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CHRIST A SURETY FOR SINNERS.

Heb. vii. 22. By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament.

Man is naturally under a law, for obligation to obedience necessarily arises from his relation to God. A moral agent must be held accountable for his manner of life. Sin is a transgression of the divine law, and it has to the justice of the legislator the relation of a crime; but God did, by positive institution, appoint an additional relation between himself and man. The law of nature was reduced to a covenant form, and a positive precept was annexed; to this man voluntarily assented, and the treaty was sanctioned, with threatening to the party liable to failure from the party incapable of change. Of this covenant, commonly called the covenant of works, sin is a breach; and it has, of course, to justice the relation of a debt. It is a debt of a public nature, the unconditional remission of which would be an implication of the honor of the character to whom it is due. We are all sinners, and punished we must be, unless our criminal debt be paid.

For a discharge from this sentence, the covenant of works made no provision; but there is a better covenant, established upon better promises; and what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God himself hath effected by the mission of his Son, whom he hath

given for a covenant to the people.

It is the grand object of the Epistle to the Hebrews, to illustrate the mediatory character of Christ; and of this character an important part is held up to our view in the text. A surety is *one who engages to perform to another, instead of a third person, all the conditions specified in the bond to which he subscribes*. Such a surety was Jesus. The certainty of it is expressed in the words, "by so much," referring to the 20th verse: "And inasmuch as not without an oath he was made priest," by so much he became a surety. The former he had demonstrated, and the latter is a necessary inference. The bond to which he subscribed is also specified in the text; it was the better covenant or testament, Διαθήκη. The Sinai dispensation exhibited the two covenants: the covenant of grace was exhibited by types in the gospel given to the Israelites; and of the law of works given to Adam, the knowledge of which had become very limited, a new and a full edition was now published, with accompanying terrific emblems of the divine majesty, from the mount. The covenant of works is from* this fact designated the Sinai covenant.—Gal. iv. 24. The New Testament dispensation of grace excels the Old; and much more is the new covenant itself, when compared with the old, the better testament.

Whence to be given.—Extracts are given from the minutes, when completed, and approved by the court, and either entered in the record, or ready to be so. Extracts have been applied for from the jottings, from which the minutes are made up. In one case, extracts from the jottings were allowed to enable parties to substantiate their complaints.* In another case, extracts from the jottings were refused to a party, who thought that it concerned his cause to have them produced.† The only difference in the circumstances of the two cases was, that the parties, in the first instance, were members of court. If an opinion upon the point may be hazarded, the second decision mentioned above, refusing extracts from the jottings, is, in all cases, the proper one. The register, when filled up, and signed by the moderator and clerk, as the minutes of all the superior judicatories are required to be, is the only record of the court. It is the province of the moderator to take care that it gives an accurate and faithful report of the mind and the proceedings of the court. For this purpose, he causes the minute of every separate transaction to be read repeatedly in the hearing of the members, till he ascertains that it expresses their meaning; and it is not till the whole of the minutes, written out *in mundo*, have again been deliberately read, that his signature is attached to them. If the members neglect both their duty and their interest in

attending to the minutes, they have only themselves to blame for the consequences of that neglect. They have ample opportunities, both of rendering the register correct, and of satisfying themselves that it is so; and there does not appear to be any occasion for referring to jottings, which are not a record of the court, and which are, in fact, superseded as soon as the record is filled up.*

(To be continued.)

CRITICISM.

Matth. xvii. 24—27. And when they were come to Capernaum, they that received tribute-money, came to Peter, and said, Doth not your Master pay tribute?

He saith, Yes. And when he was come into the house, Jesus prevented him, saying, What thinkest thou, Simon? of whom do the kings of the earth take custom or tribute? of their own children, or of strangers?

Peter saith unto him, Of strangers. Jesus saith unto him, Then are the children free.

Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them, go thou to the sea, and cast a hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up: and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money: that take, and give unto them for me and thee.

Every portion of the inspired volume is profitable for instruction; and few, indeed, are the pages of that sacred book which have not been subjected to some form of abuse. The passage quoted above has not escaped the attempt to make it serve a purpose with which it has no alliance. The times *have been* when it was fashionable, as it was safe and profitable, to vindicate the claims of the lords and lordlings of this lower creation as legiti-

* Assembly, 1812, Session 9.—Bryce and Douglass, Synod of Aberdeen.

