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ARTICLE I.

ECCLESIASTICAL DISCOVERIES OF THE PURITANS.

By REV. GEO. B. CHEEVER, D. D., New York.

1. *A History of the Work of Redemption, including a Church History in a method entirely new.* By JONATHAN EDWARDS, Pastor of a Church in Northampton.
2. *Cromwell's Letters and Speeches, with elucidations.* By THOMAS CARLYLE. New York. Wiley & Putnam.
3. *The Protector: A Vindication.* By J. H. MERLE D'AUBIGNE. New York. Robert Carter.
4. *Neal's History of the Puritans.* Edited by JOHN O. CHOULES, A. M. New York. Harper & Brothers.

MEN seeking God earnestly for themselves, always find him for others. This is the case both with individuals and nations. This is one reason why our blessed Lord, when his disciples returned from their novel and difficult mission with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject to us through thy name, simply and solemnly answered, after assuring them that Satan's power was indeed broken, Notwithstanding, in this rejoice not, that the devils are subject to you, but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven. Take heed to your own holiness and salvation, for thus only can you conquer Satan, by conquering yourselves. One of our elder poets has said that

"Only he who knows  
Himself, knows more."

It may be added, that only he who *saves* himself, *saves* more. God never saves one alone, but others; and the fountain of power is through individual experience, individual baptism of the soul in fire. A man like Henry Martyn, Brainard, Edwards, Payson,

## ARTICLE III.

## THE NATURE OF THE ATONEMENT.

By REV. THOMAS H. SKINNER, D.D., New York.

NOTHING is more emphatically taught in Scripture,<sup>1</sup> than that the grace of God which bringeth salvation, could not have been bestowed arbitrarily, or without regard to principles of propriety and decorum, as to the mode of procedure; but was under the highest necessity of adhering to apt and fitting mode, in accomplishing its object. God, though above every other necessity, could not disregard His own dignity, or act in a way unworthy of Himself, as the Lord and Maker of all. Such a way is conceivable, but it was not possible, because not consistent with the essential perfections of the Divine nature. It would not have become the Most High.

2. It may have been well, if not necessary, on our account also, that respect should have been had to mode. The mode of showing favor is itself often of more value than all particular benefits; yea, essential to the permanent value of every benefit. A family may have received a father's generosity in the amplest measures, and yet be less indebted to him for this, than for his having always bestowed his offices of kindness in such a way as to make them so many instances of wisdom and dignity of deportment in himself—so many exemplary lessons to his household, as the paramount value of character. It is often better that things in themselves very desirable should be left undone, rather than be done in an improper manner. Might not, then, the Divine favor towards man have proved no favor in the end, if God had disregarded propriety in the mode of conferring it?

3. It was not only well, but absolutely indispensable for our sakes, that mode should have been observed. Had not God consulted his own honor, He would have done nothing to the ultimate benefit of mankind. God is Himself the portion of man; but God dishonoring Himself were no more God. No happiness, no possibility of it, would be left to man, if God should do an unwise thing, or a thing on any account misbecoming the Supreme Majesty of heaven and earth. The benevolence of God, His power to bless mankind, depends on His acting always worthily of Himself.

4. But the Scripture teaches<sup>2</sup> that the glory of God, "the

<sup>1</sup> Heb. 2: 10, 14, 17. Gal. 3: 21, &c.

<sup>2</sup> In the text before referred to and others.

essential perfections of the Divine nature," required, that He should not only have had respect to mode, but have limited Himself to one only mode, namely, "the making the Captain of our salvation perfect through sufferings." For this mode—this, and no other—the necessity was the same as that God be unchangeably God, a being of infinite perfection, who will not dishonor Himself by conduct unbecoming or indecorous in such a being.

