down my life for them, and intercede for them. They are dear to me, because they are thine: "all mine are thine, and thine are mine" Yes, though many of them, "not knowing what they do," will be found among the number of my persecutors and murderers, yet, even when they are nailing me on the cross, I will pray for them,—for whom, as well as by whom, my blood is poured out,—"Father, forgive them."

Thus Christ unequivocally restricts and limits his own work of obedience, atonement, and intercession, to those whom the Father hath given him. And it is upon his work, as thus limited and restricted, that he establishes their perfect security in him, and would have them to realize it, in terms of his loving commendation of them to his Father and their Father, his God and their God: "And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee.\* Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are" (ver. 11).

5. In exact accordance with this prayer of the Lord, we find the Apostle Paul resting the assurance of believers on the death of Christ, as that which, by its own exclusive efficacy, secures their salvation.



Take, for example, the argument a fortiori in the fifth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans: "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.\* Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son; much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life" (ver. 8–10). Are not believers here taught to connect the certainty of their ultimate salvation with the atoning death of Christ as that which of itself, and by its very nature, makes their ultimate salvation certain to all for whom he died? The reasoning in the close of the eighth chapter is equally conclusive: "It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.\* Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" (ver. 34, 35). And in the fourth chapter (ver. 16) the assurance of the promise, or its "being sure," which is declared to be the very end or design of its being "of faith," and "by grace,"—or gratuitous and free,—is very pointedly connected with its being limited to "all the seed."\*

In these, and various other passages, it is uniformly implied, that to have an interest in Christ, in the sense of being among the number of those for whom he died, secures, infallibly, everlasting salvation. And this is what every anxious and inquiring soul longs to have.\* I may be in difficulty as to my warrant to appropriate Christ as dying for me. I may have difficulty also as to the evidence of my having rightly and warrantably done so. But these are my only difficulties,—the one in the direct, the other in the reflex, act of faith. To separate between the proposition, "He gave himself for me," and the proposition, "I am safe for eternity,"—whatever hesitation I may have in timidly apprehending, and scarcely venturing hopefully to realize, that first proposition, "He gave himself for me,"—would be to cut off the very bridge by which, as a prisoner of hope, I can ever dream of reaching the stronghold to which I would flee for my life. And it would be fatal to the life for which I flee to Christ. For what is that life but this: "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the

faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Gal. 2:20).

Having dwelt at such length on the certainty of the salvation of believers, as being so connected in Scripture with the atonement of Christ as necessarily to imply a limitation or restriction of its virtue to them,—all their certainty of salvation being based on the fact that Christ died for them,—I must pass more lightly over certain other features or characteristics of salvation which, equally with its certainty, shut us up to the same conclusion. This I the rather do, since the remarks already made may easily be applied to the illustrations or examples which I have yet to give of the mode of proof, on this whole subject, for which those who hold the Calvinistic view usually contend.

II. The completeness as well as the certainty of the salvation of Christ's people is, in many passages of Scripture, remarkably bound up with statements and reasonings implying a limitation to them of his purchased redemption. Here I might quote again some of the passages already commented on, such as the tenth and the sixth chapters of John's Gospel, in which the fulness of the provision made for Christ's sheep, or for those given to him by the Father, is connected, not less clearly than the security of their position, with his dying for them.\* But there are other passages which set before us this connection in a variety of striking and affecting practical points of view.

1. Thus there are texts which represent the death of Christ as the highest conceivable instance of his love, and of the Father's; and in which, on that ground, a general argument from the greater to the less (a fortiori) is based upon his death, as to the nature and amount of the good which his believing people may expect at his hands, or through his mediation.\*

In the fifteenth chapter of John the Lord is dwelling on the abundance of fruit which he would have his disciples to bring forth

(ver. 5); on the fulness of joy of which he would have them to be partakers (ver. 11); on the large desires in prayer which he is ready to satisfy (ver. 7); and on the copious stream of mutual love which he would have to flow from himself through all their hearts (ver. 9, 10).\* And, to sum up the whole,—to convince them that there could be nothing, in the way of attainment or of enjoyment, too high for them to aspire after,—he appeals to his dying for them, as explaining all and justifying all: "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you" (ver. 13, 14). The whole force of this motive to enlargement of expectation is gone, if his death be not the pledge of his special love to his friends. If no greater proof of love can be given than his laying down his life, and if it be not for his friends exclusively, but indiscriminately and universally for the whole world, that he does lay down his life, what has he in reserve to demonstrate his affection for his people? Can he, on that supposition, give them any proof of love greater than he gives the world? And what then becomes of the previous argument, founded on his dying for them as the evidence of his love to them, and meant to convince them that in him who had so loved them they may well hope to be, as to all the elements of holiness and happiness, perfect and complete?

The same view is supported by the reasoning of the Apostle Paul, in the beginning of the fifth chapter of his Epistle to the Romans (ver. 1–11); and in his argument a fortiori, in the eighth chapter: "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" (ver. 32). In both of these passages Paul represents believers as arguing, from the mere fact of Christ's dying for them, that they may claim and challenge all the abundant blessings of grace and salvation. This they could never do if his death was a propitiation or atonement in which they had simply a common interest with mankind at large, including the reprobate and lost. They might, in that case, reason from the Spirit's work in them, making them Christ's, but scarcely, as they do, from the mere fact of Christ's dying for them.

The statement of our Lord, however, as I have quoted it, is still more precise. It is a clear assertion that he laid down his life for his friends. And that this must mean that he laid it down for them exclusively, is apparent from the view which he teaches them to take of his death, as the strongest possible evidence of his love; as well as from the use which he would have them to make of it, as warranting unlimited aspirations of holy ambition, in regard to all that constitutes the life and fellowship of the children of God.

2. Not only generally is the death of Christ, as the highest proof and instance of divine love, represented as in itself securing the completeness of his people's salvation, but more particularly the several elements or ingredients of their salvation,\*—or of the blessedness in which it consists,—are so connected with Christ's dying for them, as to preclude the possibility of that event being regarded in any other light than as a special atonement for their sins exclusively, and as purchasing, by its own intrinsic efficacy, for them, and for them alone, "all things that pertain unto life and godliness" (2 Peter 1:3).

The gift of the Holy Spirit, for example, of which they are made partakers, is so bound up with the atoning work of Christ as to convey the irresistible impression that they must be of the same extent.\* I do not here refer to those movements of the Spirit of God, "striving with men" (Gen. 6:3), which form part of the dispensation of forbearance,—the economy of long-suffering on the part of God,—under which, for a season, man is placed (2 Peter 3:9). The relation between that dispensation or economy and the atonement will be afterwards considered. I point at present to the gift of the Holy Spirit which is confessedly peculiar to those who are actually saved,—his being given for the purposes of conversion, and sanctification, and comfort, as the Spirit of regeneration and the Spirit of adoption. The Spirit is spoken of as being given, in that sense, to the people of Christ, in immediate and intimate connection with his death, and as the proper fruit of it. So the Evangelist John puts the matter in the seventh chapter of his Gospel.\* He is commenting on the Lord's

saying, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." Upon that saying John observes, "But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified" (John 7:37–39). To the same effect the Lord himself, in his farewell discourse, as recorded in John's Gospel, declares, "It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you" (John 16:7).<sup>\*</sup> In both of these passages the atoning death of Christ is set forth as the procuring cause of the gift of the Holy Spirit to his disciples; for it is simply as the consequence or fruit of his atoning death,—and as the token and proof of its being sufficient and of its being accepted,—that his being "glorified," or his "going away" and "departing," has anything to do with his giving or sending the Spirit. In both passages, therefore, his atoning death and the gift of the Holy Spirit are indissolubly bound up together as cause and effect. Whoever is interested in the one must, one would think, according to the fair meaning of these passages, be interested also in the other. But the gift of the Spirit that is intended is not any general influence, common to all alike, whether lost or saved. It is his being given and received according to the full measure of the utmost plenitude of grace and joy of which saints on earth are capable. It is his indwelling in them so richly as to turn their inner man into a fountain of water,—a source or spring even of rivers of living water. It is his coming, not merely to "convince" or "reprove" the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment," so that the witnesses for the truth shall find an accompanying testimony of the Spirit going along with their testimony in the consciences of men generally; but "to guide themselves into all truth," and "to take of all that is Christ's,"—all the Father's fulness that is Christ's,—and show it unto them" (John 16:8–15). That being the sort of gift of the Spirit indicated in the Lord's gracious words to his own people—and it being so manifestly identified, as one might say, with his being "glorified," and "departing," upon the completion and acceptance of his atoning work in his death,—I can scarcely see how it is possible to appropriate the

blessedness of these comprehensive promises on any other footing than this—that they are sure to all for whom Christ died.

The same conclusion, I apprehend, may be fairly drawn from what the Apostle Peter says in explanation of the miracle of the day of Pentecost, and the saving effusion of the Holy Spirit of which it was the sign, when, having charged the people with the sin of "crucifying the Lord of glory," he adds: "This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses; therefore, being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the gift of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear" (Acts 2:33).

In truth, I might gather together all that is written in Scripture of the presence and power of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of believers, whether as shutting them up into Christ, or as renewing their nature after his image, or as sealing their acceptance in him, or as witnessing their adoption in and with him, or as the earnest of the glory which he is to share with them; and I might ask if the humble and earnest soul, in reading anything of what is written, as to any of the high privileges and hopes which the gift of the Spirit thus involves, ever once dreams of separating them in idea from the atoning death of his loving Saviour; ever once imagines that they are not the direct and proper effect of his death; or can so much as conceive of his not being in a position to secure, and not actually, in point of fact, securing, one and all of these inestimable benefits of the Spirit, to one and all of those whom he represented on the cross? There may not always be an explicit doctrinal recognition of the coincidence, in respect of design, and efficacy, and extent, between this gift of the Spirit and the atoning death of Christ; but it is by grasping and holding fast Christ as loving me and giving himself for me, that I grasp and hold fast the promise of the Holy Spirit as personal to myself. Practically and experimentally, the joy of the Holy Ghost is to me unattainable, excepting through the exercise of a faith which virtually and really welds together in one the dying of the Lord Jesus and the coming of the Holy Ghost. To all for whom Christ died, the Holy Spirit, in his saving power, is given. That is the sum

and substance of Scriptural truth in regard to this point on which my faith fastens, when, embracing Christ Jesus my Lord as dying for me, I seek to realize the blessed fact of the Spirit of my Lord dwelling in me.

III. The atoning death of Christ is often spoken of in Scripture in connection with the duties, obligations, and responsibilities of his people, in such a manner as necessarily to imply its restriction or limitation to them.\* Two passages, from among many, may be selected which will sufficiently illustrate and confirm this branch of the argument.

1. The first is that remarkable passage in which, writing to the Ephesians, the Apostle Paul compares the marriage tie to that which binds Christ and his Church in one (Eph. 5:23–33).\* In the course of his reasoning on this topic the apostle asserts expressly, and in terms, that Christ "gave himself for the Church" (ver. 25). The bare assertion of that proposition by an inspired writer, in words so unequivocal, might be held sufficient to prove its truth, even if it were only on this one occasion that we found it so clearly and categorically expressed.\* There can be no doubt as to what we are to understand by "the Church." This is made clear when the object which Christ had in view is declared to be, "that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word; that he might present it to himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy, and without blemish" (ver. 26, 27). For the Church thus defined, and identified beyond question with the multitude of those who are to be ultimately saved, Christ gave himself; for the Church distinctively; for the Church alone. Words can scarcely be plainer than those in which the proposition is affirmed, "He gave himself for the Church." But I do not rely upon an isolated proposition, however articulate and unequivocal it may seem to be. I take it in the connection in which it is introduced, for the purpose of enforcing a practical duty—the duty of conjugal affection. The atoning death of Christ, his giving himself for the Church, is cited as the proof and pledge of that special love of

Christ to the Church—special in kind as well as in amount—which is to be the model of a Christian man's love to his bride and spouse: "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ loved the Church, and gave himself for it" (ver. 25). The appeal, I maintain, is unmeaning, frivolous, and irrelevant, if Christ is to be held as having given himself for any besides the Church which he is to "present," to betroth and marry, "to himself, as a glorious Church, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing." Upon any such understanding, his having given himself, in his atoning death, is no evidence of his special and fond regard for the Church, which is his bride and spouse. It can be evidence of nothing more than his general good-will towards mankind at large. That, however, is not surely the type of the peculiar love which husbands owe to their wives. The exhortation is emasculated—its whole pith is gone—if it be any other love than that which Christ has for his own (John 13:1), that the apostle brings forward as the motive and the measure of the conjugal love which he is enjoining upon believing husbands. And of that love, his giving himself for the Church is no evidence or instance at all, unless his doing so is peculiar to the Church, and to the Church alone.

2. The other passage is, if possible, still more conclusive. In it the limitation or restriction of the atonement is brought out, not in connection with a relation and obligation of ordinary civil life and fellowship, but in connection with a tie more directly sacred, and a duty strictly spiritual and ecclesiastical. In Paul's affectionate farewell address to the elders or presbyters of the Ephesian Church, whom he had invited to meet him at Miletus (Acts 20:17–38), he reminds them, in the most touching and emphatic terms, of what was incumbent upon them as being pastors as well as rulers in the congregation.\* After a very solemn assertion of his own faithfulness as a preacher and minister among the Ephesians, in witness of which he appeals not only to God and his own conscience, but to the elders themselves to whom he is speaking,—“I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men; for I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God” (ver. 26, 27),—he exhorts them by his own example to the like faithfulness: “Take heed



therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the Church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood" (ver. 28). It is immaterial, for my present purpose, whether the Church is called here the Church of God or the Church of Christ. The reading which would substitute "Christ," or "the Lord," for "God," wants manuscript authority, and has too much of the appearance of an alteration introduced to evade the argument for our Lord's supreme divinity, which the verse, as it stands in the received text, suggests. As regards the point now at issue, however, the meaning is, according to either reading, plain enough. The apostle enforces his exhortation to the Ephesian elders to "take heed to all the flock," and to "feed the Church of God," by two considerations; the one taken from their peculiar relation to the flock, as having been made its overseers, or bishops, by the Holy Ghost; and the other founded on God's own relation to the Church, as having bought it, or purchased it, with blood—the blood of atonement—the bloody and atoning death of the cross. Surely the elders are here taught to ascribe a very peculiar sacredness, involving a very peculiar responsibility on their part, to the flock over which the Holy Ghost has made them overseers, for this very peculiar and special reason,—because, in taking heed to it, they are called to feed those to whom the Lord himself attaches a very peculiar importance and preciousness, as being his own dearly bought Church. If the atonement is of universal extent,—if the blood of Christ was shed for all mankind,—if in consequence all mankind, being included within the atonement, are purchased by God with that blood,—if, in short, the transaction indicated by the purchase is a transaction common to all the race, and not peculiar to a peculiar seed, on whose behalf the Lord has a peculiar purpose of saving grace;—I cannot see how the apostle could refer to it as investing with any peculiar sacredness and value the Church which pastors have to feed, or as imparting any peculiar delicacy to the office which they have to execute, as if it implied the handling, or dealing with, the Lord's peculiar treasure.

IV. Apart from particular passages in which the limitation of Christ's death is either explicitly asserted or necessarily implied, according to the fair construction of the Spirit's meaning, I may refer, in closing this section, to a large family of texts, in which the position assigned to believers, with reference alike to their present attainments and their future prospects, is so described as to require that they—and they exclusively—shall be held to be the body for whom Christ died.\* I need not speak again of their being "his friends for whom he laid down his life" (John 15:13)—"his sheep for whom he laid down his life" (John 10:15). Nor need I dwell on the ground for an irresistible argument a fortiori which the apostle finds in the bare fact of Christ having died for us while we were yet sinners; that fact being of itself considered as warranting the largest expectations of good: "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him" (Rom. 5:6–9). Paul is evidently speaking of himself and of those to whom he writes as believers. We were once "without strength," "ungodly," "sinners,"—chargeable with the guilt, and lying under the doom, of sin. We are now "justified." We are encouraged to look for more than present justification as sure to come to us through the same channel through which our justification itself comes to us. And it is Christ's dying for us, and that alone, which is held out to us as the ground or warrant of our hope. It could scarcely be so, in any fair, or valid, or satisfactory sense, if his dying for us was not something peculiar to us, as his people,—if it was a dying, or death, for all mankind in common.

How often are the believing people of Christ described and addressed by such terms as the following: "Bought with a price" (1 Cor. 6:20),—"Redeemed with his precious blood" (1 Peter 1:18, 19),—"His purchased possession" (Eph. 1:14),—"His peculiar" or purchased "people" (Titus 2:14).\* Expressions like these connect the death of Christ with them;—and not with them viewed as a part of the human

family, sharing a benefit common to the whole; but with them as distinguished from the human family as a whole,—with them considered separately and by themselves,—with them, and those of like faith with them, specially and strictly,—with them alone.

This way of speaking of them, and appealing to them, seems to me, I own, to be altogether inexplicable on the supposition of Christ's death being an atonement for the sins of men generally and universally. Upon that supposition, it is not simply on account of his dying for them that they can be said to be "bought," or "purchased," or "redeemed," in any sense that can distinguish them from others,—from mankind at large. It must be on account of something else,—something additional, at least, if not something quite different—that they are thus distinctively spoken of and appealed to. It is not simply Christ's death that can furnish the ground and substance of these representations concerning them. His dying for them is not the real explanation and reason of the very peculiar character and standing assigned to them;—it cannot be so, if it is regarded as including all mankind as well as them. It must be some cause, or consideration, over and above Christ's dying for them, that accounts for their relation to him being such as to constitute them his "bought," or "purchased," or "redeemed" people. But nothing of that sort is in the remotest way hinted at in the numerous passages in which that relation is asserted or assumed; nothing of that sort is admissible in any of them. The relation, with all its sacred solemnity of obligation and responsibility, rests wholly and entirely on the fact of Christ's dying for them. It is that fact which of itself alone constitutes the relation. They are his bought, purchased, redeemed people, for this, and for no other reason whatever,—because he has died for them. They, and their fellow-believers, from the beginning to the end of time, are the "many," for whom, as he himself says, and not for all, he came "to give his life a ransom" (Mark 10:45). They belong to him because, dying for them, he has bought them.

The privileges and hopes, as well as the duties, of which the relation of ownership, or ownedness, thus constituted, is represented as the

source and foundation, are of such a kind and character as to confirm the view now given.\* The preciousness of his people to him, and his preciousness to them, are alike bound up with his dying for them, and, by his dying for them, purchasing them to be his own. As purchased by him, and by right of his dying for them belonging to him,—being his property, bought with a price,—he receives for them and bestows upon them the Holy Spirit, for their conversion and sanctification, and for his sealing of them, as his purchased possession, until their redemption is complete (Eph. 1:3–13). As thus purchased by him, he claims for them exemption from all other lordship or dominion, that he alone may be their Lord: "Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants of men" (1 Cor. 7:23). Many of the most pathetic representations in the Old Testament, respecting Jehovah's interest in Israel, and Israel's interest in Jehovah, derive their full significance from the unfolding, in the New Testament, of the relation of property, founded upon his dying for them, in which not all Israel after the flesh, but the true Israel according to the Spirit, stand to Jehovah-Jesus. The language of penitential grief put, by prophetic anticipation, into the mouth of the Church, implies that, as redeemed and bought by him, she claims him, in his death, as her own: "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" (Isa. 53:5).\* And if we pass from the present scene of trial to the future world of blessedness and glory, how unmeaning, upon any theory of a universal atonement, does the song of the countless multitude before the throne become! For the burden of that song is the Lamb's right of property in them, as bought by himself, and for himself, with a price: "Thou hast redeemed us,"—thou hast purchased us, "with thy blood" (Rev. 5:9). Is it their being redeemed or purchased by his blood in common with all mankind everywhere that they thus gratefully acknowledge? Let them give the reply themselves: Thou hast purchased us to God—"Thou hast redeemed us to God, by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation."\* The consummation of their joy and triumph, as made "unto their God kings and priests," equally with the commencement of their

holiness and peace, they ascribe to the atoning death of the Lamb. And most certainly it is not as a manifestation of Heaven's righteousness and Heaven's love common to them and to all that have ever dwelt on the earth,—but as a real and thoroughly effectual sacrifice of atonement for them, and for them alone, whose full salvation it has secured,—that they cease not day nor night gratefully to celebrate that death, as they join in the universal heavenly strain: "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever" (Rev. 5:13).

## CHAPTER V

### METHOD OF SCRIPTURAL PROOF—EXAMINATION OF HEB. 9:13, 14—REALITY AND EFFICACY OF OLD TESTAMENT SACRIFICES OF ATONEMENT

"For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh; 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. 9:13, 14.

I HOPE it is by this time apparent that I regard the inquiry into the extent of the atonement as important, chiefly in the view of its bearing on the value, virtue, and efficacy of the atonement. Apart from that consideration, the controversy might be left to the schoolmen. What makes the question, For whom did Christ die? an urgent, vital, and practical question, for the spiritual man as well as the theologian, is, that it involves the question, What did his death actually effect? There is a well-known logical maxim, Quo major

extensio, minor comprehensio,—the wider the range of any term, objectively—in its application to persons or things that may be the objects of it—the narrower must be its import subjectively—the less can it include in itself of meaning or of matter. Enlarge the sphere to be embraced within its outer domain, as it were, and you must proportionally limit the amount of its own inherent contents. It must mean less, in proportion as it takes in more; the greater the number with reference to whom it is to be defined, the less must you put into the definition of it. The maxim is to the point here. It is because the extension of the atonement to all mankind limits its comprehensiveness, as regards what it is to be held as actually effecting and securing for any, that, in common with a great body of evangelical divines, I am apt to shrink from such an extension of it.

The manner in which I have attempted to state the general principles of the Scriptural argument upon the subject must have made this plain enough. To make it still plainer, as well as to prepare the way for that more experimental examination of the same subject which I have in view, I think it expedient to introduce at this stage some remarks on the actual efficacy of an atoning sacrifice, considered simply in itself, and with reference to its own essential nature. As the ground of my remarks, I select a passage in which the inherent virtue, first of the Old Testament sacrifices, and secondly, of the New Testament sacrifice, is expressly asserted, and in a sense defined. The true Scriptural idea of atonement may thus be in some measure ascertained. And the ascertaining of that may help us in the practical questions relative to faith in the atonement of Christ which are afterwards to occupy our attention.

The text selected (Heb. 9:13, 14) consists of two parts. It asserts the efficacy of the Old Testament sacrifices: "The blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkled on the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh." It infers, a fortiori, the greater efficacy of the New Testament sacrifice: "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?" To the consideration of it, in both of these views, I devote the remainder of this first part of my treatise. In the present chapter, I shall endeavour to fix the exact import of the assertion, that "the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh."\*

The first question, of course, is,—What are the sacrifices, or sacrificial rites, here indicated? They are twofold, being connected with two distinct ordinances.\*

The first,—"the blood of bulls and of goats,"—manifestly points to the solemnities of the great day of atonement, as these are described in the sixteenth chapter of Leviticus, and referred to in the preceding part of the chapter in the Epistle to the Hebrews now under consideration.\* It was on that day that the high priest entered into the holy of holies, within the veil, "not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people" (ver. 7). The other ceremonies then observed, and in particular that of the scape-goat, are familiar to every reader of the Bible. They were all, as adjuncts, intimately related to the one august transaction which signalized the day. The high priest, stript of his gorgeous canonicals, attired simply from head to foot in the holy, priestly, linen, passes alone, through the mysterious hanging that parts the tabernacle in two, carrying with him, into the inner sanctuary, the blood of the sacrifices previously slain on the common altar of atonement; the blood of bulls and of goats, which he "offers for himself, and for the errors of the people" (ver. 7). Once every year was this done, and once only.

The second ordinance indicated,—"the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean,"—denotes what was called the water of separation.\* It is described in the nineteenth chapter of Numbers. A red heifer, spotless, unblemished, unsubdued to the yoke, was led forth by the high priest without the camp, and slain in his presence. The blood was sprinkled or scattered by him, seven times, right in front of the tabernacle of the congregation. The carcass was burnt whole, with

cedar-wood, hyssop, and scarlet. The ashes were carefully gathered and laid up in a clean place. When any one contracted defilement by the touch of a dead body, some small portion of the ashes was put in a vessel, with water from a fresh or running stream; and a clean person, taking a bunch of hyssop and dipping it in the water, thus impregnated with the ashes of the heifer, sprinkled it, on three separate days,—the first, the third, and the seventh,—on the tent and furniture, on the family and household, as well as on the person, of the brother who had become defiled.

These were the rites. Now what did they do? What were they understood to effect?

They are declared to have "sanctified to the purifying of the flesh."\*

In the first place, they sanctified. There are two words, in both of the original languages of the Bible, rendered in our translation "holy;" the one meaning a certain moral frame of mind, or a certain moral and spiritual disposition, such as piety, godliness, goodness, graciousness; the other marking rather the position, or standing, or destination of any person or thing,—considered especially as recognised consecrated, set apart, to sustain some sacred character and fulfil some sacred function or use. It is with the last of these two words that the sanctification here spoken of is connected. It implies, not a change of moral nature, but a change in one's standing before God; not a change in the man, but rather a change upon the man; not a change of his affections towards God, but a change with respect to his relation to God,—the place which he occupies before God,—the light in which God is pleased to regard him. Such a change these sacrificial observances were held to effect, and really did effect. They sanctified.

Secondly, they sanctified, however, only "to the purifying of the flesh." They conveyed or imparted purity;—they made the man pure. Not certainly in a moral sense. There is no question here as to moral purity. The uncleanness for which the water of separation was



provided, was not moral. Nay, for that matter, it was not even physical. A man might have to render the usual offices to the dead. Professionally he might handle the lifeless corpse. Affectionately he might imprint a last kiss on the cold lips of his beloved. And all this not only without sin, but even commendably. He might accidentally come in contact with a dry bone, without offence to the nicest and most fastidious sense of cleanliness. The errors, also, for which blood was offered on the annual day of atonement, were what were called sins of ignorance,—breaches of legal order and ceremonial etiquette;—which priests and people might have unwittingly committed during the past year—involving neither moral guilt nor even bodily soil or stain. The purity, therefore, conferred by the observances in question is purity of the flesh in a special sense. It is not inward purity of heart. It is not even literal outward purity of body. "The blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean," cannot cleanse the person, any more than they can take away sin. It is purity of the flesh in a sense corresponding to the sense in which these rites are said to sanctify. The sanctification which they effect is limited. They do sanctify. They do make a real change in the man's position before God. They do actually alter the relation in which the man stands to God.\* But the change, the alteration, is restricted to the flesh. It has respect to the righting of his position before God, the rectifying of the relation in which he stands to God;—not in a high spiritual point of view, as when one passes from a state of guilt and condemnation to a state of acceptance and favour with God; but in a point of view far lower than that, more according to the flesh, or the bodily state of man.\*

For, in a word, what is the precise change effected?

A Jewish worshipper has fallen into an error or sin of ignorance, or into more than one.\* He has violated, unawares, some of the rules of the worship which he is bound to observe, and some of the ordinances which, as a Jewish worshipper, he is bound to keep. He knows that he must have done so often, during the year, in instances which he cannot specify or recollect. He knows that, in consequence

of this, he has forfeited his standing as a Jewish worshipper, and has incurred a severe penalty. The penalty which he has incurred corresponds to the standing which he has forfeited. That standing is the standing of one accounted holy, as all the Jewish people were accounted holy unto the Lord. It is the standing, that is, of one whom God looks upon as sacred to himself, and set apart for himself. The penalty, therefore, is, that he is liable to be cut off and cast away. He can no longer claim his place in the camp of God's people, or in the courts of God's house. The punishment of expulsion is his due. But the punishment of expulsion, if inflicted, would have been physical and carnal. It would have been his actual bodily removal out of the camp of Israel, and away from the tabernacle of the Lord. What the blood of bulls and of goats did, on the day of atonement, was to prevent the execution of that sentence; to secure to the man, for another year, his right of bodily presence in the places, and his right of bodily participation in the services, from which otherwise he must have been excluded as a condemned offender. It did that, and it did nothing more. It "sanctified to the purifying of the flesh."

Or, take the other case. The man happens to touch a body or a bone. He has just been closing a brother's eyes, or wrapping in a linen shroud his loved remains. It is an offence, in the eye of the statutory ritual, the law of ceremonies,—an offence entailing punishment. The punishment which it entails is a loss of standing; the loss of the standing which he has, as a Jewish worshipper, before God, in virtue of his due observance of God's ordinances. If the punishment is executed, he is removed bodily and shut out from whatever privileges that standing infers—in so far as these are privileges from which his bodily exclusion can debar him.\* But the water of separation is at hand, and the bunch of hyssop to sprinkle it. A clean person applies it thrice. And the sentence of bodily exclusion is reversed. His right of bodily presence is restored. "The ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean," effects that, and it effects nothing more. It "sanctifies to the purifying of the flesh."

Two conclusions concerning the Old Testament sacrifices may be drawn from these views: They had a real, though limited efficacy. And their efficacy was of the nature of satisfaction, in the strict and proper sense of the term.

I. They had a real, though limited efficacy. They were typical, no doubt; but they were not merely typical.\* In fact, they could not have been typical unless they had been real. They were shadows of the better sacrifice of Christ. They pointed to it, as signs and symbolical representations of it. In them, Abraham, and the spiritual among the family of Abraham, "saw the day of Christ afar off, and were glad." But they could scarcely have prefigured real efficacy in Christ's sacrifice, if they had not themselves possessed some real efficacy of their own. I say, some efficacy of their own. For it is not correct to conceive of them as deriving all their efficacy from the better sacrifice which they foreshadowed. It is true that, in so far as they were means and instruments of spiritual life, speaking peace to the conscience, restoring the soul to the love, and favour, and moral image and likeness of God, they did indeed derive all their efficacy from the sacrifice of Christ.\* For these high ends, they had no sort of efficacy in themselves. They held up, as in a mirror or through a glass, to the eye of faith, "the seed of the woman bruising the head of the serpent" (Gen. 3:15); "through death destroying him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, and delivering those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (Heb. 2:14, 15). In the slain bull, or goat, or heifer, faith grasped the idea and the assurance of a higher victim, a worthier ransom, yet to be found. But that did not hinder the apprehension of a real present benefit coming through these sacrifices, and a real present virtue residing in them. In complying with them, the intelligent worshipper knew that he was not going through an empty form or an idle ceremony;—precious, perhaps, as significant of some transaction to take place ages afterwards, but in the meantime, and for any present purpose, unprofitable and unmeaning.\* He believed and was sure that by them and through them his condition was actually changed for the better; that they secured to him a standing before God which he

could not otherwise have claimed or retained; and turned away from him a very serious penalty, to which otherwise he must have been inevitably exposed. Nay, more. He might understand, and, if well informed, he did understand, how it was that by these sacrifices, and through them, this good came to him. And it was because he understood that—because he could perceive, not only the fact of their efficacy, but the principle and rationale of their efficacy—that he was enabled, if he was spiritually enlightened, to discern in them,—what he never otherwise could have guessed,—how there might be blood shed that could do more for him than the blood of bulls and of goats, and a fountain of atonement opened in Jerusalem that would suffice for all sin and for all uncleanness.

II. The efficacy of these Old Testament sacrifices was of the nature of satisfaction, in the strict and proper sense of that term. This was the principle or rationale of their efficacy. It was understood to be so by the Old Testament worshippers. It is of the utmost consequence that it should be seen clearly to be so by us also, if we would rightly estimate the sacrifice of Christ.\*

Satisfaction is the offering of a compensation, or an equivalent, for some wrong that has been done. The idea of it is founded on that sense of justice which is inherent and ineradicable in every human bosom. When we see an injury inflicted, resentment rises within us, and it is not appeased until redress is given to the injured party, and an adequate retribution inflicted on the wrong-doer. This is an original conviction or instinct of our moral nature. It recognises the necessity of satisfaction when a man breaks the law of equity or honour to his fellow-man. It recognises the necessity of satisfaction, also, when a man breaks the law of duty to his God. Its appeal is to law. It is not, however, to law as the generalized expression, merely, of what we observe in the sequence of events and the succession of cause and effect, that it appeals; but to law as implying authority and right on the one hand,—obligation and responsibility on the other.

It would be absurd to speak of satisfaction being given for a breach of the so-called law of gravity, by which a heavy body when unsupported falls to the ground; or the law of heat, by which a finger thrust into the fire is burned; or any of the laws of health, by which excess breeds disease, and a disordered body makes a disordered mind.\* Such laws admit of no compensation or equivalent in any case coming instead of the result naturally and necessarily wrought out under them. If I fall, I break the law of gravity in one view, for I have not observed with sufficient care the conditions of my safety under it. But, in another view, it is not broken. It tells upon me, and I take the consequences. There is no wrong here; no injury for which compensation may be made; no breach demanding satisfaction. If all laws were of that nature—if that were the character of the whole government of God—the idea of satisfaction would be impossible.

But once let in the thought of moral obligation. Let law be the expression of the freewill of a ruler, binding authoritatively the freewill of the subject. Let it be the assertion of right, and the imposing of duty. Then, when a breach of that law occurs, we instinctively feel that satisfaction is due. And, to meet the case, it must be satisfaction bearing some analogy and proportion, in its nature and amount, to the law that has been broken.\*

All this is irrespective of consequences. Apart altogether from a calculation of chances or probabilities, as to what evil may result from the wrong, and how that evil may be obviated, the wrong itself is felt to require redress. If the wrong-doer were alone in the universe, we have an instinct which teaches us that there ought to be redress; a righteous instinct which craves for redress, and will not rest content without it. And the redress must be either adequate retribution inflicted on the offender, or some fair equivalent or compensation instead.

Now, this is the principle of the Old Testament sacrifices. They appeal to that instinct, that sense of wrong and craving for redress, of which I have been speaking. The offences committed are breaches of

law. They are violations of statutes and ordinances enacted by undoubted authority—the authority of the most high God, whose will is law. No doubt they relate to matters of subordinate importance, such as "meats and drinks, and divers washings and carnal ordinances." Even a deliberate and wilful disregard of such ordinances may seem to be no very grave crime. To act against them accidentally, or unknowingly, or from necessity, may be excusable, if not justifiable. Still, God would teach that no law authoritatively given forth by him can be broken, without redress and reparation for the wrong. And the moral instinct of man approves the lesson. There must be satisfaction for the offence,—the punishment of the offender, or an adequate compensation and equivalent, through the substitution of another, as a victim, in his place.

Surely, however, in such a case, "the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of a heifer," slain in sacrifice, may furnish compensation and equivalent enough. So the moral instinct pleads. And inspired Scripture sanctions the pleading. These sacrifices are sufficient as a satisfaction for the breach of that law of carnal ordinances. They "sanctify to the purifying of the flesh."\*

But, on the very same ground and for the very same reason that warrant as reasonable this conclusion, as to the real efficacy of these sacrifices, within the limits of the law of ceremonies, both the moral instinct and the inspired Scripture declare their utter insufficiency when transgressions of a higher law are to be dealt with. "It is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sin" (Heb. 10:4). And both the moral instinct and the inspired Scripture gratefully meet in the argument *a fortiori*—"If the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh; 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?"

Before proceeding to the examination of that argument, let the sum of what has been ascertained be stated clearly.

It may be seen now, not only that there is a point up to which the Old Testament service of sacrifice was really effectual, but, also, that there is a point at which, considered in itself, and apart from its typical reference to Christ, it entirely failed.\* It made "him that did the service perfect;"—not, indeed, "as pertaining to the conscience" (Heb. 9:9), but as pertaining to the flesh. It perfectly righted his position with reference to the law of "carnal ordinances." It perfectly absolved him from the guilt, and perfectly delivered him from the penal consequences, of his violation of that law.\* In that sense, and to that extent, it did actually make him perfect. It made him as whole and entire,—as unassailable, in respect of his personal standing among the people who were the "Israel after the flesh" (1 Cor. 10:18), as if he had never forfeited that standing at all. The offence by which he had forfeited it was sufficiently purged,—the law of ceremonies, in terms of which he had forfeited it, was sufficiently vindicated,—by a merely animal victim being substituted for him, and put to death in his stead.

But there is another law, in terms of which he has forfeited a higher standing. It is the law, not of ceremonies, but of conscience—the moral law of God—the law of holiness, the law of love. His position, as regards that law, is not so easily rectified. For meeting his case under it, something more is needed than the slaying of a bull, or goat, or heifer, or lamb, as the substitute of the breakers of it.

A Jewish worshipper, fresh from participation in the great transaction of the annual day of atonement, or freshly sprinkled with the atoning water of separation, might warrantably consider and feel himself to be "perfect." He might assert or resume his place among the "Israel after the flesh," challenging all and sundry to gainsay his perfect title to be there, to find any flaw or fault in him, "as pertaining to" the flesh. But he must still hang his head and smite upon his breast, as his conscience charges him with the breaking of

that law which says, "Thou shalt love;" and which says also, "Thou shalt not lust."

Ah! he may exclaim, what can such a sacrificial service as this, that has made me perfect,—sound enough and safe enough as pertaining to the flesh,—what can it avail to make me "perfect as pertaining to the conscience?" Would that I had one who might answer and make satisfaction for my violation of God's eternal and unchangeable law of holiness and love, as thoroughly as that slaughtered animal is held to answer and make satisfaction for my breach of the law of ceremonies!\*

And so thou hast, if thou art "an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile" (John 1:47). "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). See in that divine victim, bleeding on the tree of shame and condemnation, one who may indeed be a worthy substitute for thee—for all, for any, of the lost children of men. This infinitely precious ransom thine offended God provides for thee, and graciously accepts on thy behalf. He takes upon himself all the guilt that wounds thy soul, bears its doom for thee, and opens up the way into the holiest for thee to enter in with him! And, lo! when thy sin finds thee out at any time, a divine agent is ever ready to dip the bunch of hyssop in the stream that is ever flowing fresh from that pierced side, and to sprinkle thee—again and again, as thou needest it, to sprinkle thee—that thou mayest be clean indeed!

"Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow." So, beholding the day of Christ afar off, a spiritual Israelite intelligently and believingly prays. And on the faith of that great atonement, accomplished by the Son, and applied by the Spirit, of God himself Most High, he presents himself within the veil, with this grateful acknowledgment of sin and of grace,—of sin otherwise expiated than by any substitute he can himself present, and of grace so abounding, through a ransom of the Lord's own finding, as to melt the whole inner man in tears of godly sorrow,— "Thou desirest not sacrifice, else would I give it; thou delightest not in burnt-offering.



The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise" (Ps. 51:7, 16, 17).

## CHAPTER VI

### THE METHOD OF SCRIPTURAL PROOF—EXAMINATION OF HEB. 9:13, 14—THE ARGUMENT "A FORTIORI" FOR THE ATONING EFFICACY OF THE SACRIFICE OF CHRIST

"For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh; 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. 9:13, 14.

THE fact that the blood of Christ is compared with the blood of bulls and of goats, and of the heifer whose ashes formed the basis of the water of separation, is a proof that it is to be regarded as of the same nature—as possessing a virtue of the same kind.\* The contrast between the two has reference to the amount or measure of that virtue. The comparison upon which the contrast proceeds assumes the identity of the virtue in both. The death of Christ stands in the same category with the slaying of the animals appointed by the Levitical law to be sacrifices. It is an event or transaction of exactly the same sort, of the same import and significancy.\* Whatever, therefore, has been established as to the meaning and efficacy of the Old Testament sacrificial service must in fairness be held to apply to "the decease accomplished at Jerusalem." That procedure, viewed in the light of the divine purpose and ordination, is as truly and literally the substitution of a chosen victim, in the room and stead of parties

who themselves deserve to die, as was the bringing in and bringing forward of the choice of the herd or flock, to have the offence committed by any of the people visited upon its innocent and uncomplaining head.

Here, therefore, we are entitled to take the benefit of whatever force there is in the considerations already urged to prove the strictly piacular character of the Old Testament sacrifices, as well as their actual virtue and power to make satisfaction for the violation of law.\* By being placed on precisely the same footing, the New Testament sacrifice is clearly represented as having the same character, as being endowed with the same virtue and power. It is strictly piacular,—it is a proper satisfaction for the violation of law. Upon this sure foundation of acknowledged identity of nature, the argument by way of contrast, and a fortiori, firmly rests. Otherwise there would be no sense or relevancy in the question which is so confidently and triumphantly put by the apostle: "If the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh; 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. 9:13, 14.)

The contrast is exhibited in two views. On the one hand, the superior intrinsic worth and value of the New Testament sacrifice is magnified in comparison with that of the Old Testament sacrifices.\* Over against "the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer," is set "the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God." On the other hand, the actual result got by the sacrifice of Christ is celebrated, to the loss and damage of these other sacrifices. They "sanctified to the purifying of the flesh;" this sacrifice "purges the conscience from dead works, to serve the living God."

## **PART FIRST**

The sacrifices in question are contrasted in respect of their inherent or intrinsic worth and value. In that view, the superiority of the New Testament sacrifice will sufficiently appear upon a consideration of these two particulars: I. What is the offering? II. How is it made? The victim substituted in place of the breakers of law is first to be contemplated.\* Then, secondly, the manner of the substitution.

I. Instead of a bull, a goat, a heifer, or any other sacrificial animal, what victim is presented to our notice? What have we here set up in opposition to these sacrifices of the olden time, as having power to purchase or procure right of access into the Holiest, and also to cleanse those whom at any time the touch of death, or of dead works, has defiled and slain? The blood of Christ; the "obedience unto death" of Christ; the sufferings of Christ; the cross of Christ;—"Christ and him crucified."\*

"Behold the Lamb of God!" Contemplate him who is thus introduced. There is none like him in all the universe!—the blessed Immanuel!—the glorious, gracious, Jehovah-Jesus! There is a worth in him which neither men nor angels shall be able throughout all eternity to estimate. In him alone are united the unchanged essence of the uncreated Godhead and the highest perfection of created manhood. One with God, one also with man, he has a standing before God as the representative man, the second Adam, the Lord from heaven; he has a position in the presence of God, a place in the favour of God, which none can challenge,—the full joy of which none can imagine. He is in the Father's bosom, his beloved Son, in whom he is well pleased.

If in any way this illustrious person may become to us what the sacrificial animals were to the worshippers of old,—if he comes in place of them, to serve the very same purpose which they served, and be a sacrifice of the very same nature with them,—this surely is far more, infinitely more, than adequate satisfaction for those breaches of the law of ordinances for which they were provided. It may well be

available for something more than they could effect. It will do more than "sanctify to the purifying of the flesh."

And is it so? Does he, does this Son of God and Son of man, become precisely what these animals were held to be, and really were, when they were slain? Does he stand in the very same relation to a broken law that they did, to compensate for the breach of it, to relieve the breakers of it, by suffering in his own person what is equivalent to their being punished themselves? Does he thus actually make satisfaction, as these sacrifices did? That is the teaching of the apostle, when he reasons concerning the death of Christ as being identically of the same character with the death of the bull, the goat, the heifer, slain of old in sacrifice. Beyond all fair question this identity is assumed in the argument. They are the same in kind. The difference is one of degree. But that difference, how immense! On the one side the blood of bulls and of goats, the ashes of a heifer. On the other side, the blood of Christ!

II. Besides the infinite worth of the victim offered, there are circumstances in the manner of his being offered that enhance the intrinsic value and efficacy of the sacrifice.\*

In the first place, he offered himself.\* His offering of himself was voluntary and spontaneous. It was necessary that it should be so. It was not so, it was not necessary that it should be so, in the case of the Old Testament sacrifices. When the law that is broken, the offence that breaks it, and the penalty which the breach of it infers, are all of such a nature as to admit of adequate satisfaction being made by the substitution and the slaying of a bull, a goat, a heifer, consent is out of the question. But when it is one capable of choice that is to be offered, consent is indispensable.

To drag an unwilling victim to the altar,—to force an innocent person into the place of many guilty, and compel him, in his own person, and by his own personal obedience and sufferings, to render what may be a just equivalent for the punishment which they have

deserved,—this, so far from being a satisfying of law, is a new and aggravated violation of it. If the office is to be undertaken and the service rendered at all, it must be by a volunteer. Only one who is in a position to offer himself can meet the case. This is not, of course, the only condition. One might be willing to become the sacrifice, who might not be competent or adequate. An angel might be willing, but an angel would not suffice. There can be no objection, however, on that score here. Worthy is the Lamb that is slain. And with his own full concurrence and consent is he slain. He does not shrink at the last from what must have appalled any other, however willing at the first. Knowing all its bitterness, he drinks the cup.

Secondly, through the eternal Spirit he offered himself. This is an expression which has been variously understood. It is confessedly of very difficult interpretation. On the whole, however, there does not seem to be any sufficient reason for not applying it, as it may most naturally be applied, to the third person of the Godhead, the Holy Ghost. That divine agent was deeply and actively concerned in this great transaction. Christ was anointed with the Holy Ghost. He received not the Spirit by measure. He was led by the Spirit when he was led as a lamb to the slaughter. The Holy Ghost was with him, upon him, in him, all throughout. This, indeed, is one chief proof and token of the concurrence of the undivided Godhead—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost—in the sacrifice. It is when the Spirit descends upon Christ like a dove that the Father's complacency is declared, and a voice from heaven proclaims: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

In particular, thirdly, it was through the eternal Spirit that he offered himself without spot to God. It was necessary that he should do so. And it was through the eternal Spirit that he was able to do so. He must be "without spot," or without fault; himself unstained by the uncleanness which he has to purge; not himself involved in that breach of law for which he has to make compensation. For one who is in his own person and on his own account liable to be dealt with as an offender, to offer himself as a substitute in the room of other

offenders, would evidently be a new offence to the majesty of law; adding, as it were, insult to injury. That this fatal objection may not lie against Christ when he offers himself, he offers himself through the eternal Spirit. The Holy Ghost prepares for him a body, a holy human nature, in the Virgin's womb. Conceived and born by the power of the Holy Ghost, he is without spot of sin, either hereditary or personal. He is, therefore, competent to offer himself to make satisfaction for the sins of others.

Thus, in every view and on every ground, Christ our sacrifice is exalted above the sacrifices of old. The transcendent excellency of his person; his own free choice and consent; the gracious concurrence of God his Father, signified by the presence and co-operation of the eternal Spirit; and the spotless, faultless innocence, righteousness, holiness, which the eternal Spirit secured to him, in his birth as well as in his life,—all combine to stamp a character of infinite worth, value, and efficacy on this Christ, if he is indeed to be, as in fact he is, "Christ our passover, sacrificed for us" (1 Cor. 5:7).

Even apart, therefore, from what the text teaches concerning the actual benefits conferred by this sacrifice, from the comparison of it with the Old Testament sacrifices, in respect of its inherent worth and value, several important practical conclusions may be drawn.\*

1. The case to be met must be inconceivably worse than the case for which these other sacrifices were provided. But for the blood of atonement and the water of separation, the worshipper in the camp of Israel must often have been in a poor and miserable plight.\* He was liable at any moment to be an outcast. And if his condition was so sad, since such sacrifices were deemed needful to amend it, what must ours be, since to amend it a sacrifice so incalculably more valuable must be found? But for that sacrifice, what must be my state? What is it if, with all its efficacy for any sinner, that sacrifice is not effectual for me?

2. The law requiring cleanliness of the person—physical or ceremonial purity,—holiness of the body, as it were—among these old worshippers, was so strict, that the very touch of a bone inferred defilement, and was an offence. And the offence was so grave and serious, that nothing but either the signal punishment of the offender, or, instead of that, satisfaction given by the shedding of vicarious blood, could repair the wrong done, and meet the law's demand of redress.\* What shall we say of the law to which the sacrifice of Christ has reference, and of sin as the transgression of that law? It is the law of perfect purity and perfect love. It is the law also of supreme authority, which says, Thou shalt, and Thou shalt not. What shall we say as to the strictness of that law,—what shall we say as to the breaking of that law,—when we contemplate the amazing satisfaction required?

I point you to the blood of Christ,—to Christ, through the eternal Spirit, offering himself without spot to God,—that you may see, and know, and feel what every sin deserves. I ask you, for the present, to discard from your mind any view of that event which would encourage speculation as to its bearing either on your own reformation and renewal, or on the prevention, in regard to others, of the evil issues of your conduct. I bid you look to that cross as a real transaction. Understand and be thoroughly assured that you have there presented to you the only possible alternative. Either Christ offers himself for you, or you inevitably perish.

Dismiss, meanwhile, I say, all reasoning as to the tendency which that scene on Calvary has to mould your own heart into conformity with its love, and to warn or win those whom your unloving behaviour may have estranged. Come and deal with this great fact.

You have sinned once, and but once. It is a solitary offence. You are penitent. There are none to be influenced or affected by the treatment which you receive. It is a secret sin. And God may keep it secret for ever. But yet know that the alternative is, as to that one solitary, secret sin,—Christ suffers, or you perish. Yes; though you

were the only one in the universe that had ever sinned, and though that were your only sin. Such is God's estimate of law, and of sin as the transgression of law.

3. And what, in this view, shall be said of love,—the love of God,—of God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost? Bring the matter to this issue, and there is love.\* Otherwise there is but policy. Take any one, even the best, of those modified representations of the sacrifice of Christ which make it hinge, not on the question, What does every sin in itself deserve? but on the question, What are likely to be the consequences of its being punished or forgiven? They all carry you out of the region of consciousness and of conscience. They presume almost that you may sit beside God and consult with God as to what may be best, on the whole, and in the long-run, for the universe at large. They give a painful impression of a sort of divine diplomacy, to which you are asked to be parties. And instead of exercising your own conscience upon your own sin, and every sin of yours, known or unknown, secret or open, they carry you off into some general idea of the way in which the world may best be governed, and the greatest amount of good made to consist with the smallest quantity of evil.

All the while, real, personal love on the part of God is unfelt. It must be so. God is a schemer, not a lover; a schemer for the whole, not a lover of individuals.\* There may be love in his scheme. The arrangement which he adopts for reducing evil to a minimum, and extracting the maximum of good, may indicate even infinite benevolence. It is the benevolence of cold, impersonal, generalizing system, however; as if one should contrive a machine which, with more or less of inevitable suffering, is yet, in the main, to work well for the general good. I admire; I adore; in a sense I believe. But it is a cold abstraction at the best.

Take me now away from all these generalizations; take me to the cross of Christ. Let me there see, in the unknown sufferings of that august and altogether lovely substitute, what every sin of mine deserves.\* Let me be made to apprehend how for every sin of mine I



must have perished, or Christ must have made satisfaction in my stead. Then "herein is love; not that I have loved God, but that he hath loved me, and hath given his Son to be the propitiation for my sins." It is not a coup d'état—a stroke of government. It is love, redeeming love, to me,—to me personally—to me, the chief of sinners.

## **PART SECOND**

The sacrifice of Christ is compared and contrasted with the Old Testament sacrifices, not only in respect of what it is—its intrinsic worth, value, and efficacy,—but also in respect of what it does—its real and actual effects.\* It "purges the conscience from dead works." And it so purges it, for "the service of the living God."

The first effect of this sacrifice is, that it purges the conscience from dead works.\* It can scarcely do otherwise, it cannot well do less, if it is of the same nature with these Old Testament sacrifices, and if it is yet, at the same time, in itself so incomparably more valuable and efficacious.

What, let me ask again, did these sacrifices effect for the worshipper? They procured for him exemption from his liability to be cut off; they secured his right standing as an Israelite before the Lord. Without the blood of bulls and of goats—without the ashes of the heifer to sprinkle him—the unclean man was no better than one dead. As to the position, and as to all the privileges, of an acceptable worshipper, he was virtually dead, or rather really doomed to die. His work about that dead body which he has touched, or which has touched him, has brought him into the same state of death in which it is. And all that he does while in that state partakes of this death. It is a dead work he has been concerned in; and only dead works can come of it, until the blood is shed, the ashes are sprinkled; when, lo! the man is a worker with death, a dead worker, no longer. The taint of that dead work he was about when the dead body was in contact with him, as well as the taint of the dead works he has been about ever since, is all gone. He

lives as if no shadow of that death had ever fallen on him. He lives as being "sanctified to the purifying of the flesh."

Put now for the flesh, the conscience; for the carcass which defiles and slays, put sin.

I have to do with sin; I touch it; it touches me. My trafficking with sin, dallying with sin, negotiating with sin, is a work of death. And all my works thereafter, while I am on that tack, as it were, or in that line, are works of death. Defilement is in them all, and death. The defilement and the death affect my conscience. My conscience is the seat of them. It is not my body, but my conscience, that is defiled and dead. Guilt and condemnation are in and upon my conscience. Woe is me! what shall I do? Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? How shall I ever get rid of these dead works? My offence—the offence of my original contact with sin, the growing and accumulating offence of my subsequent continuance in sin—is as a sort of mortal nightmare, a dead weight and load on my conscience. I feel that I must suffer the punishment, that I must bear the doom. I cannot satisfy the law which I have broken otherwise than by suffering the punishment and bearing the doom. That is what the law demands. It is fair; it is equitable; it is reasonable; it is just. I see and own it to be so. The offence must be purged; the wrong must be redressed; and I most righteously must be lost for ever.

Lost! Yes, unless one can be found able and willing to stand for me and answer for me,—to offer and consent in his own person to undergo what may be accepted as a full equivalent for all that I have deserved to suffer.

And, lo! here is one, near me, beside me—Jesus, still, as it were, bleeding for my deadly sins; Jesus, really and actually travailing in soul for me; Jesus, making full satisfaction, by his own endurance of the curse of the law in my stead, for all the guilt of all my violation of it.

I look, and looking, I believe;—the same eternal Spirit through whom Christ offered himself without spot to God, giving me an insight into what that offering of himself really means, and making me willing to acquiesce in it. Then the dead body I have touched falls away from me; the death which it has communicated to me—the death with which it has infected me—is gone from me. The guilt and condemnation of my deadly sins—of that first deadly sin of my surrender to evil, and of all the deadly sins that have followed upon that surrender—I now consciously, believingly, rejoicingly put off; as thoroughly and as gladly as ever worshipper of old put off his liability to the punishment of uncleanness, when, by the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling his uncleanness, he was "sanctified to the purifying of the flesh." The blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purges my conscience from all these dead works. Their guilt, their condemnation, cleaves to me no more.

The second effect of the sacrifice of Christ is, that it enables us to serve the living God. This is the consequence and result of that first effect of it, its purging the conscience from dead works. It is the end to which that is the means.\* The conscience being purged from dead works—our being acquitted of guilt and delivered from condemnation—is not the ultimate design; it is not the principal object, with a view to which Christ through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God. He did so that we, whose conscience is thus purged, might serve God—that we might serve him as the living God.

Our "dead works" are in marked antithesis here—in strong antagonism—to "the living God." Our works are dead; our God is living. Our works, if we continue and go on in them, condemn us more and more. Every one of them has sin in it. Every one of them is deadly. Every one of them—our best and brightest virtue, as well as our worst vice—is a dead work. The corrupting element of guilt and condemnation is in it; for we who do it are guilty and condemned.

That is death. And that death belongs to all our works, and vitiates and deadens them all.

But now, believing, let us get rid of this death. Let us get rid of it, first, as it adheres to ourselves personally. Let us leave our works alone. We cannot put life into them, nor can they put life in us. They are dead, the best of them as well as the worst of them;—all of them are dead.

But our God, the God to whom Christ through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot, liveth,—he is the living God.

Come, therefore, hampered, hindered, embarrassed, and encumbered no more with any of these works;—not with the worst of them, for their deadliest guilt is cancelled;—not with the best of them, for the best of them has guilt that can be cancelled only by the blood of Christ. Come, all these dead works apart—away with them all!—Come, let us serve the living God!

We serve him now on a new footing. There is no more death; no more guilt and condemnation. No more is there any sentence of death hanging round our necks, and giving a deadly character to all our doings. We serve him as the living God; who lives himself; who would have us to live in serving him; who would have us to render to him, the living God, a living service.

A guilty criminal is dead, and his works are dead. The burdened conscience is dead, and its works are dead. A guilty criminal, therefore, with a burdened conscience, cannot serve the living God. But if the blood of Christ purge our conscience from dead works, we are not now guilty criminals; our conscience is not now burdened. Living now ourselves, we are in a position to serve, "in newness of life," the living God.

Thus there is a double change wrought by the blood of Christ;\* or, rather, there is a double aspect in which the change wrought by it may be viewed.\* It destroys death, and imparts life. It puts an end to

a state of death, and originates a state of life. And both the death and the life—the death ended and the life begun—belong to the sphere of our inner spiritual experience. This is the main distinction between the change which the New Testament sacrifice has efficacy to accomplish, and the change which the Old Testament sacrifices could effect. Both are changes affecting my relation to God—my title and fitness for serving God. The one, however, at the utmost, only puts me right with God in respect of my outward standing, and qualifies me for a service which is in itself dead, having nothing in it of the real life of the living God. The other, again, puts me right with God in respect of my whole moral and spiritual being; myself, my whole self, my very self, as a conscious, free, and willing agent, it puts right with God. And it qualifies me for a service of the same nature with him whom I serve,—for "serving the living God,"—"worshipping him who is a spirit in spirit and in truth."

This difference of result necessarily flows from the difference between the victims in the two cases respectively. The principle is the same in both—the principle, I mean, of my personal interest in the power or virtue of the sacrifice.\* It is this: I become one with the victim—with whatever it may be that is offered in sacrifice. I am identified with the victim. Voluntarily I identify myself, and the law identifies me, with the victim. I die in the victim's death. The death of the victim is my death.

The victim is a bull, or goat, or heifer. Well; it dies by the sentence of the law of ceremonies, In its death I die. The sentence, therefore, so far as I am concerned, is passed and over. It has been executed, and there is an end of it. I am as I was previous to the sentence being incurred. There is here an identification between the victim and me. But it is very imperfect in itself and in its issue. It is little or nothing more than an external, formal, and bodily union—the sprinkling of blood or of ashes on my body—and it gives me no other, no better life than I had before.

But the victim now is Christ. The identification is of Christ with me, and of me with Christ. The eternal Spirit, by whom he offered himself, makes me a part of him in his doing so. By the eternal Spirit preparing for him, not only a body in the Virgin's womb, but a body in the womb of "the Church of the first-born," Christ offered himself—himself in his body natural, himself in his body mystical—without spot unto God. Into that body of Christ—into Christ himself—the eternal Spirit shuts up me, believing. The victim and the worshipper—Christ and I—are now identified; identified by the eternal Spirit. I am one, not with a senseless animal, who can but fall unconscious under the sacrificial knife. I am one with him who says, "I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore" (Rev. 1:18). I am one with him in his death, in its terrible reality, in its blessed efficacy. By the power of the eternal Spirit, and by my own consent, I am one with him;—"crucified with Christ." And the life in which, for himself, that death was swallowed up, is as really mine as the death. For me, as for him, death under the sentence of the law—the death of guilt and condemnation, the death of being without God, forsaken by God, under the curse—is over for ever.\* He has endured it for me. I endure it in him. And the life—for he liveth still—is mine. With no dead victim, continuing dead, am I united and identified; but with Christ, the living Lord. And not outwardly, in a bodily fashion, but inwardly, with heart and soul, I am united and identified with him. "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Gal. 2:20).

Such is the efficacy of the atoning sacrifice of Christ, on which, as its basis, the gospel of the grace of God proceeds, in the wide and unrestricted call which it addresses to all men; inviting all men to come and consent to be saved in terms of it. It is indeed a sufficient basis for such a call. And it may be seen to be so if it is viewed in the light of the two Old Testament sacrificial services or ordinances, to both of which it answers, as it fulfils the functions of both.

I. It opens the way into the holy of holies,—the holiest of all; not for the High Priest alone, but for all the people; not once a year, but once for all. Come, enter in, all of you; at once, and once for all; never to be cast out again.\*

See! The veil is rent in twain. The inner glory of the house of God is disclosed. There is the Holy One, shining forth from between the cherubim, over the mercy-seat, pacified toward you; for the High Priest has entered in, not with the blood of others, but with his own. See the heavens opened, and Jesus at the right hand of God. Look! He beckons to you. He invites you to draw near. Hark! He calls,—"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28).

Nay, look again; open your eyes and see. That gracious, glorious High Priest comes forth himself,—he is ever coming forth,—to take you by the hand and lead you in. He is near you now, that divine and human priest and victim in one, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God. Is not that eternal Spirit even now, through the word, showing you this Christ as thus near to you? Not arrayed in awful pomp and state; not thus is he near you;—but meek and lowly in heart, as in the day when he took a little child into his arms; clothed simply in the pure white robe of his own righteousness, with which he is ready to clothe you.

Sinner, whosoever thou art, I tell thee that this Christ is come out from that holy place, for thee, this day. It is I, he says; be not afraid. Behold my hands, my feet, my side. He would carry thee, this very day, even now, in with him into that rest of his. No guilt of thine need hinder thee, for his blood cleanses from it all. No law can challenge thee, for he answers for all. Wilt thou not suffer him? Arise! awake! "The Master is come, and calleth for thee." The way into the holiest is open. Every claim is met; every just demand is satisfied. God is waiting to be gracious; his reconciled countenance is lifted up upon thee. Ah! why hesitate, poor sinner? In with thee at once, and once

for all. In, I say. In, with thy living, loving Saviour. He wills that thou shouldst be with him where he is.

Then what bliss is thine evermore, henceforth! To be with Christ within the veil, in the true holy place!—in the bosom of his Father and thy Father, his God and thy God! For now in Christ we have access into that grace wherein we stand. We go no more out. Our right of continual access none henceforth can question. "We draw near," we are continually drawing near, "with true hearts, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water" (Heb. 10:22.)

II. For this again is another good office which the sacrifice of Christ does for us. It supplies the water of separation, the fresh running stream, impregnated with atoning virtue, that may be ever, from time to time, sprinkled on us anew, as, in the commerce of an evil world, and in the communings of a deceitful and desperately wicked heart, we are ever apt to come in contact with dead bones, and dead men, and dead works, again. This is the "fountain opened in the house of David, and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness" (Zech. 13:1).<sup>\*</sup> It is ever flowing, to wash the soiled body; to create in us a clean heart again; to refresh us when we are weary; to heal us when we are sick; to revive us when we are like to faint and die.

"My little children," says the beloved apostle, "these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world" (1 John 2:1, 2).

How is it with thee, brother, even now? Art thou drawing near? Art thou where Isaiah was? (ch. 6.) Seest thou what Isaiah saw? Feelest thou as Isaiah felt? Art thou in the holiest, in the very presence of thy God? Seest thou the Lord high and lifted up? Hearest thou that voice resounding through all heaven? Holy! holy! holy! Woe is me! for I am



undone. I see as I never saw before the uncleanness of my lips. I feel as I never felt before the uncleanness of my own lips, and the uncleanness of the lips of the people among whom I dwell;—and the deep guilt, moreover, of my insensibility to the uncleanness of both. Long forgotten sin rushes on my memory. Conviction of recent backsliding flashes on my conscience. Nathan has startled me from my soft sleep in the lap of sense by the abrupt appeal: "Thou art the man!" I am undone. Within the very courts of the house of my God—in the very arms of his mercy—in the light of his reconciled countenance, I am undone. I am so very vile; so miserably weak; always resolving, and yet always sinning;—it is vain to strive any more—I cannot stand—I am a lost man.

Nay, my brother: the altar is there still, as firm as ever; the sacrifice is on it still, as fresh as ever; the eternal Spirit is in it still, as ready as ever to make a new and fresh application of all its efficacy to thy case. Even now he flies, as in haste, lest thou shouldst despair and die. Taking a live coal from off the altar, he flies; he lays it on thy mouth, and says, "Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged." He sprinkles clean water upon thee, and thou art clean.

Rise then, brother, with conscience purged again from dead works, to serve the living God. To serve him—how? Nay, hearest thou not "the voice of the Lord saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" Wilt thou not, with purged conscience and quickened soul, gladly and gratefully reply, "Here am I, Lord; send me?" "Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do?"

And what, O what shall I say to any who will still continue far from God? What but this?—"How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God!" "There remaineth no more sacrifice for sin!"

## **PART II**

**THE QUESTION VIEWED IN ITS PRACTICAL RELATION TO THE  
GOSPEL CALL AND THE ACCEPTANCE OF IT BY FAITH**

# CHAPTER I

## THE UNIVERSAL DISPENSATION OF GRACIOUS FORBEARANCE—ITS CONNECTION WITH THE ATONEMENT

THE objection felt to the Calvinistic view of the Atonement, as apparently limiting the love of God, may be put in two ways. It may be put, if we may so speak, in the interest of mankind at large, simply as such. Or it may be put in the interest and on behalf of earnest and inquiring souls.\* In the former point of view, it is chiefly a theoretical or doctrinal difficulty that demands solution; the difficulty of harmonizing the universal and impartial benevolence of God with a provision of mercy that is restricted, special, and discriminating. In the other point of view, the difficulty assumes more of a practical character. It touches the experience of the individual sinner, when his sin is finding him out; when it becomes a matter of life and death with him to get firm hold of Christ as his Saviour; and when, as it is alleged, this restriction of the efficacy of Christ's death interposes a formidable barrier.\* I frankly own that it is in this last point of view that the difficulty or objection seems to me to be most entitled to respect and sympathy; and, accordingly, I intend to deal with it, in that aspect of it, somewhat fully; being anxious to show how completely the sinner's case is met by the Calvinistic doctrine, and by it alone.\* I consider it enough to devote the two opening chapters of this second part of the treatise to the explanation and vindication of the Divine consistency in the bearing of the atonement upon mankind at large; especially as regards the universality of the dispensation of forbearance which it procures, and the warrant and encouragement to believe which it holds out.\*

That the death of Christ, or his work of obedience unto death, considered in the light of a satisfaction rendered to divine justice, and an atonement made for human guilt, was undertaken and accomplished for the elect alone,—or, in other words, that they for

whom Christ died are those only who shall infallibly be saved,—is a doctrine which seems to have an adverse look towards the world at large, and to embarrass the free proclamation of the gospel as a message of mercy to all. The feeling is apt to arise that there is something like an inconsistency or incompatibility between this restriction of the design and efficacy of the great propitiation to a limited and predetermined number of the race, and those Scriptural representations which suggest the idea of the widest and most comprehensive range and sweep being the characteristic of that love to the race, as a whole, of which the great propitiation is the expression. The question, therefore, is in the circumstances not unnatural or unreasonable:\* Has the cross of Christ no relation at all, of any sort, to all mankind universally, whether elect or not? If it has not, how is the aspect of universality, which in its open exhibition undoubtedly belongs to it, to be explained? If it has, of what sort is the relation which it bears to all, as distinguished from the relation which it bears to those who by means of it are actually saved?

One answer to such an inquiry is obvious;\* and it is an answer which, if the inquirer is in earnest, and is simply solicitous about what is practical and personal in religion, should be held sufficient, if not to satisfy, yet at least to silence: The condition of all men, in respect of present duty and ultimate responsibility, is materially affected by the fact of such a sacrifice of atonement being provided, or, at least, by the publication of that fact. It does not leave them where it finds them. Those who have had the gospel preached to them, and have rejected it, incur an immeasurably heavier load of guilt than if they had never heard the joyful sound. So the Lord Jesus expressly and repeatedly testifies. And even as regards the heathen,—in so far as God, in his providence, gives them any hint or any information on the subject of his long-suffering patience and love, in its connection with a mediatorial economy of grace,—they also are on that account the more inexcusable. In this sense and to this effect the death of Christ has undoubtedly a universal bearing. Whoever comes to the knowledge of it, in proportion to the clearness of his knowledge of it, is the worse for it if he is not the better. His criminality is aggravated,

if he refuses to submit to God and be reconciled to God, upon the footing of those proposals of peace for which the death of Christ opens up the way. So far the solemn truth in this matter is plain enough.\* As to anything further,—as to any exact definition or description of the precise nature of the bearing which the death of Christ has upon the world at large, including the unbelieving portion of it,—an intelligent advocate of the Calvinistic view will be inclined to bid the inquirer consider that on a subject of this sort Holy Scripture may very possibly be found to furnish no adequate materials for explicit statement; it being the design of revelation to exercise faith rather than gratify curiosity, and to leave many speculative difficulties unsolved till the light of eternity dawns on the comparative darkness of time.

Still, however, while all that is true, it is at the same time most important that the actual state of the case should be ascertained and explained. In this view, and with reference to the universal aspect of the atonement, there is a great fact to be asserted, and there are certain inferences from it to be vindicated, according to the Scriptures.

It is, then, a great fact, that the death of Christ, or his work of obedience and propitiation, has procured for the world at large, and for every individual,—the impenitent and unbelieving as well as the "chosen, and called, and faithful,"—certain definite, tangible, and ascertainable benefits;—benefits, I mean, not nominal, but real;\* and not of a vague, but of a well defined and specific character. Of these the first and chief,—that which in truth comprehends all the rest,—is the universal grant to all mankind of a season of forbearance,—a respite or suspension of judgment,—a day or dispensation of grace.

This measure of forbearance on the part of God is uniformly represented in Scripture as having reference to his plan of mercy and salvation, and as designed to be subservient to the carrying out of that plan.\* So the Apostle Paul speaks when he appeals to the man who is reckoning on ultimate impunity and neglecting present grace:

"Despisest thou the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?" (Rom. 2:4). To the same effect, and in the same connection, the Apostle Peter also testifies,—having in his mind, as he tells us, this very saying of his "beloved brother Paul,"—"The Lord is not slack concerning 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:" upon which view of the motive and purpose of the divine forbearance he founds the pointed exhortation, "Account that the long-suffering of God is salvation" (2 Peter 3:9–15).<sup>\*</sup> This measure of forbearance, accordingly, is further represented as implying that there is put in motion a system of means, and agencies, and influences, fitted in their own nature to lead men to God, and sufficient in amount and cogency to leave them without excuse if they continue ignorant of him and alienated from him. Thus Paul and Barnabas, addressing the people of Lystra, and speaking of the forbearance of God, who "in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways," adds the explanation which gives its proper character to that forbearance: "Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness" (Acts 14:17). In the same strain Paul discourses at Athens (Acts 17:22–31), and reasons with the Church at Rome (Rom. 1 and 2); demonstrating at length that, in his long-suffering towards the heathen, God gave them, in his works around them, and in the voice of conscience within them, light that should have sufficed to keep them in the knowledge of himself. Thus even to them the dispensation of forbearance is described as having a character of grace. Much more must it be evident that it possesses such a gracious character when it is signalized by the proclamation of the Gospel and the institution of the Church. For then it must be held to include all the ordinances of God's word and worship, together with those common operations of the Spirit which are fitted to render these ordinances effectual to salvation.

The connection between this universal dispensation of gracious forbearance and the atonement as its procuring cause, is asserted by manifest implication in the whole strain, scope, and spirit of the teaching of Scripture on the subject.\* One passage, in particular, may be selected, as bringing out the connection very explicitly. In his most systematic exposition of the great doctrine of justification, the Apostle Paul traces back that benefit to the "free grace of God" as its source, and to the "redemption that is in Christ Jesus" as the channel through which it flows to the guilty; and he immediately adds: "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. 3:25, 26).

In this clear and unequivocal statement of the apostle, the dispensation of long-suffering patience and the dispensation of saving mercy are, as it would appear, equally ascribed to the interposition of Christ and his finished work of redemption. It is intimated that "God hath set forth Christ to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness;" which expression—"his righteousness"—is explained in the following verse to mean his justice: "That he might be just," or might be declared or seen to be just—that the righteousness of his administration might be vindicated and magnified.

That is not, indeed, the usual meaning of the expression in this epistle.\* In all other places it must be taken to denote the righteousness—not subjective as regards God, but objective—which he has provided, and of which he has accepted, in the person and work of his own beloved Son; that justifying righteousness which is "unto all and upon all them that believe" (Rom. 3:22); which, as a righteousness by faith, is revealed in order to faith (Rom. 1:17); and of which in another epistle Paul speaks as "not his own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith" (Phil. 3:9). In

the passage now before us, however, it seems clear that it is the attribute or principle of justice, as characteristic of God's nature and administration, that we are to understand by that "righteousness" of his, which, as the apostle intimates, needs to be "declared," or manifested and made illustrious.

And the point to be observed is, that there are two things represented as calling for that "declaration" of this "righteousness;"\* two aspects of God's providence in dealing with men which otherwise must appear anomalies and inconsistencies. The first is, his "passing over sins that are past, through forbearance," (Rom. 3:25, marg). The second is, "his justifying him that believeth in Jesus" (ver. 26). His past exercise of forbearance, and his present ministry of justification, are the two acts which might seem to impeach the rectitude of his moral government and touch or tamper with the sanctions of his law, but for his "setting forth" or "foreordaining" (ver. 25, marg.) "Christ to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood."

The distinction here is, in the first instance, a distinction between the general character of God's treatment of men before Christ came into the world, and the peculiar grace of the gospel dispensation.\* The former is, as has been seen, elsewhere described by this same apostle as a sort of connivance, on the part of God, in comparison with the urgency and universality of his subsequent appeal: "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent." In these "times past he suffered all nations to walk in their own ways" (Acts 14:16); whereas now he would have all men to "turn from lying vanities unto the living God" (ver. 15). It is plain, however, that even thus viewed, the distinction in question does not turn on the dates of these dispensations of forbearance and of justification respectively, nor on the era of transition from a period when the dispensation of forbearance prevailed to a period characterized by the promineny of the dispensation of justification. It turns really on their difference in nature from one another, and on their bringing out God's twofold manner of dealing with the children of men,—his showing forbearance to all, and his justifying them that



believe. We are to remember, also, that before Christ's coming, though the leading feature of God's providence was his letting men alone, he never left himself without a witness,—he always had a ministry of justification going on; while since that time, though his appointment is more clear and unequivocal, that an aggressive system is to be plied towards the whole world—whose inhabitants, instead of being let alone, and having their "times of ignorance winked at," and being "suffered to walk in their own ways," are all to be pressed to accept of a fuller grace—still, the wonder of mercy is God's forbearance—the suspension of his judgment—his passing by sins so many and so heinous—sins, too, aggravated by the rejection of the offered Saviour.\* On the whole, therefore, we may understand the passage under review as discriminating the respective natures, rather than the dates, of these two dispensations, and as connecting both of them equally with the "setting forth of Christ to be a propitiation." It is that transaction which, whether as regards the history of the world at large, or as regards the history of its individual inhabitants, justifies God in both of these modes of dealing with men. Without it, or apart from it, he could neither exercise long-suffering nor impart justification, except by a compromise of his righteousness—a sacrifice and surrender of that all-important and essential attribute of his character and administration.