† Assembly, 1823, Session 4.—Marshall, Presbytery of Paisley.

mate, regardless of the character of the title by which they reigned, and without allowing much inquiry into the mysteries of the principles upon which they ruled. Are they in possession of power, and, expressly or *tacitly*, do the prostrated nations yield to the pressure of that power? were the questions, by an answer to which this part of morality was to be settled. Taking an answer to these queries in the affirmative, all inquiry must then be put at rest; and this portion of the history of our Redeemer's instructions and actings was adduced to establish the right of the actual occupant of the throne, to sway the sceptre of his power over the subjects of his empire. In all this it was taken for granted that the Roman Cæsar, to whose imperial standard the land of Israel was in subjection, obtained and held his title by right of conquest; that the payment of tribute homologated his title; that the tribute paid at Capernaum was civil tribute, exacted by the Roman government, and that the payment of it by Jesus Christ sustained the claim of Cæsar as legitimate.

To discuss Tiberius' right to rule in the promised land, or to settle the question, how far the payment of a tax recognizes the right of a conqueror to demand it, is not the business of this paper. The time is well nigh past for the principle of such questions to create any doubt. More than half a century has gone by, since thirteen confederate empires, in North America, spoke distinctly upon the subject; and in a similar tone, we hear the voice of eleven more distinct so-

vereignties now added to the confederacy. In unison with these, we hear Mexico and the empires of the south, together with arisen and arising Europe, arresting the illegitimacy of every power, not sustained by the fair expression of the public will. But from this we turn to our proper subject.

I. It is proposed to show, that the tribute of this text was neither exacted by nor paid to Cæsar, and, consequently, to free Jesus of Nazareth from the imputation of having given his sanction to the domination of Tiberius; if, indeed, it should be supposed that the simple payment of tribute necessarily implies the confession of the legitimacy of the power exacting it. In this gospel we have twice a reference to the payment of tribute: the first is in the passage before us; the second is found in chapter xxii. 17. This latter refers to civil tribute, as demanded by and paid to the Roman Cæsar. To the passage in which we have this reference, we may attend at another day. Of the tribute spoken of in our text, we decidedly say, it was paid as an ecclesiastical due, to the support of the temple worship. The evidence of this assertion will be found in the following remarks:

1. In Exod. xxx. 12—16, we find the enactment of the ransom-money, for the service of the sanctuary. Every one, from the age of twenty years and upward, was required to pay into the treasury of the sanctuary a half shekel. In the time of Nehemiah it was reduced, probably on account of the depressed circumstances of the people, to one third of a shekel. Neh. x. 32.

But as their condition improved, they recurred to the original requisition, and the half shekel continued to be paid to the temple, until after the fall of Jerusalem, when the emperor decreed that the ransom-money, which had been given to the sanctuary, should be paid to the capitol. "He," Cæsar, "laid a tribute upon the Jews wheresoever they were, and enjoined every one of them to bring two drachmæ every year into the capitol, as they used to pay the same to the temple at Jerusalem."*

2. The value of the half shekel is now to be ascertained. The Jewish historian, a good authority in this case, informs us that the "shekel is a Hebrew coin, and is equal to four Athenian drachmæ."† The Attic drachm was but half the value of the Alexandrian coin of that name, and is generally estimated at something less than fourteen cents of U. States currency. The shekel being in value equal to four of these drachms, may be estimated at about 56 cents, and the half shekel at about 28 cents.