5. The doctrine we are to explain, takes for granted concerning this mode, that it embraces what evangelical theology has termed, AN ATONEMENT FOR SIN. By this phrase is intended, an amende, a compensation, or satisfaction, *for the remission or setting aside* of the condign punishment of sin; or the punishment of the sinner according to his desert. The idea of Atonement is sometimes identified with simple *at-one-ment*, or reconciliation; but if the design be to exclude what has now been expressed, it will not be pretended that this is the evangelical or orthodox meaning of the term. The atonement, as commonly held by the Church, rests on the assumptions that man is a sinner, and that there is in the nature of sin that which deserves and calls for punishment; and is something which comes in place of punishment, supposing this to be forborne. Our object does not require us to examine the assumption just mentioned. Taking as conceded, that man is a sinner, and that sin incurs punishment, we are to show the principles and nature of that atonement or satisfaction for the remission of punishment, which, we assume, the mode of the Divine mercy to mankind embraces.

6. We ground the necessity for an atonement, under the circumstances supposed, in the perfection of the Divine Nature, and the necessity that God always act as it becomes him to do. Supposing that there is forgiveness with Him,—that He may and does remit the punishment of sin, God, we say, owes it to Himself, as the best and greatest, the Lord and Creator of all things, to require an atonement. Sin calls for punishment, and God cannot disregard the demand; cannot---if it be necessary that the Deity retain the glory of His nature inviolate. Of this the proof is in itself. The difference between good and evil, holiness and sin, is essential and immutable, and to this difference, no good or upright being can be insensible; neither can such a being refrain, if occasion arise, from expressing appropriately, approbation of holiness, and hatred of sin. The Most High, then, infinite as he is in moral perfection, and holding the provinces of Lawgiver and Ruler of the world, was under a necessity—that repeatedly mentioned, of being true to Himself in His mode of agency,—to manifest, in fitting measure and for the sake of the world, his disapprobation of sin. It became Him to do this, in the first place, in His Law—the rule

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Owen, on Heb. 2; 10.

of life which He gave to man ; and, in the next place, He must do the same, if there be occasion, in administering and executing His Law. It is impossible, that either in the one or the other province, He should fail to express His estimate of the demerit or turpitude of sin ; much more do, or omit to do, anything, which might imply, that His abhorrence of sin is less than it should be, or may be changed or abated. These things have their proof in themselves, and cannot be denied. But if they be true, how is the Divine Government, or God acting towards His creatures as Lord and Judge of all, to dispense with the punishment of sin ? A penalty the law must have ; and where it has been incurred by transgression, how may it consist with the holiness and moral rectitude of the Deity, not to execute the penalty ? Is not punishment in this case necessary to the just revelation of the Divine displeasure ?

7. But the fact lies before us, and is admitted by all, that punishment is forborne ; that mercy in the Divine administration rejoices against judgment, and opens the gates of Heaven to those who have incurred condemnation to eternal death. There is remission of punishment for rebellious men. But how might this take place, without dishonor to Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things ? The primary and natural means of maintaining His honor being set aside, does a possibility remain of securing the end by any other means ? Our doctrine gives this question an affirmative reply. It asserts there was one other means,—one only, namely, an atonement, by which the end could be and was secured. And because the end must be secured, and could be by no other means, an atonement in order to the forgiveness of mankind was as necessary, as that God do nothing incompatible with His essential excellency.

8. But how could even an atonement answer the purpose ? The careful consideration of this question is necessary to our design. To see the truth distinctly here, is to understand the doctrine of the atonement. Let it be remembered, then, what the precise thing was that would have put the Divine conduct out of harmony, out of consistency, with the essential perfection of God, in case of an arbitrary remission of punishment. It was just this, that there would in that case have been no appropriate revelation of the displeasure of God against sin. Let there be then such a revelation, and does not the necessity for punishment disappear ? Why is punishment necessary any longer, if its object is attained ? It was only in order to the manifestation of the Divine abhorrence of sin, that punishment was appointed. It was not appointed simply for its own sake. If it be possible, then, by any other means than punishment, to reveal in full measure and power the displeasure of God against sin ; in other words, if there be any means by which the end of punishment is

answered as perfectly as by punishment itself, and if these means are provided, is not the way now open, so far as the honor of God is concerned, for the setting aside of punishment? May not pardoning mercy here intervene, and grace abound in all its offices of kindness and love, without opposition from any one of the Divine perfections? May not God now act as it becomes Him to do, even while He pours upon the guilty and the condemned, if only they are prepared to receive it, all the fulness of His benevolence? In the language of inspiration, may we not say that God now may be *just* and yet the justifier of men? Or is there still something in the nature of God inconsistent with the remission of punishment?

9. To some it appears, so at least we understand them to say, that *two* things in the Divine Nature are still inconsistent; two essential perfections—the Divine Justice and the Divine Veracity.

A necessity for punishing sin lies, it has been said, in the nature of sin itself, as deserving of punishment: punishment is *due* to sin; so that Justice has no place if punishment be set aside. But is this indeed so? Punishment is *due* to sin, if *due* and *desert* be the same? Sin deserves punishment; and if Justice is wanting wherever there is not treatment according to desert, forbearing to punish is being unjust; and there is truly a hindrance to the remission of punishment, still remaining in the nature of God. He would be the author of injustice if He should forbear to punish. The high and unchangeable necessity of which we have again and again spoken, would be against admitting any substitute for the punishment of sin. No atonement is admissible, not even though the atonement be itself punishment, i. e. the punishment of another: for the argument is, that there must be punishment *where* and *because* it is deserved; and the sinner's desert of punishment is one of the things which are eternal.

10. But let it be inquired into, whether that is the true idea of Justice which leads to this conclusion? Is it so, that Justice implies and necessitates *treatment according to desert*, so that where there is sin there must be punishment, or Justice is renounced and ceaseth for ever? The necessity of treatment according to desert—is this embraced in the nature of Justice? Is there, then, no such thing with God, as the remission of the punishment of sin, or veritable forgiveness? What means the preaching of the remission of sins among all nations in the name of Christ?

Besides, how, after adopting this idea of Justice, can we give it a place among the virtues? If Justice be a virtue, a good thing, it can never be opposed to any other virtue, or oblige us

<sup>1</sup>Luke 24 : 47.

to anything evil, or be inconsistent with universal goodness. The virtues are homogeneal, sisters in the same family; they love and embrace one another. If I must renounce virtue,—be malignant or vindictive, for example, in order to retain what I choose to call Justice, either Justice is here an evil thing, or I have abused it, by giving its name to that which is evil. That cannot be in its own nature good which requires us to be, or to do, evil. But suppose a man to be brought into judgment and condemned as a criminal; and that, by some means, the ends to be answered by his punishment are already secured—that by virtue of a certain arrangement or provision, no injury will be sustained, and no good be lost—no ill consequences of any kind will follow, by forbearing to punish him—so that if his punishment should take place it would be for no end but simply for punishment's sake; and now suppose again, that something naming itself Justice should forbid his discharge on the ground that it would keep him from his desert, would this something, bear whatever name it may, be anything else than simple malignity—would it do in this case what might be regarded as a praiseworthy office, a thing worthy to be classed with the exercises and acts of that holy love, which is the fulfilling of the moral law? Surely it ought not to be called Justice. No, the quality of Justice is not such that it must inflict punishment, in all cases where it is merited, irrespectively of the ends of punishment, or merely because punishment has been incurred and is deserved. The ends of punishment must be regarded; they are the justification and defence of its infliction—what Justice points to, it may be with tears of pity, as the necessitating cause of her punitive procedures. If these can be secured without punishment, it is not Justice, or any form of goodness, but arbitrary cruelty, that will proceed, in these circumstances, to inflict a pang, though death itself be *deserved*. Justice is in this case *satisfied*; she does not and cannot object to the remission of punishment: Justice is no enemy to Love.

11. It may be well to note the office and place of Justice in a virtuous character. It is essential, but it does not hold the highest seat among the attributes of goodness. The supremacy belongs to Love—the highest, brightest adornment and glory of every good being. Wisdom is subservient to Love; so is Power; so is Justice. The work of Justice is to secure to all their rights, and protect the interests of all. This done, Justice is content; she seeks nothing more. If by any proceeding of Wisdom,—any means whatever not unlawful in themselves,—the interests of all are placed in perfect security, nothing would be more unjust and absurd than to forbid, in the name of Justice, the manifestations of mercy.

12. Distinctions have been made in Justice, as if it were of

different kinds, *Distributive*, *Commutative*, and *Public*; but Justice in each of these varieties is of the same nature; in neither of them does it ever fulfil the part of simple, despotic power, or renounce the rule of Love and Goodness. *Distributive Justice* deals out to every one the portion of good which falleth to him; allots to each one his claims, suffers no one to be injured; but it hinders no one from relinquishing his rights at the suggestion of benevolence or compassion, much less does it oblige any one to be malignant or unforgiving. *Commutative Justice*—faithfulness to contracts, honesty between man and man,—is not against indulgence to an unfortunate debtor, nor will it imprison an honest debtor who has no means of payment; such a measure never proceeds from any modification of Justice; it is the doing of pure malevolence. *Public Justice* is of the same character: it demands the punishment of crimes, as a means of securing the public good, but it is not against the pardon of an offender whose punishment may be remitted with prudence; or, as the case sometimes is, must be remitted, unless the public good be disregarded. To return to our former statement, it is never of the nature or spirit of Justice to give pain to any one where no ulterior end is to be answered, where there is no object to be reached beyond the giving of pain, or where the infliction terminates in itself. Work of this kind proceeds not from Justice, but gratuitous cruelty. Justice, then, is not in the way.

13. The other supposed obstacle is the Divine veracity. Punishment, we are reminded, is not only deserved, it is *threatened* and *denounced*. It is expressed in the Law itself, as the consequence of transgression, and is not the Law the voice of truth? Or is it consistent with the principle and end of Divine legislation, to allow the idea that what the Law names as the penalty of transgression, may be incurred and yet not endured? If this be so, is not the discouragement of transgression, the majesty of the Law—the strength of the Divine government, less than it might be?

It must be confessed that there is, on this supposition, less of one kind of strength than in the opposite view there would be. If the Divine government proceeded on the principle, adopted, it is said, by an ancient tyrant, that no remission or mitigation of the punishment prescribed in the law would, *under any circumstances*, be admitted, there would, indeed, be in it more of that formidable, terrible strength which is displayed in the stern exercise of authority; more, in other words, of despotic power. But it is in the nature of things impossible that God, a being of perfect and unchangeable goodness, should administer such a government. He would not be God if He should assume the throne of an arbitrary despot. Any plan of government, not consistent with the supreme rule of Love or Goodness, is such as would mis-

become the Most High. God could govern on no such plan. *If the remission of punishment may be made compatible with Justice*, it is reproachful to God to suppose that He would, by institutes of law and government, have foreclosed against Himself the exercise of the pardoning prerogative; or disabled Himself from appearing in His administration true to His own nature as the God of Love, whose goodness is His glory.

The fact is, that mere legislation, unless it be itself unlawful, never binds the hands of love, or forbids mercy under all possible or supposable circumstances. The veracity of a lawgiver is not pledged by the simple fact that he has annexed a penalty to his law, for the execution of the penalty in all cases of transgression. Let Justice be satisfied, and Truth itself would lose the quality of a virtue, if it should now be a barrier to the free exercise of benevolence. Just legislation, like Justice itself, implies no necessity for punishment, except as the ends of punishment may require. The penalty of a law is "not to be taken for a prediction, expressive of a certain event, or what shall be; but a commination, expressing what is deserved, or most justly may be; the true meaning or design of a commination being, that it may never be executed."<sup>1</sup> They who think otherwise, "labor under a delusion as to the meaning of threatenings, which, though they affirm simply, nevertheless contain in them a tacit condition, depending on the result."<sup>2</sup> Such universally is the groundwork, the law, of all true legislation, human and divine. Where law under the Divine government is broken, the penalty is incurred, the transgressor is amenable to punishment; but God has not, by the mere fact of having given the law, pronounced *a priori* against the exercise of mercy. He holds, and from the first meant to hold, the pardoning prerogative in His hand. Although, according to the letter of the law, the offender is exposed to death, yet God, except as justice demands satisfaction, has left Himself free to do with him as He pleases—to have mercy on whom He will have mercy, and show compassion to whom He will show compassion.

14. These Divine perfections, then, are not in the way. So far as Justice and Truth are concerned, the way is open and clear. Is there any other obstruction? If an amende, an atonement, may be supplied, is there anything remaining, in or out of the Divine nature, to restrain the exercise and manifestation of the Divine benevolence to mankind?

According to the evangelical faith, such a measure has become a reality. An atonement has been made, by means of which all the perfections of God harmonize and interblend their glories in favor of men; his Justice, Truth, Holiness, Wisdom, commingling with his Mercy, and all perfectly consenting toge-

<sup>1</sup> Howe.<sup>2</sup> Calvin.



ther, to set before us, as a free and sovereign gift, eternal life, with all its variety of infinite blessings. It is, we hold, a historical verity, that such a measure has come into existence and operation; has taken effect, and is the groundwork of the Divine dispensation of grace and goodness which so abound towards our sinful world. We regard it as the chief of all the ways of God—the foundation of His kingdom. The immediate agent by whom it was accomplished, was He to whom the Scripture refers, under the title, “the captain of our salvation.” The means were included in those sufferings of His, by which, as the Spirit saith, “He was made perfect.” In these sufferings the atonement is to be found. The gospel of Jesus Christ records the history of the transaction. It had its consummation in the agony and bloody sweat and unparalleled death of Christ. “The decease which He accomplished at Jerusalem,” including its preliminary and attendant particulars, *was an atonement*, a satisfaction to Divine Justice, whereby the door of salvation was opened to mankind. This is the grand article of evangelical Theology.

15. The doctrine embraces an *explanation*, showing why it was, that this death had the efficacy which is ascribed to it; or what gave it its power to atone for sin. This arose in part from the nature of the death or sufferings of Christ; but chiefly from the character which the doctrine ascribes to the sufferer. In this latter respect, the doctrine without controversy, presents a great mystery. It gives to the sufferer a sphere of antecedent and independent existence, out of and above the creation. It makes Him distinct from God,<sup>1</sup> and at the same time co-equal and co-eternal with Him; partaking with Him the essence and inherent glory of the godhead:<sup>2</sup> whereby He was competent to dispose of Himself as He pleased, and also to suffer or do whatever might be exacted of Him for the satisfaction of justice, without being Himself overcome and swallowed up, in meeting His dread liability. It affirms of Him, moreover, that He sustained a mysterious relation to God, that, namely, of an only begotten son, who dwelt from eternity in the bosom of the Father. It adds, that this uncreated and co-eternal companion and Son of God, came into the world, in the fulness of time, clothed in humanity, yet without sin, for the suffering of the death which awaited him. Further, it represents Him, as bearing by the imputation of justice, the sin of mankind; thus making His sufferings vicarious, while it gives them a severity, not to be explained or justified under any other idea, than that they were a substitute for our punishment—a compensation for its remission. Finally, it declares that by virtue of these sufferings, on the part of one who possessed the Divine nature in full equality with God, an atonement was made—every

<sup>1</sup> “The Word was *with* God.”

<sup>2</sup> “The Word *was* God.”

end answered which could have been gained by inflicting con-  
dign punishment on mankind.

16. The sufficiency of this measure—its power to atone—no one, of course, could perfectly appreciate, besides God himself. None else could comprehend the amount of the guilt to be forgiven, or the punishment which it incurred; nor could any other estimate justly the value of the sufferings which were endured by Christ—such sufferings of such a personage. Their compensative merit, in their breadth and length, their depth and height, who but God alone could comprehend? But they must have been an adequate compensation, having been appointed and accepted as such by the Divine Justice: and now, since by the will of God they have been published and set forth as sufficient for their great purpose, two things are of the highest certainty; First, the manifest divinity of the measure (if it be of God, it must proclaim itself his work):—and, secondly, the human mind must be competent to perceive evidences of its being what God declares it to be, an atonement truly—a sufficient amende or satisfaction. For the object or end of it, not being an effect on the mind of God only, but a revelation of God's displeasure against sin, which the subjects of the Divine government were to regard and understand, *as such*, it must needs have in itself power to make this revelation. The atonement, in other words, must be an atonement as well in the consciousness of every one to whom it comes in its just statement and influence, as in the esteem and judgment of God. It must have in itself a *self-evidencing* virtue—be its own witness—proclaim itself an atonement, as the sun shows what he is by his own beams, without need of external witness-bearing. The facts embraced in it must show it to be an atonement; and they do. That the sufferer was in essential dignity and glory equal with God, and was also His only begotten Son; and that His sufferings were such as the statement represents—these facts cannot be mentioned in connexion with their design, without asserting their sufficiency as an atonement. Let it be admitted, that the degraded man, whose sweat in the garden was as great drops of blood falling down to the ground, and who died on the cross in the manner described in the gospel, was the equal and express image of God, the brightness of His glory, and His own Son; and that He suffered thus “to purge our sins,” or make satisfaction for us to justice; and though no finite mind can conceive the magnitude of the punishment due to mankind, yet sure and self-evident it is, that neither this punishment nor anything else, could have been of greater avail as expressive of the demerit of sin, and the Divine indignation towards it. Let the statement be apprehended and received by the human conscience, and apart from all external testimony, it must give that con-

science, peace and quietness, as to the *atoning sufficiency* of the stupendous measure.

17. But is the statement itself credible? Does it not involve intrinsic absurdity, or what is repugnant to reason and natural religion? Is not the possibility of an atonement grounded in an assertion respecting the character of Christ, which cannot be true? There could have been no atonement, it is said, if there had not been One in eternity with God, who himself possessed the Divine attributes: in other words, it is taught, that Christ was strictly a Divine Person. This is the foundation of the doctrine of the atonement. Is it consistent with the greatest and first of all truths—the unity of God? The statement is presented with a concession, yea, rather with a bold averment, that it is in this respect a mystery—a mystery it may be, to angels as well as men—what is far above human and perhaps all finite comprehension; but it is a mystery and no more; it is not against any dictate of reason, or contradictory of the Divine Unity. In asserting the pre-existent and eternal divinity of Christ, it does not deny the one and simple essence of God, but only implies that this one Divine essence is *pluri-personal*; or that in the one and simple essence of the Deity there are more persons or subsistences than one. There is nothing in reason, nothing in nature against this assertion. It relates to the mode of the Divine existence—a great mystery indeed. But to men, what is there that is not in some respect mysterious; and if all nature be full of mystery, why should he expect to find out by searching the mode in which the great Infinite himself subsists? The mystery, in this case, is one which, it is contended, the Scriptures reveal in a thousand places; yea, which, including its cognate doctrines, is the grand subject-matter of the Bible. The only question is, Is the Bible understood and interpreted aright?

18. To this brief view of the atonement, though we have endeavored to make it definite and distinctive, it may be proper to subjoin a few additional observations in order to insure it, if possible, against misapprehension.

The atonement, as now propounded, gives no unfavorable impression of the Divine character; does not represent God as divided against Himself, or the persons of the Godhead as divided and contrary to one another; does not ascribe gentleness to Christ and deny it to the Father. The whole Deity is made the author and finisher of the measure; the will and purpose of the entire Godhead were fulfilled; it was as much the doing of the Father as of the Son; the Son, while he gave himself, was also the Father's gift. The conception of opposite feelings and interests is not justified, but precluded.

There is no ground for the objection, that it makes God *unjust*

in order to be just,—unjust in his treatment of Christ, in order to be just in showing favor to the guilty. Christ does not become a sinner, because by imputation he bears our sins. He is not regarded as deserving the treatment he receives. He is not treated otherwise than as he chooses to be. He simply foregoes His own honors and rights for a time, and offers Himself to suffer, as the necessary means of our salvation. He is not *punished*, in the ordinary meaning of the word, as implying personal criminality. No injustice is done Him, unless it be in the nature of Justice to permit no sacrifice to be made, no interest or right surrendered for the benefit of others; unless justice be the enemy of self-denial and disinterested benevolence.

The atonement does not imply that there is a vindictive propensity in the Divine nature; or that God needs compensative sufferings for his own gratification, or any motives out of Himself in order to be inclined to the exercise of compassion. It supposes the Deity to be incapable of acting with impropriety, or in a manner which does not become Him, but not to be vindictive or slow to mercy. The atonement assumes as a necessity, that every Divine attribute harmonize in every Divine act or procedure; and that the Divine conduct never be out of keeping with itself, or inconsistent with the majesty and honor of God, as the Lord and Maker of all. But this is not against the purest and highest benevolence; it is only against a benevolence falsely so called, which, by disregarding mode in manifesting itself, would defeat all the ends of infinite goodness. The atonement is but the mercy or goodness of God, using a proper mode of showing itself to man. Instead of being against goodness, it is an instance of goodness, comprehending every other, and also infinitely surpassing all other forms of goodness possible or conceivable. It is the chief means by which God demonstrates his goodness.

There are representations in evangelical writings and discourses which, taken to the letter, and apart from their connexions, are to the discredit of the atonement, as implicating the Divine character in reproach. The atonement is said to be the appraisement of the Divine vengeance; the wrath of God is set forth as spending and exhausting itself on the pure and innocent Savior, &c. But these are bold and strong expressions, the import of which, as consisting with just views of the Divine goodness, is commonly obvious from their context and scope. They are not without warrant from Scripture.<sup>1</sup> They make no bad impression on candid minds. When it is kept in mind that the atonement is God's own work, that Christ was His own Son, in whom He was always well pleased, and that His treatment of Christ was, in fact, a sacrifice infinitely expensive to Himself, no room is left for understanding the language in question as imput-

<sup>1</sup> Zech. 13: 7. Is. 53: 10. Rom. 3: 25.

ing malignant feelings to the Deity. It serves but to show the malignant nature of sin, and the greatness of the love of God to man.

19. It is not true of the atonement<sup>1</sup> that it is incomprehensible or obscure as to the manner in which it answers its end. Nothing in the atonement is more manifest than its mode of influence, or *how* it is connected with forgiveness and salvation. An attempt to state the doctrine, which does not show this connexion, omits the radical idea of the atonement. The atonement, in its very definition, declares *how* it opens the door for the manifestations of mercy. What is the atonement but a satisfaction to Justice, as complete as would have been our punishment, in order to the remission of punishment without dishonor to God, and without detriment to his law and government? And is it still a mystery *how* the atonement is connected with our salvation? There is mystery in some things pertaining to the atonement, but it is denying the doctrine to say that we know nothing of the mode of its influence.

20. The atonement cannot with propriety be regarded as a strictly *forensic* transaction. Where the terms peculiar to courts of judicature are used in speaking of it, they are not to be taken literally; but, as human language must needs be taken very often when employed to express Divine things, with more or less accommodation to the nature of the subject, as by its own evidence, or by other means, understood. The atonement, for example, *justifies* no one in the forensic sense, the satisfaction which it makes not being such as the law exacts from debtors or criminals. Forensic justification and satisfaction are incompatible with forgiveness: he who is justified in a court cannot be pardoned: he whose debt is discharged cannot be forgiven: but the atonement does not render our free and gratuitous forgiveness an impossibility. Its influence is precisely the reverse; namely, to make our forgiveness consistent with the perfection and glory of God; or if we may so speak, to obtain the consent of Justice and all the other Divine attributes to the exercise of the pardoning power. The atonement does not give us a claim on God, on the ground of justice; it does not impose a necessity or obligation on God to forgive us; it does not deprive Him of his high prerogative, as Judge and Lord of all, to have mercy on whom He will have mercy: it does not transfer this prerogative from Himself to Christ, or give it to the Son exclusively of the Father. We have mentioned what it does. It brings all the perfections of God into harmony with the free manifestations of His mercy; so that in making these manifestations He acts as becomes Him for whom are all things and by whom are all things.

21. The extent of the atonement is determined from its nature. How far indeed it is to avail in actually saving men, or

<sup>1</sup> As Mr. Coleridge, Dr. Paley, and others say.

to how many it is to be applied, or what portion of mankind were, as its fruit, destined to salvation by the eternal purpose of God, cannot be understood from the atonement itself. The satisfaction which it renders for sin, not being like the payment of a debt, inconsistent with, but only the necessary condition of, forgiveness, the atonement of itself involves the actual salvation of none. Certain indeed it was, that this measure of infinite wisdom and goodness would not be without fruit; but to render the atonement effectual, other agencies and influences, those especially of the renewing and sanctifying Spirit, must be employed. In respect to its application or success, the atonement will be coincident in extent with that of the Divine purpose. But the atonement *proper*, the atonement in itself, or its efficacy *precisely as an atonement*, hath an amplitude and a sufficiency equal to the value of the blood of Christ—the infinite merit of his sufferings and death. The overture of salvation to man is limited in Scripture to no age, no country, no class, no number; it is made, not to as many as God secretly intends to make willing to accept it, but with the same earnestness to those who are not made willing; nothing limits it but incorrigible obstinacy of heart in those by whom it is not received. The boundlessness of the overture hath an adequate ground in the atonement, whose breadth and length are also without bound.

22. Again, the atonement is adapted to have influences and effects ulterior to the salvation of men. By the discoveries which it makes, the lessons of wisdom, justice, purity, power, and goodness which it inculcates, and the manner in which it enforces them, it is suited to be the teacher of the world and the ages—the great light, the central sun of the moral creation. The impression of necessities which it makes—the necessity that the conduct of the Most High be always as becometh His essential majesty and dignity; that order be preserved in the Divine kingdom; that the displeasure of God against sin be revealed; and the necessity of punishment, or else of satisfaction, in order to this revelation; and the other mysterious necessities which are shown in making satisfaction;—how fitted is a measure of this import and this power of enforcement, to uphold the universe in love and allegiance to him, by whose infinite goodness it was devised and accomplished? That it is not hidden from any part of the creation, and that it is, in fact, the pillar and ground, the strength and security of the moral empire of the Almighty, the bond of eternal union and harmony among angels and men, and all the sons of light, is a scriptural asseveration concerning it, which hath a high ground of probability in itself.

23. The distinguishing traits of evangelical piety appear in high relief in the light which shines from the atonement. It is this doctrine which gives evangelical godliness or piety its peculiarity. That piety takes from the atonement its entire image

and fashion, its every line and point, as the clay receives whatever is engraved on the seal. The atonement in evangelical doctrine is a fulness that filleth all in all. It is the ground of all, it sustains all, it permeates all, it gives life and form and power to all. It has the same pre-eminence and importance in the piety which corresponds to this doctrine as its just counterpart. The impress of the atonement on the soul and the character is the sum, the *all* of evangelical piety. That piety is nothing else than the doctrine of Christ, co-existent and co-eternal with God; Deity incarnate; incarnate Deity suffering for the sins of men, the just instead of the unjust;—this doctrine written on the heart by the spirit of the Living God, and exhibited in the life and conduct. We have not time to examine this subjective image particularly—the sense of mystery and wonder, the humility, the annihilation of self-wisdom, self-righteousness, and self-will, the filial dread of the Divine majesty, the contrition and brokenness of heart, the sense of the evil of sin, the love and delight in Christ, the love and gratitude to God, the peace, the joy, the hope, the praise, and other traits comprised in it. But one thing we cannot forbear to observe: that there is in the piety which answers to the atonement as the image to the seal, an absolute, overwhelming conviction of the final and aggravated condemnation of unbelievers. That the atonement, with all its inherent evidences of divinity, and all the testimonial signs and wonders, and other outward proofs by which it is confirmed, should not be received by those to whom it is offered; that this great salvation should be neglected, this only means be despised, by which man could be saved; how appalling the thought, how full of amazing terror! How shall they escape, where shall they appear, who tread under foot the atoning blood of the eternal Son of God!

There is a piety whose most distinguishing characteristic seems to be aversion to that which is termed Evangelical. It has many recommendations. It melts with tenderness, it bows with reverence, it smiles with complacency, it rejoices with confidence and hope, at its own religious views. It often discourses with fluent, and gentle, and tasteful language, in praise of itself; and it certainly hath many fruits of natural goodness and self-culture to boast of. But so indifferent, so inimical is it to the majesty and glory of God, that when the great Deity is mentioned, by which alone it was made possible to keep the Divine honor unsullied and immaculate, while grace is shown to men, then this piety is ready to cry out, “away with it, away with it,” as the Jews expressed their scorn of the Son of God, when Pilate brought him forth to them, saying, “behold your king.” No wickedness moves its indignation sooner or more profoundly than the doctrine of the atonement. If that doctrine be true, of what avail will his piety be, “when God taketh away the soul?”