It is to be observed, however, that this can be said only of a dispensation of forbearance which is gracious in its character and tendency, having in it gracious means and influences of a saving tendency. It is only such an exercise of long-suffering towards the guilty that needs any such vindication of God's righteousness as the atoning death of Christ is declared to furnish.\* It is an additional proof, therefore, of the dispensation of forbearance being really gracious—granted in love and meant for good—that it is so expressly associated with that highest instance of the Divine benevolence, God's gift of his Son to be the propitiation for sin. This great transaction—the setting up on earth of the cross of Christ—is that which makes it plain, in the eyes of all intelligences, that God is still just, when, in his long-suffering patience, waiting to be gracious, he

spares for an appointed season a whole guilty race and all its guilty members, as well as when he freely and graciously justifies them that believe in Jesus.

For it is possible to conceive of another sort of dispensation of forbearance that might have been extended to fallen man, and that would have required no such vindication.\* There might have been reasons for sparing mankind, irrespectively altogether of the atonement, and although no such provision of grace had ever been contemplated. Thus, for the sake of illustration, we may venture to conceive of the alternative before the Divine mind, upon man's commission of sin, having been decided otherwise than he was pleased to decide it, in his eternal counsels. We may imagine that instead of a gracious purpose to save any, there had been a righteous and holy determination to leave all to perish. Even on such a supposition, the earth, cursed for man's sake, might have been preserved for a season. The final judgment and conflagration might have been delayed.\* The race of sinners might have been suffered, or ordained, to increase and multiply, till the full number of the generations of Adam's children should be completed, and all in succession should individually and collectively give evidence of their participation in his guilt and corruption, by bringing forth, from the seed of original sin, the bitter fruit of actual transgressions. By their own deeds, virtually consenting to the deed of Adam and concurring in it, they might have been appointed to manifest personally each one of them his own iniquity, in order that, in the final and universal ruin, the righteousness of the Judge of all might be all the more conspicuously vindicated and glorified.

This, indeed, maybe regarded as but too probable a result, or rather the inevitable result, of such a purpose of inexorable judgment without redemption as I have dared to indicate. For it was not with fallen man as it was with the fallen angels.\* These last completed their apostasy at once. They may, indeed, like the race of man, have been dealt with by God upon that footing or principle of representation which seems to characterize so generally his

providential government of his intelligent creation. They may have been led on in their rebellion by an individual of their number, either chosen by themselves or appointed by God to be their captain and head; and it may have been ordained that by his conduct they were to stand or fall. In their case, also, as in the case of mankind, it may have been a single offence, committed in the name of the disobedient by a single and selected surety, which signaled their disloyalty, and sealed their character and fate. There is, however, a very obvious difference. In the probation of the angels, all the parties on whose behalf the trial was made being already in existence, and capable of giving voluntary consent, the execution of the sweeping sentence might be swift and summary. But in the case of man, had there been no remedy provided, we must believe that the whole progeny of Adam, whom, in his probation, he represented, would still have been brought into being. They were not in existence when he, as their head and representative, was tried and fell. They must have come into existence, in successive generations after him.\* Is it not, then, a fair and probable presumption, that all would have been suffered, one after another, each individual for himself, to show what was in them? None would have been taken away in infancy. None would have passed from earth before opportunity had been given them on earth to manifest, by their own wicked works, their practical acquiescence and complicity in the rebellion of their first father. Under such an arrangement the reality and universality of the imputed guilt and transmitted taint of his original apostasy would have clearly appeared, and the condemnation of all his posterity would have been proved to be inevitable.

I have ventured to say, that, upon the supposition now made, none would have died in infancy.\* All would have lived on until their actual as well as original iniquity was full. Hence it follows that the death of little children must be held to be one of the fruits of redemption. It is a blessed consequence or corollary which may thus be drawn from what I cannot but regard as an all but certain, if not even a self-evident, assumption. If there had been no atonement, there would have been no infant death.\* It is on account of the

atonement that infants die. Their salvation is therefore sure. Christ has purchased for himself the joy of taking them, while yet unconscious of guilt or corruption, to be with him in paradise. That any little children at all die,—that so many little children die,—is not the least among the benefits that flow from his interposition as the Saviour.

There is great satisfaction in this thought. In many ways, I apprehend, it may be inferred from Scripture that all dying in infancy are elect, and are therefore saved. Our Lord's special love to little children,—his taking them into his arms and blessing them,—his saying "Of such is the kingdom of heaven,"—cannot but suggest this hope. The apostle's argument (Rom. 5:14, 15) on the subject of imputation fairly implies that as they are involved in the deadly disease of sin, "though they have not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression," so they are interested equally in the life-giving remedy of the gospel. The whole analogy of the plan of saving mercy seems to favour the same view. And now it may be seen, if I am not greatly mistaken, to be put beyond question by the bare fact that little children die. Their dying while yet innocent of actual sin—their being thus "taken from the evil to come"—is of itself a proof of their being "righteous," in the righteousness of Christ (Isa. 57:1). When they die, it is because he says, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not."

It is true that early death is usually deprecated in Scripture as a heavy calamity; and in particular, the death of a little child is represented as a sore stroke, and sometimes also a heavy judgment, to its parents. It was so in the instance of David, when Nathan announced it as the punishment of his sin in the matter of Uriah: "And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the Lord. And Nathan said unto David, The Lord also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die. Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die" (2 Sam. 12:13, 14). It is true, also, that in the glorious state of things described by Isaiah (65:17–25),

the death of infants seems to be referred to as a special source of sorrow, as well as a peculiar token of sin, from which that period is to be exempt. Nor, indeed, is it possible to conceive of any more affecting proof of the malignity and power of sin, than the sight of one who has never sinned after the similitude of Adam's sin, or of our sin—the new-born babe, guiltless of actual transgression—yet, on account of sin, doomed to suffer, to languish, and to expire, often in convulsions of pain. The heart round which the tie of a new affection has begun to twine itself, cannot but be smitten to the dust when the bond is thus rudely and prematurely cut in twain; and recognising the melancholy ravages of the destroyer, where shall it find rest but in a scene from which this sad disaster is excluded?\* But all this is quite consistent with the opinion that to die in infancy is a privilege procured by the death of Christ for those who are thus early carried away;—that but for his interposition, all the children of Adam would have lived to heap the guilt of their own wilful iniquities, besides their inherited sin, upon their own heads;—that it is a part of his purchase to have many of his seed given to him to be regenerated and sanctified from the womb, and of these to have so large a proportion taken early home to be with him where he is.

This idea which I here venture to throw out is one full of interest and consolation, and it seems to be warranted by the analogy of Scripture; but the present is not the occasion for enlarging upon it. My immediate object is to explain that we are not to connect the sparing of the earth, and of men upon the earth, in itself and as a matter of course, with the death of Christ; since, even had there been no design of atonement and mediation at all, it might still have been necessary, for the ends of righteous judgment, that there should be time given for the whole race to increase and multiply, and sin, and perish. But that would not have been an exercise of long-suffering, or a dispensation of forbearance and patience, properly so called;—any more than the partial respite or licence given to Satan and his angels, before their being first bound, and then cast into the lake of fire, can be viewed in that light.

Evidently, however, the apostle speaks of a dispensation of postponed or suspended judgment, with the accompanying benefit of a system of means fitted to effect reconciliation,—he points to a gracious respite, and not merely to a penal licence or opportunity,—when he represents the "passing over of men's sins through the forbearance of God" as being, not less than the "justifying of him that believeth in Jesus," connected with this as its procuring cause,—that God hath "set forth Christ to be a propitiation."

Now, this surely is a real, definite, and substantial benefit, of a universal sort, accruing to the human family at large, from there being an atoning sacrifice provided and accepted by God.\* So far all men alike are interested in the death of Christ. This, at all events, is a great fact, to be ever kept in view when we inquire concerning the aspect which the atonement presents to all men alike, as an indication or discovery of the mind and will of God. It establishes God's claim to be regarded by all men as their benefactor in this matter; to whom they are indebted for what is in itself a good thing, and what is fitted to be a good thing to them,—for that "long-suffering" which may be, and ought to be, "accounted salvation."\*

## CHAPTER II

THE DISPENSATION OF GRACIOUS FORBEARANCE—THE GOOD-WILL OF GOD—THE UNIVERSAL WARRANT AND ENCOURAGEMENT TO BELIEVE

HAVING attempted to show that, according to the teaching of the divine word, the grant of a gracious respite to all our guilty race,—a suspension of judgment with a view to overtures and appliances of

mercy,—is due to the atoning work of Christ, and that his death must consequently be regarded as having so far a universal bearing; I might take leave of this part of the subject by simply asking if this great fact is not enough at least to stop every mouth, and cause all men everywhere, instead of cavilling, to stand in awe.\* A few additional remarks, however, it may not be superfluous to offer, for the purpose of bringing out still more clearly the "good-will to men" which the dispensation of forbearance founded on the atonement breathes; as well as the warrant of faith which it furnishes, by at once imposing a duty upon all, and affording encouragement to all.

I would observe, then, in the first place, that what has been said as to the actual obligation under which mankind at large, including the finally lost, lie to Christ and his work, for a benefit in point of fact real and valuable, is not at all affected by the circumstance that the season of long-suffering, and the system of means which it includes, are extended to them all indiscriminately, mainly and chiefly for the sake of the elect who are among them.\* For, on the one hand, it does not appear that this can be established, from Scripture, to be the only reason which God has for such a mode of dealing with the world. It is true, indeed, that the elect are the salt of the earth, whose presence would procure a respite even for a Sodom; and when they are gathered in, and not a soul remains to be converted, the period of forbearance will come to a close.\* But this does not prove that God may not have other ends to serve, besides the salvation of his elect people,—and ends more closely connected with the individuals themselves who are thus spared and subjected to salutary influences, though in vain,—when he extends to them his goodness for a time.\* And then, on the other hand, whether directly or indirectly—mediately or immediately—for their own sakes or for the elect's sake—the fact, after all, is the same—and it is important and significant—that the forbearance granted to every sinner, and the favour shown in a way manifestly fitted to lead him to repentance, must be ascribed to the interposition of Christ, and his sacrifice of himself upon the cross.

It is this consideration which explains the frequent use of language concerning the impenitent and unbelieving, fitted to convey the impression of their interest in Christ's death and in the plan of mercy being, at all events, such as to make the ruin which may overtake them in spite of it, really their own doing and their own choice.\* What strong and touching appeals are made to sinners in that state, as "bringing upon themselves swift destruction,"—as "treasuring up unto themselves wrath,"—as being, in a word, the wilful authors and causes of their own miserable fate! Thus the Eternal Wisdom testifies: "Whoso findeth me findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the Lord. But he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul: all they that hate me love death" (Prov. 8:35, 36). So also the Prophet Jonah puts the case: "They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy" (Jonah 2:8). And Jesus, weeping over Jerusalem, exclaims: "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!" (Matt 23:37.) The same consideration must also be taken into account, as adding solemn weight to denunciations like that which the Apostle Peter launches against apostates, who are "bringing in damnable heresies," when he charges them with "denying the Lord that bought them." For, whatever other explanation may be put upon these words, as indicating chiefly what these criminals profess to be, and what they must in the judgment be accounted to be,—still it is never to be forgotten that there is a very terrible, and as it were ultimate and final sense, in which even the reprobate are declared to be within the reach and range of the atoning work of Christ, and to be really purchased or bought by him with a price.\*

It is a material part of the covenant of redemption, that, in respect of his obedience and death, the Redeemer has received the right, and power, and commission to deal judicially with those who will not have him to deal with them graciously,—to dispose of them in such a manner as to glorify his Father's holy and righteous name, and secure the accomplishment of his people's salvation. This is one fruit



of his purchase as Redeemer. For his finished work of propitiation, and as its recompense, he himself declares that the Father hath "given him power over all flesh, that he might give eternal life to as many as the Father hath given him" (John 17:1, 2). And the Father, accordingly, is represented in the Psalms as ratifying this assurance to his Son: "Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel" (Ps. 2:8, 9).

Let it be observed here, in explanation of this last view of the bearing of the atonement, and the concern which all sinners, even the lost, have in it, that there is a double sense in which we may speak of Christ's purchase.\* Strictly and properly, we are to regard him as purchasing men. It is only in a secondary sense, and with less propriety, that we are to consider him as purchasing benefits for men; in a sense rather figurative and metaphorical than real and literal.\* For the idea of Christ purchasing benefits from the Father for mankind, must ever be so understood as to be in consistency with the Father's sovereignty, and especially in consistency with the Father's pre-existing love to the children of men. The Father is not induced or persuaded to bestow benefits on men by a price paid to him; but being antecedently full of compassion to all, and having a purpose to deliver many, he appoints and ordains—he decrees and brings in—this death of his Son as a satisfaction to divine justice, and a propitiation for human guilt, that he may be justified in showing forbearance and kindness to the world, as well as in ultimately and gloriously saving his own elect.\* In this aspect, therefore, of the matter, it may be said, I apprehend, with equal fitness and equal truth, that Christ purchased the benefits implied in the long-suffering of God for all, and that he purchased the blessings of actual salvation for his elect.\* Both the one and the other may be held to be the fruit of his purchase. For, so far as appears from Scripture, his death is not less indispensable as a condition of any being spared for a season, than it is as a condition of the "great multitude, which no man could number" (Rev. 7:9), being everlastingly saved.

In regard, again, to the other light in which Christ's purchase may be viewed,—its being a purchase, not of certain benefits for men, but of men themselves,—there is room for an important distinction.\* In right of his merit, his service, and his sacrifice, all are given into his hands, and all are his. All mankind, therefore, may be said to be bought by him, inasmuch as, by his humiliation, obedience, and death, he has obtained, as by purchase, a right over them all—he has had them all placed under his power, and at his disposal. But it is for very different purposes and ends. The reprobate are his to be judged; the elect are his to be saved.\* As to the former, it is no ransom or redemption, fairly so called. He has won them—bought them, if you will;—but it is that he may so dispose of them as to glorify the retributive righteousness of God in their condemnation; aggravated, as that condemnation must be, by their rejection of himself. This is no propitiation, in any proper meaning of that term. It is no offering of himself to bear their sins—no bringing in of a perfect righteousness on their account. It is rather an office or function which he has obtained for himself by the same work—or has had intrusted to him for the sake of the same shedding of blood—by which he expiated the sins of his people, as their true and proper substitute, and merited their salvation, as their righteous representative and head.\* It is an office or function, moreover, which he undertakes on his people's behalf, and which he executes faithfully for their highest good, as well as for his Father's glory.

These distinctions seem to be important as explanatory of the real aspect and bearing of the atonement, considered in the light of a purchase. But they do not, let it be ever kept in mind, in the least touch or impeach the great fact that the atonement does actually procure for all mankind indiscriminately a suspension of judgment, or dispensation of long-suffering patience, embracing means and movements of grace, more or less abundant in different cases, but yet of a nature to stamp an undeniably gracious character on the dispensation itself to which they belong.\* This will probably appear still more clearly if due attention is given to two inferences fairly deducible from the great fact which I have been illustrating.

I. The death of Christ is to all men universally, and to every individual alike, a manifestation of the character, or name, or nature of God, and of his plan of mercy.\* In this respect, Christ is "the true light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." He is so as the Eternal "Word, by whom the world was made, and who has ever been in the world, the life and the light of men" (John 1:4–9). From the beginning he has always been the living light of men; their "light of life;" shining among them and in them, more or less clearly, in the revelation or discovery of the truth, and by the inspiration or illumination of the Spirit; "giving the light of the knowledge of the glory of God;" unfolding, "at sundry times and in divers manners," the being and attributes of the Most High, and opening up, at least in a measure, the holy and loving heart of the Everlasting Father. As "the Word made flesh," "in these last days,"—in his incarnation, in his human life, and in his death, he is now more manifestly and pre-eminently "the light of men;" the light to enlighten them in the true knowledge of God,—of what his essential attributes and his dispositions towards his creatures really are,—according to his own saying: "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (John 14:9). For it is when he is seen "lifted up," expiating guilt on the cross, that Jesus now fully reveals the Father, and the Father's pure and perfect benevolence, in the provision so wonderfully and fearfully made for reconciling the exercise of mercy with the claims of justice. This service his cross renders equally to all before whom it is exhibited, and in proportion to the distinctness and completeness of the exhibition of it. It is a service, therefore, which it renders, not to the elect specially, but to men generally and universally.

II. But not only is the cross of Christ a manifestation equally to all of the name or nature of God,—it is the proof and measure of that infinite compassion which dwells in the bosom of God towards each and all of the lost race of Adam, and his infinite willingness, or rather longing and yearning desire, to receive each and all of them again into his favour.\* Even the cross itself would almost seem to be an inadequate expression—though it is a blessed confirmation—of what is in his heart;—of the feeling, so to speak, to which he gives

utterance, when, enforcing his appeal by an oath, he swears: "As I live, saith the Lord God. I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked;"—and of the deep, ineffable sincerity of his assurance, that he would rather—how much rather!—"that the wicked should turn from his way and live" (Ezek. 33:11).

Here, once more, I must ask the thoughtful student of Scripture to discriminate.

There is a well known theological distinction between God's will of decree (*voluntas decreti*) and his will of desire or of good pleasure (*voluntas beneplaciti*)—between what his mind, on a consideration of all interests, actually determines, and what his heart, from its very nature, if I may venture to use the expression, cannot but decidedly prefer and wish.\* The types, or expressions, of these two wills respectively, are to be found in two classes of texts which are commonly quoted as proofs and instances of the reality of the distinction between them. Of the first class of texts, one of the most obvious is that in which the Apostle Paul puts into the mouth of the gainsayer the sophistical argument that he is about to answer:\* "Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? for who hath resisted his will?" (Rom. 9:19). Such a question could be asked only with reference to God's will of determination, or of decree, fixing what is to take place. To the same aspect of the will of God the penitent king of Babylon more reverentially and submissively points when he exclaims: "He doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?" (Dan. 4:35.) Of the other class of texts, indicating the other aspect of the will of God,—his will, if one may so speak, of nature, or of natural preference and desire,—examples in abundance might be quoted; but one may suffice. Take that in which the Lord pours forth his earnest longing, almost in a burst of pathetic and passionate regret.\* "Oh that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways! I should soon have subdued their enemies and turned my hand against their adversaries"—"He should have fed them also with the

finest of the wheat; and with honey out of the rock should I have satisfied thee" (Ps. 81:13, 14, 16).

This latter will of desire or good pleasure, as distinguished from the former will of determination or decree, denotes the pure complacency with which God approves of a certain result as just and holy and good in itself. On that account he delights in it, and therefore wills to enjoin it on the creature, as his most bounden duty. And for the same reason, in enjoining it, he cannot but add the assurance of his most willing acceptance of it, whensoever, wheresoever, and howsoever realized.

Even in a human agent, some such distinction as is here contended for must be recognised.\* Knowing his character—knowing his very heart,—you can at once specify, promptly and most confidently, what would be most agreeable and welcome to him,—what sort of scene or spectacle he would most delight to contemplate. But you must know a great deal more respecting his opinions, and the circumstances with which these opinions come into contact—or, in a word, respecting his mind,—his judgment as to what, in certain contingencies, he is to do, and the reasons of his judgment,—before you can be qualified to understand the whole of his procedure. Still, if he were a straightforward man, you would act without hesitation, in any case in which your personal interest was concerned, on what you knew of his heart, although you might have much perplexity in discerning, or even conjecturing, all the views which, in certain difficult cases, must enter into the making up of his mind.

Thus, I may take a familiar instance,—which, however, I would say, by way of warning, is by no means to be pressed too far.\* A man of undoubted and notorious beneficence to the industrious poor, or the poor willing to be industrious, has peculiar opinions on pauperism generally, and on the right mode of dealing with certain instances of pauperism. His peculiar opinions involve his conduct in some degree of mystery to the uninitiated: they may, and must, give rise to various questions in regard to some unexplained parts of his

procedure. Now, if I am a beggar, perishing without his aid, shall I perplex myself with difficulties arising out of my ignorance of the reasons that determine his resolution in these particulars;—or shall I not rather proceed upon my acquaintance with his acknowledged goodness, and, on the faith of his own express invitations, appeal at once to his generosity and truthfulness as my ample warrant for expecting at his hands all that is needed to meet my case? Evidently, in such a state of matters, I would practically draw the very distinction on which theologians insist. Knowing my friend's character, and frankly interpreting his frank assurances to me,—to all situated like me,—without reference to any inquiries that might be raised respecting his possible or actual treatment of certain difficult cases, not as yet fully opened up to me,—I would venture confidently to make my application to him, and I would feel no anxiety whatever about the issue.

So is it with God. His will, as determining what, in any given case, is to be the actual result realized, is an act of his omniscient mind, which he need not explain to us. But his will, as defining what, in every conceivable case, would be the result most agreeable and welcome to him, is an inherent part of his nature, and, as it were, a feature of his heart. In the one view, his will is consistent with many being impenitent and lost; in the other, his will, or rather he himself, would have all men everywhere to repent and be saved.

Now, it is into this latter will, this will of the DIVINE HEART, and not into the former, the will of the DIVINE MIND,—it is into what God, from his very nature, must and does desire, in reference to lost sinners, and not into what God, for ends and on principles as yet unknown, has decreed,—that the cross of Christ gives mankind at large, and every individual, if he will but look, a clear, unequivocal, and most satisfying insight.\* To every individual, believer or not, elect or not, it is a proof and pledge of the Father's bowels of compassion yearning over him, and the Father's eye looking out for him, and the Father's arms open to embrace him freely, if he will but be moved to return.\* And to no individual, before he does return, is

it, or can it be, anything more. To none does it beforehand impart any further insight into the character and will of God, as a warrant or encouragement to believe.

Nor is more needed. This alone is sufficient to lay a foundation for the universality of the gospel offer or call; to vindicate its sincerity or good faith on the part of God; and to demonstrate its sufficiency as regards men. For all practical ends, enough is gained when the gospel call or offer, as both free and universal, is fairly put beyond question, or cavil, or doubt. And that it is so, on the view advocated by Calvinists respecting the atonement, a few closing observations may now suffice to show.

1. To vindicate God in this procedure, and to satisfy men, it is enough that these two things be acknowledged and established:—first, His right to require and command the sinner's return to himself; and, secondly, His willingness and ability, in consistency with the ends of justice, to save all such as do return.\* It is irrelevant here to raise any question either as to the extent, or even as to the sufficiency, of the atonement. It is enough that it is sufficient for all who will avail themselves of it, and who seek, in this appointed way, to return to God—sufficient for washing away guilt of deepest dye, and corruption of darkest stain. This, taken along with the undoubted right which God has to say to the sinner—not merely graciously, and in the way of a free permission, but authoritatively, and in the way of a peremptory command—Return, repent, believe—is enough to shut the sinner up to the necessity of complying with the call.\* And if we add, what has already been explained, the insight given into the character and heart of God,—into the intensity of his longing desire to see every sinner return, and to embrace every sinner returning,—what can be wanting, so far as argument, or motive, or warrant is concerned, to bring the prodigal again, in relenting contrition, to his Father,—to bring the rebel, in new-born allegiance, to his Lord?

2. No sinner, before believing, is entitled to stipulate for any information on the subject either of the extent or of the sufficiency of

the atonement, beyond the assurance that it will suffice for him, if he will make use of it. To raise a question as to what may be its aspect or bearing towards him, while he is yet rejecting it, and to insist on his having that question answered or settled, as a preliminary condition of his believing, is not only arrogant presumption, but mere infatuation.\* And to deal with any such question, as if it might occasion any scruple really embarrassing to a soul really in earnest, and therefore really deserving of pity,—or as if the statement of Christ's dying for his people, and for them only, must be modified or qualified to meet the scruple,—is but fostering the impiety, and flattering the folly, of unbelief. Let the sovereign authority of God in the gospel call be asserted, and let the sinner, as a rebel, be summoned, at his peril, to return to his allegiance. Let him be certified, also, of the sufficiency of Christ's atoning death for all the purposes for which he can possibly need it, and the free and full welcome that awaits him with the Father. What more has he a right to ask? "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will show them his covenant." To believers, accordingly, more insight may be given into the mind and purpose of God. But let not unbelievers imagine that they, while yet in an attitude of rebellion, are entitled to have all things made plain. What! shall it be deemed necessary to accommodate our statements respecting God's love to his elect, Christ's death for them, and the Spirit's witness in them, to the difficulties which may be started as to the precise relation of all these to the unconverted,—difficulties which the unconverted man starts while continuing in a state of sin,—difficulties which would vanish on the instant of his being converted, and so ceasing to sin? Surely to give the slightest countenance to any such notion, is to bring down the sovereign Jehovah to the rank of a mere petitioner for man's favour, and to degrade the gospel to the level of a kind of bargaining and trafficking with presumptuous offenders. It is, in fact, to place salvation at the mere discretion of sinners, who may condescend to look at it, and, if all is to their mind, make trial of it; instead of bringing the guilty, at once and peremptorily, to the bar of an offended Judge, who does not relinquish the stern hold of his just sovereignty over them, even while, with melting love, he beseeches



them, as a gracious Father, to be reconciled to himself. It is to be feared that the gospel trumpet has sometimes, in this respect, given forth too feeble and hesitating a sound, when a higher tone might have been more constraining in its influence over the heart, as well as more cogent and commanding in its appeal to the conscience.

3. But, further, it might be shown that even if men had more Information on the point in question, it would not help them to believe.\* For faith is not the belief of an express proposition defining the precise relation of Christ's death to the elect, or to men in general, or to the individual in particular. It is "the receiving and resting upon Jesus Christ alone for salvation, as he is freely offered in the gospel." According to that view, even the revelation of the decree of election, and of my name in it, would not materially help me in believing; and, at all events, would not produce faith. For it is not the knowledge or belief of a certain fact respecting the bearing of Christ's death on me, that saves me, but my trust in him as "the way" to the Father. Still less could it avail me to know with the utmost possible exactness, and to be able to put into the most precise categorical proposition, the exact relation or connection between the death of Christ and men at large, including the non-elect. The knowledge of that fact, and the belief of that proposition, would not, after all, advance me by a single footstep towards true faith. For the faith which is truly saving is neither mere knowledge nor bare belief, but a hearty acquiescence in God's proposal, and acceptance of God's gift, and reliance on his faithful promise, for all the benefits of salvation, including pardon, peace, holiness, and everlasting life.

It would be premature to discuss here fully the question which will meet us afterwards, as to the nature of the faith which saves the soul. I may be allowed, however, again to remind the reader that this treatise originated in an attempt to illustrate the harmony of divine truth, and to show how an error, however trivial, in one part of the Christian system, vitiates the whole. The instance selected was faith, and especially the view held by those who make faith a simple act of the understanding—the intellectual apprehension and belief of the

truth.\* Right or wrong, I cannot but regard it as a consequence of that view of faith, that it forces us to express in the shape of a definite and exact proposition the relation of Christ's death to those who are called to believe,—that is, to mankind at large; and so to frame a sense in which it may be said that Christ died for all men, and in which, therefore, every sinner may be at once and summarily required to believe that Christ died for him. It must be a sense, however, after all, falling short of the sense in which the believer does actually, upon his believing, come to apprehend and appropriate Christ as his surety, according to the full meaning of Paul's language of appropriation: "The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Gal. 2:20). On the other hand, as I am still inclined to argue, the more simple view of faith which seems to be sanctioned by our Standards, supersedes the necessity of any such definition, since it makes faith consist, not in the belief of any definite proposition at all, but in the committing of the soul, and the soul's interests for eternity, to a divine person. In order to the exercise of such a faith as that, it is indispensable to know the truth concerning Christ's death, as a manifestation of the Father's character, and as the way to the Father's fellowship. But as to any more minute information, respecting the relation of Christ's death to the world while yet unbelieving, not only has Holy Scripture, as I believe, withheld such information, but, even if it were granted, it would avail nothing to understand and receive it. The real belief of the truth is independent of it altogether; and, in fact, for any practical purposes connected with the sinner's actual return to God, it would be alike impertinent were he to ask it, and useless were he to obtain it.

When I say that saving faith does not consist in the belief of any definite proposition, I do not mean that it consists in the belief of an indefinite one. In so far as it has to do with propositions at all, it is with such as are quite definite and precise; clear, exact, and categorical. That "God is love;" that he "so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life;" that Jesus "is able to save unto

the uttermost all that come unto God by him;" that as "all that the Father giveth him shall come unto him," so "him that cometh unto him he will in no wise cast out;"—these, and many other similar propositions with which faith is concerned, are not indefinite; if by indefinite we are to understand vague statements, or statements of doubtful interpretation. But while these definite propositions constitute the warrant or ground of saving faith, and while the intelligent belief of them must lie at the foundation of any gracious act or exercise of soul, still I cannot but think that saving faith is something more than this belief, and something different from it. The truth is, this belief of these definite propositions, having its seat in the understanding, needs to be quickened, as it were, into warmth and vital power, by touch and contact with the more energetic principles of our nature; so that first, carrying the will, it becomes appropriating faith; next, meeting with the conscience, it becomes repentance and godly sorrow for sin; then, entering the heart, it worketh by love; and lastly, impregnated with the instinct of ambition and the desire of the highest good, it ripens into holy and heavenly hope.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **THE COMPLETENESS OF THE ATONEMENT—ITS ADAPTATION TO THE REAL NEED OF THE SINNER**

THE following propositions may be taken as embodying the substance of the statements in the preceding chapters, respecting the bearing of Christ's work, or rather of the publication of it, on the world at large.

For it is to be observed always, that, let the design and efficacy of the work itself be ever so definite, the publication of it, being confessedly indefinite, cannot but affect materially the condition of all to whom it is made, as regards both their present duty and their ultimate responsibility. To say, as some do, that the atonement, if held to have been undertaken for a certain number, cannot be a demonstration of love to all, is to confound the secret with the revealed will of God (Deut. 29:29).<sup>\*</sup> Were the parties, whether few or many, for whom it is undertaken, named in the proclamation of it, in that case, doubtless, it could not be a demonstration of good-will to mankind generally, or to sinners indiscriminately as such. But since what is revealed is simply the way of acceptance, or the principle on which God acts in justifying the ungodly, it seems plain that to whomsoever such a revelation comes, with names and numbers suppressed, it is, in its very nature, a revelation of love. Let it be granted that Christ's work, like Christ himself, is set forth "for judgment" (John 9:39); for "the fall and rising again of many in Israel" (Luke 2:34); for "a savour of life or of death" (2 Cor. 2:15, 16). Let it be granted, also, that the names and numbers of those to whom it is to be the one or the other respectively, are fixed in the very undertaking and accomplishment of the work. Still, to each individual to whom it is presented, with the alternative announcement that it will certainly be to him either life or death, and with that alone, it necessarily must be a manifestation of grace. Any question that may be raised as to the divine rectitude and faithfulness in such a procedure, is really no other than the great and insoluble question as to the combination of the divine will with the human, or the divine agency with that of man, in any work whatever.<sup>\*</sup> That difficulty remains on any supposition. And certainly, on the hypothesis of a general and universal design or intention in the atonement itself, coupled with a limited and special design in the application of it, or in the work of the Spirit making it effectual the difficulty is not less than on the most rigid Calvinistic theory. No system but that of universal pardon, or rather that of universal salvation, cuts the knot. No system admitting special grace anywhere, or at any stage, even approaches a solution of it. The truth is, we attempt what is presumptuous and vain, when we seek to

vindicate the consistency and sincerity of God in the gospel call by going beyond the assurance, that whosoever will put him to the proof, will find him faithful.

But, to return to the propositions in which the substance of the former sections may be embodied, they are these:—\*

1. The present dispensation of long-suffering patience towards the world at large stands connected with the work of Christ, as its condition or cause. That dispensation of forbearance is subservient to the dispensation of grace, and preparatory to the dispensation of judgment. And, in either view, it is the fruit of Christ's mediation.
2. To all alike, the work of Christ is a manifestation of the divine character, as well as of the divine manner of dealing with sinners of the human race.
3. To all alike, it is a proof and pledge of the desire, the earnest and strong desire, subsisting in the divine heart, to see every sinner return to himself, and to welcome every one so returning. That desire is involved in the very nature of God, considered as originating such a plan of salvation at all,—whatever, on grounds and reasons unknown to us, his decree may be, as to its extent, or as to its actual issue and result.
4. To every individual it brings home the divine claim of sovereign and supreme authority. It is an appeal to conscience. Whether the sinner is to be satisfied on all points, or not, before believing, the gospel proceeds on the principle that God has a right to demand submission and allegiance to himself; and that conscience must recognise that right.
5. To every one who hears the gospel, assurance is given of the full and infinite sufficiency of Christ's work for any, and for all, who will come unto him. The dignity of his person, the merit of his obedience, and the value of his death, as a propitiation, secure this.

6. Saving faith—not being the mere belief of any definite propositions, far less of any that are indefinite, but union with a person, and reliance on a person, even Christ—requires nothing beforehand as the ground and warrant of its exercise, beyond the apprehension of these two precise and unequivocal truths:—(1.) That God is entitled to command the sinner's return to himself; and, (2.) That the sinner, returning, is sure of a sufficient salvation. No additional information is necessary; nor would it be of any use.

With this brief summary or recapitulation, I take leave of that first view which I proposed to consider of the question at issue, as raised in the interest of mankind at large, and especially the unbelieving portion of mankind; whose right to be satisfied beforehand in such a case,—and even to stipulate, as they seem often inclined to do, that unless satisfied beforehand they will not believe,—is surely more than doubtful. And I proceed to the other view of the question, which is far more entitled, as I cannot but think, to sympathy.\* I deal with the question now as raised in the interest of the earnest inquirer, and his search after salvation, whether for himself or for his fellow-men.

It may be useful, at the very outset of the inquiry as now adjusted, to apply a kind of practical and experimental test, of which this whole subject seems very particularly to admit.\*

The test turns upon this consideration—that the instant we begin to conceive of Christ's work as undertaken and accomplished for any but those actually saved,—under whatever vague phraseology of a general reference, or general relations, this may be done,—we altogether change the nature and character of that work, so that it ceases to be a work of substitution, properly so called, at all.\* We subvert the whole doctrine of imputation, whether of the individual sinner's guilt to Christ, or of Christ's righteousness to him. We materially modify the principle on which faith is held to justify and save us, making it not simply the instrument of vital union to Christ, but a work, or condition, supplementary to his work. We insensibly incline to an inadequate feeling of the utter impotency and just

condemnation of the sinner. And, above all, we sadly detract from the completeness and certainty of the salvation that is in Christ. It is chiefly on this last consequence, resulting or deducible from the assertion of a universal range in the atonement, that attention must be fixed, in applying the test by which, as it seems to me, the practical value and importance of the opposite doctrine may be illustrated.

Thus the matter may be brought to a sort of experimental issue, by tracing the progress of an awakened soul towards assurance of salvation; from the first feeling of desiderium, or the apprehension which such a soul has of what it really needs;\* through the successive stages of its "first love," or fresh and childlike simplicity of faith, its subsequent trials and difficulties, even verging possibly on despair, and its matured confidence of tried and ascertained integrity; onwards and upwards to that infallible certainty of hope which "maketh not ashamed." This progress, at least in its initial or commencing stage, is sufficiently marked to admit of a very simple question being put.

The question is this:—What is it that the awakened soul really needs, and feels itself to need? What is its desiderium? Without hesitation I reply, that what such a soul desiderates is, not a general or universal redemption, which must necessarily be contingent and doubtful—but one that is particular, and therefore certain.\*

I appeal here to the experience, not only of those who are converted, but of all who have ever been conscious, or who now are conscious, of any inward movements at all, tending in the direction of conversion. Were you ever aware,—I would be inclined to ask any friend thus exercised,—of any spiritual awakening in your conscience and heart, without having the instinctive conviction, that, as regarded both the end to be attained and the method of attaining it, what you needed—what alone you cared for and could no longer do without—was, not an interest in some kind of general deliverance, or some bare chance and opportunity of deliverance, common to all, but

an interest in a real and actual salvation, such as, you feel, must be peculiar to God's own people?\* "Remember me, O Lord, with the favour that thou bearest unto thy people: O visit me with thy salvation; that I may see the good of thy chosen, that I may rejoice in the gladness of thy nation, that I may glory with thine inheritance" (Ps. 106:4, 5). I am persuaded that these words express what the soul under spiritual concern really desiderates and seeks. The very anxieties and perplexities of its spiritual awakening turn upon this particular sense of need.

In fact, there are but two ways in which, otherwise, the sinner's case, when it comes to be realized by his own quickened consciousness, can be at all comfortably met.\* The one of these leans to the Popish, the other to the Pelagian, error. But they agree in this, that both of them proceed on the same idea of the divine work of redemption being left to be supplemented, whether as to its accomplishment or as to its application;\* either, on the one hand, by a priestly ministry in the hands of the Church; or, on the other hand, by some effort of spontaneous will, some self-originated volition and choice, or some attainment of righteousness, on the part of the individual. For in this respect these two systems show a marked tendency to run into one another. Popery is naturally Pelagian; and Pelagianism is apt to be Popish. The point of contact, or bond of sympathy, lies mainly in the very coincidence now pointed out. Both of the systems make the plan of salvation contingent and conditional. They would have it to be a sort of general panacea,—a universal medicine and sovereign specific,—in the possession, under the control, and at the disposal, either of the Church and her priesthood, as dispensers of it, or of all and sundry, as qualified to administer it to themselves. The "balm" that is "in Gilead" is thus to be taken and used, apart from the "Physician who is there" (Jer. 8:22). The remedy proposed,—which is admitted on all hands to be in itself of general, nay of universal, applicability, inasmuch as it is fitted for every form and every measure of disease,—is to be distributed and rendered actually effectual, either on the principle of a close spiritual corporation and ecclesiastical monopoly, the Church being recognised as having the



sole key of this divine dispensary; or on the principle, or the hazard, of absolute free trade, as it were, every man being left to be his own mediciner.