3. What was the value of the sum demanded, and of the money actually paid on this occasion? The question proposed to Peter was, "Doth not your Master pay—not *tribute*—but *τα διδραχμα, the double drachms*? Does he pay the *double drachms, the didrachmon* required of him from year to year? Those who proposed the question to Peter were the persons that received—not the *tribute-money*—but *τα διδραχμα, the double drachms*. The proper

terms for tribute, used by our Lord himself, ver. 25, are *τελος* and *κηνδος*; the latter term is that employed in Mat. xxii. 17, when speaking of Cæsar's tribute; and by Paul, Rom. xiii. 7, in reference to civil tribute, due to the minister of God, who beareth not the sword in vain. The *διδραχμον*, or double drachm of Attica, it seems, then, was equal to the half shekel, the ransom-money demanded for the temple service. What was the money actually paid at the order of our Lord? Hear the record: Go to the sea, cast the hook, take the fish that first cometh up, open his mouth; "thou shalt find a piece of money,—*στατηρα, a stater*;—that take, and give unto them for me and thee;" ver. 27. The *στατηρα* was a Grecian silver coin, precisely of the same value as the shekel, four Athenian drachms. Both the terms, in their original import, signify *weight*. The verb *βρω, to weigh*, gives origin to the noun *shekel*, and from *εστημι, to weigh*, is derived the *στατηρα, weight*. Both terms were, at first, employed to designate certain weights, which, at Jerusalem and Athens, were the respective standards. The name, as society advanced, was transferred to coins. The shekel and the stater, we see, originated in a similar manner; the terms are of the same import, and the coins of the same value. The half of the *stater* was equal to the *διδραχμον*, the double drachm, demanded upon this occasion. The stater paid for our Lord and Peter. There is no reason to believe that this was the amount of the capitation tax, imposed by

* Joseph. Wars, B. vii. ch. 6.

† Joseph. Art. 13. iii. ch. 8.

Cæsar. We have seen, from Josephus, that this very tax was transferred, by the decree of Vespasian, to the Roman treasury; but not till after the demolition of the temple, and the fall of the Jewish state, by the Roman arms, about forty years after this event.

4. Our Lord's reasoning upon the subject with Peter, sets the matter at rest: "Of whom do the kings of the earth take custom or tribute? of their own children, or of *others*, ἀλλοτρῶν ἀλλοτρῶν?" Peter replied, *Of others.* Jesus saith unto him, *Then are the children free.* Nevertheless, lest we should offend them, go thou to the sea, &c. In the whole of this reasoning, it is obvious, that our Lord argued for his right of exemption from this tax. The principle upon which he proceeds is analogy, taken from the practice of the kings of the earth. They tax not their sons or their daughters, but *others.* Jesus of Nazareth is then free. How? Is he the son of Cæsar? Such must be the fact, if he plead, on this ground, for exemption from the obligation to pay tribute to Cæsar. But this idea is absurd. Jesus of Nazareth is free, because he is the Son of God, whose is the temple, its service, and the tribute paid for its support. Thus it appears, that the tax demanded and paid at Capernaum, was for the support of the temple at Jerusalem, and not for the maintenance of Cæsar at Rome.

The sum of the argument is this: a tax of half a shekel had been imposed, by divine authority, upon every Israelite from twenty years old and upward, for

the service of religion; those who received the tax at Capernaum demanded a sum of money, the double drachm, exactly corresponding in value with the half shekel; by a miracle our Lord furnished a piece of coin, in value equal to the shekel, which answered for both himself and Peter, thus furnishing the two half shekels. There is no example of that precise amount of tax having been imposed by the Roman power, till nearly forty years after this period, and that by turning this very tribute to the capitol; and, lastly, from our Lord's reasoning for exemption, he being the Son of God, and which, from the analogy of the kings of the earth, had great point, if the tribute demanded was for the service of the temple, the house of his Father; but which is inconclusive and unmeaning, if exacted for Cæsar. We proceed to notice,

II. Some points of practical instruction, suggested by this interesting portion of the sacred narrative of the doctrines and doings of the Savior of man, while he sojourned upon earth. And

1st. By the example of Jesus of Nazareth, we are admonished not to lay stumbling blocks needlessly before men. He might, as the Son of God, have refused to pay the ransom exacted from others; but the refusal might have been misunderstood; upon his example, others might have stumbled, fallen, injured themselves, and dishonored their God. From it, too, occasion might have been taken to draw conclusions against his religion, his people,

and his claims. He guards his own reputation, is tender of the cause with which he is identified, and no less so of the moral interests and spiritual welfare of men. He that knows not, practically, the doctrine of self-denial, for social and individual interests, is a stranger to the spirit of the Redeemer's example. He who will push, upon all occasions, his rights to their utmost verge, may be a righteous man; but a good man he is not. Offend not, scandalize not, O Christian, those men of the world with whom you are called to transact the business of life, by a narrow, selfish, course of conduct, because it may be, toward yourself, in accordance with strict justice. Your Creator has placed some things at your own disposal; fear not to yield a portion of them to generous purposes.