Thus it is but one great gigantic error, at bottom, which raises itself against the truth of God;\* whether it be the priesthood, with its mystical and sacramental charms; or the individual will of fallen man, with its supposed freedom, its self-moving power, its ability of independent choice, that is regarded as dealing with the divinely ordained and divinely accomplished salvation, so as to effect, or to determine, or in any way to regulate, its particular application. It is the grand question, Whether I am to possess God's salvation, or God's salvation is to possess me? whether I am to have God in my power, and at my discretion, or God is to have me?\* whether the Creator is to place himself under the control of the creature, or the creature is to submit to the Creator? whether man is to make use of God, or God is to reign over man? And how intimately the believer's confidence, as well as his high and holy calling, is bound up with a right answer to this question, let the apostle's phraseology testify, when he represents himself, not as apprehending, but as "apprehended, of Christ Jesus"—caught and laid hold of by him (Phil. 3:12); and when he appeals to his fellow-Christians as "having known God, or rather,"—he immediately adds, as if anxiously guarding and correcting himself,—"being known of God" (Gal. 4:9).

For, in fact, to this practical issue the question must ultimately come. So every awakened sinner feels, whether he may be able to put his feeling into any definite expression or not.\* As the process of earnest thought and deep exercise of soul in the things of God goes on, the systems and forms of religion, which once appeared sufficient, whether more or less ecclesiastical, or more or less rationalistic and self-righteous or self-willed, become wholly unsatisfactory and distasteful. Once, it might not be difficult for the sinner to content himself with a Pelagian, or semi-Pelagian notion of his being at liberty, and having power, to use the promises of the gospel as a remedy for the disorders of his nature and the ills of life, and to

mould his character according to its precepts. Or, he might graft on this notion some Popish, or semi-Popish confidence in the Church's ritual and observances. And so he might have a fair-weather religion, with not a little apparent fervour, and with not a little fruit, which might look well enough, and serve his purpose well enough, while his sky was comparatively clear and his heart in the main was whole. But when experience of another kind comes—when he sees the wind boisterous, and is afraid, and begins to sink—ah! then, it is not his laying hold of Christ, with his own withered arm, or through the Church's treacherous mediation, that will save him; but his being powerfully caught and laid hold of by Christ himself. He feels this when he cries, "Lord, save me; I perish." And immediately "Jesus stretches forth his hand to catch him," with a look and a word of tender reproach: "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" (Matt. 14:28–31).

Thus far, it seems evident enough that when a sinner is really apprehended or laid hold of by the Spirit of God,—when he is made to feel the guilt and misery of his sinful rebellion against God, and his sinful alienation from God,—when he is in real earnest about his deliverance from the wrath, and his restoration to the favour, of his justly offended Maker, Lord and King,—his case is not so easily met,—the desideratum or felt want of his soul is not so readily supplied, nor its desiderium or longing desire so readily satisfied,—as those spiritual guides are inclined to fancy, who, affecting to be wiser than God, and to have a simpler gospel to propose than that of Christ, would set before him nothing more than a possibility of salvation, to become for him actual salvation, either through his use of the Church's ministry, or through some self-originating movement of his own will,—his inward moral power of choice and action. Here, therefore, I might almost be contented to leave my case, in so far as it depends on the sort of practical and experimental test to which I appeal. To do so, however, would be to evade an important part of the investigation, and one that touches directly the subject of this treatise.\* For it must be admitted that those with whom the controversy is more immediately carried on, may not be fairly

chargeable with any conscious tendency in the direction of any form of Pelagianism. They are not disposed to call in priestly or ecclesiastical aid; nor are they inclined to exaggerate the sinner's natural ability to avail himself, at his own discretion, of the remedy provided, or the plan of salvation proposed. Their Arminian leanings do not lead them so far away as that from the evangelical doctrine of man's utter helplessness and his absolute dependence on sovereign grace. Still they think that somehow the awakened sinner may see his way smoothed to the appropriation of the benefit he needs, by an extension of the remedy, or the plan of salvation, so as to make it comprehend within its scope and design others besides the individuals actually saved. It is necessary, therefore, now to deal with that modification of the anti-Calvinistic view, and to apply to it the test of an appeal to experience, or to the spiritual feeling of an earnest soul.

Accordingly, I would still say, Put that soul to the trial. Go to a conscientiously exercised, and at the same time intelligent, inquirer. Tell him of a universal redemption—an atonement or propitiation made for all—pardon and life purchased for all. Ask him,—Is it this that you want? is it this that you feel yourself urgently, indispensably, immediately to need?

It is true that, in a certain stage of his experience, this doctrine of an unlimited atonement may seem to remove a difficulty, as to the earnest cordiality of the call or invitation on the part of God, and the warrant for compliance with it on the part of the sinner.\* It may thus contribute, in his apprehension, to facilitate the decisive step, or, as it were, the leap,—not indeed in the dark, but yet at a venture and in faith,—by which he is to pass over the great gulf, and make good his clear and unequivocal transition from a state of nature to a state of grace. Such is the purpose which this notion is apparently intended to serve, in the system of some who, being better preachers, as I am inclined to think, than theologians, unite with the doctrine of a universal atonement, or general redemption, certain other doctrines which are usually held to be incompatible with it;—the doctrine, for

instance, of particular personal election, on the one hand, and that of the efficacious and sovereign work of the Spirit, in order to faith, and in the act of believing, on the other hand. They think they find, in their theory of general redemption, a stepping-stone to that personal appropriation of the blessings of saving grace which they rightly hold to be incumbent, as a duty, on every hearer of the gospel, and to be involved in the acceptance of the gospel call. But the assistance which the idea of a universal atonement affords is, after all, more apparent than real. In point of fact, to a sinner situated as I am now supposing, it is the universal, unlimited, authoritative and imperative command to believe;—coupled with the unrestricted and unconditional promise,—the free, full, unequivocal and infallible assurance,—that whosoever believeth will be saved;—which, after all, does the thing.\* It is that which gets him over the difficulty, and lands him in peace and enlargement of heart; and not any conception, either of a universal purchase, or of a universal application, of the benefits which he anxiously covets, and with trembling eagerness seizes and holds fast.

Put it to such a sinner, whose conscience within him, thus spiritually quickened, and undergoing the pangs of the new spiritual birth, is scarcely pacified, and with difficulty made to rest.\* Ask himself, Do you look to Jesus,—do you believe on him, or long to believe on him,—for no more special and specific blessings than what are common to the whole human race, for all of whom you are told that he died as a propitiation? Is it for nothing more sure and certain—more complete and full—in the way of salvation, that you seek an interest in Christ, and venture timidly and fearfully to hope that you have obtained, at least, a first instalment, as it were, or infetment and investiture in it? Ah, no! he will reply. For such a redemption, common to me with the lost and damned, it were little worth my while to believe in Jesus.\* If I am to believe in him at all, it must be for a great deal more than that.

Nor will it be of any avail here to introduce the scheme of a double sense.\* According to that scheme, it would seem to be thought that

the belief that Christ died for me, in some sense in which he equally died for the traitor Judas, may help me, as a sort of stepping-stone, to believe something altogether different;—to believe in Christ as dying to make such propitiation for sin, and purchase such a salvation, as must, confessedly, be restricted to them that are "chosen, and called, and faithful." The impression, I apprehend, is as vain as it is gratuitous. Universal redemption, universal atonement, universal pardon, are ideas or words that may seem to make the sinner's appropriation of Christ to himself, and his use of Christ for all the purposes of his own spiritual life, a very easy and simple thing. But if you exclude universal salvation, this apparent facility becomes merely imaginary and delusive. For still, what is needed is the appropriation of Christ;—not as standing in a relation, and doing a work, common to all, the lost as well as the saved; but the appropriation of Christ as standing in a relation, and doing a work, peculiar to them that believe—to them that are not lost, but saved. The really awakened and enlightened soul will scarcely be manœuvred into peace by any such ambidextrous juggle or ambiguity as that which, let me say it without offence, this scheme of a double sense involves. Ask, I repeat, such a one what he needs, what he wants,—what he now feels that he cannot dispense with, or do without. He will tell you that it is not a redemption consistent with his being after all cast into hell; but a redemption real and actual, full, finished, and perfect,—infallibly certain and irrevocably secure.

Nay, but you say to him, this redemption with which you have to do, is, in one view, common to all; and, in another, peculiar to those actually saved. And it is the former, general aspect of it, that you are first to take in, with a view to your apprehending the other, which is more special. But I ask in reply,—What is it that makes the difference? What is it that translates me from the position of one generally interested, according to some vague and undefined sense, along with mankind at large, in the redemption purchased by Christ, to that of one specially and actually redeemed? My acceptance of the redemption, you reply. But of what redemption? It cannot be my

acceptance of real and complete redemption; for what is presented to me as the object of my faith—as that which I am to believe—is the fact of a general redemption, common to me with Judas.\* It must be, therefore, my acceptance of something which, as it is presented to my acceptance, is very far short of complete redemption, and is made up to what is needed by my own act in accepting it. Ah! then, after all, it is a salvation by works, at least in part. It is a salvation only partially accomplished by Christ, to be supplemented by those to whom it is offered. It is a salvation, therefore, conditional, and contingent on something on the part of the sinner, call it faith or what you will, that is to be not merely the hand laying hold of a finished work, but an additional stroke needed to finish it.

Nor does it help the matter to tell me that this also is the work of God, this faith being wrought in me by the Holy Ghost. Still it is a different work from that of Christ, and must be associated with it, not in the way of appropriating Christ's work, but in the way of supplementing it.\* For, in this view, the work of the Spirit must become necessarily objective, along with the work of Christ, instead of being, as it ought to be, merely subjective. The Spirit must "speak of himself," as well as "testify of Christ" (John 16:13–15). The Spirit must reveal to me, as the ground and warrant of my confidence, not merely the work of Christ, but his own work in addition. For as, on this supposition, the work of Christ purchases nothing more than salvability for all, and it is the work of the Spirit which turns that common salvability into actual salvation, what I am to believe in for salvation is, not the work of Christ alone, but, conjointly, Christ's work for sinners generally, and the Spirit's work in me individually. Hence there comes a looking to inward signs, and leaning on inward experience; a walking, in short, by sense, rather than by faith.

For this, I strongly feel, is the worst effect of the notion of which I am speaking,—the notion, I mean, of the atonement being general and universal, connected with a strict view of regeneration, or of faith being the gift of God and the work of the Holy Ghost.\* It almost necessarily leads those who hold it to place the work of Christ and

the work of the Spirit on the same footing, as making up between them the ground, and warrant, and foundation of confidence; so that the sinner is to look to, and rest on, not Christ's work alone, but Christ's work and the Spirit's work conjointly and together. But it is a great Scriptural truth, that, in the exercise of saving faith, Christ's work alone is objective, and the Spirit's wholly subjective; or, in other words, that while the Spirit is the author of faith, Christ alone is its only object. And if so, it must be Christ as securing, by his atoning death, a full, finished, complete, and everlasting salvation.

It is for this, and nothing short of this, that the awakened and enlightened sinner cares to believe in Christ at all. He longs to appropriate Christ. But it is Christ as not a possible, but an actual Saviour, that he does long to appropriate; Christ as having purchased a complete salvation,—a salvation complete and sure, irrespective of his own act of appropriating it, or of the work of the Spirit by which he is persuaded and enabled to appropriate it. True it is that he may experience difficulty in thus appropriating Christ and his salvation. He may have scruples, and doubts, and misgivings manifold, in bringing himself to realize anything like a personal interest in the love and in the death of Jesus. But will it meet his case, to widen to the very utmost the extent of Christ's work, and to represent it as designed and intended, undertaken and accomplished, for all, even the lost? Do you not, in proportion as you thus widen its extent, limit and diminish its real efficacy; and in consequence, also, the actual amount of benefit implied in it? You say to the broken-hearted anxious inquirer, that he may appropriate this redemption as a redemption purchased for all. Ah! then it becomes a redemption scarcely worth the appropriating. Nay, you rejoin, it is very precious;\* for, when accompanied by the work of the Holy Ghost, it becomes a great deal more than redemption common to all,—it becomes redemption special and peculiar to the saved. Be it so. But do you not thus instantly set me, the inquiring sinner, on putting the two works—that of Christ and that of the Holy Ghost—together, as constituting together the ground of my hope? And this is a grave practical mistake, opposed to my peace and to the mind of the Spirit

concerning me. For the Spirit himself would not have his own work to be, in any degree or in any sense, either the object, or the ground, or the reason, or the warrant, of my faith at all; but only and exclusively the finished work and sure word of Christ.

The truth is, what is needed to meet such a case is a complete salvation freely offered. The difficulty in question,—so far as it is to be overcome by argument and reason at all, or by considerations addressed to the understanding,—is to be got over by pressing the peremptory gospel call to believe, and the positive gospel assurance of a cordial welcome to all that will believe. That call and that assurance are universal, unrestricted, unreserved; as much so as any can desire.\*

But the call must be a call to the sinner to submit himself to the righteousness of God, or the work of Christ, as by itself alone justifying the ungodly.\* And the assurance must be an assurance that an interest in Christ immediately and necessarily carries with it the full possession of all saving blessings. Otherwise, if it be not the very nature of the atonement itself, or its exact design and inherent efficacy, that connects with it a sure and perfect salvation—but something superadded to, or supervening upon, the atonement, to qualify, as it were, or to complete it—then it is on that something, after all, whatever it may be, that the sinner is to fix his eye and rest his hope, and not really on the atonement, which, without it, is to him unmeaning and unprofitable.\*

What, then, is that something to be?

In the first place, there are some who say that, on the part of God, it is a covenant transaction alone that secures the actual salvation of a certain portion of mankind, in connection with the atonement.\* On that theory, the atonement of itself does no more than make the salvation of any, and of all, possible. They who maintain it, represent the Son as undertaking his work for all; upon the condition, however, of its being infallibly rendered effectual on behalf of a given number.



And they seem to hold that it is this alone which imparts to that work anything like a more special reference to that given number than it has to the world at large. It is plain that this view touches very deeply the nature of the work of Christ. We are accustomed to believe that in the covenant transaction between the Father and the Son, an elect people being given to Christ, he did, in their room, and as their surety, undertake and accomplish a work which, from its very nature, as a work of satisfaction and substitution, insured infallibly their complete salvation. But that other theory makes the whole peculiarity of Christ's relation to his people turn, not on the essential nature of his work on their behalf, but on the terms which he made with the Father; so that, in fact, it comes to this, that Christ really has not done more for them than for others; although, by the divine arrangements regarding it, what he has done is to be rendered effectual for their salvation, and not for that of others.

And hence it follows, secondly, that, on the part of the sinner himself who is called to receive salvation, there must be a tendency to have his attention turned, not to Christ's work, as, from its very nature, a sure and sufficient ground of hope, but to those arrangements which define and determine its otherwise unlimited efficacy, in so far as these are made known.\* And here the great practical evil comes out. The death of Christ, or his work of atonement, is viewed very much as an expedient for getting over a difficulty that had occurred in the government of God, in reference to the negotiating of a treaty of reconciliation with the guilty. It is a sort of coup d'état,—a stroke of administrative rule,—a measure of high and heavenly policy,—for upholding generally the authority of law and justice in the universe. But that purpose being served, it may now be put very much in the background, excepting only in so far as it is a manifestation of the divine character, which it must always be right to ponder and admire. For now, the hitch, as it were, or crisis that demanded such an interposition, being adjusted,—and the door being open for a negotiation of peace,—attention must chiefly be directed, in a practical point of view, not to what has opened the door, but to what now is needed, in addition, for the actual effecting of the end desired.

In the consideration of what that is, and in the settlement of matters accordingly between God and the sinner, reference may, indeed, be made to the atonement—but rather as if it made way for reconciliation, than as if it actually procured it.

Is not this like what Paul calls "another gospel?" To preach, or proclaim, salvation through Christ, is a different thing from proclaiming salvation in Christ.\* I go to the crowd of criminals, shut up in prison, under sentence of death; and my message is, not that in consequence of Christ's death I have now to offer to them all liberty to go out free;—but that Christ himself is there, even at the door; in whom, if they will but apply to him, they will find one who can meet every accusation against them, and enrich them with every blessing. I refer them and point them to himself—to himself alone; assuring them that all they have to care for is that they may "win Christ, and be found in him" (Phil. 3:8, 9). I bring nothing from Christ to them; I tell them that all is in him, and bid them go to him for all. I do not speak to them of a certain amount of atoning virtue purchased by the obedience and death of Christ, as if it were a store laid up for general use, from which they may take what they need. I speak to them of Christ as being himself the atonement, and summon them to a personal dealing with him accordingly. In a word, I present to them, not a general amnesty, or vague and indiscriminate jail-delivery, proceeding upon the transaction which Christ finished upon Calvary;—but Christ himself, and him crucified, a present Saviour now, as well as then; having in his hand a special pardon and special grace for every one who will resort to him,—and nothing for any who will not.

The Pelagian, or semi-Pelagian, expedient for meeting the sinner's case, by exaggerating his natural ability to believe, already partially noticed, will fall to be afterwards more particularly considered. In the meantime, it would appear that little is gained, in the way of facilitating his acceptance of Christ, by any extension of the design and efficacy of Christ's work beyond those who actually come to him

and are saved, or any idea of a general aspect or reference in the atonement accomplished by him.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE DIVINE FAITHFULNESS AND HUMAN RESPONSIBILITY— WHERE THE INSOLUBLE DIFFICULTY SHOULD BE PLACED

THE reasons which, as it would appear, chiefly weigh with those who advocate the theory of a "general reference," or "general relations," in the atonement, reaching beyond the individuals actually saved by it, are, on the one hand, a desire to explain and establish the consistency of God in the universal call of the gospel;\* and, on the other hand, an extreme anxiety to facilitate the sinner's compliance with that call. The design is, in so far, worthy of commendation, while the motive unquestionably is good. It is to justify to all men the divine procedure, and to leave all men without apology or excuse.

At the same time, it may be doubted if this can ever be altogether a becoming or safe point of view from which to contemplate the plan of saving mercy.\* It can scarcely be so. For it almost inevitably leads to our regarding that plan rather in the light of what seems due to man, than in the light of what is due to God. It is remarkable, accordingly, that Holy Scripture rarely, if ever, concerns itself with these aspects of the great fact and truth which is its subject—the fact and truth of redemption. The Bible is not careful to vindicate the ways of God to man, or to make them all so smooth and plain that there shall be no stumbling-block in them for those who will stumble. It represents these ways, indeed, as such, that "the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein" (Isa. 35:8);\* but it represents them also as

such, that they who turn aside may think themselves entitled to complain of their "narrowness," and of the "straitness of the gate" that leads into them. In point of fact, the Bible, in all that it reveals as to the adjustment of the relation between the God of love and his guilty creatures, proceeds much more on the ground of what God claims as his own proper right, than on any notion of what man may consider to be due to him. It stands much on God's high prerogative, —his irresistible power and unquestionable sovereignty; and though it does leave men really without excuse before God, it does not leave them without specious and plausible excuses to themselves.\*

This, indeed, is one chief evidence of the divine authority of the Bible, as well as of the divinity of that blessed Saviour of whom it testifies, that, in the whole system of truth which it contains—the truth as it is in Jesus—it maintains so lofty and uncompromising a tone of loyalty and allegiance to God;\* and shows so much more anxiety to silence and subdue man, than—at least beforehand, or before he is subdued—to satisfy him. "Let God be true, and every man a liar." "Who art thou, O man, that repliest against God?" Let "every mouth be stopped." "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still" "Be still, and know that I am God." "He that doeth my will shall know of the doctrine." These, and such as these, are the maxims of which Scripture is full. The whole strain of the divine Word, and especially of the glorious Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, is to the same effect. So the Apostle Paul emphatically testifies, when he says: "The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God" (1 Cor. 1:18–24). And the testimony of the Apostle Peter is equally explicit, when he thus speaks of Christ: "Unto you which believe he is precious; but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed is made the head of the corner, and a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence,

even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient" (1 Peter 2:7, 8).

It were well if, in this respect, the disciple did not seek to be above his Master. Let the ambassadors and messengers of the King leave it to himself to vindicate his own ways to all to whom he cares to vindicate them;\* to the little children to whom he points when he says, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes" (Matt. 11:25). And let them, for their part, take to themselves the humbler function of handing over inquirers to him for satisfaction, instead of offering or trying to make all that concerns him plain to them; and that, too, even before they are willing to assume the attitude of Mary, "sitting at his feet and hearing his word" (Luke 10:39). This humiliation on the part of his ministers is their best credential; for it is thus that, like Jesus himself, they "speak as having authority."

But with reference, more particularly, to the matter in hand, let the real value be ascertained of the two reasons already assigned for that relaxation, which some propose, of the strict and stern Calvinism of our evangelical divinity.

The first reason relates to God,—to the supposed necessity of vindicating his sincerity and good faith, in connection with the universality of the gospel offer.\*

Now here it might be enough to dwell on the very plain and simple consideration that this whole matter might be left to God himself. We have his own authority for most emphatically and unequivocally assuring all sinners, without exception, that none ever put him to the proof, by accepting, or desiring to accept, his offer, and found him fail; and that none ever shall. That, surely, ought to be sufficient for every practical purpose. But, setting such considerations aside, let it be asked, What is the actual import of the expedient proposed for the end contemplated?

It is obvious, in the first place, that it merely shifts the difficulty.\* In fact, of all theories upon this vexed question, the most inconsistent would seem to be that of a universal atonement, or an atonement with a "general reference" to all mankind, taken along with a purpose and provision of special grace in regard to its application. To say that, in a sense, Christ died for all, but that in so dying for all, he stipulated, in covenant, with the Everlasting Father, that the Spirit, without whose agency his death would be effectual for the salvation of none, should be given infallibly to a certain number, and to them alone—this is so manifest an evasion of the real perplexity, so shifting and sandy a refuge, that none can long continue to occupy such a position. Accordingly, it has been almost invariably found, that the theory halts, and is lame. And the result in the long-run is, that even the doctrine of a special purpose and special grace in the application of the remedy is abandoned, as well as that of a limited design in the work itself. Nay, rightly followed out, this theory can scarcely stop short, either, on the one hand, of a denial of all that is essential to the idea of an atonement, as a true substitution of the innocent in the room of the guilty; or, on the other hand, of universal pardon, or the universal salvation of all mankind. Certainly, the middle stage, or intermediate position, which would combine a general reference in the atonement itself with a limited purpose, from all eternity, in its application—the notion, in short, of Christ's work being more extensive than that of the Spirit rendering it effectual—will not go far to satisfy any who are inclined to raise a question as to the honesty of the gospel offer. For how is it more easy to explain the universal offer of salvation on the footing of a general atonement, with a particular purpose in regard to its application, than it is to explain the universal offer of salvation in connection with an atonement which is, from its very nature, restricted, indeed, but which at the same time, on that very account, and by that very restriction, secures efficaciously the salvation offered, and renders it absolutely certain to all who are made willing to receive it?

The real question, let it be observed, in this whole inquiry, is not how the difficulty is to be explained, but where it is to be allowed to rest.

It is admitted that there is a knot which cannot be unloosed,—an arrangement, or ordinance, or decree, which must be resolved into an exercise of the divine sovereignty, of which no account is given to us. The only question is, Where is it to be placed?\* Is this restriction, or limitation of the plan of mercy, which constitutes the real perplexity, to be introduced between the work of Christ purchasing redemption and the work of the Spirit applying it?

I own that this seems to me to be the very worst of all niches in which to hide it. For thus situated, it dishonours either the Spirit's work or the work of Christ.\* It dishonours the Spirit's work, if we ask, Why should not that blessed agent give the most wide and universal effect to the wide and universal atonement of Christ? Or it dishonours the work of Christ, if we ask, Why should not that infinitely meritorious and precious atonement of his, having reference, as it is alleged, in its own nature, to all, avail to purchase or obtain for all the needful supplement of the gift of the Spirit?

The truth is, there are but two consistent landing-places for this high mystery which has been so much tossed and bandied to and fro;—the one at a point prior, in the order of nature, to both of these works; the other at a point subsequent and posterior to both.\* In other words, the reason of the admitted limitation, practically, of the plan of salvation must be sought, either in the purpose of God's will, going before both the work of Christ and the work of the Spirit, and defining both;\* or in the power (arbitrium) of man's will coming after both of these works, and restricting what God has left general. This is the real alternative. And this is the danger to be apprehended from any attempt to shift the difficulty from the former of these two positions, that it almost infallibly leads, sooner or later, to an adoption of the latter. Then we have a general love of the Father, a general work of the Son, and a general influence of the Spirit, all depending on the power of man's will for their fruit and efficacy. Is it not better to regard the will of the Eternal Godhead as the source, alike, and the limit, of the whole plan; and to make both the work of Christ and the work of the Spirit commensurate with that will, which

they exactly fulfil?\* Then the whole difficulty is resolved into the sovereignty and mere good pleasure of God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; and the question, Why is it not God's pleasure to save all men, or to save more than are actually embraced in the plan? is met by the question, Why is it his good pleasure to save any?

It is but justice to the Calvinistic system to bear always in mind the remark now made, that it does not profess to solve the great difficulty involved in the adjustment of the relation between the will of the Creator and the will of the creature.\* All that it proposes is, to fix the position of the difficulty rightly; so that it shall not interfere either with the sovereignty of divine grace in the whole matter of salvation, from first to last, or with the responsibility, the dependence, and the free agency of man. In this respect, so far from being liable to the imputation of presumption, or attempting to pry into the divine secrets, it rather possesses the character of true and honest humility. It does not, like some other theories, affect to explain and vindicate the divine administration, to the entire satisfaction of human reason. It frankly owns the impossibility of making all plain, and appeals to the absolute supremacy and almighty power of God as the only answer, in the last resort, to cavilling questions. Its simple aim is, to assign to the inexplicable knot its right place;\* so that it shall not come in between the counsels of God and the salvation of believers, in such a manner as to occasion any incongruity in passing from the purpose of redemption to the purchase of it,—or again, in passing from the purchase to the application of it.

This, I apprehend, is an important service; although the importance of it may not be in all circumstances equally apparent.\* Much may depend on the point of view from which people have been accustomed to consider the subject. I have referred, for example, to some whom I have ventured to call "better preachers than theologians,"\* who hold pretty strongly the Arminian doctrine of a universal atonement, and yet hold no less strongly the evangelical doctrine of the sovereignty of grace in regeneration, conversion, and



faith. It is, perhaps, no discredit or disparagement to such divines as Wesley and his followers, that, in the intensely practical business of the Methodist revival of the last century, they should have manifested a distaste for what they might be inclined to call metaphysical speculation in divinity. At the same time, even their way of representing the universality of the atonement, in connection with a confessedly restricted divine work rendering it effectual, might be shown to be attended with all the inconvenience that is apt to arise from the real difficulty in the case being concealed or slurred over, by being put in its wrong place; although we would be far from confounding their theology with any of the more rationalistic forms which Arminianism is apt to assume, when, resenting the notion of divine sovereignty, it magnifies unduly human freedom and human power.

For, surely, in the discussion of this vexed and vexing question, one cannot but be anxious to keep the door as widely open as possible, for the mutual recognition of the one evangelical faith among all who have been taught "by the Holy Ghost to call Jesus Lord" (1 Cor. 12:3), by making allowance for the different lights in which they look at it.\* We can afford to smile at the bitter hatred of Calvinism which breathes through the Wesleyan writings, when we perceive the caricature of that system which they set up to be attacked; and still more, when we take into account their soundness in the faith in other essential particulars. In fact, with the high doctrine which they hold respecting the work of the Spirit, it becomes rather an inconsistency than a heresy, with them, that they put a more lax interpretation on the extent of the work of the Son.

It does not follow, however, that what may be comparatively safe for them, must be equally so in the case of others. Much depends on the soil in which a dangerous weed grows.\* Here it may be so merged and lost in the strong and flourishing luxuriance of the good grain as to be almost, if not altogether, harmless; whilst appearing elsewhere, like a deadly blight in the most goodly field, it may "eat as doth a canker," and "increase unto more ungodliness" (2 Tim. 2:16, 17). In

Scottish theology, for example, any departure from the strict view of the extent of the atonement is to be seriously dreaded, because it almost uniformly indicates a lurking tendency to call in question the sovereignty of divine grace altogether. Hence it is invariably found to open a door for the influx of the entire tide of the Pelagian theory of human ability, in the train of that Arminian notion of the divine decrees which is so apt to be its precursor.

In this view, it might furnish an interesting topic of inquiry, to investigate the cause of a difference which, I think, may be traced throughout, between the practical divinity of England and that of Scotland, at least since the days of the Covenant and Puritan contests.\* In England, Calvinism has much more frequently lapsed into Antinomianism than in Scotland; whereas in Scotland, Arminianism has always run more immediately into Pelagianism than in England. These are evidently the opposite tendencies of the two systems. Calvinism inclines towards Antinomian fatalism, and Arminianism towards Pelagian self-righteousness or self-conversion.\* Now, in Scotland, a Calvinist is rarely Antinomian; while an Arminian, or semi-Arminian, has almost always a leaning towards Pelagianism. In England, again, a hard, cold, and indolent orthodoxy soon began to take the place of living piety, among too many of the successors of the Calvinistic and Nonconformist divines—until the philosophical necessity of the Socinian school of Priestley almost came to be held as the legitimate representation of the Predestinarian theology; while, on the other hand, in the Methodist revival, an Arminian notion of the extent of the atonement sprung up, in connection with a strictly Calvinistic view of the new birth, under a free and fervid preaching of the gospel of the grace of God. The national difference of intellectual talent and moral temperament may go far to explain the fact to which I have referred; the different histories of the two countries, still further. That it is, at all events, substantially, a fact correctly stated, can scarcely be questioned.

But, however one might be inclined to speculate on this national or ecclesiastical distinction, as a fact well worthy of study, and in

whatever way it is to be accounted for, it does not in the least affect the view which I have been giving, as to the danger of misplacing, under the profession of solving, the knotty problem which meets us at every turn in this high field of thought. The universality of the gospel call is not really justified or vindicated, as on the side of God, by widening the extent of that provision of atoning blood and righteousness on which it is based. On any theory, however wide, that stops short of the universal salvation of all mankind, the difficulty still remains as great as ever; with a difference, however, for the worse,—that the difficulty comes to be put where it is apt to increase our perplexity and endanger our whole faith.\*

This might be, of itself, a sufficient answer to the first reason alleged for enlarging the range of the efficacy of Christ's death, that the offer of salvation in terms of it may be seen to be real and earnest. There is another answer, however, which perhaps goes still deeper into the root of the matter.

For, secondly, in our anxiety to avoid a supposed appearance of insincerity, on the part of God, in one direction, we may be apt to incur the very same risk in another.\* By all means let there be an honest offer of the gospel, it is said. Surely. But let it be honest in respect of what is offered, as well as in respect of those to whom it is offered. "Let God be true" to those who accept the offer, though all else should "make him a liar." Now, consider what they who are in Christ are said, according to Scripture, and on the terms of the gospel offer, to possess.\* Is it anything short of a real and personal substitution of Christ in their room and stead, as their representative and surety, fulfilling all their legal obligations, and undertaking and meeting all their legal liabilities? Is it anything short of such a substitution as must insure that, in consequence of it, and upon their acceptance of it, they are now, by a legal right—in terms of the law which He as their covenant head has magnified and made honourable in their behalf—free from the imputation of legal blame; that, as one with him in his righteousness, they are judicially absolved and acquitted,—justified from all their transgressions, and

invested with a valid legal title to eternal life and salvation? This, they will themselves be ready to say, is what was presented to them and pressed upon their acceptance, before they believed, as being all freely and fully theirs, in Christ, if only they would have it to be theirs. It was for this, and nothing short of this, that they were brought, in their conversion, to believe in Christ. It was this, and nothing short of this, that in believing they actually obtained. They obtained, they got, they apprehended, and laid hold of as their own,—theirs by the gratuitous gift of God,—Christ himself, the Son, the Saviour. But it was not Christ considered as standing in a vague and undefined relation to all mankind, that they had offered to them, and that they got. No. It was Christ considered as standing in a special relation to his willing and saved people; being literally their substitute—who took their place under the law, and was "made sin" for them,—in such a sense, and to such an effect, as to imply that their being thereafter themselves condemned for sin would be unrighteous, and, by necessary consequence, must be impossible.

That is what God offers in the gospel; what he offers in good faith; what all who accept the offer find that he fully and faithfully bestows.

Look at some of the passages of Scripture which describe what Christ is to "as many as receive him," even to "them that believe on his name."\* Take such passages as the following: "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace" (Eph. 1:7);—"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:1);—"Ye are complete in him" (Col. 2:10);—"Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us" (Gal. 3:13);—"He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (2 Cor. 5:21). Let these, and innumerable other texts of the same general class,—including our Lord's own assurances of what those who receive him are to be to him, and what they are to find in him,—be duly pondered. And then let the question be asked, In what character is Christ set forth and offered to sinners of mankind generally and universally,—in what

character and aspect is he proposed to their belief, and pressed on their acceptance?\* Is it not in the character which he sustains to his own people, and which he can sustain to none other? Is it not in the character of a real and actual substitute in their room and stead? Is this an honest offer? Is it honest, as regards not only the parties to whom it is made, but the portion of good which it contains? Honest! Nay, the offer, the proposal, the gift, of what is implied in a general atonement, may be, and must be, delusive; for it is the offer of what does not meet the sinner's case. But "it is" indeed "a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came to save sinners, even the chief;"—to save them by the actual substitution of himself in their place, under the law which they have broken, and by the actual fulfilment of all the righteousness of the law, and the endurance of its penalty, on their behalf and in their stead.

Thus far I have been dealing with the first of the two reasons urged in favour of the doctrine of a universal reference in the atonement; its being supposed to be of use in explaining and vindicating the consistency and good faith of God in connection with the universality of the gospel offer. I think I have shown that it really serves no such purpose. In the first place, it merely shifts the position of what is confessedly an inexplicable difficulty in this whole matter, and shifts it for the worse. It is better at once to own the sovereignty of God, to bow before it, and to confess that he is justly entitled to demand the return of guilty rebels to their allegiance, upon the simple assurance that, returning to their allegiance, they will find grace enough for them.\* They have no right to raise difficulties and start questions before returning. And then, secondly, a new element of doubt is introduced, affording room to question the good faith of God in respect of what it is that he offers in the gospel, as well as in respect of the parties to whom the offer is made. I hold it to be of the utmost consequence to maintain that what is offered in the gospel to all men indiscriminately and without exception, is Christ as a real substitute—a real and efficacious propitiatory sacrifice. That is what all who accept the offer find him to be. That is what unbelief rejects. It rejects Christ in that character and capacity. "This is the record, that God

hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son" (1 John 5:11); —"Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life" (John 5:40).

There is a second reason, which weighs with some who object to any limitation or restriction of the plan of saving mercy, or, at least, to such limitation and restriction as is implied in the doctrine that the whole work of Christ was undertaken and accomplished for those actually and ultimately saved, and for them alone.\* It is a reason founded upon the supposed necessity of not merely vindicating God, but satisfying sinners themselves, on this point, with a view to facilitate their acceptance of the gospel call, or to leave them inexcusable in rejecting it.

There are several practical considerations that might here be urged, to show the danger of making such a concession to the weakness or the wilfulness of unbelief as would seem to be implied in admitting the validity of this reason. There is one in particular, however, on which I think it important to dwell, not only because it is in itself conclusive as to the matter immediately at issue, but because it is of very wide and vital application in the department of human opinion.

The train of thought, or habit of mind, which the objection I am now dealing with either indicates or fosters, has an important bearing on the whole question of what it is that makes man accountable, and renders his condemnation just. In fact, it is a train of thought or habit of mind that is very apt to derange or vitiate most seriously that most delicate of all the parts of our moral and spiritual frame,—the sense or feeling of responsibility.\* For it goes far to countenance the impression,—which sinners are prone enough otherwise to take up,—that, except upon a certain understanding, and certain conditions, such as they themselves would dictate to meet their own views, they ought not to be held, and cannot equitably be held, accountable before God at all.

This impression operates in various forms and degrees among men. In its worst extreme, it becomes the plea of infidelity itself, leading to

a denial of all moral accountability, properly so called, and all retributive justice or penal judgment.\* "I am so framed, and so situated," says the infidel, "that I have no fair chance, or fair play, in this mighty moral warfare which I have to wage; and so cannot fairly be made to answer for the issue. The child of impulse, and, to so large an extent, the creature of circumstances, I have not the liberty or power essential to my contending with any hope of success. If I am to engage in this life-struggle, and peril my all on its issue, give me a better constitution, and more equitable or more favourable terms." To this demand of the infidel what reply can be given, beyond an appeal to his own consciousness and his own conscience;—to his consciousness, as testifying that he sins wilfully,—and to his conscience, as registering, even in spite of all his sophistry, the just sentence of condemnation? The same tendency is seen among many, who, stopping short of absolute infidelity, have, nevertheless, but very vague and inadequate apprehensions of the principles and sanctions of the divine government. They take, as they say, a rational and moderate view of human nature and human life; and look with an indulgent eye, as they allege the great Creator himself must do, on a race of frail and fallible mortals, who could scarcely be expected to be much better than they are, and who may, on every ground of good sense and good feeling, claim a certain measure of forbearance and indulgence, of favour and of friendship. They regard the sins, the follies, and the crimes of men as misfortunes, rather than faults; and look on offenders as deserving rather to be pitied than to, be blamed.

Now, I cannot help thinking that there is something of a similar tendency in the idea which I am combating—the idea, that is, of its being necessary to extend and stretch out the scheme of grace, with a view to satisfy men as to its application to them, and so to enlarge their feeling of freedom, and deepen their feeling of responsibility, in dealing with it.\* It tends to shift, or transfer, the ground of responsibility too much away from the moral to the intellectual part of our nature. It is true, indeed, that the sense of responsibility must be intelligent as well as conscientious. But all that the understanding is entitled to demand is, that it shall be satisfied on these two points,

namely, first, That what is duty, in the matter on hand, is clear; and, secondly, That it is reasonable,—or, in other words, that there is no reason against it, but every reason for it.\* These preliminaries being settled, the understanding inquires no further, but at once hands back the affair to the department of the conscience, and recognises the imperative and indispensable obligation imposed or declared by that supreme and ultimate faculty of our moral nature. And all this is independent of any question of will, on the part either of the Being who claims, or of the party who owes, the duty;—any question, I mean, either regarding the purpose of God's will, or regarding the power of man's will.\* Leave the burden of responsibility here, and all is safe. But it is most dangerous to give the slightest countenance to the idea, that any information respecting the purpose of God's will, or any communication of power to man's will, is to enter at all as an element or condition into this vital principle, or great fact, of accountability.\* It is most dangerous to admit that man is entitled to stipulate, before consenting to hold himself responsible in any matter, that he shall have any knowledge of the intention of God, or any assurance of ability in himself; or anything whatever, in short, beyond the apprehension that this is his duty, and that it is altogether reasonable.

Thus, in dealing with the law, or covenant of works, the sense of guilt is wrought in the awakened sinner's conscience, by the insight given him into the excellency and spirituality of the law, and the holiness, the reasonableness, and the benevolence of all its requirements.\* Nor is this sense of guilt at all affected by the sad experimental conviction, that he is himself so carnal, and so sold under sin, that he cannot do the things which he would. On the contrary, when he is rightly and spiritually awakened, the bitterness of his sense of guilt is not alleviated, but aggravated, by the melancholy discovery, which extorts from him the grievous complaint and cry, "I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man; but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man



that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death!" (Rom. 7:21–24.)

So, also, in dealing with the gospel, the condemnation of unbelief, as a sin, rests altogether on the right which God has to demand the sinner's return to himself;\* and the reasonableness of that demand, arising out of the full and sufficient warrant with which he has furnished the sinner, and the evidence and assurance which he has given of his gracious willingness to receive him. Conviction of the sin of unbelief is wrought in me by the Holy Ghost, simply by his manifesting to my conscience the enormous impiety, infatuation, and ingratitude, which, in its very nature, unbelief involves, apart altogether from every other consideration, either as to the ultimate design of God in the gospel which my unbelief rejects, or as to the utter helplessness and impotency of my own unbelieving will in rejecting it.

On this subject, a very confident appeal may be made to the experience of every deeply exercised soul.\* When the Spirit has been convincing you at any time of sin, "because you believed not in Jesus,"—or because you believed not Jesus, for it is the same thing (John 16:9),—was there any other thought present to your mind but that of the infinite unreasonableness, in every view of it, of your unbelief? Had your feeling of guilt any reference at all to the purpose of God's sovereign will? Was it not rather wholly and exclusively concerned with the just authority of his government, as asserted in the gospel which you had been disbelieving; and the infinite perfection of his character, as there so gloriously and attractively displayed? Or again, on the other hand, did you raise any question as to your own power of will to believe, or as to your possession of effectual grace, as if that might modify your responsibility for not believing? Nay, the very feeling of that impotency with which your whole nature has been smitten—with the thorough impression, moreover, that so far from being due to you, all help from above may be most justly withheld—only increases your distress. And it does so, not in the way of transferring this inability to believe, out of the

category of a sin to be condemned, into that of a misfortune to be complained of and deplored;—but in the way of fastening down upon you, with even a deeper acknowledgment than ever of God's perfect equity and your own inexcusable demerit and guilt, the sentence of righteous judgment for the unrighteous and unreasonable sin of unbelief.\*

Something like this, it is apprehended, is the course of the Spirits work, and of the experience of the people of God, in reference to conviction of the sin of unbelief. But it is to be feared, that this true and solid ground, on which guilt is to be brought home to the unbeliever's conscience, is apt to be not a little shaken by the jealousy which has always been entertained, by some, of special love in the accomplishment of Christ's work; and by others, of special love in its application. For it seems to be thought, that the responsibility of the sinner for his unbelief is at least rendered more obvious, more tangible, and more simple, when he is told of an unlimited atonement; and still more, when he is assured of an unlimited work or operation of the Spirit. The contrary, as has been said, seems to be the impression which a sound view of the nature of the case, and of the constitution of man, is fitted to make.

For the real danger is, lest you thus substitute responsibility for continuing, under certain circumstances, in the state of unbelief, instead of responsibility for the sin of unbelief itself. You thus, in point of fact, change the character of the responsibility altogether.\* You almost inevitably lead the sinner to think, that but for the information which he supposes himself to obtain respecting God's grace in the work of Christ,—as embracing all and being common to all, himself among the number,—he would be scarcely, or at any rate would be far less to be blamed, for not submitting and returning to God. And the next step is, that he considers himself entitled to insist on a knowledge of the purpose of God's will, and a removal of the impotency of his own will, as necessary conditions of his accountability. It is a convenient discovery of the imagination. It goes far to make his conscience very easy, as to the guilt which his

unbelief, in its very nature, implies; causing him to dwell exclusively on the aggravations which attach to it, in consequence of this supposed universal and unlimited grace.

Now, the universality of the gospel offer is an aggravation of the sin of unbelief, which it is important to take into account. Nay rather, I freely admit, it is not properly an aggravation, but an essential ingredient in its criminality.\* For it is that which establishes the perfect reasonableness of what is required of the sinner, and therefore leaves him without excuse. But, as to any of these other aggravations, which may be supposed likely to tell upon his conscience, the risk is that they operate rather as palliatives, and conduce to a state of mind the most difficult, perhaps, of all its morbid experiences to be dealt with.\* I mean the state in which unbelief is bewailed much as an evil, without any adequate sense of its guilt as a sin. It is but too common to hear one complaining, in doleful accents, that he cannot believe; and alleging, perhaps, the decree of election, and its kindred doctrines, as a difficulty in his way. And, in treating such a case, one is often tempted to enter into lengthened explanations; to go on arguing and redarguing about these high mysteries, until one is almost tempted to wish that the perplexing and obnoxious dogmas were got rid of altogether. But, alas! however far we go in that direction, and whatever assurances we try to give of universal grace, the sufferer complains the more. His misfortune is the greater, that even under a universal scheme of mercy, and with a universal promise of the Spirit, he cannot believe. What, then, is the real remedy? It is simple enough. Let him cease to be a patient—to be soothed and sympathized with. Let him be viewed and treated as a criminal, to be placed at the bar of that great God whose word of truth he is belying, whose authority he is defying, whose love he is refusing. Then, in the Spirit's hands, he begins to feel what true responsibility is, and to be "convinced of sin, because he believes not on Jesus."\* And then, as in the case of conviction of sin under the law, the sense of his own utter impotency,—his inability to know, or to believe, or to will, or to do, according to what God requires,—taken along with the deep and solemn impression,

that he has no claim at all upon God for the communication of any light or any power from on high—so far from alleviating the poignancy of his feeling of inexcusable guilt, fastens and rivets it more firmly in his inmost soul. In such an attitude, the word of God, in the proclamation of the gospel, finds him little disposed to ask questions or to raise difficulties;\* but rather ready, with all the simplicity of the early converts to Christianity,—with whom this whole doctrine of sovereign and free grace was less an affair of the head, and more of the heart, than, alas! it is apt to be with us,—to receive the Father's testimony concerning his Son, and, led by the Spirit, to return through the Son to the Father.

## CHAPTER V

### THE OFFICE OF FAITH—TO APPROPRIATE CHRIST—A COMPLETE ATONEMENT AND A COMPLETE SALVATION

A DESIRE to facilitate the sinner's coming to Christ and closing with Christ,—to help him over the great gulf which on this side of the grave is to none impassable—the gulf which divides a state of reconciliation from a state of enmity,—is the motive or reason which leads many to dislike the restriction or limitation of the work of Christ, and of the whole of his saving offices and relations, to the people actually, in the end, reconciled. Now, it should be kept in mind, as a consideration fitted to modify this dislike, that it is not at all this seemingly obnoxious feature of the salvation of the gospel,—its restrictedness or limitation,—which is presented to the sinner in the first instance, as the ground and warrant of his faith, and the argument or inducement that should lead him to believe.\* It is

another aspect altogether of the salvation of the gospel, which is not in the least affected by the doctrine objected to, that the sinner is asked to contemplate. He is to view that salvation simply and exclusively in the light of these two plain and unequivocal qualities or characteristics of it. In the first place, it is in its nature suited and adapted—it is specially applicable—to the case of each individual sinner;\* as much so as if that individual sinner's case had been the case particularly provided for,—nay, had been the only case provided for,—when the salvation was planned and accomplished. And, secondly, it is in its terms freely and unrestrictedly offered;—it is by an absolutely gratuitous grant or deed of gift conveyed and made over to the acceptance of every individual sinner who will have it,—who, according to the divine command, will receive and take it;—for this is the Father's "commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ" (1 John 3:23);\* "this is the work of God" which we have to do, "that we believe on him whom he hath sent" (John 6:28, 29).

True, it may be said, all this liberality in the ostensible proclamation and front scene, as it were, is well; but there is the fatal contraction and drawing in, in reserve behind. Nay, I reply, there need be no reserve in the matter. The exclusive reference of the work of Christ to those actually saved by it may be, and must be, announced.\* But this does not touch the plain matter of fact, that the work is, in its very nature, such that each individual sinner may see and feel it to be what meets, and what alone can meet, his case. Nor, on the other hand, does it affect or alter the terms on which a personal interest in it is bestowed. These terms are still such that each individual sinner may see and feel the completely saving work,—the complete Saviour himself,—to be freely and fully within his reach, if he will but consent, in obedience to the divine call and command, to lay hold of the salvation—to let the Saviour lay hold of him.

But I go much further on this point. I venture confidently to add an observation for the truth of which I appeal to every spiritually enlightened and spiritually exercised man. And the observation, I

think, is as important as it is true. It is this very exclusiveness, so often complained of, that imparts to the work of Christ that character of special and pointed adaptation to his own case, which is so readily apprehended by every sinner truly sensible of his sin;—which makes the free offer of a saving interest in Christ's work so very precious and welcome to a sinner so situated; and which is, in fact, what chiefly encourages and emboldens him to receive that which is thus offered as really meant for sinners such as he is,—as meant in good faith for him. If my soul is deeply groaning under the burden of sin,—whatever difficulty I may feel in getting over the decree of election, or the necessity of the Spirit's agency in producing faith,—I ought not to feel—and sinners so situated do not, I believe, usually feel—the pressure of any difficulty on the side of the work of Christ arising out of its definite, and therefore limited efficacy.\* On the contrary, I would not wish to have it more extended, lest it should cease to be what, on a first glance, and on the first awakening of a desire towards it, it approves itself to be,—a complete remedy for all my soul's disease, through the substitution of Him who bears it all in my stead.

The real truth, I apprehend, may be found to lie in a very simple distinction. The universality so much in demand, and admitted to be so indispensable, is not the universality of an actual interest of any kind, in anything whatever that is Christ's, but the universality of a contingent or possible interest, of the most complete kind, in all that is his. What I need to have said to me for my encouragement is, not that I actually already have something in Christ;\* but that, having now nothing in him at all, I am freely invited, exhorted, and commanded, at once to have Christ himself, and then in him to have, now and for ever, all things. In a word, the gospel assurance is, "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth" (Mark 9:23). And what comes home to me as the crowning excellence of the gospel, is this very assurance which it conveys to me; not that there is something in Christ for all, but that there are all things in Christ for some,—for believers; and for me, if I can but say, in the very agony of my helplessness, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief" (Mark 9:24).

But the transition from this warrant to have, to the actual having; the translation of the contingent into the categorical; the transmutation of the objective gospel offer,—Christ is thine, as the saying is, for the taking,—into the subjective gospel assurance,—Christ is mine, in the taking,—that now is the difficulty.\* It is a difficulty which, more than any other, has vexed the ingenuity of practical and experimental divines, especially since the era of the Reformation. It is a difficulty which was not much felt, either on the first proclamation of the doctrines of grace in apostolic times, or on the first recovery of these doctrines out of the rubbish of Popery.\* The fresh and authentic simplicity of a newly awakened or revived soul bursts through all entanglements, and asks no questions. With a dark conviction of sin, and a bright discovery of the Saviour, it frankly and unhesitatingly makes the obvious application, and rejoices in the apostle's language of deeply penitent, and yet assuredly appropriating faith: "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief" (1 Tim. 1:15). At each of the times referred to, for at least a brief moment, all was thus fresh and authentic. Nor, even in the most doubtful and suspicious age—the most to be doubted, or the most apt to doubt—have there ever failed to be multitudes, "converted and become as little children," who have been content to know, with Paul, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, "of whom," each has been ready instinctively and most sincerely to add, "I am chief." And they have found that knowledge enough.

This consideration is our chief comfort in attempting to thread the mazes of an intricate inquiry like that in which we are now engaged; this alone,—and this always. It is the same consideration which, to speak with reverence, caused the soul of the Redeemer himself to "rejoice" (Luke 10:21), in the view of the very same mystery which perplexes us. There are "babes," to whom the Father reveals what is hidden from "the wise and prudent." There is many a one who, through grace, can say with David, "Lord, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty; neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me. Surely I have behaved myself as a child

that is weaned of his mother; my soul is even as a weaned child." Let all such, being "Israelites indeed, in whom there is no guile," rejoice; let them enter into this joy of their Lord; "let Israel hope in the Lord, from henceforth, and for ever," (Ps. 131.) Yes! blessed be God, there is a practical and experimental way of having the mystery sufficiently solved, in the actual trial which one who is, like the Lord himself, "meek and lowly in heart," is enabled to make of his grace, and of the "simplicity that is in him" (2 Cor. 11:3); when, "coming to him and learning of him," he "tastes and sees how good he is, and how blessed is the man that trusteth in him" (Ps. 34:8).

At the same time, for minds of a more restless turn—for all minds in their reflective mood—and with a view to the shunning of errors that may to such minds, and in such a mood, be dangerous,—a more minute investigation cannot be declined.\* The inquiry into which we have entered must still be prosecuted.\* It will be found, I think, to embrace in it these four particulars, which, taken together, may be regarded as exhausting it—the office, the nature, the warrant, and the origin, of saving faith.

The present chapter deals with the first of these particulars.

Let the office of faith, then, be considered, or, in other words, the place which it holds, and the purpose which it is designed to serve, in the economy of grace.\* Let the question be asked, Why is the possession of all saving blessings connected with faith, and with faith alone?

It is easy, at once, to dismiss all answers to this question which would imply that there is anything like a plea of merit, or a qualification of worthiness, in faith.\* Doubtless, faith is in itself an excellent grace, most honouring and acceptable to God, and his beloved Son, and his blessed Spirit,—as well as most becoming and ennobling to him who exercises it. It is, moreover, the source of all excellence; working by love, and assimilating its possessor to God himself; for, by "the exceeding great and precious promises" which



faith receives, we "are made partakers of the divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4). But to represent it as saving or justifying, on account of its own excellency, or on account of the virtue that goes out of it, is to build again, only in a modified form, the original covenant of works.\* It is to make the good quality of faith, or its good fruits, our real title to the divine favour and eternal life, instead of the perfect obedience and full satisfaction which the law requires. In this view, the dispensation of grace, brought in through the mediation of Christ, consists simply in a relaxation of the terms of the old natural and legal method of acceptance; not in the establishment and revelation of a method of acceptance entirely new and entirely "of grace."

Again, it is easy to answer the question which has been put, by an appeal to the divine sovereignty, and the undeniable right which God has to dispense his liberality in any manner, and upon any footing, that may seem good to him.\* This, undoubtedly, is the *ultima ratio*, the final explanation or account to be given of the arrangement in question. God is free to connect the enjoyment of the blessing with any act on our part that he may be pleased to appoint. This summary argument or answer from authority, however, though it may silence, cannot satisfy. That, sometimes, is all the answer to our questioning that we can have. But on the particular point at issue, it is in accordance both with reason and with Scripture, that we should be not merely silenced, but intelligently satisfied. For, if left on this footing, faith would be as much the mere blind fulfilment of an arbitrary or unexplained condition, as the doing of penance would be, or the undergoing of circumcision, or the compliance with any task or ritual; and no sufficient reason—indeed, no reason at all—could be given, why life and salvation should be inseparably and infallibly annexed to any of such conditions more than to any other.

Is faith, then, to be viewed, in this matter, as a condition, in any sense, or to any effect, at all? Is that properly its office or function? Setting aside, on the one hand, the idea of a condition of moral worth or qualification on the part of man; and on the other hand, the notion of a condition of mere authoritative appointment on the part

of God,—as if faith were one of several kinds of terms, any of which he might indifferently, at his own mere good pleasure, have selected and chosen,—there remains one other aspect in which faith may be regarded.\* It may be held to be, as in fact it is, simply a condition of necessary sequence or connection; a *conditio sine qua non*. It is that without the antecedence of which,—or its going before,—the desired result or consequence cannot possibly, from the very nature of things, and the necessity of the case, be obtained or realized. In this view, it may be said, without impiety, or even impropriety, that God requires faith in those who are to be saved, because he cannot save them otherwise: so that, as "without faith it is impossible to please God," so without faith it may be said to be impossible for God to save men. For God saves men in a manner agreeable to their rational and moral nature, as beings endowed with mind and conscience; free, therefore, and accountable.

Hence, generally, the office or function of faith, as distinguished from its nature, may be said to be this,—to effect and secure man's falling in with what God is doing.\* But more particularly, in determining the office or function of faith—the purpose which it is designed to serve—what, in short, renders it indispensable—much will depend on what it is that God is doing, in saving sinners; and especially on the extent to which, and the manner in which, he makes use of the sinner's own co-operation or instrumentality in saving him.

Take, for example, any saving work of God in which man's own agency is employed. This is the simplest class of cases;\* in which, indeed, there is no difficulty at all. God is about to save Noah, when the flood comes; and this salvation is "by faith." Why so—why must it be by faith? What, in this instance, is the office or function of faith? Evidently to set Noah to work in preparing the ark, "wherein few, that is, eight souls, are saved." For this end God gave the promise, which Noah was to believe, and on which he was to act. "By faith, Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark, to the saving of his house." So the apostle

testifies as to the immediate office or function of Noah's faith, with reference to the work on hand; while at the same time he identifies his faith in that matter with the faith which falls in with what God does in the higher matter of justification and eternal life; for he adds, "By the which faith, he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith" (Heb. 11:7). In like manner, when he was about to make Abraham the father of the promised seed, God required faith. And for a similar reason; because, without Abraham's belief, and his acting upon his belief, the promise could not have been fulfilled. Abraham's faith also, in that matter of the birth of Isaac, is identified with the faith which falls in with what God does in the economy of grace and salvation, and in respect of which "righteousness is imputed without works" (Rom. 4:16–25). But as regards the specific object for which he is called to believe, his faith simply serves to secure his co-operation with God for the accomplishment of it. In these cases, it is not merely from any abstract delight which God may be supposed to have in receiving the homage of a believing assent to his word,—nor out of a regard to any barren honour thereby done to his name, as the God of veracity, and faithfulness, and truth,—that he requires this act or exercise of faith; but for a more immediately practical end, and, if we may so speak, with a business view. The faith which he requires is the indispensable prerequisite, or *sine qua non*, to the setting in motion of the human agency or instrumentality, on which the attainment of the result that is sought necessarily depends.

The case is somewhat different, and the explanation perhaps is not quite so simple, when we pass to another mode of procedure on the part of God, and take for our example an act, or work, or transaction, in which all is done by God, without any co-operation or agency of man.\* Why is faith required now? What is its function? It is still the same faith; as we have seen it is declared to be so by the apostle, in the instances of Noah and of Abraham. But it is required for a somewhat different purpose, and exercised in a somewhat different way. Evidently it is not now needed to insure the actual execution or performance of anything,—as of the building of an ark or the birth of

a child; for by the supposition, the thing to which it refers is executed and performed irrespective of any co-operation on the part of him who believes. What then does it do? It simply insures acquiescence, or appropriation. That is all. But it is much,—it is everything.

For there is the same necessity for appropriation here as there was in those former instances for performance, in order that the saving work of God may be effectual. That work, I here assume, is complete and finished, independently of any co-operation on the part of man. Faith, therefore, on his part, is not needed with a view to any work to be done by him. For what, then, is it demanded? Is it merely that the individual believing may have an intelligent apprehension of this work of God, thus finished without human concurrence, and may admire it, and be suitably affected with all the sentiments and emotions which it is fitted to call forth?\* Is this what God immediately and most directly seeks when he unfolds his plan of justifying mercy through the righteousness of Christ, and asks you to believe? Is it merely that your faith may lead you to have a right conception of that plan, and do justice to it, and approve of it? Is it simply that he may have your signature, as it were, or your setting to your seal, to justify his wisdom and love in the scheme of redeeming grace? Nay, it is not your approbation or admiration merely that he desires; though these, at all events, he must have. It is something else, and something more, that he would have;—your appropriation of it—your acquiescence in it—your personal application of it to yourselves. For this end he requires in you faith. Otherwise, the requirement of faith, in the matter of the sinner's justification, his forgiveness and reconciliation, has really no meaning or propriety.

Thus, then, in the divine arrangements, where anything is left to be done by man himself, the office or function of faith is properly that of a motive prompting to action; but where, on the other hand, as in the justifying of the ungodly, all is done by God, and the act of justification proceeds upon no work of man, but on the finished work and perfect righteousness of Christ, instead of a motive to any act, faith rather takes the character of an act in itself final.\* It is the

resulting movement, rather than the moving power. It partakes more of the nature of an effect than of the nature of a cause. It resembles not so much the force of hunger prompting to the search for food, as the play and motion of the muscles and organs of touch and digestion, laying hold of the food that is presented to them. This, at least, would seem to be the exact function of faith, in its ultimate and direct dealings with its proper object. It is like the closing of the hand upon what is brought into contact with it;\* or the action of the mouth on what is put into it; or the heart's warm embrace of what is its nearest and dearest treasure. All these and the like processes or operations, considered in themselves, imply no working out of anything new or additional, but simply the appropriating of what is already perfect and complete. I speak, of course, not of the inducements and encouragements to believe, which go before; nor of the gracious impulses and active energetic affections that come after; but of the mere act itself, or exercise of faith, in its immediate dealing with that which is set before it. And, in this view, I submit that we cannot fail now to perceive the fitness of such expressions as, receiving Christ, embracing Christ, closing with Christ—all describing the office or function which belongs to faith, as that which carries and makes sure the sinner's consent to be saved "freely by grace, through the redemption that is in Christ."

For, in one word, let the principle upon which the salvation of the sinner, according to the gospel plan, turns or depends, be clearly understood.\* It is his union or oneness with Christ. He is in Christ, and Christ in him. They are truly and spiritually "one" (1 Cor. 6:17). Their union or oneness is not an idea merely, but a great fact. It is not simply imputative, or by imputation. It is not their being reckoned one, otherwise than it is their being really one. It is not as if, by a sort of fiction of law, Christ the righteous one, and I the guilty one, were accounted identical, and treated as identical;—he being treated as one with me in my guilt and condemnation; I being treated as one with him in his righteousness and life. No doubt that is a correct enough representation of the matter, so far as it goes. But it is imperfect, and therefore apt, or rather sure, unless explained, to

convey an erroneous impression. It suggests the notion of artificial contrivance or policy. It makes the transaction look like an evasive or collusive device of legal ingenuity, to save the technical validity of the statute, while practically its rigid application is got rid of. It must be ever kept in mind, that there is and can be nothing of this sort in the dealing of the holy and just God with me, as represented by Christ and identified with Christ. There is imputation,—but it is because there is reality,—in the union formed between Christ the Saviour and me "the chief of sinners." The imputation which the union carries in it, depends on the reality of the union.\* The oneness is not a legal fiction; an "as if," or "as it were," if I may so speak. It is real, personal, and vital Christ and I are regarded and dealt with as in the eye of the law one, because we are indeed one. And what makes us one is my believing in him,—my faith. The use or office of faith is to unite me to Christ.\* It is the instrument or means, as the Spirit is the agent, in effecting this real, close, personal, and intimate union. Evidently, in that view of it, what gives faith its whole value or utility, is its simply receptive character. Its sole business is to receive Christ. What I have to do in believing, and the only thing I have to do, is to consent, to acquiesce,—to respond in the affirmative, and answer Yes, in reference to the proposal or overture for a treaty of union that is made to me on the part of Christ. I have to deal with him alone; and I have to deal with him simply and solely in the way of closing with him when he presents himself, or is presented to me, in his Gospel and by his Spirit, as willing to be mine, and willing—Oh, how willing!—to have me to be his. I do not work or wait for saving benefits to be reached through Christ, or got from Christ. I lay hold of Christ himself. My faith is the appropriation of Christ himself as mine, and of all saving benefits as mine in him. Such is the office or function of faith. It unites to Christ, and therefore justifies and saves.

## CHAPTER VI

THE NATURE OF FAITH—NOT SIMPLY AN ACT OF THE INTELLECT—THE CONSENT OF THE WHOLE INNER MAN TO THE APPROPRIATING OF CHRIST—UNITES THE BELIEVER TO CHRIST

THE inquiry concerning the nature of saving faith is, at least, as important as that which relates to its office and function.\* I am inclined to think, indeed, that an inadequate, if not erroneous, view of the nature of faith lies at the root of much of the crude speculation which has prevailed in the department of theology with which I am now occupied. The naked intellectual theory of faith may possibly, as I shall presently explain, be so held and maintained as to be isolated from what seem to be its legitimate consequences. It may even be so put as to simplify apparently the plan of salvation, in its practical aspects and bearings. It may have been, and I believe has been, thus adopted and recommended by not a few eminent divines.\* But I have a strong impression that this theory of faith, ingeniously defended, has been the source of evil; especially in the hands of disciples not equal to their masters,—less thoroughly grounded in the fundamental truths of the gospel, and less accustomed to guard every step of their reasoning by a reference to the sovereignty of divine law and divine grace. I cannot but think that it is this theory of faith which has led the way,—first, to the devising of a sense in which Christ may be regarded as dying for all, while he really died as the proper substitute of the elect only;\* then secondly, to the notion of his death being, in its own nature, equally for all, though limited in its application by the decree of God, and the necessity of the Spirit's special work of grace; and thirdly, to the vague and wide idea of its being an atonement equally for all, and of its depending on the free will of the individual man, under the common influences of the Spirit, to render it effectual on his behalf.

Entertaining this opinion, I am of course bound to examine the theory in question, upon its own merits, carefully and fully. I have been led, indeed, already to anticipate in part this branch of my subject in my remarks on the universality of the gospel call, and the consequent universality of the obligation to believe. I resume the discussion of it now, in the light of what I have attempted to contribute towards a right and clear understanding of the office or function of saving faith. For the two topics will be found to be intimately connected, so that according to the office or function of faith will be its nature.\*

Let it be remembered, then, that the reason why faith is required or appointed as a step in the accomplishment of the Lord's purpose, is not any grace or beauty in faith itself, making it generally acceptable to God and useful to man; but this special virtue which it has, that it provides for and secures man's falling in with what God is doing. His faith, in fact, is simply his taking the place which God assigns him;—whether it be, as in his sanctification, actively to "work out his own salvation with fear and trembling, since it is God who worketh in him both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Phil. 2:12, 13); or, as in his justification, to appropriate the free gift of God, and make it his own. Now, if we comprehend in our idea of the nature of faith, all that is essential for this office or function which it has to discharge, then, it would seem, besides a rational conviction of the understanding, there must be included in it, or associated with it, some corresponding affection or desire in the heart, as well as some active determination of the will. Otherwise, it is not explained how it either acts and impels as a motive, or apprehends and appropriates as a hand or handle.

The question, therefore, comes to be very much this: When faith is represented as justifying and saving, are we to understand by that term the whole complex movement of soul which I have indicated?\* Or are we to detach and separate what partakes of the character of emotion and volition,—regarding that rather as a necessary fruit and consequence of faith than as being of its very essence;—and are we to



make faith itself consist exclusively in the assent of the mind to truth, received as such upon the divine testimony? Those who favour this last view are anxious to avoid the imputation of attaching a peculiar meaning to faith in the department of theology, as if it were something different from ordinary belief, in any other branch of knowledge. The faith which has the truth of God for its object, they would have to be identical in kind with the faith of which any truth whatever is the object; resolving both alike into simple conviction. Thus they are led to make the intellectual part of our nature, and that alone, the seat of faith strictly and properly so called. Faith, according to them, is altogether an act or exercise of the understanding, weighing the evidence submitted to it, and drawing the legitimate or necessary conclusions. And faith in God is simply the belief of what God says, because he says it. There is an advantage, as they think, in thus isolating the bare and simple act of believing,—separating it from any process going before or coming after, and viewing it as nothing more and nothing else than the state of the mind assenting to certain truths, on the testimony of Him who cannot lie,—a state not at all differing, as to the nature of the thing done, from that of the mind assenting to truth of any kind, on the authority of any credible witness.

The advantage of this way of considering faith is chiefly twofold.\*

In the first place, it most effectually puts away and puts down the Popish or semi-Popish notion of implicit faith, or of a blind reliance on the supposed communication of spiritual blessings to the soul by a mystical charm, or sacramental virtue, or some process guaranteed by the priest, of which he who is the subject of it need have no intelligent knowledge, nor even any conscious cognizance at all. That the faith with which all saving blessings are connected, is a reasonable act of an intelligent mind,—not merely taking upon trust the thing said to be done, but understanding and assenting to what is done,—is a great scriptural truth, and a great safeguard against the delusions of the "man of sin."\* It is a view of faith fully sanctioned by not a few passages of Scripture, of which one may be quoted as a

specimen. Writing to the Corinthians, the apostle Paul, for obvious reasons, dwells much on the fact that the gospel system is foolishness to the Greeks. But at the same time, he is careful to explain that it satisfies the reason, and carries the intelligent assent, of the humble and sincere disciple. He strongly asserts, that, whatever aspect of mere blind fanaticism it may present to "the princes of this world," or its proud intellects, it approves itself to the upright in heart as altogether worthy of acceptance: "Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect" (1 Cor. 2:6, 7).

Again, in the second place, this view tends to divest faith of that character of unknown and mysterious peculiarity, which is apt to make it appear, in the eyes of an anxious inquirer, so very recondite an exercise of soul—so very unattainable a grace—that he despairs of ever satisfactorily realizing it.\* Such a one is told of the necessity of faith. He hears much of its workings and of its experiences. And hence, conceiving that it must be some high and singular attainment, altogether different from the ordinary actings of the mind, he harasses and perplexes himself in groping after this unknown something, without which, it seems, he cannot be saved. In this way, he either involves himself in a labyrinth of inextricable difficulties, or elaborately gets up some frame or feeling which, he thinks, answers the descriptions usually given of faith. And thereupon, having got, at last, as he imagines, the key, he summons courage boldly to enter and ransack the treasury.\* It is manifest that the alternation or transition—the vibration, as it were, in such a case as this—between absolute helplessness on the one hand, and a subtle form of self-righteousness on the other, cannot be either salutary or comfortable. It is, therefore, a safe and seasonable, as well as happy relief, for a mind so exercised, to have faith presented to it in its very barest and most naked aspect. It is good to be made to see and be satisfied that there is really nothing recondite or mysterious in the act of believing, considered in itself; that it is, in fact, nothing more than giving to the living and true God, in reference to things divine and eternal, the same reasonable and intelligent credit that you give to an upright man, in reference to the things of time.

With these advantages, the intellectual view of the nature of faith seems to be strongly recommended by its simplicity and clearness. It may be shown, indeed, as I think, to be seriously defective in a practical point of view, and to furnish only an insufficient explanation of the principle on which the free salvation of the gospel depends;—still it may be usefully employed as a sort of spiritual test, as it were, to detach and isolate, for the purpose of better mental analysis, what in reality never exists but in a certain combination, although it may yet be conveniently extracted and examined by itself. In physical science, an analytical chemist may take out of a compound or complex substance one single ingredient, that he may subject it to the ordeal of a separate and searching scrutiny, and verify its character in its purest and most unequivocal form; while still it may be true that the ingredient or element in question is never, as a natural phenomenon, to be found otherwise than in a given union or affinity. So also, in the science of mind, the moral analyst may deal in like manner with some act or state of the living soul, which, though seeming to be one and simple, is yet capable of being resolved into parts. He may detach and clear away, as in a refining crucible, all that may be regarded as the adjuncts, or accessories, or accompaniments, leaving single and alone the real central and staple article of the mass, around which the rest all cluster, and with which they all combine. And this he may do for the most important ends and with the most satisfactory results, in the interest of science, while at the same time he may be himself the readiest to admit that, for ordinary practical uses, it is the mass as a whole with which we have to concern ourselves.

Thus, to apply this illustration, let it be granted that faith may be resolved ultimately and strictly into intellectual assent, or belief, on the evidence of divine testimony; still it remains true, as a matter of fact, that this assent or belief, if it is of a saving character, has ever associated and blended with it, on the one hand, a deep sense of sin in the conscience, a clear sight of Christ in the understanding, and a consenting will and longing desire in the heart; and on the other hand, sentiments of trust, reliance, confidence, or what can only be

described as leaning and resting upon Christ. And all these, in actual experience, so enter into combination with the central element of assent or belief, that the whole may be practically considered as making up one state of mind,—complex in its ingredients, but simple enough in its acting and out-going,—the state of mind, I mean, in which, as a poor sinner, I flee away from my guilty self to my righteous Saviour, and roll over the burden of all my iniquities on Him who, "though he knew no sin, was made sin" for such as I am, that such as I am, the chief of sinners, "might be made the righteousness of God in him" (2 Cor. 5:21).

There are two observations, however, which it seems necessary to make, in the way, not so much of controverting, as of guarding on the one hand, and supplementing on the other, this analytical view, if I may so call it, of the nature of faith.\*

The first observation is, that it must be understood with an express or implied qualification,—a qualification of most vital moment in a practical point of view. Whatever may be our theory of the nature of this grace, it is indispensable that it should be one which clearly and unequivocally recognises both the moral character and the moral influence of faith.\* It must recognise its moral character, as proceeding from a renewed will. It must recognise also its moral influence, as determining that renewed will to embrace Christ, or to embrace God in Christ, as the chief good. Not only to maintain untouched the fundamental principle of man's responsibility to God for his belief, is this explanation necessary; but with reference, also, to the scriptural doctrine of the depravity of man, as well as the scriptural idea of the office or function of the faith which is required of him in order to his being justified and saved.

All belief is voluntary, in so far as it depends on the fixing of the mind upon the substance of the truth to be believed, and upon the evidence or testimony in respect of which belief is claimed. To understand what we are expected to assent to, and to weigh the grounds of the assent expected, implies an exercise of attention; and

attention is a faculty under the direct and immediate control of the will. Hence, any perverse bias of the will must affect the kind and degree of the attention which is given, and consequently, also, it must affect in a corresponding manner the result attained. On this ground it may be most consistently maintained, that the renewal of the will is an indispensable preliminary to the believing assent which the understanding has to give to the truth of God.\* So the apostle expressly testifies: "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, neither can he know them; because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Cor. 2:14). The intellect of fallen man is clouded and struck with impotency, through the entire estrangement of his affections from God, the enmity of his carnal mind against God, and the impossibility of his willing subjection to God and to God's law. He is prejudiced, blinded, darkened. In order that the light may get into his understanding, and bring home to his understanding a conviction of the reality of things, divine, there must be a direct work of God in the soul, restoring to it the capacity of discerning and perceiving the truth which God has to reveal. And it must be a work, let it be noted, not restricted to the understanding, but reaching to other parts of man's nature, and in particular touching the conscience and the will. Not only must the eye be purged that it may see; the man himself must be made willing to look. The Spirit might operate upon the intellect so effectually as to repair thoroughly the damage which it has sustained, and perfectly restore its capacity of apprehending spiritual truth and the evidence of it. Would that of itself suffice to produce certainly even a right intellectual knowledge and belief? Not, one would say, unless there were such an accompanying change in the moral frame as to substitute for estrangement, offence, and enmity, feelings of complacency and cordial interest in the things of God that are to be known and believed. This merely intellectual belief, therefore, must be the result of the renewal of the whole man. It must always be regarded in that light, if we would consistently maintain uncompromised, either the moral demerit of unbelief, as a sin for which man is responsible, or the moral worth and excellency of faith, as implying right dispositions and a heart right with God.\*

And this suggests another remark, which is the counterpart of the preceding one. We must beware of under-estimating the inveterate strength of human depravity, as if it were such that an intellectual conviction could overcome it.\* It seems to be presumed or taken for granted, in the scheme of human nature on which the merely intellectual theory of faith proceeds, that once to carry the understanding, is to carry all. Get the mind, or intellect, enlightened and convinced, and all is gained. Thus it is alleged that a man, really understanding and assenting to all that God reveals respecting coming wrath and present grace, cannot but flee from the one and lay hold on the other. Hence, though neither reliance nor appropriation be held to be of the essence of faith, yet both are secured, if you have the intelligent belief of what God testifies concerning his Son. It is true, there seem to be individuals not a few whose understandings are well informed in the whole of Christian doctrine, and convinced, moreover, of the truth of every portion of it, who yet give too palpable evidence of their information and their conviction being practically inert and inoperative, and stopping far short of their actually turning from sin to God. But then, it is said, there must be, unknown to us, and perhaps even unknown to themselves, some mistake or misapprehension in some particular, or some latent incredulity in regard to some point. They cannot really know and believe all the truth; since, if they did, it would be impossible for them to continue impenitent and unreconciled.

Now it is here, if anywhere, that I confess I feel the exclusively intellectual view, as it is called, of the nature of faith, giving way.\* We may allow the extreme improbability of a man being able to comprehend, even intellectually, the whole truth of God, in all its terrible and affecting reality, without an inward work of God on his conscience, his mind, his will, his heart. Even in that aspect of the matter, however, it is most painfully instructive to observe how very near, at least, natural intelligence, under the ordinary means of grace and the common operations of the Spirit, may come, and often does come, to a right speculative knowledge, and a real theoretical admission and belief, of all the statements of the divine record,

without any valid consciousness, or any satisfactory evidence, of a change of heart. It is, therefore, at all times a solemn duty, in a land of privilege and profession, to warn all hearers of the gospel that they may have what seems to be commonly understood by an intellectual acquaintance with things divine, and an intellectual conviction of their truth, through the mere use of their natural faculties, under gospel light and gospel opportunities, without being spiritually enlightened, so as savingly to know Christ Jesus the Lord. But it is the other aspect of this matter that chiefly strikes one as doubtful. When it is taken for granted that the understanding is the ruling principle of our nature, and that to carry it is to carry all, I have some fear that man's depravity may be under-rated. Is it so very clear that a man, knowing and believing, even by divine teaching, all that is revealed of his own lost estate, and of the Redeemer's free and full salvation, will necessarily consent to be saved? Is there no case of a sinner, whose mind is thoroughly enlightened, so far as an acquaintance with all the truth of God is concerned, and thoroughly convinced, so far as intellectual assurance goes, yet, from sheer enmity to God, and unwillingness to own subjection or obligation to God, refusing to accept deliverance, and choosing rather to perish than be indebted, on such terms, to a Being whom he suspects, dislikes, and hates—to a Being who will not barter salvation with him for a price, and from whom he cannot bring himself to take it as a free gift? Such a case, perhaps, so extremely put, may be considered visionary and ideal; and it may be alleged that, in point of fact, such a man cannot really know what it is to perish, or cannot believe in the certainty of his perishing, since, if he did, he could not but seek and be anxious to escape. Of this, however, at any rate, I am fully persuaded. I am much mistaken if it be not the earnest feeling of almost every child of God, not only that such a depth of depravity as I have indicated is conceivable, but that it is no more than might have been, and, but for a strong pressure from above on his rebellious will and heart, must have been, realized in his own case and in his own experience.\* On this account, as well as for other reasons, I am rather inclined to consider consent and confidence, trust and reliance, as not merely flowing naturally and necessarily from faith,

but forming its very essence. Giving all due prominence to the share which the understanding has in bringing about that state of mind which we call faith,—giving it, in fact, the first place, since it is, and must be, through a spiritually enlightened understanding that the whole soul of an intelligent man is moved,—I would still place the seat of faith in the moral, fully as much as in the intellectual part of our nature. I would make it chiefly consist, not in the assent or credit given to what God reveals or testifies, but in our embracing, with a fiducial reliance or trust, Him whom God reveals, and of whom "this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and that this life is in his Son" (1 John 5:11). And I would appeal to that word, which, though it cannot be urged as conclusive, seems, at least, to countenance this view: "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness" (Rom. 10:10).

The second observation which I have to make confirms my leaning in the direction I have pointed out. I return again to what I have already said of the office or function of faith, as appropriating Christ, and all things in him.\* Now, it seems clear to me that it is only through the medium of this trust or reliance which I consider to be of the essence of faith—this casting of ourselves upon Christ—that we arrive at any intelligible connection or correspondence between the nature of faith and the office of faith. It is only thus that we are enabled to see how faith is fitted for the purpose which it is designed to serve; what there is in it that adapts it for the appropriation of the Saviour and the salvation presented to its acceptance in the gospel. Suppose that we limit our view of faith to the mere assent or credit given by a spiritually enlightened understanding to the testimony of God concerning his Son. Then, on the one hand, no very satisfactory reason can be assigned for the selection of faith as the medium or instrument of justification. It may be said, perhaps, that it is because it excludes works. That, however, is rather a reason why works are not, than why faith should be, the appointed way of obtaining the blessing. But further, on the other hand, it seems difficult to explain how, upon this theory, a sinner can get at the direct act of appropriation, which it is the very office and function of faith to



secure. True, he may arrive at this appropriation, and even at full personal assurance, by a reflex act of faith, or by a syllogistic process of argument founded on his own act of believing. For though there is no revelation or testimony of God concerning the salvation of any individual sinner, personally and by name;\* though there is nothing beyond the general declaration of his being able and willing to save all and any sinners who will believe; yet, according to the intellectual view of faith, appropriation may be reached by reasoning thus: Christ is the Saviour of every one that believeth; but I am conscious that I believe—that I understand and assent to what is revealed in the gospel concerning Christ, and the way of acceptance in him: therefore, I conclude that Christ is my Saviour; and I rejoice in him as such. This, as all must admit, is a legitimate and scriptural way of arriving, through a process of reflex self-inquiry, at a full assurance of one's personal interest in Christ. But for my part I plead for a more direct and immediate sort of appropriation as being involved in the very act of believing. And for that, on the theory of faith which I am now examining, there is scarcely any room. According to that other theory, however, which I would prefer—but rather as supplementary than as antagonist to the former—making faith consist mainly in trust, or reliance on Him of whom the Father testifies, I hold that the discoveries of Christ in the gospel, as the Saviour of sinners generally, are so full, pointed, and precise in themselves, and are so brought home to the individual, by the Spirit working in him, that he is persuaded, as by a leap—not indeed at hazard, or in the dark, but still as one would venture from a burning house into the arms of a friend standing below—to cast himself upon Christ.\* And in so doing, he directly and immediately appropriates Christ as his own; his language being that of Thomas, in the very looking to Christ: "My Lord, and my God!" (John 20:28).\*

This is probably the nearest approach that can be made to the embodying of the direct act of faith in language such as does not turn it into the reflex. It is the instinctive utterance of the soul, when one naturally hard and slow of heart to believe,—having yielded, it may be, to sullen despair, refusing to be comforted,—has such an insight

given him into the love of Jesus, and the meaning of his wounded hands and side, as constrains him, not only to recognise the divine character of Him who is mighty to save, but to realize his gracious and saving relation to himself. There is an end of hesitation; there is a frank resolution to confide in him—"I will trust, and not be afraid;" there is a committing of his soul and his all to Him,—in the direct, straightforward, earnestness of ejaculation: "My Lord, and my God!"

Here, then, on such grounds as I have indicated, I am disposed to make a stand in defence of that view of faith which includes in it something more than simple belief.\* I do not see how otherwise we can consistently explain the place assigned to faith in the matter of the sinner's free justification and salvation by grace. We cannot well be said to be justified and saved by faith alone, unless we understand by faith that consent of the entire inner man which effects our union to Christ, and the submitting of ourselves to him as "the righteousness of God,"—"the Lord our righteousness," and "the Lord our strength." It is not enough for the advocates of the bare intellectual theory to tell us that the belief for which they plead will always produce as its accompaniment or result the fiducial trust and appropriation on which we insist, and which they as well as we admit to be what really unites the believer to the Saviour. On that footing, we are really justified and saved, not by faith alone, but by the fruit of faith,—the hearty embrace of Christ which faith prompts. Surely it is better to recognise the uniting virtue or efficacy as residing in the faith itself, if we are to hold fast in its integrity the Reformation watchword, that faith alone justifies. In fact, as I have been endeavouring to show, it is hard to see what precise truth it can be, the bare and simple belief of which is to work such a direct appropriating assurance as the calling of Jesus Lord must be held to mean.\* For what is it that I am to believe? What is the proposition to which I am to assent? Is it this,—Christ is mine; or, I take Christ to be mine; or, I have good reason to conclude that I have taken, or that I am taking, Christ to be mine? The belief of any one of these propositions will doubtless give the appropriating assurance sought. But how to arrive at that belief otherwise than through the reflex and

subjective process of verifying, by self-examination, my own state of mind towards Christ—that is a serious practical difficulty. Nor do I see how the difficulty can be got over, unless there be in the state of mind itself which I am by reflection to realize, something that directly effects the appropriation. And what can that something be? It cannot well be the admission or conviction of any mere proposition or statement concerning Christ; for that simply throws me back upon some reflex argument of my interest in Christ. It cannot well be anything short of my actually so dealing with Christ himself personally as to accept him, and close with him, and embrace him. In a word, my faith, in its direct and objective act or exercise, makes Christ mine. And so it prepares the way for the reflex or subjective line of reasoning by which I confirm myself, on valid grounds, in the humble confidence and assurance that Christ is truly mine.

This subject may be illustrated by a reference to a discussion of some interest, between Dr. Bellamy and Dr. Anderson of the United States. Bellamy's\* "Treatise on the Nature of True Religion," is known as a work of great theological value, especially as searching very thoroughly the foundations on which our knowledge of God, and our obligation to love God, as well under the law as under the gospel, must ultimately rest.\* In another work, under the title of "Letters and Dialogues," Bellamy sets himself to controvert the views on the nature of faith put forth by Hervey, the well-known author of "Theron and Aspasio," as well as by Marshall in his book on Sanctification. His strictures are perhaps unduly severe; manifesting too much inclination to convict his opponents of Antinomianism, and too great a dread, also, of all assurance except what is the result of a testing self-examination and appeal to fruits. In exposing the untenableness of what he imagines that his adversaries hold faith to be,—namely, the mere belief that I am saved already,—he seems to disparage that act of direct appropriation by which, on the warrant of the gospel call, and with a strong personal assurance, I take Christ and his salvation to be mine; mine at once and immediately; mine now and for ever.\* It is upon this point, accordingly, that Dr.

Anderson chiefly dwells, with remarkable clearness and power, in his observations on Bellamy's system. The two divines, I am persuaded, somewhat exaggerated, as is not by any means uncommon in such cases, the real theological difference between them. They were both of them men of sound evangelical opinions, and eminently endowed alike with gifts and with grace. They had before them respectively different forms of error;\* and each might be apt to suspect the other of a leaning towards that form of error which he himself particularly dreaded. At the same time, the difference of their ways of viewing faith must not be under-estimated. Bellamy is undoubtedly apt to urge too far the purely intellectual feature in faith, as requiring that it shall always have some categorical sentence to grasp; and Dr. Anderson's vindication, on the other hand, of the power which there is in the outgoing of the soul to Christ, and the hold which the soul takes of Christ, "to assure our hearts before God,"—is a valuable service, not only to theological science, but to personal and practical religion.

The truth is, I must repeat, the chief difficulty in adjusting the matter at issue would seem to arise out of the attempt to translate into a precise formula, and embody in an exact proposition, what is implied in the direct and immediate act or exercise of saving faith.\* Hence such definitions of saving faith are given as justly provoke the criticism of philosophical thinkers like Dr. Bellamy. Take, for instance, the following: "It is a real persuasion in my heart that Jesus Christ is mine, and that I shall have life and salvation by him—that whatsoever Christ did for the redemption of mankind, he did it for me." "It is a hearty assurance that our sins are freely forgiven us in Christ;" and its language is, "Pardon is mine—grace is mine—Christ and all his spiritual blessings are mine."

If these expressions are weighed in connection with other views set forth by the same writers, they will be found, perhaps, to mean nothing more than that faith, in its very essence, is an appropriating act;\* and that, consequently, in its direct exercise, it involves a measure of "persuasion," or confidence, or "hearty assurance;"—

which, however, it would itself, if genuine, shrink from putting into the bold and naked form of a categorical proposition, or an express and positive deliverance. Nor does this seem to be inconsistent with Bellamy's own opinion. He freely uses such scriptural phraseology as, "coming to Christ, receiving Christ, trusting in Christ, believing on Christ, flying to Christ;"—all which he considers as descriptive, not of any act subsequent to faith, but of faith itself. Now, any exercise of mind such as will suit that phraseology, must surely have in it a measure of directly appropriating assurance, which, if it is to be articulately interpreted at all, must have some voice given to it, very similar to the utterance which Dr. Bellamy condemns.

But this, I apprehend, is the very evil to be complained of,—that men should either attempt, or be required, to fix down, in written or spoken words, an affection or movement of the mind, as yet unable, or scarcely able, to realize itself.\* For all language is reflex, whereas faith is direct.\* It is directly that I believe, and believing, take Christ as mine. It is reflexly that I say that I believe, or that Christ is mine. Thus it is with other mental operations. I love; but my loving is not my saying, or thinking that I love. I take an offered friendship to be my own; but my so taking it and using it is different from my saying, or thinking, that it is mine. It is the imperfection of language, after all, that causes any fallacy here. Language cannot catch a direct act of the mind without instantly making it reflex. The moment I put my faith or feeling into words, it is as if I looked into a mirror, or sat to a painter, to have, not the primary attitude of my soul, but an image of it, presented to my own view, and to the world's. The mistake of the class of divines whom Bellamy criticises somewhat sharply, would seem to lie in their vainly endeavouring to make language do the office of that magic art which would arrest and stereotype the almost unconscious glance of the eager eye. Or, in plainer terms, they seem bent upon reducing into a formula that direct exercise of simple trust, which cannot thus recognise its own reality without instantly and altogether ceasing to be direct, and becoming reflex and inferential. And Bellamy's error, probably, in so far as he erred, consisted in his making no allowance for this source of

misunderstanding, and in his pressing, consequently, too far, his *reductio ad absurdum*, or the running up of his antagonists into a corner, and insisting on their becoming responsible for some logical statement, which forthwith he has no difficulty in proving to be either baseless or inept.

I hold it, therefore, to be of the last consequence always to keep in view this difference between a direct and a reflex act or operation of the mind, and this inadequacy of language as the vehicle or instrument of these two acts respectively.\* It is a fruitful source of fallacy, and the main cause, I am persuaded, of almost all the embarrassment that is apt to perplex the question about the nature of faith, in its relation to the other question about the efficacy and extent of the atonement.\* Holy Scripture, as every one must have observed, says little or nothing expressly on the subject. It sets forth the object of faith—Christ—in all the glory of his mediatorial character, in all the fulness of his mediatorial work, and in all the freeness of his mediatorial ministry of reconciliation. The motives to faith are urged; the warrants of faith are spread out; the blessed fruits of faith, in the pure peace and holy joy of a believing soul, are traced; as well as its holy issues and evidences, in a consistent life of new and loving obedience. But as to the nature of the act itself, there is no analysis in Scripture that seeks to reach it. It is assumed that men know what believing or trusting means. That a more rigid and subtile scrutiny has been rendered necessary in after times, by the accumulation of errors on every side, must be admitted. At the same time, we may be allowed to regret that such a necessity should have arisen; and we cannot but fear that it may have led some to carry the process too far. Thus, on the one hand, the enumeration of so many different kinds of faith as some divines have been wont to distinguish—such as historical faith, the faith of miracles, temporary faith, saving faith, and so forth—has undoubtedly tended to perplex;—while, on the other hand, the attempt to simplify the whole matter, by reducing all to one, has, perhaps, created that very appearance of over-refinement which it was meant to remedy.

For, after all, the belief of a statement which is abstractly or independently true, whether I believe it or not, is a different thing from the belief of a statement which becomes true through some process of conviction, or concurrence, or consent, on my part;\* and it is different, also, from the process itself on which the truth of a statement of this latter kind turns. There is thus a sort of tertium quid, an intermediate something, between the belief of the one kind of statement and that of the other, which it seems vain to attempt to reduce into the form of a categorical proposition. That Christ is the Son of God and Saviour of sinners, is a clear announcement; that he is my Saviour is a clear announcement also. But the former is true, as a matter of fact, whether I believe or not; the latter becomes true, as a matter of fact, only upon my believing. Does not this seem to prove that my believing, standing as it does between the two announcements, and forming the stepping-stone from the former announcement to the latter, is different from the belief of either the one or the other? But no categorical proposition can possibly be framed between these two: He saveth sinners; and, He saveth me. Must not that faith, therefore, of which we are in search, be an act or exercise of the mind, such as cannot be expressed in any formula of the naked intellect? For the intellect cannot turn the contingent—which alone comes between the two propositions—into the categorical. That, however, really is the present problem. There must, therefore, be some other function—call it trust, or confidence, or persuasion, or assurance, or consent, or what you will—to translate, He saveth sinners who believe, into He saveth me.\* The whole speculation, in fact, or the whole inquiry, concerning the nature of faith considered with reference to its function or office, may be appropriately summed up and closed in the exquisitely beautiful saying of one of the writers to whom I have referred—a saying not more remarkable for its poetic charm, if I may so characterize it, than for its deep philosophic truth:—"Hence faith is not so much our saying anything, as our silent acquiescence in what God says."\*





## CHAPTER VII

### THE WARRANT OF FAITH—THE DIVINE TESTIMONY, APPEALING TO THE DIVINE NAME OR NATURE AS EXHIBITED IN THE ATONEMENT

THE warrant or ground of faith must be considered in connection with the views already given, respecting the office or function which faith has to discharge, as well as the nature of the act or exercise itself.

Generally, it is agreed on all hands that the warrant or ground of faith is the divine testimony.\* I believe, because the Lord hath said it. The formal reason for believing, is not the reasonableness of what "the Lord saith," but the fact that "the Lord saith it." To give credit to a report on account of its inherent probability, or on account of the circumstantial evidence by which it is corroborated, is a different thing from receiving it on the simple assurance of a competent and trustworthy witness. The states of mind implied in these two acts of faith respectively are very different;\* the one being that of a judge or critic, the other that of a disciple or a little child.\*

It is true, indeed, on the one hand, that as an element, and a very important element, in determining the question whether it be the Lord that speaks or not, we are entitled to take into account the substance and manner of the communication made to us;\* to weigh well its bearing on what we otherwise know of God and of ourselves; and to gather from its high tone of holy sovereignty, so worthy of the speaker, as well as from its deep breathings of mercy, so suited to the parties to whom it appeals, many precious and delightful confirmations of the fact, that it is in very deed a message from heaven that has reached us, and a message addressed to us, and meant for us, poor, guilty sinners upon earth.\* It is true, also, on the other hand, that, in gracious condescension, God does not merely

announce to us peremptorily his will and our duty—abruptly intimating that so it is, and so it must be. He is at pains to explain how it is so, and how it must be so. He lets us into the rationale of his own procedure. He shows us what he is doing, and why and how he is doing it. He not merely proclaims the general result, that his justice is satisfied on behalf of all who choose, or become willing, to embrace the righteousness of his Son—to embrace his Son as the Lord their righteousness;—He goes into the details of the mysterious transaction, and makes it plain and palpable, even to our limited power of comprehension, that this satisfaction to his justice is real, and cannot but be sufficient. He not merely summons authoritatively the rebels against his government to submit and be reconciled; he argues, and expostulates, and pleads with them—unfolding the whole plan and purpose of wise, righteous, and holy benevolence, in virtue of which he is enabled to receive them graciously and to love them freely. All this he does that they may have the less difficulty or scruple in believing, or else that they may have no excuse for their unbelief,—no pretence for not being intelligently and thoroughly satisfied.

Still it is ultimately, or rather immediately, on the ipse dixit of God—his "THUS SAITH THE LORD"—that our faith must rest.\* For then only am I really exercising this blessed grace, and honouring God in the exercise of it, when I am not merely canvassing the contents of the revelation, with a view to settle my mind as to whence it comes—nor even meditating on the wondrous wisdom with which all is so arranged as to harmonize all the attributes of God, and meet all the exigencies of man's case; but when, like the child Samuel, I say from the heart, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth" (1 Sam. 3:9, 10); or, like the docile and grateful virgin mother, reposing her trust, not on the explanation given of the marvellous announcement made to her, but on the truth of Him from whom it came—"Behold the handmaid of the Lord: be it unto me according to thy word" (Luke 1:38).

It is plain, however, that as regards the nature of the faith which I exercise, and still more as regards its fitness for the function or office

assigned to it, much will depend, not merely on the precise literal amount of what is said, but also on the view which I take of Him whose word or testimony is my warrant for believing.\* Thus, generally, it is obvious enough that, in order to make his testimony a foundation of that faith which is needed, the veracity, the faithfulness, the sincerity and truth of God, must be owned and appreciated.\* Otherwise there can be no credit given to him, and no confidence reposed in him, at all. But, more particularly, it would seem that other attributes of his character must be apprehended, in order that his testimony may be a good ground of the sort of faith which is desiderated and sought.

For example, in addition to his veracity, the unchangeableness of God must be recognised.\* How indispensable this is, will appear if we inquire what is the common source of the scepticism, whether of presumption or of fear and doubt, which lies and lurks at the bottom of the unbelieving heart. It is not so much the veracity, or general truthfulness of God, that is called in question, as his unchangeableness, or the immutability of his counsels and his commands. Men forget that it is not only said of him, "He is not a man, that he should lie;" but it is added, "neither the son of man, that he should repent" (Num. 24:19). Hence, in reference to threatened judgment, that reliance which sinners are so prone to place on the imagined placability of God, and the ready heed which they give to the argument or suggestion of the tempter, "Ye shall not surely die."

Thus, in a similar case,—alas! too much a case of ordinary experience in the government of human families,—when I warn my child of my determination to "visit his iniquities with stripes, and his transgressions with the rod," why does he run away from me careless and unconcerned? Not so much because he doubts my honesty, as because he doubts my firmness and inflexibility of purpose. He is quite aware that I am in earnest in straitly forbidding the offence, and loudly intimating my resolution to punish it. But he sees a relenting fondness in the glance of the very eye that would sternly frown on him. Experience also has taught him that I may change my

mind. And he has a vague notion that if the worst, as the saying is, come to the worst, my parental tenderness will get the better of me, or something will happen to appease me, and somehow he will get off. He cherishes this notion, even when I tell him of the general principles according to which his conduct in youth must exert an influence on his welfare in after years, and early profligacy must entail upon him either early death or an old age of vain remorse and premature decay.\* He admits my veracity. He admits also the average probability of the testimony which I bear. But he lays hold of the doubt that may be cast on the inflexibility of the law, or the invariableness of the providence, which I seek to announce to him. And he can find many plausible reasons for anticipating a relaxation of the rule or practice in his own especial favour. For it is soon found to be but too easy and natural an extension of his fond reliance on impunity, that he should carry his scepticism and his calculation of chances from the parental government to the divine. The case is precisely the same with respect to my dealings of kindness with him. How is it that, when I fondle and caress my child most warmly, I may very possibly detect, under all his wild gaiety, a shrinking and half-avowed sense of insecurity? It is not that he doubts my sincerity at the time. By no means. But, alas! like the school-boys in the "Deserted Village," the "boding trembler," having found that I may be swayed by—

"Learned to trace

The day's disasters in my morning face."

Even so it is with the threatenings and promises of God. They are too generally received by men as if they came from one "altogether such as themselves." And, in fact, the unbelief of the evil heart manifests itself in this very disposition to regard the denunciations of God's law as mere ebullitions of personal, and therefore placable, resentment; and the assurances of his gospel as the relentings of a merely pitiful, and therefore precarious, indulgence. On both sides, in reference both to the severity and to the goodness of God, what is chiefly

needed is, to have men convinced, not only that God is really in earnest, but that he is unchangeably so.\*

Nor is this all. There must be not merely a conviction of the unchangeableness of God,—there must be a conviction, also, that this unchangeableness is necessary, reasonable, and right;\* that it is not to be confounded with the perseverance of mere obstinacy or caprice, but is the result of the absolute perfection and infinite excellence of the divine character and nature. Among men, one often holds on in the course, whether of favouritism or of vindictiveness, which he has resolved upon and announced, merely because he has committed himself, and has not courage, or is ashamed, to draw back. Such a one is essentially of a weak temper and frame of mind, and never can be the object either of sincere respect or of cordial faith. He may be feared or flattered as a tyrant, but he can never be loved and trusted as a gracious father, or revered as a just master and lord. The unchangeableness of Jehovah is not of such a sort. It must be viewed in connection with the glorious attributes of his character, and the everlasting principles of his administration, as the moral governor of the universe. Thus viewed, his unchangeableness must so commend itself to the intelligence, the conscience, and the whole moral nature of the individual to whom it is rightly manifested, as to make him feel, not only that God is, and must be, unchangeable, but that, for his part, even if it were possible, he would not wish him to be otherwise.

It is here, particularly, that we may see the necessity of an acquaintance with the character of God, as preliminary, if not in the order of time, at least in the order of causation, to that saving faith which rests upon his word or testimony.\* This is what would seem to be meant by such a significant statement as that of the Psalmist: "They that know thy name will put their trust in thee" (Ps. 9:10). Apart from this knowledge of his name, or nature,—this acquaintance with his character,—the most explicit assurances, whether of judgment on the one hand, or of mercy on the other, must fail to bring home either real conviction or real contentment to my

soul. I might be forced to admit the reality of his commands and prohibitions—his threatenings and promises. I might also be most unequivocally told, and most emphatically assured, of their irrevocable steadfastness, and of the impossibility of any change of his mind with regard to them. Still, if I continued to be ignorant of his real character, and blind or insensible to all its glorious excellences and perfections, there would be no acquiescence on my part. On the contrary, there could only be either impatience, sullen resentment, and defiance, on the one hand, or a reckless sort of desperate carelessness and presumption on the other.

Beyond all question, therefore, the faith of which we are in search, whatever word of God it is to be based and built on,—whether his word of wrath or his word of grace,—presupposes an enlightened knowledge of his nature;\* and such a knowledge, too, as carries consent, and even a measure of complacency, along with it. No true sense of sin, or right apprehension of the holy displeasure and just judgment of God, could ever be wrought in my conscience, by the mere announcement of the sentence of death under which I lie—let that sentence be ever so terribly thundered in my ears, and let the withering conviction of its irrevocable and endless endurance be rivetted ever so deeply in my heart. Like the devils, I might believe and tremble. But this extorted belief, forced on me by the mere word of God, if it is not founded upon an intelligent spiritual acquaintance with his name or nature, has nothing in common with the faith which we seek. To realize my condemnation aright, I must not merely apprehend it as a fact: I must have an insight also into its reasonableness—its righteousness—its inevitable necessity. I must not merely believe that I am condemned; but there must enter into the ground and reason of my belief such a view of God as makes me feel that I am condemned, not merely because God has said that it must be so, but because God is what he is; and makes me feel, moreover, that even if it were to effect my own escape from condemnation, I would not have him to be other than he is. In like manner, in regard to any word of God conveying a promise of mercy, it is not that mere word, taken by itself, that becomes the ground or

warrant of my faith, but that word as the word of Him who is no longer an unknown God to me,—whose name and character, whose attributes and perfections, are now recognised, apprehended, or, in short, intelligently and spiritually perceived and seen.

I assume now that faith is an act of the soul;\* that it is not merely a state of mind and heart produced by certain impressions made from without and from above, but also an active movement from within, outwards and upwards, upon the object presented to it. In believing, I have something to do. I am not simply acted upon, I act. Conviction of sin, however reasonable and spiritual, is not faith. A sight and sense of Christ, and of the mercy of God in Christ, even when accompanied with a large measure of emotional relenting, may not be faith. In faith, I personally transact with Christ as the gift of God, the Son of the Father, and with God the Father in Christ. I close with Christ, I embrace Christ, as he is freely offered to me in the gospel. This, I repeat, is an act. It is not the belief merely of an old fact—a fact true antecedently to my believing, and independently of my believing. It originates a new fact, a new thing; a new state of things, as regards my God and myself. Moved by the Holy Spirit, I really and personally perform an action or deed,—the deed or action of taking Christ to be mine, and giving myself to be Christ's. What emboldens and encourages me to do this? The word of God; his gracious assurance that I am free to do it if I will, and that if I do it I shall find that I do it not in vain. "He has never said to the seed of Jacob, Seek ye my face in vain." But what, I ask again, emboldens and encourages me to put that word of God to the proof, and to proceed upon its infallible certainty? It is conditional. It is contingent on a step which I personally have to take,—a leap, as it were, from the tottering pinnacle of a burning ruin into unseen arms below, that I personally have to venture upon. What gives me resolution to make the venture? What but the discovery which He who calls me to make it,—and swears to me that I shall not suffer, but be saved in making it,—has made to me such a discovery of himself, has given me such an insight into his nature, as makes me feel that I may trust him;\* and that, trusting him, I may with trembling hope comply with his

invitation, and taste and see that he is good, and that they are blessed who trust in him? I know his name, and therefore I commit myself to him.

Here, therefore, we may perceive the value of the cross, considered in an aspect of it which is plainly universal and unrestricted;\* considered, I mean, as making known the name of God, or his essential character and nature; in which aspect, chiefly, it enters as an element into the ground or reason of saving faith.

The importance of the cross, and the preaching of the cross, is, in this view, unspeakably great; when it is regarded simply as a manifestation of the nature of God, or of what God is; and especially of what God is in those acts or exercises of his administration in which he is peculiarly the God with whom in believing we have to do,—in dealing, that is, with sin, whether to punish or to pardon. Apart from all the verbal assurances connected with it,—apart from all the promises and threatenings of the divine word that may be associated with it,—the cross, in itself, as an actual transaction and fact in the history of the divine government exhibits and reveals, not what God says, but what God is; and what, in all his dealings with sin and with sinners, he necessarily must be. And they who are spiritually enlightened to behold "the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. 4:6), now see both the severity and the goodness of God in a very different point of view from that in which they once regarded them. Thus,—without reference, for the present, or in the first instance, to the question of my personal interest in it, or its ultimate bearing on my personal destiny,—there the cross stands as a fact, significantly revealing to me, if my eyes are opened to take it in, the real character of that God with whom I have to do, as well as the manner in which, being what he is, his essential nature must move him to deal with sinners; and with me, "of sinners the chief."

For this very end, indeed, is the great fact of the atonement made matter of revelation at all.\* It is simply in order that the view thus given of the name, or nature, or character of God, may enter as a



constituent element, or a determining cause, into the assent which I give to the word of God, in the assurances and promises which that word connects with it. Were it not for that consideration, the transaction might have taken place in another part of the creation, and the knowledge of it might have been confined to another race of beings.\* In so far as it is an expedient or device in the divine government for getting over, as it were, a difficulty, and meeting an exigency, and enabling God, as the holy one and the just, consistently to dispense amnesty and peace—it might have equally well served the end contemplated to have had it hid altogether from the eyes of men. It might have been enough to proclaim to them, without explanation, —or at least without further explanation than that in a certain undiscovered way the exigency of the divine administration had been met and provided for;—it might have been enough to proclaim to men the mere general message of reconciliation which God had thereby been warranted to announce. Nay, this might even have seemed a more thorough trial of men's dispositions, as well as a simpler appeal to their sense of present danger, and their natural desire of safety.\* But God sought to be believed, not merely for his word's sake, but also for his name's sake; not only on the ground of what he might say, but on the ground of what he is, and must necessarily ever be. No faith based upon his mere word, apart from an intelligent and satisfying acquaintance with his nature, could effect the end in view; for no such faith could insure that falling in with what he is doing—that acquiescence and willing subjection—which is the very thing that he seeks and cares for.

Hence the cross is revealed.\* And it is revealed as a real transaction. God, in Christ, is seen dealing with sin. And how does he deal with it? He is seen inflicting its full penal and retributive sentence;—punishing, in the strictest sense, the individual who, then and there, takes the sin as his own. But that individual, thus bearing the punishment of sin, is no other than his well-beloved Son. What room is there here for the suspicion of anything like either malign vindictiveness on the one hand, or, on the other hand, the mere obstinacy of perseverance in a course to which one is committed? It

cannot be merely on account of what he has said, in the sentence pronounced,—it must be on account of what he is in his own nature, irrespective of any word that has gone forth out of his mouth,—that even when his own Son appears before him as the party to be punished, there is no relenting or mitigation, but the judgment is carried out to the uttermost. Then, again, as he is revealed in the cross, how is God seen to deal with the sins of those whom he reconciles to himself?\* Not in the way of pardoning their sins, in the sense of remitting their legal punishment, but rather in the way of making provision for the punishment being endured by his own Son in their stead; so that they are now legally free. Thus, in dispensing to all his people his grace and favour in Christ, as well as in inflicting judgment on his own Son as their surety, God appears as justifying the ungodly who believe in Jesus, not merely on the ground of what he has said, but on the ground also of his very nature; insomuch that, before he can withhold these blessings from those, the punishment of whose sins has been borne by his own Son—on whose behalf also that Son has brought in an everlasting righteousness—not only must God fail to fulfil what he has spoken, but he must cease to be the God he now is—the I AM, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. Hence the peculiar force of such an assurance as this: "I am the Lord Jehovah, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." It is an appeal to his name, as confirming his word, and making it absolute and irrevocable

On the whole, the cross, or rather the transaction there completed, reveals God as never pardoning, in the strict and proper sense of the word, but always punishing sin;\* and never punishing, but always rewarding righteousness; and, moreover, as dealing thus with sin and with righteousness, for his great name's sake. Let me be really enlightened to see the real meaning of this great event, and I have an entirely new apprehension of the character of God, especially in reference not only to what he tells me of the way in which he deals with sin, but to what I now see to be the only way in which he can possibly deal with sin. My eyes are opened to perceive that he does not punish vindictively, or pardon capriciously, as I once fondly

imagined; that he does not act, as I see men of so-called firmness often do, out of a mere determination to keep his word. I see that, both in punishing sin and in accepting righteousness, he acts according to the perfection of his own blessed and glorious nature; which same nature, blessed and glorious, I dare not now expect, nor would I now wish, even for my own salvation, to have in any respect different from what, taught by the Spirit, I now perceive it to be.

Before leaving this part of my argument, it may be proper to interpose an explanation.\* It is an explanation rendered necessary by the continual proneness of adversaries to misrepresent the doctrine which I have been asserting of the literally and strictly legal character of Christ's righteousness, and in particular the literally and strictly penal character of his death.

Rightly understood, this doctrine does not raise the question either of the precise nature or of the exact amount of the sufferings which Christ endured on the cross; but only of the character which he sustained when he endured them, whatever they were, and the corresponding character which is to be assigned and ascribed to them. It was in the character of one "made under the law" (Gal 4:4), and "made sin for us" (2 Cor. 5:21), that he endured these sufferings; and therefore they were, in the strictest sense, penal and retributive. And as borne by one, the divinity of whose person and the merit of whose obedience imparted an infinite value to his offering of himself, they exhausted the full penal and retributive sentence lying upon the guilty sinners whose place he took. As to the exact nature of these sufferings, beyond what is revealed respecting his bodily anguish and mental agony, it must ever be presumptuous to inquire.\* It was a good form that was employed in the old litanies: "By thine unknown sufferings, good Lord, deliver us." The sweat in the garden—the cry on the cross—speak volumes. Nor, as to the amount of these sufferings, need we at all incline to the idea of the striking of a balance, or the settling of an exact proportion or account, between the number of sins to be expiated, or of sinners to be redeemed, and the stripes inflicted on the Surety; as if his sufferings, weighed and

measured to the value of each sigh and each drop of blood, were exactly adequate to the guilt of the transgressions of his people—neither more nor less; so that, if fewer sinners, or sinners with fewer sins, had been concerned, his pain would have been less—while, if it had been the will of God to save more, he must have had additional pangs to bear. Any such calculation is to be utterly repudiated, as dishonouring to God, and savouring of a "carnal mind."\* So far as we can judge, such is the heinousness of sin, and such the inflexibility of the righteous and holy law of God, that had there been but one individual sinner for whom atonement was to be made, it would still have been as necessary as now that the eternal Son of God should become incarnate, and assume that individual's nature, and take his place under the law, and under the curse of the law; for even then, nothing short of the Surety's perfect obedience in his stead could have justified that one transgressor, and nothing short of his endurance of the cross, with all its woe, could have procured remission of his sins. And so, on the other hand, such is the Surety appointed by the Father, and such the merit of his voluntary obedience and propitiatory sufferings and death, that had the number of those whom he represented been increased a hundredfold, it does not appear that it would have been needful for him to do more, or to endure more, than he has actually done and endured for his elect. The real question is, Did he obey, and did he suffer, in a representative character? Was he "under the law?" In fulfilling all righteousness, did he meet the positive demands of the law which his people had failed to meet? In enduring all his sufferings and submitting to the cross, did he receive the punishment due to his people? Was his righteousness a legal righteousness, and were his sufferings penal sufferings?

If so, then the cross is a discovery of the name and nature of God such as may well be the ground and warrant of a sort of faith altogether different from any mere assent which I might otherwise be inclined to give to any word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.\* The atonement for sin effected on the cross, viewed as a real transaction,—no mere coup de theatre, or august spectacle, exhibited

for the purpose of impressing onlookers—no mere coup d'etat, or general device for getting over an administrative knot or difficulty in the divine government—but the literal and actual endurance by Christ, the substitute, of the legal punishment due for sin to sinners,—comes home to me personally with the power of a new and fresh discovery of the nature of that God with whom I have to do. This now I perceive to be his name, proclaimed, not in words, but in act, by himself,—“The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin,—and that will by no means clear the guilty” (Exod. 34:6, 7).

The nature of the connection between the divine testimony which is to be credited and the divine name which is interposed as the guarantee of its credibility—as well as the bearing of both on that appropriating faith whose office it is to unite every one who exercises it, in the very exercise of it, to Christ—are topics which, in a theoretical or systematic point of view, may fall to be afterwards more fully considered. Meanwhile, some important consequences of a practical sort would seem to follow from the views which have been suggested.

In the first place, when the appeal is made to the name, or nature of God, and to the atonement as declaring it, there is introduced an element of certainty—nay, of necessity—which is altogether independent of what we hear him say to us, or see him do, or think him likely to do, to us.\* It is not now with what he says to us, or with what he does or may do to us, that we are chiefly concerned, but with what he is in himself. What he says to us may be, in some respects, incomplete and fragmentary. Over what he does, or may do, to us, darkness and doubt may hang as a cloud. That it must be so, indeed, will appear evident if we consider the infinitely vast extent and infinitely complicated interests of the universal empire which he has to wield, and the impossibility of any explanation being given which can be fully comprehended by our limited faculties. His word must necessarily be but a partial and imperfect discovery of his counsels;

and "his way is often in the sea, and his path in the deep waters; and his footsteps are not known" (Ps. 77:19). The restless and impatient spirit may not be satisfied by what he tells of his plans and what he unfolds of his proceedings. But he reveals his name, his nature, his essential character,—and that not in mere verbal utterances and the on-goings of his ordinary providence, but in a great fact—in one stupendous work—which makes clear and certain, beyond the possibility of mistake or question, what sort of God and Father he is. It is a transaction which opens to us his whole mind and heart. It supersedes all speculation as to what, in any conceivable circumstances we choose to put, may be his actual course of conduct. It brings home to us a deep conviction of what, being such as he is, must be his feelings toward us, and his will as regards us, in the actual circumstances in which we are placed. Conjecture on our part gives place to certainty—resting now not on anything that might seem to us contingent in the unknown purpose of God, but on the necessity of his very nature, his essential character and name.

This necessity, however, it is to be observed in the second place, is not by any means of a blind and fatal sort; nor is it such as to supersede the free exercise of grace in God and the free play of gratitude in us. The cross shows us the open heart of God our Father.\* We see how, being such as he is there apprehended to be, he must necessarily feel and act in reference to sin and to sinners. He cannot but visit guilt with its doom of death. He cannot but yearn over the guilty, desiring their return to himself. He cannot but pardon, justify, and save all who are in Christ—redeemed in him—found in him—believing. Here is absolute necessity, about which there is no room whatever for any hesitation or surmise of doubt. But it is not a necessity that fetters God, any more than a true, and righteous, and good man is fettered by its being certain that he always will, and indeed being a matter of necessity that he always must, feel and act in accordance with his own truthful, and righteous, and benevolent nature. We rely on such a man on account of what he is, and what we know him to be. We have confidence in what must necessarily be, in any circumstances, his mind and heart towards us

—such confidence as will overbear a whole host of adverse suggestions and misgivings.

And the confidence, let it in the third place be noted, is altogether reasonable.\* It is no more than He whom we trust is entitled to ask and expect. What! when one comes to me, all beaming with love in his eyes,—and when, pointing to the cross on which his own beloved Son hangs pierced and dying, he bids me see there what he is, as a just God and a Saviour,—shall I refuse to look,—and looking, to acquiesce, and trust, and love,—unless he shall first satisfy me as to how, in his character of Governor and Judge of all, he is to determine certain points of difficulty in his universal, imperial rule;—points of difficulty, moreover, which can only affect me, to any practical end, upon the supposition of my continuing rebellious and unbelieving?

An earthly friend may warrantably put to the test, in some such way as this, my capacity of confiding in him implicitly; he may be so situated that he cannot help thus putting it to the test I know his name, his nature, his character. By some actual, unequivocal proof and instance, in a manner most affecting as well as most convincing, he has made himself known to me,—his whole mind—his whole heart—what he is—and how he must needs, being such as he is, feel and act in any matter which is at issue between him and me, whatever that may be. On the ground of this knowledge which I have of his name, he invites and solicits my faith. He tells me frankly that he cannot make all plain to me. He warns me that I must often hear objections urged and questions raised, as to many things about him and about his ways, that I cannot answer or solve. He prepares me for misgivings and suspicions ready to haunt my own bosom. But he bids me always fall back on the insight I have so wonderfully got into the utmost depths of his soul—into his very nature and essential name—and ask myself this question,—Can I refuse to take upon trust whatever may yet seem hard or strange about some of his sayings and doings in some lofty region of thought into which I am not yet able, or not yet allowed, to enter? May I not be content meanwhile to

stay and steady my agitated spirit on the assurance that such an one as he is, will never mock, or deceive, or fail me?

The eternal God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, makes a similar demand upon me. He gives me his name to be my strong tower. His people of old found it to be a strong tower, though they knew it but imperfectly, through the redemption out of Egypt, and the dim anticipation of something better. I know it, through and in the cross of Christ. Much that is connected with that cross I know not. But God's name, his nature, what he is, what is in his heart, as seen in that cross, I know. And that, to me, will overbear ten thousand scruples and fears of ignorance. For his name's sake I will trust him. For his name's sake he will save me.

## **CHAPTER VIII**

**THE WARRANT OF FAITH—THE SUM AND SUBSTANCE OF THE DIVINE TESTIMONY IN CONNECTION WITH THE EXHIBITION OF THE DIVINE NAME IN THE ATONEMENT—HYPOTHESIS OF A POSTPONED ATONEMENT**

ASSUMING, now, this acquaintance with God, and this new insight into his glorious character and name, which the atonement, viewed as a real transaction, imparts, let us return to his word or testimony, which is more directly the ground and foundation—or the guide and warrant—of that faith of which we speak.

Here I might enumerate all the commands, and invitations, and promises of the gospel, and I might show how full and free a title these afford to every individual sinner of the human race to lay hold



of Christ, and to appropriate him as his own Saviour.\* But for my present purpose, which is to illustrate the bearing of a right knowledge of God's name on the kind of credit or assent which we give to his testimony, it may be sufficient to consider that testimony as threefold.

I. God testifies, in his word, to my guilt, depravity, and condemnation.\* This testimony, did it stand apart from the manifestation which he makes to me of his character, might irritate and provoke me, or simply drive me to angry and dogged despair. But now, if I am spiritually enlightened to know God, how differently does it affect me! I can suspect nothing arbitrary or harsh in his sentence that condemns me; I can expect nothing weak or capricious in any dealing on his part that is to relieve me. I learn that I am condemned; I perceive that it must be so; I have no excuse—my mouth is stopped. Nor has God himself any alternative. Looking to the cross, I see the principle on which God punishes such sin as mine—not vindictively, nor merely because he has said the word—but necessarily, from his very nature being such as it is. I believe, therefore, God's testimony concerning my own condemnation, in a sense and spirit in which I never before—never otherwise—could apprehend it. My belief of it now is connected with a relenting and softened frame of mind, arising out of my being enabled to see, and seeing to appreciate rightly, the real character of God, and the obligation I am under to love and serve him, because he is what he is. Such belief is very different from the sort of conviction compounded of mortified pride and insolent defiance, which might be forced on me by the mere thunder of wrath. I see my sin now in the light of that pure nature of God to which it must needs be so offensive. I see my guilt and condemnation in the light of that perfect justice of his to which even his own Son, when bearing guilt and condemnation, must needs submit. I see and feel my utter impotency and inborn, indwelling corruption, in the light of that glory of holiness before which I fall down and cry, Unclean! undone! "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight; that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest.

Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me" (Ps. 51:4, 5).

II. God testifies to me, in his word, of the complete safety and blessedness of all who are once in Christ.\* And here, also, the importance of an acquaintance with his character, with a view to its bearing on my belief of his testimony, becomes very apparent. He tells me how he treats sinners in Christ Jesus—what favours he bestows upon them—what perfect blessedness he secures to them. Well, but I might hear all this with a feeling of envy, or of mere wonder—or with an idle, indefinite hope, that somehow I might, perhaps, one day, have a share in these benefits. There might seem to me to be in all this gracious treatment of his people, nothing more, on the part of God, than great kindness and indulgence; or, at the best, a sort of inflexible favouritism towards his chosen ones, and a determination to stand true to what he may once have said of them, or to them. But let me acquaint myself with God;—let me know his name. Then, when he testifies to me of the grace which he dispenses to them that are in Christ, I not only admit that it may be so, or that it is so, but I perceive that it must be so. I see the principle on which he deals with them so graciously. I apprehend, not only the certainty, but the reasonableness of their joyous security. The thing approves itself to me as right. For such is the inherent efficacy of the atonement, as a real transaction, a real infliction of the sentence of judgment on the Surety, instead of its infliction on the actual offenders, that God cannot but justify those who are in Christ. If he did not justify them, he must falsify his name, his nature—he must cease to be what he is. There is, therefore, no room or place now in my soul, if I perceive all this aright, either for grudging and suspicious envy as regards others, or for mere vague wishes as regards myself, in the view of that state in which the word of God assures me that all those who believe in Jesus necessarily are. There is wrought in me the single, solitary, deep, and overwhelming conviction, that in the whole of his gracious procedure towards them, God is strictly righteous, and simply righteous—that his ways are just

and true;—the conviction, above all, that as there cannot possibly be salvation out of Christ, so in Christ there can be no condemnation.

It may be necessary here to explain, that throughout the whole of the present argument, in speaking of Christ's work of atonement as a real transaction, and as, on that account, by its own inherent efficacy, rendering infallibly, and necessarily certain the justification of all that are in him—I have been considering it as a manifestation of the character of God to men, and not simply as a ground or reason of his own procedure.\* For there are two distinct senses in which that work of Christ, viewed in its connection with the name, or character, of God, may be said to secure the salvation of those whom, as their covenant head, Christ represents. For his name's sake, God, being such as he is, must necessarily provide for all the seed of Christ being in due time brought to him, and savingly made one with him.\* Otherwise, were any of them to be finally lost—the punishment of their sins having been actually borne by Christ—there would be injustice and inconsistency with God. That they should be lost is, in fact, an impossibility—so long as the character of God remains what it is. This is a precious truth, making it certain that "all whom the Father giveth Christ shall come unto him." But it is not to our present purpose, though it may afterwards appear to have an important bearing on another part of our subject.\* What I insist upon, as here in point, is the consideration that, for his name's sake, God, being such as he is, cannot but justify all who are in Christ. This is the open and revealed side of the pillar of God's testimony to man; and as such, it becomes the warrant of the sinner's faith. In the cross, he sees not only how God may, but—with reverence be it said—how God must, his nature being such as it is, receive graciously, and with rejoicing over them, all who come unto him through Christ,—all who, by faith, become one with his own beloved Son.

III. God testifying to me, in his word, first of my own guilt and ruin out of Christ, and secondly, of the benefits infallibly secured to all who are in Christ, further testifies to me of his willingness to make me a partaker of these same benefits, on those very terms which I

now see to be so reasonable and necessary.\* It is at this stage, especially, that my knowledge of the name, or character, of God, obtained through a clear and spiritually enlightened insight into the meaning of the transaction completed on the cross, comes in as a most material element to determine the sort of credit which I give to the divine testimony, and the sort of confidence which I repose in it. In particular, it has the effect at once of silencing and of satisfying me. It silences my inquisitive presumption, in the first place. And secondly, it satisfies my spiritual anxiety, in so far as it is the genuine anxiety of a truly meek and contrite heart.

In the first place, it silences presumptuous questions.\* I am disposed, perhaps, to call in question the sufficiency of the mere word of God, addressed generally to sinners,—and therefore to me, a sinner,—on the alleged ground or pretence that, after all, I may not turn out to be one of the chosen. I am tempted to demand an explanation of that difficulty, or of some other similar difficulty, as a preliminary to my believing the Father's testimony, and receiving his free gift of eternal life in his Son (1 John 5:11). In such a mood of mind I am met at once with the appeal to his name. For I find that what I am to believe is not an arbitrary rule or law, which becomes true and certain because God has said it, but a fact or principle that is, in its very nature, unchangeably sure, and must be so as long as God is what he is. It is not by a simple act of his will, or a simple utterance of his voice, that God constitutes the whole world, out of Christ, guilty before him, and accepts believers in Christ, and them alone, as righteous in his sight. His character, or name, being what it is, God could not do otherwise. The atoning death—the meritorious obedience unto death—of his own Son, in the character of a surety and substitute, being once admitted as a fact, there is no more room for discretion, on the part of God, in this matter. With exact and literal truth, and with perfect propriety, it may be said that he has no choice now—no alternative. Those who are out of Christ he cannot but condemn, being such as he is, or because he is what he is. Those who are in Christ he cannot but justify, accept, and save. It is thus simply impossible that, coming unto him through Christ, I should be

cast out. This, and nothing more—nothing else than this,—is precisely what I have to believe, on the assurance of the word or testimony of God. He explicitly and unequivocally declares that, coming unto him through Christ, I shall not be cast out. Can I hesitate to believe the declaration? Surely not now, when I find that it is a declaration on the part of God, not only of what shall be, but of what must be. For he has so revealed his name, or character, or nature, as to make me see it to be absolutely certain, that if I will but come unto him, through Christ, I shall be, and necessarily must be, saved. I have now not only God's word for it, but God's nature. And what more would I ask? But this is not all. For,—

In the second place, to satisfy real anxiety, as well as to silence idle questioning, God appeals to his name, in this transaction, and gives it, as it were, in pledge and pawn, to the hesitating and trembling soul.\* Have I endless misgivings as to whether, vile as I am, I may venture to come to God, through Christ; or as to whether, even coming through Christ, I may not be too vile to be accepted? God assures me, most emphatically, that I may freely come, and that, coming, I shall surely be received most graciously. Is this to me too good news to be true? Am I incredulous from the very greatness of the glad surprise, like the disciples of whom it is said, that they "believed not for joy?" (Luke 24:41.) Such is the condescension of God, that when I would even question his word, he is ready to give me the assurance of his name. Am I apprehensive that I may miss my aim, and be disappointed in my timid and trembling expectation of finding rest, and peace, and all saving blessings in Christ? It cannot be. For his word's sake he will not suffer it; for his name's sake he cannot. He cannot deny himself. It would be not merely a breach of the promise that has gone out of his mouth, but an outrage on his very nature, were he to suffer any poor sinner to perish when he would fain cling to Christ,—or any anxious soul to seek his face in vain.

The passages of Scripture are innumerable in which this use is made of the name of God. It is thus used by God himself when he pledges

it, and swears by it, as the confirmation of his promises to his believing people.\* It is thus used also by poor and perishing sinners, helpless and hopeless, when they plead it, and appeal to it, in their cries to him. This name, or nature, of God, furnishes a good reason why God should extend mercy to me, the chief of sinners, and I should reckon on that mercy as both sure and gracious—infallibly certain, and altogether gratuitous and free. So the Apostle Paul reasons, with reference to his own case: "Howbeit, for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting" (1 Tim. 1:16). Evidently Paul connects his obtaining mercy, when he believed, with the name of God. He represents his thus "obtaining mercy" as identical with God's "showing forth all long-suffering;" and he explains the treatment he received upon the principle, that God's name or character for "all long-suffering"—or for waiting to be gracious—is to be the great encouragement to all sinners such as he was, to taste and see that the Lord is good. His name—his holy and blessed name—is also alleged by God himself as his motive for imparting sanctification as well, as justification—a new heart as well as newness of life—and so completing the salvation of all that come unto him: "Thus saith the Lord God; I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for mine holy name's sake, which ye have profaned among the heathen, whither ye went.... For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land. Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them" (Ezek. 36:21–38). And finally, this great name of Jehovah is the security or guarantee implied in God's swearing by himself, that his blessing, once bestowed, is irrevocable; as when he gives to those who might be discouraged by the fear of falling away, the pledge of "two immutable things—wherein it is impossible for him to lie"—that

is, his immutable word and his immutable nature—to prove the impossibility of his casting off his people, and to "show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, that they might have strong consolation who have fled for refuge to the hope set before them" (Heb. 6:9–20). In all these instances, men are asked and expected to believe, not merely on the ground of what God says, but on the ground, also, of what God is; and God is seen to challenge their credit and confidence, not by the authority of his word exclusively, but in respect of the necessity arising out of the very immutability of his nature, and the absolute perfection of his glorious character and name.

The view now given of the warrant of saving faith may be rendered still more clear, when we go on to consider the remaining particular embraced in this inquiry, namely, the source and origin of that faith.\* But, even as I have now endeavoured to present it, I cannot but think that it has an important practical bearing on the general question of the extent and efficacy of Christ's work of atonement. For it is of consequence to observe, that, according to this view, much less than is usually imagined depends on the explicitness and preciseness of any verbal statement regarding the comprehensiveness of the atonement,—such as might be applicable to a sinner, even before he believes; and much more depends on the exhibition of the divine character which it gives. Now that, surely, is what a sinner, even before he appropriates the Saviour and his salvation, may apprehend. He may apprehend it, in fact, as his chief encouragement to appropriate the Saviour and his salvation. It is not so much what God says, as what God is, that really gives me boldness to confide in him. At least, what he says, were it ever so articulate, would go but a little way to assure my heart, were it not for my apprehension of what he is. Were the warrant of my faith the simple ipse dixit of God, or his bare word, I might have some reason for requiring very express information as to my actual and ultimate interest in the Saviour and the salvation of which he speaks to me, before believing, before taking the Saviour and the salvation to be mine. But the ground on which I am to believe, being not so much

that he says so and so, as that He who says so and so is of such and such a character, and cannot but act in such and such a way—I am less concerned about knowing beforehand what I am to be to him, and more occupied with the thought of what, if I make the trial, I shall assuredly find him to be to me.

And here let me sum up, in a few brief statements, the information which, as it seems to me, the cross gives concerning God; the information which, when it is rightly and spiritually apprehended, becomes the ground and foundation of appropriating faith:—

1. The objective revelation or discovery which the cross gives of God, and of the name, or nature, or character of God, is evidently general and universal.\* It is a manifestation of the divine perfections, and the divine manner of dealing with sin and with sinful men, to all alike and indiscriminately. Hence it is a warrant of faith to all.

2. That it may serve this purpose, however, of a universal manifestation of God's real character and actual mode of procedure, the transaction accomplished on the cross must be a real transaction.\* It must be the real infliction of judicial and retributive punishment on Him who suffers there. Otherwise it is no manifestation of the principle on which God, being what he is, must necessarily deal with sin and with sinners. That principle must be actually carried out in the death of Christ. His death itself, as a great fact, is to prove that, being such as he is, God can acquit or justify the guilty only when their punishment is vicariously borne by an infinitely worthy Substitute in their stead; while, on the other hand, he cannot but acquit and justify them, when they are thus represented and redeemed. Evidently this implies a limitation of the efficacy of Christ's death to those ultimately saved. And it is important to observe, that this very limitation of it to those in reference to whom alone it can be a real transaction, is essential to its being a manifestation of God's real character, universally and alike, to all.



3. For this real and actual, and therefore particular and personal, work of substitution, becomes a sufficient warrant of faith to all, through the discovery which it makes of what God is, and must necessarily be, as an avenging Judge, to all who are out of Christ; and of what he is, and must necessarily be, as a gracious Father and justifying Lord, to all who are in Christ.\* It reveals the impossibility, from the very nature of God,—from his being what he is,—of pardon out of Christ, and of condemnation in Christ. Not by any arbitrary arrangement, or mere sovereign act of will, do I find God acquitting some for Christ's sake, and rejecting others. By the very necessity of his nature, I perceive him (with reverence, I repeat, be it said) shut up to the acceptance of all who are in Christ—because their punishment has been actually endured, and all righteousness on their behalf has been fulfilled, by him; shut up, I say, to the acceptance of them, and of them alone. It is this perception of the inevitable sentence under which every sinner out of Christ lies, and of the absolute certainty and necessity of its removal from all who are in Christ, which shuts me up to the belief of the testimony of God, when he assures me that, lost sinner as I am, I have but to come unto him, through Christ, and that so coming, I cannot fail to be saved.

4. Nor can it reasonably be any practical hinderance, that Christ's death is a real atonement only for those who come to him, and not for all mankind.\* A hypothetical case may make this clear.

Let us suppose ourselves to have lived before Jesus suffered on the cross. Or, which is the same thing in the argument, let us suppose his blessed work to have been postponed till the end of time. Let us regard him as, from the beginning, waiting to receive accessions of individuals, from age to age, made willing, by the Spirit, to take him as their surety, covenant-head, and representative. Let us conceive of him as thus waiting to have the number of his seed actually made up, and all who are to receive salvation at his hands effectually called and united to him. The fulness of that time comes at last. The last soul is gathered in. The entire multitude of the elect race who are to stand to him, as the second Adam, in the same relation in which the fallen

family of mankind stands to the first Adam, is ascertained;—not only in the eternal counsels of the Godhead, and the covenant in heaven between the Father and the Son, but in the actual result accomplished by the Holy Spirit on the earth. Then at last, the Son, on their behalf and in their stead, performs the work, in which, by anticipation, they have all been enabled to believe, and satisfies divine justice, and makes reconciliation for them all.

Where, in such circumstances, would be the necessity of a general or unlimited reference in his atonement? No one called to believe, with the knowledge that Christ was to be the surety of believers alone, and that as the surety of believers alone he was to be ultimately nailed to the cross, could have any embarrassment on that account. There might still be difficulties in his way, arising out of the decree of election, or out of the doctrine of the special grace of the Holy Ghost. But at all events, the limitation of the work which Christ had yet to do, to those who, before he did it, should be found to be all that would ever consent to take him as their Saviour, could not, in such a case, occasion any hesitation.

Is the case really altered, in this respect, when we contemplate the cross as erected in the middle, rather than at the end, of time? On the supposition which I have ventured to make, there would be the same absolute certainty, as to the parties in whose stead Christ should ultimately make atonement, that there is now, as to those for whom he has made it. And yet it would be enough for every sinner to be assured, that he might freely believe on him for the remission of sins; and that, so believing, he would undoubtedly find himself among the number of those for whom, in due time, atonement would be made, and whom, for his own name's sake, God must needs justify, on that all-sufficient ground. Is it really any assurance less than this that we can give to the sinner now? Surely there is a strange fallacy here. The essential nature of this great transaction of the atonement does not depend on the time of its accomplishment. It would be a real propitiation for the sins of all who should ever take him as their surety, were it yet to be accomplished. It is all that, and nothing

more, now that it is accomplished, eighteen hundred years ago. Nor is it practically more difficult to reconcile a limited atonement with a universal offer, in the one view than in the other. It is enough, in either view, to proclaim, that whosoever believeth in Jesus will assuredly find an efficacy in his blood to cleanse from all sin—an infinite merit in his righteousness, and an infinite fulness in his grace.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE HYPOTHESIS OF A POSTPONED ATONEMENT FURTHER CONSIDERED

THE supposition which I have ventured to make as to a postponed atonement, is one which I am inclined to follow out a little into its consequences.\* It is a supposition which, unless I am mistaken, may be found to carry in its bosom, or in its train, not a few of the elementary truths needed for a settlement of this whole dispute.

Let it be assumed, then, that instead of being accomplished during the fifth millennium of man's existence in the world, the incarnation, obedience, death, and resurrection of Christ, stood postponed till the end of all; and that now, with a fuller revelation, perhaps, than the Old Testament saints had, of the precise nature of the ordained and appointed salvation, we were, like them, in the position of expectation, looking forward to the work of atonement, as still to come.\* This cannot be regarded as a presumptuous or irreverent supposition For certain purposes, and in a certain view, the death of Christ is ante-dated in Scripture, and he is spoken of as "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (Rev. 13:8). It is no bold

fiction, or mere figure of speech, that thus assigns an era to this event, so remote from that of history. The truth is, the event itself, like the Godhead concerned in it—the everlasting Father ordaining and accepting it, the only begotten Son undertaking and accomplishing it, and the eternal Spirit sealing and applying it—is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." It has properly, therefore, no date. And if, on this principle, it may be held to have taken place "from before the foundation of the world," it is not doing any violence to its reality, or taking any undue liberty with its sacredness, to conceive of it as delayed till the world's close. In fact, we may probably thus test, to speak with reverence, in the best possible manner, the precise import of the cross: by planting it, in imagination, at different epochs in the lapse of ages, and observing what one aspect it invariably presents—what one voice or utterance it uniformly gives forth.

We are to conceive, therefore, of the atonement as still future; and we are to inquire how far, and in what way, this conception of it may seem at all to throw light on some of the various questions which have been raised regarding it,—especially on those which relate to the offer of salvation, on the part of God, and the acceptance of it, on the part of the sinner, in the exercise of that appropriating faith by which the Spirit unites him to Christ.

Let me speak here, in the first instance, for God, and in vindication of his truth and faithfulness. Let the gospel offer or call be viewed in connection with an atonement yet to be made.\* Let it be considered as preceding, instead of following, the actual accomplishment of redemption. And let us see if, either in its freeness or in its fulness, it is at all affected by the transposition.

The freeness of the offer, as an offer made in good faith, unreservedly and unconditionally, to all, might seem at first sight to be, in this way, more clearly, intelligibly, and satisfactorily brought out than on the present footing.\* An air or aspect of greater contingency is imparted to the whole transaction. Room is left, as it were, and

opportunity is reserved, to use a Scottish legal phrase, to "add and eke." The promised and still future atonement, beheld afar off, bulks in the sinner's eye as a provision or scheme of grace capable of expansion and of adjustment; so that if a larger number should ultimately be found willing to be embraced in it than was from the first anticipated, it may yet, when the time comes, be made so much wider as to take them in.\* In short, it appears possessed of an elastic capacity of enlargement, instead of being fixed, stereotyped, and confined.

But, even on this theory,—on a theory thus open to contingencies,—it would be no general or universal atonement after all.\* It would not be any general or universal reference in the atonement, that the sinner would be encouraged believingly to anticipate, or that he would feel, in the believing anticipation of it, to be suitable to his case. On the contrary, to preserve the integrity and good faith of the offer, in respect of its fulness as well as its freeness,—to give it, in fact, any worth or value,—it must even then be an offer connected with a limited atonement. For what, in the case supposed, must be the actual benefit freely presented to all? What must be the assurance given? How must the tenor of the gospel message run? Surely it must be somewhat to this effect: that whosoever, understanding and approving of the divine plan, yet to be accomplished, gave his consent and avowed his willingness to acquiesce in it, might rely on finding himself comprehended at last in a work of propitiation and substitution adequate to the expiation of all his sins, and the complete fulfilment of all righteousness on his behalf; and that on the faith of such an atonement, yet in prospect, he might, by anticipation, be presently accepted in the Beloved, and have peace in believing, and joy in the Holy Ghost.\* Still, most manifestly, the offer made to him must be the offer of an interest in a limited atonement. Explaining to such a one, in such circumstances, the principle of this method of salvation, its bearing on the honour of the divine character, and its adaptation to the necessities of the sinner's condition, you would set before him the Saviour hereafter to be revealed. You would enlarge on the dignity and wondrous mystery

of his person, on the depth of his humiliation, on the merit of his voluntary obedience, on the infinite value of his penal sufferings and death—all as yet future. And what would you say next? Or how would you seek to apply all this to the hearer or the inquirer himself? Would you tell him of any general references and aspects in this vast mediatorial undertaking? Would you speak of any universal, or vague, or indefinite relation which, in all this work, the Saviour was appointed to sustain, or might be held to sustain, to mankind at large? Nay, would you not be prompt and eager to disavow all such generalities, and to fix and fasten on the very limitation of the work, as the precise feature in it to which it was most important that he should give heed? It is to be all, you would say, a work of suretyship, in the strictest sense, and of suretyship exclusively.\* He who is to finish it is, in the undertaking and accomplishing of it, to sustain no saving relation whatever to any but his own people. He is so literally to identify himself with them, and to identify them with himself, that all their sin is to be his, and all his righteousness is to be theirs. It is in no other character than that of their representative, and with no reference to any but them, that he is to pour out his soul as an offering for sin. If you held the doctrine of the atonement at all,—in any sense implying real personal substitution and a really vicarious work of propitiation,—you could not fail, in the circumstances which I have supposed, to announce it to sinners of mankind in some such terms as I have indicated. You would do so, moreover, without embarrassment. You would feel no difficulty in preaching such a gospel, then.\* And in preaching such a gospel, you would hold it to be the freest and fullest of all possible offers or proclamations that you were commissioned to make,—when, pointing to this atonement, which you confessed, or rather boasted, would be a restricted atonement,—from its very nature a restricted, because a real and effectual atonement,—you summoned all men everywhere to believe and live, to come to the Saviour and be saved.

Now, how is this to be accounted for? How is it that, on the supposition of the atonement being yet future, it would seem so much easier to reconcile the universality of the gospel offer with the

restriction or limitation of Christ's work, than on the other supposition, which has now been realized, and become matter of historical fact,—that of its being a transaction already past? I cannot but think that this is a question very well deserving of being seriously pondered.\* I have a deep persuasion that, if seriously and devoutly pondered, it might arrest not a few earnest and inquisitive minds, who, having got entangled in the difficulties in which this subject is confessedly involved, as in one direction it touches the throne of God—whose throne clouds and darkness must ever surround—are seeking relief and a door of escape, in another direction, by taking liberties with it at the point at which it touches the hearts and consciences of men. This inquiry which I have now suggested might show them whither they are tending, and what is but too likely to be the issue of that state of mind which they are cherishing.

For, what makes the difference between the two cases, as I have put them—the hypothetical and the actual? Or, is there any real difference? None whatever, unless you introduce the element of contingency.\* I have already observed that there is the appearance of this contingency in the view of a postponed, more than in the view of a past, atonement. The former—a postponed atonement—seems to leave more scope and room than the latter—a past atonement—for the discretionary exercise of divine grace, and the free play of the human will. But unless there be the reality, as well as the appearance, of this greater contingency, under the economy of a postponed, as contrasted with that of a past atonement, the ease or relief which one feels in passing, in imagination, from the one to the other, is wholly delusive. Nay more, it is such as to indicate a very dangerous turn of thought,—a turn of thought which our opponents as well as we, in the controversy as I have been all along conducting it, will admit to be dangerous. They, as well as we, hold fast the great truths of the divine sovereignty, the election of grace, the fixed purpose of God in the plan of salvation, and the efficacious work of the Spirit in conversion and regeneration. It is for them, therefore, as much as for us, to consider if the sort of enlargement which one is apt at first to feel when a future is substituted for a past atonement, does not really

indicate a disposition or incipient tendency towards what I may venture to call "heretical pravity," or latent unsoundness, on the essential doctrines of the common faith.\*

For let me here question and interrogate myself. Am I conscious that I find it a simpler thing, and less revolting to my natural understanding, to conceive of Christ's work as undertaken and accomplished for his people alone, when I try to view it prospectively, than when I look upon it in the way of retrospect? What makes it so? It must be some lurking idea, that, under the former system, matters are not quite so fixed as under the latter. Ah! then, it is really electing love, and sovereign, efficacious grace that I must get rid of. For, if the eternal decree of election, and the utter impotency of man without a sovereign operation of grace within him, be held equally under both systems, there is really no more uncertainty, or capability of enlargement, under the one than under the other. It is high time for me, on seeing the treacherous nature of the ground on which my foot is set, to call a halt, and stop short—lest I find myself carried on, as so many have been, along this fatally inclined plane, from less to more, to a denial of special grace altogether.

For it is thus that men, leaning to unsound views, improve one upon another.\* Following out, more and more fearlessly, the legitimate consequences of incipient error, they come boldly to proclaim an extent of aberration from the truth, from which they, or their masters, would once have recoiled. Hence, what germinates as an isolated and uncongenial anomaly, on the surface of some otherwise well-cultivated mind—springing out of some peculiar influence that does not, perhaps, materially affect the general crop of good grain and abundant spiritual fruit—grows, in course of time,—most probably in other and less cultured minds into which it is transplanted and transferred,—and spreads and swells out, till all the fair foliage is choked, and the sound seed is well-nigh expelled altogether from the soil. So it may be in the case before us. A man of a speculative or inquisitive turn, seeking relief from the perplexity of



the one great insoluble problem, thinks he has found it in denying or explaining away the limited extent of the atonement. He soon discovers,—or his disciple, bettering his example, soon discovers,—that the relief, so long as he stops short there, is but delusive and apparent. Then, the same impatience of mystery or difficulty which unsettled his views at first, carries him on a step further. And so on, step after step, until nearly all that is peculiar and precious, either in God's love, or in Christ's work, or in the Spirit's grace, is sacrificed to the demand which men vainly make for a gospel that may enable them to save themselves, instead of that which announces for their acceptance the salvation of God.

This, perhaps, is a digression, although the observation is both important in itself, and not irrelevant to the present discussion.\* Resuming, or continuing my illustration of the hypothesis of a postponed atonement, I would now bring it to bear upon the experience of anxious inquirers, whose difficulties are not so much of a speculative as of a practical nature. May not the supposition which I am making be available for the removal of their conscientious scruples about the doctrine of a limited atonement, arising out of its apparent inconsistency with the good faith of a universal gospel offer? May it not tend to satisfy them that this inconsistency is in reality only apparent; and, at all events, that there is nothing in the essential character of the transaction, thus viewed, that should occasion any difficulty in the way of their complying with the invitation which they receive, to appropriate to themselves all its saving efficacy? For thus I would be inclined to address them.

You perceive that, if the work of Christ were yet to be accomplished, it would fall to be announced as a work restricted to those who should ultimately be found to constitute the entire number of his believing people. That number being supposed to be made up, previous to his coming in the flesh, you would never dream of his death being anything more than an atonement exclusively for their sins, and the bringing in of a perfect righteousness on their behalf alone. You might say, indeed, that meanwhile, the fact of that death

being due, if I may so speak, was one in which not only those ultimately saved, but the world at large, had an interest; inasmuch as it procured for all that season of providential forbearance, together with those universal calls, and influences, and opportunities of grace, which otherwise would not have been vouchsafed to any. This however, as you must at once see, on the supposition now made, would appear to be plainly a consequence, not of his death on the cross, but of his being destined to die. Or, in other words, it would be evidently connected, not with the proper virtue or efficacy of his atonement at all, but simply with its certainty, as an event yet to occur. Even if it were to turn out, at last, that only a single individual had been persuaded and enabled to become a believer in the promised Saviour, so that he needed to lay down his life for none, save for that single individual alone, still the appointment of his death, though restricted, in its reference, to one solitary soul, would be a sufficient explanation of the forbearance granted to all, and the offer made to all. For still, all along, and even at the very instant of his ascending the cross, all might be most honestly assured, that if they would but consent, if they were but willing, their sins also would be expiated on the tree.

We might thus conceive of the Redeemer as standing from generation to generation, among the successive millions of the children of men, testifying to them all that he has been ordained to become the substitute of all sinners, without exception, who choose to accept of him in that capacity, and that he delays the execution of the work he has to do till the end of all things, for the express purpose of allowing full time to all to make their choice.\* The announcement which he has to proclaim is, from the very nature of the case, the announcement of a limited atonement. The message which he is to accomplish, as he must in faithfulness warn them all, is to have no general reference whatever. He is not in any true and proper sense to obey, or suffer, or die, for any but his own people. The efficacy of his propitiation, as well as its design, is to be strictly and exclusively theirs. And still, as age after age rolls on, he may be seen, down to the last moment, plying each one of the mighty

multitude of the guilty,—almost lingering as he takes his appointed place, at last, under the broken law and the impending curse: Thy surety, also, would I gladly be, if thou wouldst but suffer me; thine, as well as this thy neighbour's, who has not been less guilty than thou! Thy sins would I willingly bear, as well as his! Yet once more consider, O thou lost one, ere I go on my heavy and bloody work! Shall I go in thy stead, as well as in his? Wilt thou have me to go as substitute for thee, as well as for him? Choose before it be too late!

Would that be a free gospel? Would that be an honest universal offer? It is connected, you perceive, with a limited atonement. Would it be of any value if it were not?

And does the accident of date so alter the essential nature of this great transaction—in which the parties are that eternal Father, who seeth the end from the beginning, and that well beloved Son, who is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, and that blessed Spirit, who cometh forth evermore from the Father and the Son;—does the accident of date, I ask, so alter the essential nature of this great transaction, as to make the restriction of it to the Lord's own people less consistent with a universal offer when it is set forth as past, than it would be, if announced as still future? Surely, if such an impression at any time prevail, one may say, in all humility, with the Psalmist: "This is my infirmity; but I will remember the years of the right hand of the most High" (Ps. 77:10).

Yes!—the earnest soul may be ready now to exclaim—it is my infirmity if I raise any scruple about my right and warrant to claim an interest in a past atonement, that I would never feel if I had to deal with an atonement yet to come.\* The fact is the same. The great transaction is unaltered. The cross stands before my eyes, as wide and free, in its revelation of saving mercy, as it could ever be, however far adjourned. I bless God that it stands, not in promise or in picture, but in vivid actual reality. Christ has come—he has lived—he has died—he has risen again,—an all-sufficient surety and saviour for all who will have him to be surety and saviour for them. I am

thankful—I may well be thankful—that all this is past, and not future. Shall I, then, now turn the inestimable advantages of its being past—giving me a sight I never otherwise could have had of holiness and love divine—into a reason for hesitating and hanging back when I am called to embrace the crucified One and consent to be crucified with him? What is there in the difference of some hundreds or thousands of years to affect the assurance which I have that this Christ is mine, by the Father's free gift, if I will but have him to be mine, and that in him I have eternal life? May I not rely on Him who is from everlasting to everlasting God, without variableness or shadow of turning,—so far rely upon him,—as to be fully persuaded that what was finished on Calvary, eighteen hundred years ago, meets my case as thoroughly, and is as unreservedly available on my behalf, as if eighteen hundred years had yet to run before shepherds were to hear the song of angels in the starlit plain of Bethlehem?

## CHAPTER X

THE SOURCE AND ORIGIN OF FAITH—THE SPIRIT GIVING LIFE—THE LIFE IN CHRIST—A FRUIT OF HIS COMPLETE ATONEMENT

IN prosecuting what remains of the present inquiry, I shall continue to avail myself of the supposition which I have ventured to make—the hypothesis or supposition of a postponed atonement.\* In the light of that hypothesis, without any further discussion of the three particulars already disposed of,—the office or function, the nature, and the warrant of that faith which is required for the appropriation of the gift of God—or, rather, which is that very appropriation,—for

these particulars are not very directly affected by this test,—I shall proceed to offer a few remarks on the only other topic which it seems important, in a practical point of view, to consider.

The question I have now to deal with has respect to the source and origin of that faith by which sinners become interested in the work of Christ.

And here, at the very outset, let the precise point upon which our imaginary, but yet potent, criterion is to be brought to bear, be clearly and exactly determined.

Christ, then, is presented to us, not as having accomplished the work of redemption, but as set apart, appointed, and ordained to accomplish it.\* He is to do so, whenever the names and the number of those willing to have it undertaken and accomplished by him, on their behalf, shall have been historically ascertained. It is to be assumed, in fairness, that as the case is thus put, we have all the knowledge that we at present possess of the person of Christ and the nature of his work. Christ himself it may be supposed, is revealed, in all the glory and grace of his united Godhead and manhood—as Emmanuel, God with us, the Word made flesh, Son of God and Son of man, Jehovah-Jesus. And it is understood, or rather proclaimed, that the work for which this divine person, the man Christ Jesus, is manifested, is to be a work implying the substitution of himself in the room and stead of "a peculiar people"—consisting of, or comprehending, all everywhere who, at the set era, shall be found to have consented, or to be consenting, to have him as their representative and head. When that era comes, he is to identify himself with this willing people, then known and registered, not in any book of fate, nor in the book of the eternal divine decree merely, but in the book of the annals of time. He is to identify this willing people with himself, and "to bear their sins, in his own body, on the cross," on which, as their substitute, he is at last to be lifted up. On their behalf exclusively he is to expiate guilt, and "bring in an everlasting righteousness," and secure a full and final triumph over

every form of evil and every formidable foe. The atonement is to be for them alone.

Such, according to the supposition or hypothesis fairly put, and applied fairly as a test of truth in this matter,—such is the state of the case, as it is now, in anticipation of that closing act of the divine administration, to be explained and announced to all and sundry in this guilty world. Such is the gospel to be universally preached. It points ultimately to an atonement definite in its efficacy, and limited in its purpose and extent.

But, in the meanwhile, an apparent contingency is allowed to rest, so far as man's judgment goes, on the precise number and actual names of the parties who are to be the "peculiar people," and as such, to be thus favourably dealt with.\* It may be true, that in the foreknowledge and predetermination of God all is, fixed. But as regards the actual making of the atonement, the matter seems to be simplified by the work, while yet unaccomplished, being thus thrown loose on mankind at large and indiscriminately. It looks like leaving the door more open. In the view of its being still future, and therefore capable of adjustment, and sure of adjustment, to whatever case may emerge,—scarcely any difficulty can be imagined likely to arise on any of the questions regarding faith which we have already had before us. For if Christ is thus set forth as having the work of obedience and atonement yet to do; then evidently, in the first place, as to the office or function of faith,—unless he is to save me against my will, he must have my consent or acquiescence.\* Secondly, as to the nature of faith, there must evidently also be not only a conviction of the understanding or intellect,—recognising his sufficiency,—but a movement, moreover, of the will or of the affections; there must be the choice of the heart,—an active movement on my part to avail myself of his all-sufficient mediation. And thirdly, as to the ground or warrant of faith, what more can be needed beyond the assurance, that if I choose to accept of him as my substitute, he will undertake, when the proper, the appointed time comes, to satisfy all claims, and meet all demands on my behalf? So far all is clear.

But now, in the fourth place, comes the all-important and most vital question as to the source and origin of faith.\* That question must necessarily be raised, upon the hypothesis or supposition of a postponed atonement, quite as much as upon the fact of the atonement being already accomplished. In one point of view, indeed, it might seem that the question is best raised in this way and upon this footing. We have it pure and simple, disembarassed of all the perplexities and complications which the vexed controversies on the subject must always more or less occasion. We have a guilty sinner brought face to face with a Saviour, able and willing to save him to the uttermost. And the question is, How shall that sinner be moved to accept that Saviour? Will his doing so be a self-originated act of his own mind and will? Or is it altogether the result of his being acted upon?

The question turns upon the causal priority, if I may so speak, in the language of the schools,—or upon the priority and precedency, in respect of logical order and the relation of cause and effect,—of faith to the new spiritual life, or of the new spiritual life,—at least in its beginning,—to faith.\* It is not any sequence in point of time that is involved in the issue; the two, faith and life, may be admitted to be contemporaneous; the one cannot be conceived of as existing for a moment without the other. Still, the question as to the sequence of causation is most material. In the initial motion of the soul, obeying the divine call—believe and live—is the life from faith, or is the faith from life?

Let it be observed that, in the view which I am now taking, the object of faith is not a past, but a future work of salvation. It is a present Saviour, indeed, but one whose actual and effectual redemption of his people is still in prospect, and is necessarily, therefore, set before men under what may seem a contingent, and in a sense, a conditional aspect.\* It is my faith, however it may be wrought in me, that must, so far as I am personally concerned, turn the contingent and conditional into the categorical and certain. It cannot, therefore, in such a case, be the understanding that commands the will, in this

determining and decisive act of faith. It must, on the contrary, be the will that furnishes a guide or index to the ultimate finding of the understanding. For, so far as the conviction of the understanding is concerned, the proposition which I am to believe, if it is to be reduced to exact form, and expressed with intellectual precision, is not that my sins are expiated, but that they will be expiated, in consequence of my being now embraced and included among those whom, in his yet future work of propitiation, Christ is to represent. Evidently, however, the truth of this proposition depends on my consent to be thus represented by him; and my assurance of its truth must turn upon my consciousness of the consent which I give. Thus, on the theory which I am now imagining, for the sake of illustration, to be realized,—there is no room for any intellectual conviction, implying the recognition of an appropriating interest in the work of Christ, except upon the footing of a previous act of the will, consenting to his suretiship, with all its consequences.\* But such consent, it will scarcely be denied by any intelligent advocate of the doctrines of grace, is the result of a divine operation, and is an exercise of the new spiritual life.

For the real question, it is to be carefully noted, on this closing branch of the subject of faith, respects the precise nature of that state of mind in which appropriating faith originates, and out of which it arises.\* Some, indeed, might think it enough to have it acknowledged, in general terms, that "faith is the gift of God"—that "no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost"—that salvation is "through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth" (Eph. 2:8; 1 Cor. 12:3; 2 Thess. 2:13).

Doubtless to plain minds such plain statements as these suffice. And, but for the subtle refining which has been resorted to, on this as on other points, for the covering of an ambiguous position, nothing more in the way of explanation would ever have been necessary.

It is thus, in fact, for the most part, that the defence of the truth becomes complicated, and a prejudice is created against it, as if it



turned upon mere word-catching and hair-splitting. The reason is, that persons verging, perhaps unconsciously, towards dangerous error, shrink from realizing, even to themselves, the full extent and actual tendency of their aberrations and peculiarities.\* They cling, with a sort of desperate tenacity, to the familiar formulas and expressions of a sound scriptural creed; with the sort of infatuation with which one struggling in the river's treacherous calm, above the rapids, might convulsively grasp some landmark as he is drifted past, fancying himself thereupon to be stationary and safe. All the while, he is only carrying the sign-post, which he has embraced, along with him into the perilous and eddy navigation of the torrent. Hence it becomes necessary to follow such ingenious speculators or dreamers in their windings, and to recover, out of their hands, those simple statements of Holy Writ, which they contrive so ingeniously to perplex and pervert.

In the present instance, a mere admission of the necessity of the Spirit's agency in order to the production and exercise of saving faith, may be very far from coming up to the full meaning of what, to persons inexperienced in the arts of controversy, the words would seem to imply.

The truth of this observation, and the consequent necessity of more particular definition, will appear evident if we attend for a little to what I cannot but regard as a very common propensity of the human mind or heart.\*

We may desire to take advantage of the comfort arising from the belief of some supernatural power and wisdom being somehow available on our behalf; while at the same time there may be no inclination to part with that feeling of self-determining liberty, which the idea of having the matter still in our own hands inspires. Hence it happens that men will go a long way in professing, and sincerely too, their persuasion that without God they can do nothing; and yet, when you come to press them closely, it is plain that they consider themselves entitled as well as able to undertake whatever they

please, and to undertake it at whatever time and in whatever manner they please, with the complacent assurance of being sufficiently helped at any crisis at which help may be desirable.

Let us consider, in this connection, how very differently different men may understand that acknowledgment of dependence upon God, as the source alike of every good gift and of every good work, which they may all be ready, with a measure of honesty, to make.

Thus, that God is not far from every one of us, since in him we "live, and move, and have our being," is what even a heathen poet could feel and own, when he said, "For we are all his offspring" (Acts 17:28).<sup>\*</sup> Every common function of the natural life may thus be said to be performed by the help of God. But a devout Theist, having an intelligent belief in a particular providence, will regard this as meaning far more than an Epicurean philosopher, with his notions of the retirement and repose of the great Creator, could admit. This last—the Epicurean sage or sophist—ascribes to God the original contrivance of the curiously wrought organ, or the subtle mental power, by which the function is to be performed, as well as the adjustment of those general laws of matter and of mind, under which all its operations are carried on. In that sense, and in that sense alone, he will recognise God as enabling him to draw in every fresh breath of air that swells his chest, and to eat every morsel that is to revive his exhausted frame. So far, he may believe and be grateful. But the other goes much further. Believing in the direct and immediate interposition of God, upholding all things and regulating all things, he believes literally that he can do nothing without God. Hence he is thankful to God, not merely for having made him, such as he is, and placed him under natural laws, such as they are, but for his concurrence in the very act by which, at any given moment, he puts forth his hand to touch, and opens his mouth to taste; feeling and being persuaded that without such concurrence, present and real, he could do neither—he could do nothing.

Again, in the department of practical morality, there are many who hold that without God they can do nothing good. They hold this in a sense, too, more special than is implied in the acknowledgment that, without God they can do nothing at all.\* For here, some weakness or derangement of the natural faculty is admitted; and there is a sincere persuasion, that in every instance in which it is to be exercised, there must be the presence and concurrence of God, not merely that it may be enabled to act at all, but that it may be helped to act rightly. A pious moralist may thus maintain that man, left to himself, cannot form, or reform, his own character aright; nay, that he cannot, without the help of God, think a good thought or speak a good word. So far, therefore, he will be ready to trace every good disposition and every good act to God, and to do so frankly and gratefully. But in all this there may be great vagueness and obscurity. It may be rather an indefinite impression with him, than an intelligent article of belief. Were he questioned particularly, he might be unable to explain very clearly what he meant; although generally, his notion would seem to be somewhat like this: that God is, as it were, to second or back the efforts of man, by some supplementary influence or aid from on high; that man, straining himself to the uttermost in the exercise of his moral faculties of reason, conscience, and will, is helped on and helped out by some divine communication of additional light or power. Thus, when I am blinding myself with intense looking into the depths of a vast cave, I am relieved by a friend putting a torch into my hand, or applying his glass to my eye. Or when I am toiling up a steep ascent, breathless and ready to give way, I find a strong arm linked in mine, by the help of which I start afresh and mount swiftly and pleasantly up the hill. Or when I am suffering my resolution to be overborne by the flattery or the taunts of false friends, I am recalled to myself, and assisted in recollecting and recovering myself, by the timely warning and kind sympathy of a faithful brother.

Now, is it anything more than this that some mean, who seem to admit that faith is the gift of God? They hold strongly, as they tell us, that no man can believe but by the special grace and operation of

the Holy Spirit. But yet, at the same time, they sensitively shrink from any explicit recognition of faith as being one of the fruits of the new birth, or the new creation, or the new spiritual life. Nay, they will have it that faith is itself the cause of the new spiritual life; or the antecedent state of mind out of which the new life springs. They must therefore hold it to be an act or exercise of which the soul is capable, with divine help, in its natural condition, and by means of which it reaches the higher position of the completed new birth or new creation. According to that way of representing the matter, it is not easy to see how the acknowledgment of divine help can amount to much more than the sort of general admission of dependence which I have been describing.

For there is, and can be, but one other sense in which the acknowledgment of divine help, or of a divine interposition, in the act or exercise of any faculty, can be understood.\* That sense is plainly and unequivocally this: that the faculty itself is renewed—that it becomes, in fact, in a true and proper sense, a new faculty.

Now, can anything short of this exhaust the meaning of the scriptural testimonies on the subject of the source and origin of faith? "Faith is the gift of God" (Eph. 2:8).\* Does that statement mean nothing more than that God concurs with man, and is an auxiliary or helper to him, in believing? How does the passage run? "By grace are ye saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves." How not of yourselves? Because God influences and assists you to believe? No; that is not all. "It,"—this faith,— "is the gift of God." What can this mean, if it be not that God directly bestows the faculty or capacity of believing?—and that, too, as a new faculty—a new capacity? He does not merely cooperate with man in this exercise or act of faith. He does more. He gives it.

And why should we take alarm at the idea of man receiving new faculties, that he may know God, and believe God? Why should we hesitate to say that it is a new understanding that apprehends, and a new heart that embraces, "the things of God"—"the things which eye

hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man"—the things "which God hath prepared for them that love him?" (1 Cor. 2:14, and 9).

You say that in this new creation, there are no new powers imparted to man, beyond what he naturally possesses, and that therefore no essential change is wrought in his constitution. What is it that you mean by these words to affirm or assert? Is it such propositions as the following:—that the renewed man continues to have the same number of powers that he had before, and these of the same kind as before;—that he is still a man, and not an angel;—that he has understanding, conscience, will, affections, such as are proper to a man, and such as he had before;—that he knows, in the same manner as he did before, not for the most part intuitively, but through reasoning and discourse; and believes, in the same manner as he did before, upon evidence and motives presented to him; and loves, in the same manner that he did before, from the sight of what is excellent and the sense of what is good?\* Is this really what is meant when the protest is anxiously made against the new creation being supposed to imply any essential change of man's constitution, or the imparting to him of any new faculties? Then, I rejoin,—it is true, but it is little to the purpose. And I reassert and reaffirm my own proposition, that the renewed man's faculties,—his sensibilities, susceptibilities, capacities, and powers—are in a real and proper sense to be characterized as new. He has an eye, he has a heart, as he had before. But it is a new eye and a new heart. It is an eye and a heart as strictly new, as if the natural organs had been taken out and replaced by others entirely different. Or it is as if, being taken out and thoroughly renovated, they were again restored to the frame to which they belonged. They are restored, but it is after being so changed from what they were before, as to make a new world all around, and a new world within.

Now, it is out of this new creation that faith springs. It is by this work or process that faith is wrought in the mind and heart of the sinner.\* Faith is the act of a renewed understanding, a renewed will, and a

renewed heart. If it be not—if it be not the fruit of that new life which the soul receives in the very commencement of the new birth or new creation, but in some sense, or in any sense, the cause or instrument of that life—then it is idle to say that it is the gift of God, or that no man can believe but by the Holy Ghost. At the very utmost, your saying this can really mean nothing more than that the Spirit must be concurring and aiding in the act of faith, as he might be held to concur and aid in any act for which man has a certain measure of ability, that needs only to be supplemented and helped out. Is this the sense in which it is meant that the Spirit is the author of faith? If not—and they with whom I care to conduct the present argument will probably feel that this is much too low a sense—then what intermediate sense is there between that, and the doctrine that the new creation, or regeneration, originates faith? Or, to put the question differently, in what other way can the Spirit be conceived of as having a part in the production of faith, excepting in one or other of these two ways—either in the way of helping, or in the way of causing man to believe; either in the way of mere auxiliary influence, or in the way of creating anew, and imparting new life?

What is man's natural state, apart from the Spirit's work, in reference to his ability to believe?\* Is he partly, but not quite, able to believe? Has he some intellectual and moral power tending in that direction—not, indeed, sufficient to carry him on to the desired landing-place of faith, but such as, with a certain concurrent and assisting operation of the Spirit—falling short of a new creation, however, or the imparting of new life—may be stretched out so as to reach that end? Or is he wholly devoid of all that even tends in the line of faith? Is he altogether "without strength?" (Rom. 5:6.) And must faith be in him, not merely an improvement on some natural act or habit of his mind, but an act and habit entirely and radically new? Is it with him an old thing amended, or a new thing, to believe God?

Need I say what the scriptural reply must be? If the Spirit is the source and author of faith at all, it must be in his character of the quickening, the regenerating, the creating Spirit.\* Otherwise, if it be

in any other character that he produces faith, or by any other process than what his sustaining that character involves, there is no reason why all other grace and goodness may not be implanted in the soul, and matured there, by the mere co-operation of God with man, in the use of his natural ability, without anything that can be properly called a new birth, or a new creation, for the imparting of new life at all. For if a man can believe before the essential work or process of regeneration, or his being made spiritually alive, is begun and in full progress, he may equally well, in that state, acquire any other good quality, or perform any other good work.

Against this view of the source and origin of faith, as being, not the cause of the new spiritual life, but the effect of it, certain objections of a somewhat specious character may be urged.\* Some of these it may be proper to notice before closing the discussion of the subject; all the rather because they may be made to illustrate the bearing of the view which they call in question on the controversy respecting the efficacy and extent of the atonement.

I. Do we set aside Christ in this view which we take of the source and origin of faith? So it may, perhaps, be alleged.\* We may be represented as maintaining that the first germ, at least, of the new spiritual life is imparted by a process irrespective of Christ's work and Christ's word; or that a man may be said to have life without having Christ; whereas the Apostle John, it may be truly said, bears an emphatic testimony to the very contrary effect: "He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life" (1 John 5:12).

There might be something in this objection if the quickened soul had far to seek—or long to wait for—Christ;—if, in my new birth, opening my new eyes to look, and my new and feeble arms to grasp, I had still to say, "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)" (Rom. 10:6, 7). But it is not so. "The word is nigh me, even in my mouth and in my heart" (ver. 8);—so

nigh, that the very first cry of my new and faltering tongue is to confess Christ; for he is "in my mouth," and I find him there (ver. 9; Ps. 8:2);—so nigh, that the very first pulse of my new and trembling bosom beats against my Saviour's breast; for he is "in my heart," and there, too, I find him. In the very agony of my birth-struggle I have Christ—very near, in close contact, giving himself to me. And awaking from that long dream that has been my death,—I awake, as Lazarus awoke, with Christ's voice ringing in my ear, Christ's blessed image filling my eye, and Christ's word in my inmost soul. What separation is there here between the possession of spiritual life and the possession of Christ? I live, not before having Christ, but in having Christ. My new life is through him, and with him, and in him. Yet it is the Spirit that quickeneth. It is as being quickened by the Spirit that I have Christ near, and have life in him.

II. Do we, by such teaching as to its source and origin, disparage faith, as if we called in question the great doctrine of salvation through faith?\* Undoubtedly we do, if it be held that salvation is through faith in such a sense as to imply that this faith is not itself a part of the salvation; that it is not included in the salvation of which redemption by the shedding of Christ's blood, and regeneration by the operation of the Holy Ghost, are the sole causes;—the one of its purchase, and the other of its application. Any such imagination, however, we set altogether aside. For while faith is ever to be magnified, as opposed to all works of man, in the salvation of the sinner, it never can be the antagonist of any work of God, whether of God the Son, or of God the Holy Ghost. To make it that, is to degrade faith itself, bringing it down from its high position, as the link of union between God and man, and putting it into the class of those "righteousnesses" of ours which are all as "filthy rags."

Thus, in the matter of justification;—make faith, instead of obedience, the ground of acceptance; and what worthiness has it? Or what stability? None whatever, more than those other works which it supersedes. But put the work of Christ, and the work of Christ alone, in that position. Let faith take her proper place as a handmaid,



meekly waiting on Christ, and taking his work as her own. Then she becomes omnipotent—she can remove mountains.

So also it is in the matter of regeneration. If you insist on faith being the cause or instrument of the change, or being in any way antecedent to the new life which the process of the new birth gives, you establish, as the measure of that great change and of that glorious life, something to which man's ability is competent—something which, with divine help, he can reach—before he is changed or made alive. For the effect must be proportioned, not to the agency alone, but to the agency and the instrumentality taken together. In that view, therefore, regeneration must really be according to the measure of faith—not faith according to the measure of regeneration. But take it the other way. Then, in regeneration, on the imparting of the new life, you have an agency that creates anew, and an instrumentality that "liveth and abideth for ever." You have the agency of the quickening Spirit, and the instrumentality of the unchanging word. And so the fruit, or result, is faith; a faith of high value and potency; since it is faith proportioned to the value and potency both of the agency and of the instrumentality to which it owes its birth. It is faith which, as an effect, is proportioned to its own twofold cause—the efficient and the instrumental. It is faith whose measure is according to the living energy of the Holy Ghost, and the enduring steadfastness of the divine testimony.

What a principle of power and patience have we now in the faith that is thus produced,—corresponding, as it must do, if real, to the might of its heavenly cause and the massive strength of its heavenly instrumentality! It is truly a divine principle. This faith is a divine act—implying the inward communication of a divine capacity, concurring with the instrumentality from without of a divine testimony. Thus, literally, with the Psalmist, may the believer say, "For with thee is the fountain of life: in thy light shall we see light" (Ps. 36:9). For, through his divine power, working in me a divine faith, I see Christ with the eye with which the Father sees him; I hold him as the Father holds him; and love him as the Father loves him.

He is mine, by a work of the Spirit in me, precisely similar to that by which, in his mediatorial character, he is the Father's. For I am born of the Spirit,—as Christ was himself.

III. Do we, by the view which we thus advocate respecting faith, cast any slight or discouragement on human efforts, or give any sanction to the relaxation of diligence, or the diminution of anxiety, on the part of the sinner, seeking the salvation of his soul?\*

Here let me face at once this imputation, by comparing, as to their tendency in this respect, the two different ways in which the interposition of God, in the actings of his creatures, may be represented. For the sake of distinction, I may characterize them as the auxiliary and the creative methods respectively.\* According to the first, God is regarded as co-operating with man; according to the second, he is to be regarded as requiring man to co-operate with him.

This, as it seems to me, is an important distinction, on which, indeed, turns the practical question, whether man is to have the precedency, or God is to have the precedency, in the work of individual salvation.

The types, if I may so speak, of the two opposite theories, may be found in the instance of the impotent man beside the pool of Bethesda (John 5:1–9).\* Consider his own complaint: "I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool." Contrast this complaint with the Saviour's command to him: "Rise, take up thy bed, and walk." The Lord might have adopted the plan which the man himself virtually suggested. He might have rewarded his long waiting and his many previous attempts, by helping him to the side of the pool. And in this way, supported and aided by so strong an arm, the tottering invalid might have succeeded at last in curing himself, or getting himself cured, by the use of the mysteriously troubled waters. But God's ways are not as our ways. Jesus proceeds otherwise in his work of healing.\* He will not merely fall in, and be a party, as an auxiliary, in the carrying out of man's plans and efforts. He will take the lead, by assuming the whole matter into his own

hands. He issues his order, and the man, believing, is healed. On both of these plans there is co-operation. On the first plan, however, I would say, the Lord is expected to co-operate with the man. According to the second plan, the Lord requires the man to co-operate with him.

Need I ask which of these two arrangements is the most becoming and the most blessed? Which is the most becoming as regards God? Which is the most becoming as regards man? Which is the most blessed as regards God? Which is the most blessed as regards man?

Now, the sum and substance of the whole system for which we contend may be reduced to this one comprehensive principle, founded upon the distinction to which I have been adverting.\* Throughout, in the first step, and in the whole subsequent progress, of the life of God in the soul of man, the position or attitude which man has to take is that of acquiescence. He is to fall in with what God proposes. He is to be a fellow-worker with God. His own idea constantly is, that God is somehow to concur with him;—so as to help him out where there is any deficiency in his attainments, and to help him on where there is any failure in his strength.\* His hope is that, upon his doing his best, God is to make up what may be wanting, and have a tender consideration for what may be weak. Thus, the righteousness of Christ being virtually supplemental to his own sincere yet imperfect obedience—and the assistance of the Spirit seconding his own honest though infirm resolution—he is to be somehow, on an adjustment or balance of accounts, and with a due allowance for human frailty, justified and sanctified at last. Need I say that, if the doctrines of grace are really to prevail practically, the whole of this motley and mongrel scheme must be overturned and reversed? It is, indeed, a scheme, as every child of God who has at one time tried it—and who has not?—will testify, which everywhere and always, in proportion to its influence, proves itself to be the very opiate of a drowsy spirit—deadening all energy, and lulling asleep all spiritual life.

How different from this is the plan of God!\*

Take a believer in the middle of his course. What is he doing? Is he not, as the apostle Paul describes him, "working out his own salvation with fear and trembling, because it is God that worketh in him both to will and to do of his good pleasure?" (Phil. 2:12, 13.) He is not trying to make himself holy, by the help of God, as another man might vaguely express it. He is apprehending, feeling, realizing God himself within, making him holy. And under that impression, he is following out what God is doing.\* It is the Christian paradox. I am to feel myself passive in the hands of God, and yet on that very account the more intensely active. I am to be moved unresistingly by God, like the most inert instrument or machine, yet for that very reason to be all the more instinct with life and motion. My whole moral frame and mechanism is to be possessed and occupied by God, and worked by God; and yet, through that very working of God in and upon my inner man, I am to be made to apprehend more than ever my own inward liberty and power. This is the true freedom of the will of man;\* and then only is my will truly free, when it becomes the engine for working out the will of God.

Now, does not the same order hold in the beginning of the divine life? Here, too, is it not through our being passive, that we reach and realize the only true activity?

It is said that, by telling men that faith is the act of a living soul, and that they cannot believe but by the energy of a new life—a life such as the creating and regenerating Spirit alone can impart—we encourage them to shut their eyes and fold their hands, and sit down in listless and indolent expectancy, waiting for they know not what irresistible impulse to force them into penitence and faith.\* It is a miserably shallow theology that prompts the allegation. And, if possible, it is still more meagre metaphysics. Call a man to believe; and at the same time let him imagine that his believing is some step which, with a little supernatural help, he may reach, as a preliminary to his new life with God. Then, is he not apt to feel that he may take his ease,

and, to a large extent, use his discretion, as to the time and manner of obeying the call? But let him know that this faith is the effect or fruit of an exercise of divine power, such as raises the dead and gives birth to a new man.\* Tell him that his believing is seeing Christ with a new eye, which God must give; and grasping Christ with a new hand, which God must nerve; and cleaving to Christ with a new heart, which God must put within him. And let it be thundered in his ear, that for all this work of God, "now is the accepted time, and now is the day of salvation." Then, fairly startled, and made to know what faith is, as the act of a living soul,—and what is its source, even the present power of the quickening Spirit,—will he not be moved to earnestness and energy in "seeking the Lord while he may be found, and calling upon him while he is near?" (Isa. 55:6.) And is it not this urgent impression, alike of the heavenly nature of faith and of its heavenly origin, which prompts both the profession and the prayer—the profession, "Lord, I believe"—the prayer, "help thou mine unbelief?" (Mark 9:24.)

This great theme of the Atonement is very far indeed from being exhausted.\* In fact, I may say with truth, it is little more than one single feature in that divine transaction that I have attempted to exhibit; only setting it in various points of view.\* That feature is its completeness, as securing all blessings to those who embrace it. They are "complete in him" (Col. 2:10). For this end I have endeavoured to bring out the full meaning of Christ's work, as a real and literal substitution of himself in the room and stead of his people; and also the full meaning of the Spirit's work, as that which gives them a supernatural sight of Christ, and a supernatural hold of Christ. Seeing Christ with the new eye which the Spirit purges; grasping Christ with the new hand which the Spirit strengthens; believing all the divine testimonies concerning Christ, with that clear intelligence which belongs to the renewed mind, and that eager consent which the renewed heart hastens to give;—I am Christ's, and Christ is mine; I become a partaker of the divine nature; for as Christ is, so am I. The completeness of the atonement, as regards all who embrace it, I have sought also to harmonize with the universality of the gospel offer, as

being the free offer of a full interest in that complete atonement to every individual of the human race.

For thus the matter stands.

A crowd of criminals, guilty and depraved, are kept in prison, waiting for the day of doom. What is my office, as a preacher of righteousness, among them?\* Is it to convey to them from my Master any universal proclamation of pardon, or any intimation whatever of anything purchased or procured by him for them all indiscriminately? Is it to carry a bundle of reprieves, indorsed with his sign-manual, which I am to scatter over the heads of the miscellaneous multitude, to be scrambled for at random, or picked up by whoever may care to stoop for them? That, certainly, is not my message; that is not my gospel. These criminals are not thus to be dealt with collectively and en masse; nor are they to be fed with such mere crumbs of comfort from the Lord's table. The Lord himself is at hand. And my business—I am to say to them—is to introduce him to you, that individually, and one by one, you may deal with him, and suffer him to deal with you. It is now as it was in the days before the flood. "The ark is a preparing" (1 Pet. 3:20). For, though prepared from all eternity in the counsels of the Godhead, and now also prepared, in point of fact, in the history of time, it is, to all intents and purposes, as if it were a preparing for you. Does it seem too straitened? Is it too small? Doubt not, O sinner, whoever thou art, that there will be room enough in it for all that choose to enter! Have no fear but that there is room enough for thee! For, to sum up all, in the words of an old writer, take hold of this blessed assurance, "that there is mercy enough in God, and merit enough in Christ, and power enough in the Spirit, and scope enough in the promises, and room enough in heaven, for thee!" Yes, brother, Jesus assures thee, for thee! And, blessed be God, he assures me, also for me!

## APPENDIX

I. THE first of the two quotations which I have to give from Dr. Anderson has reference to a part of Hervey's "Theron and Aspasio" on which Bellamy is commenting.

"Mr. Hervey observes, that 'this appropriating persuasion is comprehended in all the figurative descriptions of faith which occur in holy writ. Faith is styled a looking unto Jesus. But if we do not look unto Jesus as the propitiation for our sins, what comfort or what benefit can we derive from the sight? When the Israelites looked unto the brazen serpent, they certainly regarded it as a remedy, each particular person for himself. Faith is styled a resting upon Christ, or a receiving of him. But when I rest upon an object, I use it as my support. When I receive a gift, I take it as my own property. Faith is a casting ourselves upon Christ. This may receive some elucidation from an incident recorded in the Acts. When those who sailed with Paul saw their vessel shattered—saw the waves prevailing—saw no hope of safety from continuing in the ship, they cast themselves upon the floating planks. They cast themselves upon the planks without any scruple, not questioning their right to make use of them; and they clave to these supporters with a cheerful confidence, not doubting that, according to the apostle's promise, they should escape safe to land. So we are to cast ourselves upon the Lord Jesus Christ, without indulging a doubt concerning our right to make use of him, or the impossibility of his failing us. Faith is characterized by eating the bread of life. And can this be done without a personal application? Faith is expressed by putting on Christ as a commodious and beautiful garment. And can any idea or any expression more strongly denote an actual appropriation?'

"The unprejudiced will allow these observations to be much to Mr. Hervey's purpose; that is, they clearly prove that there is, in the

nature of saving faith, an application of Christ to ourselves in particular.

"And what does Mr. Bellamy reply? 'Why,' says he, 'Christ is to be acknowledged, received, and honoured, according to his character, as the promised Messiah. Is he compared to the brazen serpent? We are not to believe that we are healed; but to look to him for healing. Is he compared to a city of refuge? We are not to believe ourselves safe; but to fly to him for safety. Is he compared to bread and water? We are not to believe that our hunger and thirst are assuaged; but to eat the living bread, and to drink the living water, that they may be so.'

"In this reply we observe, first, that Mr. Bellamy misrepresents the sentiments of his opponents. For they are so far from saying that faith is a belief that we are healed, or that we are already in a safe state, or that our hunger and thirst are assuaged, that they will not allow that faith, properly speaking, believes anything concerning the state we are already in, excepting that we are miserable sinners of Adam's family to whom the gospel is preached. And while they tell sinners that the gospel is directed to them, in such a manner as to warrant their immediate reception of Christ as therein exhibited, they at the same time declare that the gospel, without that reception of Christ, will be unprofitable to them. In the next place, it is to be observed, that, in Mr. Bellamy's remark, there is no notice taken of Mr. Hervey's argument; the force of which lies in two things. One is, that it is only true and saving faith which is meant by these metaphorical expressions. The other thing is, that each of them includes the notion of a person's application of something to his own use, or for the benefit of himself in particular. If these two things hold true (and Mr. Bellamy says nothing against either of them), it will necessarily follow, that there is such an application of Christ to ourselves in the nature of saving faith."

In further explanation, I must give the close of this letter of Dr. Anderson's:—



"We conclude this letter with a caution, which may be of use to remove a common prejudice against our doctrine concerning the nature of saving faith. When we say that a real persuasion that Christ is mine, and that I shall have eternal salvation through his name, belongs to the essence of faith, it is not meant that a person never acts faith but when he is sensible of such a persuasion. There are various degrees of faith; and its language is sometimes more, sometimes less, distinct and explicit. The confidence of faith is, in many, like a grain of mustard seed, or like a spark of heavenly fire amidst the troubled sea of all manner of corruptions and temptations; which, were not this faith secretly supported by the power of God, according to his promise, would soon extinguish it. Hence this real persuasion may be rooted in many a heart, in which for a time it cannot be distinctly discerned; yet it in some measure discovers itself by secret wrestling against unbelief, slavish fear, and all other corruptions."

II. The other passage is one in which Dr. Anderson answers a query of Bellamy; and it is fitted still more clearly to show at once their difference and their agreement:—

" 'Query 1. Did God ever require any of the sons of Adam to believe any proposition to be true, unless it was in fact true before he believed? We are required to believe that there is a God—that Christ is the Son of God—that he died for sinners—that he that believeth shall be saved—that he that believeth not shall be damned—that without holiness no man shall see the Lord. We are required to believe all the truths taught in the Bible. But they are all true before we believe them, and whether we believe them or not.'

"Answer.... It is granted to Mr. Bellamy, that God never requires us to believe any speculative proposition, such as those recited in the query; or any absolute prediction or historical fact, but what is true, whether we believe it or not. But saving faith, as it is distinguished from other sorts of faith, is not merely a belief of such speculative truth; because there is no such truth but what may be known and

assented to by wicked men and devils.... In this sense, it has been justly said, that true justifying faith is not simply the believing of any sentence that is written or can be thought upon. So the persuasion, that Christ is mine, which we consider as belonging to the nature of saving faith, is not, properly speaking, a belief of this proposition, That Christ is mine, as if it were formally, or in so many words contained in Scripture; but it is the necessary import of that receiving or taking of Christ to myself, which is answerable to, and warranted by, the free grant of him in the gospel, directed to sinners of mankind indefinitely. In this believing, however, that Christ is my own Saviour, I am no more chargeable with believing a lie than I am in believing that, when a friend gives me a book, or any other valuable article, I have a right, by virtue of his gift, to consider it, to take and use it, as my own; though it be certain, that, if I finally despise and reject his gift, it neither is, nor ever will be mine. Further: if the gospel be considered as a free promise of Christ and his benefits, then this persuasion, that Christ is mine, is undoubtedly the import of my faith or belief of that promise as directed to me. And yet, though this promise be directed to all the hearers of the word, none of them, in the event, will find Christ to be theirs, excepting those that believe; because faith is the only way or mean by which God hath appointed them to attain a saving interest in, or the actual possession of, what he hath promised in the gospel. Hence the apostle warns those to whom this promise is left of the danger of coming short of it (Heb. 4:1). It may be useful to add the words of some ministers of the gospel on this subject. 'There is a full warrant,' say they, 'to believe, or general right of access to Christ by faith, which all the hearers of the gospel have before they believe, and whether ever they believe or not; and, in this respect, the provision of the new covenant is their own mercy; which warrant, or right, faith believes and improves. Yet faith is not a mere believing of an interest which the person had before; but it is also a believing of a new interest in Christ and his blood; or a persuasion, by which a person appropriates to himself what lies in common upon the field of the gospel. All the privileges and blessings of the new covenant are generally and indefinitely set forth by the gospel, upon this very

design: That each person who hears it may take it all to himself, in the way of believing; as there cannot otherwise be any proper entertainment given to the gospel. An indefinite declaration is made of God's name, as THE LORD OUR GOD, and of Christ's name, as THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS; and all covenant blessings are presented to us in absolute promises; all which is certainly for being believed. But every person is to believe for himself, not for another. It is a mock faith, if a person believes only that some others have a saving interest in God, and Christ, and the promises; as he hath no business about making this particular application to others. So that he is still a rejecter of the whole, if he do not believe with an appropriation of the whole to himself; whilst the revelation of grace is made to him for this purpose, or for none at all.'

" 'Such is the wonderful power and privilege which God bestows on true faith, that he makes all to be personally and savingly a man's own; just as the man is taking all to himself, and making all his own, by an appropriating persuasion of faith.' "

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## MONERGISM BOOKS

The Atonement: Its Efficacy and Extent, by Robert Candlish,  
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