2d. In our Redeemer's intercourse with society, we find him uniformly, in all that was innocent, acting in correspondence with its common order. In his deportment we find no affectation of singularity, neither for the purpose of seeking distinction, nor for that of a momentary effect. He frowned upon prudery, and he damned hypocrisy in all its forms. He comes eating and drinking, mingling in the associations of life, bearing its burdens, and participating in its enjoyments.

3d. The Son of God, in our nature, exemplified a dutiful attendance upon, and a ready support of, the ordinances of religious worship. He abandons neither the house nor the institutions of his Father, because bad

men attended upon them. He refused not the requisite contributions, because imperfect, nay bad men applied, and sometimes misapplied them. He pointed out the way of truth, and re-proved every departure from the paths of rectitude; but acted toward and with men as he found them, that he might make them better and leave them happier. And when destitute of funds to meet the demand made upon him for the support of the ordinances of public worship, he puts the sea, and the fish of the sea, in requisition, and makes them his tributaries. In many a form has the Son of man taught us the worthlessness of physical, except as it subserves the interests of moral nature.

4th. This passage of the sacred record calls upon us to adore Immanuel, as God over all, and to confide in him for all that pertains to life and godliness. If his subjection, as Mediator, be indicated by the demand of tribute made upon him, his DEITY is manifested in the meeting of that demand. His omniscient eye sees the stater at the bottom of the sea, or, perhaps, his omnipotence at once extracts the silver from the distant ore, gives it form, and stamps upon it the figures of the current coin. His wisdom and his power unite in guiding, by an invisible agency, the unconscious fish to the hidden treasure, and, at the proper moment, directs it to Peter's hook. The whole transaction was before his eye; in the perfection of dignified simplicity, he gives the order to his disciple, and the result corresponded with his di-

rection. The sea and its finny tribes, the mines of the dry land and their rich ores, as well as the holy and exalted inhabitants of heaven, are the subjects of his will. Shall man, man redeemed by his blood, alone dispute his claim, and refuse to bow to his empire? *The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib, but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider.* Shall the playful, thoughtless occupant of the deep rebuke immortal man, refusing to confess Messiah Lord of all? Be it our care to do him homage, knowing that his throne is established in the heavens, and his kingdom ruleth over all. And whilst bowing before his throne, in the devotions of homage, let our hearts be assured that he will give us all things pertaining to life and godliness. He will give grace and he will give glory, and will withhold no good from them that walk uprightly. Such is the tenor of his promise. His boundless resources of goodness, the immutability of his truth, and the omnipotence of his arm, unite in assuring us that his promise shall not fail. May our faith be strong, as his word of grace is sure.

I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it. For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you. 1 Cor. xi. 18, 19.

Divisions and heresies are nearly allied in every age and among all people. They were so connected in the apostolic age; and they both abound in Christendom during at least the current

part of the nineteenth century. The tendency of these evils in the church of God is nevertheless divinely overruled for the good of Zion, and the intention is specified in the text placed at the head of this article. Those who cause divisions do not always, indeed, either avow or intend heresy; and yet it is the fact, that the one generally leads to the other. Σχίσματα and αἵρεσις are intimately connected in the history of the visible church. They are both the productions of error. "Let us, therefore, cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light."

In furnishing aid to an inquiring people for securing to themselves this *armor*, we would recommend the patient and prayerful study of the holy scriptures, and the careful revision of the ecclesiastical symbols of the churches of the reformation. There is much need of attention to those standards which declare our sentiments, and direct our forms and our practice. These may have been read and forgotten; and many of the old and of the young members may derive improvement from a reperusal of them.

There is, of course, no impropriety in bringing before the readers of the Expositor that form of church government which in accordance with the word of God has been provided for us by the wisdom of our fathers; and constitute a part of the covenanted reformation which we affectionately maintain. A judicious writer in that excellent periodical called the PRESBYTERIAN makes the following remark, August 31st, 1831: