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ARTICLE I.

THE ATONEMENT, IN ITS RELATIONS TO GOD AND MAN.[1]

BY REV. ENOCH POND, D.D., PROFESSOR IN BANGOR THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY.

THIS little book has been for a long time before the public. The substance of it was published, in four sermons, almost forty years ago. In 1844 it was re-written; the form of sermons was dropped, a new chapter added, and it was given to the public in its present state. Since that period, it has been extensively circulated, not only in our own country, but in foreign lands. It has been translated into several languages, as the French, the Welsh, and the Low Dutch. In the preface to the last edition of his Controversy with the Unitarians, the late Dr. Wardlaw speaks of it with high commendation.

But in the midst of so much approbation, it has not entirely escaped censure. As might have been expected, the Unitarians early laid their hands upon it; and almost immediately after its publication in its present form, it was

[1] Christ the only Sacrifice; or, the Atonement in its Relations to God and Man. By Nathan S. S. Beman, D.D. With an Introductory Chapter by Samuel Hanson Cox, D.D. Second Edition; Revised, re-written, enlarged, and improved. New York: Mark H. Newman. 1844.

subjected to an elaborate and merciless criticism in the Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review, vol. xvii. p. 84. "This book," say the reviewers, "is in itself of little consequence; but from its gross and confident misrepresentation of the truth, it has more of the power due to falsehood, than any book of the kind we know" (p. 138). In the following remarks, we shall have more frequent occasion than we could have desired, to refer to this Review.

The view of the atonement presented by Dr. Beman is that commonly known as the *governmental theory;* the same that was advocated by Doctors Edwards, Griffin, Emmons, Mr. Burge, and many others. According to this view, the atonement is an expedient of infinite love and mercy, adopted with a view to satisfy the justice of God and sustain his law and government, in extending pardon and salvation to guilty men.

The work before us is divided into five chapters. The first is on the *necessity* of an atonement. An atonement was necessary, not to make God merciful, but to open a way in which his mercy could consistently flow out to our guilty race. It was necessary, to manifest God's supreme regard for his law, his holy hatred of sin, and his determination to punish it as it deserves. It was necessary, also, on account of "its practical influence on moral and immortal beings," in this world, and in all worlds. It is sometimes asked: Why could not God pardon repenting sinners without an atonement? To this it is pertinently replied: None ever would have repented without an atonement. The mere influence of a broken law never brought sinners to repentance, and never will.

Dr. Beman's second chapter is on the *fact* of an atonement; which he argues, first, from the bloody sacrifices of the Patriarchal and Mosaic dispensations — a form of worship which was extended all over the ancient world. There is no accounting for this peculiar mode of propitiating the Deity, but on the ground of an original divine institution. Nor "would God have appointed such a propitiation, but on the supposition of its symbolical, typical character, pointing

forward, as the scriptures assure us that it does, to the expiation of the cross. The fact of the atonement is also proved by numerous and positive declarations of God's word.

The next two chapters are on the *nature* of the atonement; in the first of which the author examines and refutes the supposition that Christ perfectly obeyed the law for us, and bore its literal penalty in our room and stead, thus paying our debt to justice, and cancelling all demands of the law against us.

"This system would destroy all mercy in God the Father, in the salvation of sinners, because it represents God as totally disinclined to the exercise of compassion till every jot and tittle of the legal curse was inflicted. On the same principle grace or pardon, in the release of the sinner from future punishment, would be out of the question; for what grace or pardon or favor can there be in the discharge of a debtor whose demand has been cancelled to the uttermost farthing? And as to the benevolence of the gospel, it is impossible to discover how such a feature can consist with that idea of the atonement which represents Christ as having suffered the same amount of penal evil which would have been embraced in the future condemnation of all those who will be redeemed by his sacrifice. What wisdom or benevolence can there be in a plan or expedient which shall inflict a certain degree of suffering upon the innocent, who could never deserve it, in order to spare the guilty from precisely the same degree of suffering, and to which, too, their sins had justly exposed them." p. 122.

In the following chapter (the fourth) Dr. Beman sets forth, more fully than he had before done, what he conceives to be the true nature of the atonement. He regards Christ as having suffered, "not the literal penalty of the law, but that which will fully vindicate the divine character, and support the divine government; while God, at the same time, offers pardon and eternal life to the sinner, and actually secures these blessings to every one who complies with the terms or conditions on which they are offered." This view of the atonement leaves the sinner still exposed to the penalty of the law, and in need of pardon; and represents pardon and salvation as being entirely of grace — as much so as though no expiation had been made.

In the fifth and last chapter, Dr. B. considers the *extent* of the atonement; showing conclusively, from its very nature,

and from a great variety of scripture representations, that it is not limited to the elect, but is sufficient for the whole human race. The offers of the gospel are freely made to all men, and those who fail of heaven will finally perish, not because no atonement had ever been made for them, but because they rejected the provided Saviour, and would not come to him that they might have life.

Dr. B. might have added another argument for the universality of the atonement, from the fact that all men are greatly benefited by it in the present life. The probation of grace on which we are all placed, and every favor we receive in connection with this probation — the air we breathe, the varied blessings of Providence which we enjoy, the means of grace, the strivings of the Spirit, the forbearance of God, long waiting on us to be gracious; in short, everything of this nature, common to the elect and non-elect in the present life, — all is based upon the atonement of Christ; flows to us through this broad channel of mercy; and shows conclusively that, whether embraced or rejected, the *provisions* of the atonement are for all.

Such, then, is the plan of the work before us — a plan ably and faithfully carried out, rendering the book one of the best in our language on the important subject of which it treats; worthy of the high reputation of its author, and of the wide circulation to which it has attained. His reviewers may indeed say, as in fact they do, that the view here taken presents no proper atonement for sin; that it is little better than the Socinian view, and in some respects even worse; but intelligent Christians will judge differently. They will say, that this is the atonement which Paul and the other apostles preached, and in which they trusted; that here is the corner-stone of Zion, on which the whole church of God rests, and will rest forever.

Having thus expressed our honest appreciation of this work, — a judgment in which, we doubt not, we shall be sustained by the generality of Christian readers, — we proceed to point out some slight defects or infelicities of statement which have given rise to misrepresentations as to the author's meaning.

In urging the necessity of an atonement, Dr. B. lays an undue stress, in some passages, upon its influence in deterring from sin, promoting obedience, and thus advancing the good of the universe. "The penalty of the law," he says, — and of course the death of Christ, the appointed substitute for the penalty, — "was intended to operate as a powerful motive to obedience; and the execution of this penalty, whenever it takes place, becomes an awful warning to deter others from transgression" (p. 127). Again: "the moral law could never be set aside without the adoption of those precautionary measures which would secure the order and prosperity of the universe as effectually, to say the least, as the infliction of the penal curse would do" (p. 128). Passages such as these have led his reviewers to insist that Dr. B. "denies that sin deserves any punishment for its own sake," but only as a means of deterring others from transgression, and that the great object aimed at in the atonement is to promote the good, the order, the prosperity of the universe, rather than to sustain the law, and vindicate the character and the justice of God. Nor does the influence of these defects of statement, if they be such, end here. By the good of the universe, the reviewers understand the mere *happiness* of the universe; and they remark, at length, on the great error of setting the happiness of the universe above its holiness, above the justice and glory of God, above everything.[1] Now that the real meaning of Dr. Beman is perverted and misrepresented in these passages, no candid

[1] There is a difference of opinion among writers on moral and theological subjects as to the meaning of the word *benevolence*. Some — and among them the Princeton Reviewers — insist that benevolence regards only the *happiness* of its object, and that such men as Doctors Edwards, Hopkins, Emmons, and others, who resolve all holiness into benevolence, make happiness the chief end of creation. Whereas, a greater mistake could not possibly be made. Benevolence, with these men, looks at the *good* of its object — its highest good; involving, of course, and chiefly, its highest attainments in knowledge and holiness, and not merely its highest happiness. The holy character of God, the scriptures assure us, is all comprised in love, which love can be no other than benevolence. Still, this does not imply that God regards above all things the happiness of the universe, but rather its *supreme good*, involving its highest spiritual good, and his own highest glory.

reader of his work can entertain a doubt. He as fully believes that sin is an evil in itself, that it deserves punishment for its own sake, and that in providing an expiation, God had respect, not merely to the good of the universe, but to his own honor, and the maintenance of his law and government, as these reviewers themselves. Nor is there a passage in his book which implies that he regards happiness as preferable to holiness, and that by the highest good of the universe he only means its highest happiness.

Dr. B. follows the younger Edwards in setting forth three kinds of justice, viz. commutative or commercial justice, distributive justice, and general or public justice. The last of these, he says, "has no direct reference to law, but embraces those principles of virtue or benevolence by which we are bound to govern our conduct, and by which God himself governs the universe" (p. 132). We doubt whether this is an accurate description of what is commonly called general or public justice, so much of it, at least, as relates to God. If it be so, then every act of God is an act of justice, and his justice is no more satisfied in the atonement of Christ, than it is in every other dispensation of his hand. Public justice, we have supposed, had a more restricted meaning. It relates to what God may be said to owe to himself, to his law, to the interests of his kingdom, to the universe over which he reigns. Were any of these great interests to be sacrificed, public justice would be violated; but when they are all secured and promoted, as they are in the atonement of Christ, then public justice may be said to be satisfied.

We are not sure that Dr. B. has expressed himself with sufficient accuracy always, in setting forth the relations of the atonement to distributive justice. He says, more than once, that "distributive justice is not satisfied in the atonement;" that "it has received no satisfaction at all" (p. 133). That this statement is true, in the sense intended by the author, we do not doubt; but there is another sense in which it is not true. Distributive justice may be said to be satisfied when *all its important ends are answered.* They would

be answered by the merited punishment of transgressors. They are equally answered in the atonement of Christ. This Dr. B. believes, and has repeatedly affirmed. "The ends or objects of distributive justice must be secured; and the substitute by which these objects are secured is found in that atonement which is revealed in the gospel" (p. 131). In another place he represents the atonement as "answering *every purpose* which could be effected by the literal and proper execution of the penalty of the law" (p. 39). We submit therefore, whether, in a most important sense, distributive as well as public justice is not satisfied in the atonement. If "*every purpose* which could be effected by the literal and proper execution of the penalty," is met and answered in the death of Christ, what has justice to claim more, and why may it not be truly said to be satisfied? The mistake here, if it be one, is one purely of phraseology; but it is a phraseology which leads the reviewers of Dr. B. to affirm that he sets aside justice, in the proper sense of the term, altogether; and that the atonement which he proposes is really no satisfaction at all.

If the misrepresentations of the reviewers have sometimes an excuse in the language of Dr. B., they more frequently pervert his meaning when they have no excuse. They continually charge him with teaching that the whole design of Christ's mission into the world was simply to make salvation possible. "Dr. Beman denies that the design of Christ's mission was salvation; it was merely to make salvation possible." Again: "was the Son of God sent into the world, as Dr. B. says, merely to make the salvation of all men possible, or actually to save all whom God had given him?" "If Christ only makes pardon possible, if the possibility of forgiveness is all we owe to him, to whom or what do we owe heaven? Is it to ourselves, as some of the advocates of this doctrine teach? This is the natural answer: Christ having made pardon possible, then God deals with men according to their works."[1]

[1] Bib. Repertory, Vol. XVII. pp. 121, 128, 129.

That the atonement, of itself, does not actually save men, but merely opens a way of salvation, is the belief not only of Dr. Beman, but of evangelical Christians generally. It is the belief of these reviewers themselves. "Penal satisfaction," they say, "does not *ipso facto* liberate. The acceptance is a matter of arrangement or covenant; and the terms of that covenant must depend on the will of the parties" (p. 120). But simply to make an atonement for sin was not the whole object for which Christ came into the world. His work of atonement was but one among several others. He came "to bear witness to the truth." He came "to fulfil all righteousness," and to "save his people from their sins." In the language of the reviewers, which Dr. B. can adopt as sincerely as themselves, "we owe the blessed Redeemer, not the possibility of pardon merely, but justification, adoption, sanctification, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting." And to charge a Christian minister with denying all this, and holding that the sole object of Christ's mission upon earth was simply to make salvation possible, is sadly, inexcusably, to pervert his meaning.

The reviewers charge Dr. B. with holding that "the atonement was nothing more than the symbolical expression of a truth"—"a mere symbolical method of instruction" (pp. 126, 138). That the cross of Christ was a most instructive symbol, we trust these reviewers will thankfully acknowledge. From it beamed forth a glorious light to dispel the darkness of a guilty world. But where did they learn that Dr. B. regards the atonement as "nothing more than the symbolical expression of a truth." Certainly not from the book before us, nor from anything else that its author has ever said or written. To be sure, the atonement "declared God's righteousness for the remission of sins that are past." This Paul says, and Dr. B. believes it. But he also believes that the atonement of Christ opened the only door of hope for a ruined world; that it laid a foundation for our probation of grace, and for all the blessings, temporal and spiritual, resulting to us from this probation; that it honored the broken law, sustains the divine government

in the free exercise of pardon, and, in short, "answers every purpose which could be effected by the literal and proper execution of the penalty originally threatened" (p. 39). And yet these reviewers affirm and repeat, once and again, that Dr. B. represents the atonement as no more than "the symbolical expression of a truth."

They also charge Dr. B. with teaching that "so far as the *purpose* of God and his own *intention* are concerned, Christ had no special reference to his own people and to their salvation in his death. His whole work had no reference to one class of men more than to another, to the saved more than to the lost" (p. 130). Dr. B. does indeed hold (and these reviewers hold the same), that the atonement of Christ is sufficient for all men; that the offers of the gospel are made alike to all; and that all who will may come and take the waters of life freely. But he does not hold that the blessings of the atonement are conferred alike upon all, or that it entered into God's eternal purpose that they should be. God purposed the salvation of his people, his elect, "the seed" given to Christ in the eternal covenant of redemption, — a covenant of which Dr. B. has made frequent and honorable mention, and which Jesus suffered to fulfil.

But the misrepresentation in the above passages does not end here. According to these reviewers, Dr. B. teaches that "the *whole work* of Christ had no reference to one class of men more than to another, to the saved more than to the lost." The *whole work* of Christ, it must be borne in mind, includes vastly more than his atonement. It includes the entire work of human redemption, from its inception in the eternal purpose of God, to its completion in the final glorification of his people in heaven. And does Dr. B. believe that in this whole work, "Christ had no reference to one class of men more than to another, to the saved more than to the lost?" Do these reviewers *think* that he believes it? Have they not full proof to the contrary? What, then, can they mean by such unfounded, unguarded misrepresentations as these?

But if the reviewers have misrepresented Dr. Beman, they charge him also with misrepresenting them. They charge him with *wilful* misrepresentation; with imputing to them, "and to hundreds and thousands of his brethren, a shocking blasphemy" (p. 117). What, then, is the amount of Dr. Beman's misrepresentation? He says that "some have pushed the theory of substitution so far," as to suppose that all the sins of Christ's people are put over to him, and laid upon him; "that he became, in the eye of the law, the sinner, and was legally punished to the full amount of all that demerit which was attached to the sins of those who will be finally saved by his blood" (p. 98). Observe, Dr. B. does not say that this absurd and blasphemous idea of substitution is held by the Princeton reviewers, or by any number of old-school Calvinists at the present day; but *some* have so held it. "*Some* have pushed the idea of substitution" to this dangerous extreme. And is not this true? Do not the reviewers know it to be true? Have they never heard of the Neonomian controversy which raged in England near the close of the seventeenth century, in which those on one side so viewed the union between Christ and his people, as "to make a Saviour of the sinner, and a sinner of the Saviour. All Christ's righteousness is put over to the believer, and all the believer's sins belong to Christ. God considers the believer as actually doing and suffering all that Christ did and suffered; and, on the other hand, considers Christ as being actually guilty of all the sins of all the elect."[1] The old-school Calvinists of that day (or, at least, some of them) held the doctrine of substitution or imputation with a logical consistency from which their followers of this age shrink back with horror. They said: "If Christ was literally punished for the sins of his people, to the full amount of their deserts, then he must have been guilty of their sins, and they were strictly laid upon him: the Lord hath laid upon him the iniquity of us all." Thus Dr. Gill discourses upon the subject of Christ's bearing our sins.

[1] History of Dissenters, Vol. I. p. 408.

"His bearing sin supposes that it was upon him, — not *in* him inherently, in his nature and life, — but *upon* him. Sin was put upon him by his divine Father; not a single iniquity, but a whole mass and lump of sins collected together. Sin being found upon him by imputation, a demand of satisfaction for sin was made, and he answered it to the full. Christ bore all sorts of sins, original and actual; sins of every kind, open and secret, of heart, lip, and life; all acts of sin committed by his people: for he has redeemed them from all their iniquities; his blood cleanseth from all sin."[1]

So much for the first alleged misrepresentation. Let us listen to another. The apostle Paul represents pardon and justification as wholly of *grace*. "Being justified freely by *his grace*, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Rom. iii. 24). But Dr. B. insists that, if Christ has suffered the full penalty of the law for his people, so that the law has no further demands against them, their justification cannot be of grace. It is more properly of justice. He does not charge this doctrine upon any class of existing theologians, but urges it as a logical conclusion from the premises assumed: a conclusion which has, in some instances, been allowed. And to us it does seem to be a logical conclusion. If the whole debt has been paid, what more remains due? If the whole penalty of the law has been endured by an appointed and accepted substitute, what further can the law demand? What is there to be forgiven? Or if forgiveness and justification were on this ground possible, what grace would there be in the act of bestowing them? And although our Princeton brethren, we are glad to know, do not draw the same inferences as ourselves, but disclaim them with abhorrence, yet others have drawn them, and may do the same again.

To show what has actually been done in this direction, we cite the following from Scottish history. After the earl of Morton had been condemned to death, he was greatly

[1] Gill's Body of Divinity, Vol. II. p. 203.

distressed on account of his sins, and desired an interview with certain preachers whom he named. The comfort they administered was on this wise: "Be of good courage, my lord, and be not afraid of the justice of God. Your sins shall not be laid to your charge, and that for the very reason that God is just. The justice of God will not allow him to take payment twice for the same thing. Seeing, therefore, that your sins have all been put over to Christ, and he has suffered for them to the uttermost farthing, will God demand any further suffering from you? Will his justice allow him to take it? Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"[1]

After all that has been said about misrepresentations, on both sides, it is pleasant to know that the parties in this controversy are not very far from each other. The reviewers insist that sin is an evil in itself, and is deserving of punishment for its own sake; and Dr. B. believes the same. The reviewers think it a gross error to set the happiness of the universe above its holiness, and above the justice and the glory of God; and Dr. B. is of the same opinion. The reviewers reject the thought that the atonement of Christ was the mere symbolical expression of a truth, and that the whole object of his mission was simply to make salvation possible; and both these assumptions Dr. B. would reject as sincerely as themselves. The reviewers believe that "so far as the purpose of God and his own intention are concerned, Christ had a special reference to his own people and to their salvation, in his death;" and Dr. B. believes the same. The purpose of God in regard to the atonement, as well as everything else, may be best learned from its results; and certainly the atonement results in final salvation to God's people only.

On the other hand, Dr. B. rejects with abhorrence the opinion of some, that our sins were so put over to Christ as to become his, and make him guilty on account of them; and the reviewers, with equal abhorrence, reject the same. They denounce such an opinion as "a shocking blasphemy."

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[1] See Cook's View of Christianity, Vol. I. p. 265.

Dr. B. insists that, although the atonement of Christ is full and complete, salvation on the ground of it is wholly of grace; and the reviewers teach the same doctrine. They even insist that their view of the atonement has some peculiar advantages, in setting forth the grace of the gospel. Dr. B. holds that the atonement of Christ is universal as to its sufficiency, while its saving efficacy, and its intended saving efficacy, reach only to the elect; and the same view, precisely, is set forth by the reviewers. There is no difference between them, on this point, unless it be in terms.

One of the most important apparent differences between the two theories of the atonement, relates to the nature of Christ's sufferings and death; the one party affirming that he endured the proper penalty of the law for us; while the other holds that he suffered, not the exact penalty, but a *full equivalent;* one that meets all the ends of justice, and the demands of the divine law and government, as well. Now here would seem to be a wide and important difference; one from which most of the other differences flow; but when we come to sift and scrutinize it, we find that it is little more than a difference in terms. What is the penalty of God's holy law? The scriptures call it death, "the second death," and by necessary implication, *eternal* death — the opposite of eternal life. "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is *eternal life*, through Jesus Christ our Lord." It is the same, for substance, which was inflicted on the rebel angels when they sinned. They were "cast down to hell," being "reserved in everlasting chains, under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day." It is the same which will be inflicted on the wicked in the day of judgment, when they will "depart accursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." It is a positive and definite punishment, which God has sufficiently described in his word, and which he has inflicted in the case of the rebel angels, thus showing conclusively what it is. It involves, in respect to those of our race who die in sin, the eternal destruction of both body and soul in hell. Such, then, is the penalty of the divine law, as God has explained

it, and as we understand it. Now did Christ suffer all this, when he died upon the cross? Did he suffer it millions of times over, — as many times as there are individuals to be saved by his blood? Did he suffer it, in his own person, even once? Dr. B. says, no; and we say the same; and, strange as it may seem, the Princeton reviewers say the same. "The sufferings of Christ were unutterably great; still . . . . . the transient sufferings of one man would not be equivalent to the sufferings due to the sins of men" (p. 107).

And yet these reviewers insist that Christ did suffer the penalty of the broken law. What, then, do *they* understand by the penalty of the law? "Not any specific kind or degree of suffering." "Not remorse, or despair, or eternal banishment from God." "These things enter not essentially into the penalty of the law." "All that our standards say on this point, they say wisely, viz. that our Saviour endured the miseries of this life, the wrath of God, the accursed death of the cross, and continued under the power of death for a time. This was the penalty of the law" (p. 107). Very well; according to this description of the penalty, *we* say that Christ endured it. And Dr. B. would say the same. As *we* describe the penalty of the law, and as we think the scriptures describe it, the reviewers agree with us in saying that Christ did not suffer it. He could not have suffered it. Considering the dignity of his person, it was not necessary. And as *they* describe the penalty of the law, we agree with them in saying that Christ may have suffered it. We suppose he did suffer it. Our difference on this point, therefore, is merely verbal, and vanishes just so soon as the terms are explained.[1] And so the subject is regarded by most theologians, who say in terms that Christ

[1] We might insist here on the extreme danger of frittering down the penalty of the law, as these reviewers seem to do, in order to make it appear that Christ endured it; but we forbear. In one of their expressions, they fall quite below where evangelical Christians of any denomination will be likely to follow them: "The wrath of God, however expressed, constitutes the penalty of the law, in *the strictest and highest sense*," p. 108. On this ground, the incorrigibly wicked

suffered, for us, the penalty of the law. They do not mean the full and precise penalty, as we understand it, and as God has explained it in his word, but rather a *full equivalent* — one which, considering the dignity and glory of Christ's person and his ineffable nearness to the Father, answers all the purposes of law, and justice, and government, as well. Thus a writer in the late Dr. Green's Christian Advocate says: "The Redeemer did not endure eternal death," but "the infinite dignity of his person imparted to his temporary sufferings a value that made them *a fair and full equivalent* for the everlasting sufferings of all who shall be finally saved." Dr. Bellamy, too, after having said repeatedly that Christ endured the penalty of the law for sinners, sums up his meaning in the following terms: "Considering the infinite dignity of his person, his sufferings were *equivalent* to the eternal damnation of such worms as we." And again: "The infinite dignity of his Son causes those sufferings which he bore in our room and stead, to be as bright a display of the divine holiness and justice, as if all the human race had, for their sin, been cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, and the smoke of their torment had ascended up forever and ever."[2] The late Dr. Dana says: "Inasmuch as the scriptures expressly declare that, in redeeming us from the curse of the law, Christ was made a curse for us, we are constrained to conclude that his sufferings were a *substantial* execution of the law; a real endurance of the penalty, *so far as the nature of the case admitted or required.*"[3] So Dr. Woods, speaking of the penalty of the law, says: "Christ suffered it *virtually.* He suffered that which had a *like effect*, or which had a *like value*, in God's moral government. As to the ends of government, it was as though the curse of the law had been endured literally."[4]

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suffer, in the present life, "the penalty of the law, in *the strictest and highest sense.*" Thus said the late Hosea Ballou; and here he built his theory of universal salvation, — a theory which, with greater propriety, may be called *universal damnation.*

[1] Vol. for 1826, pp. 388, 389.
[2] Works, Vol. I. p. 285.
[3] In Beman on Atonement, p. 114.
[4] Works, Vol. II. p. 473.

But it is urged that justice demands the full penalty of the law, and will be satisfied with nothing less. Hence, if justice *is* satisfied in the atonement of Christ, he must have suffered the whole penalty of the law. This objection has been obviated already. We have seen that the demands of justice are answered, when its ends are answered; and these are all met and answered as fully in the atonement of Christ, as they could be in the execution of the law upon our entire guilty race. Here, a firm foundation is laid for the exercise of mercy. The divine government will be as strong in dispensing pardon as, under other circumstances, it would be in inflicting punishment. The penalty of the law may be remitted to penitent transgressors, and no interest will suffer in consequence; on the contrary, the glory of the Sovereign and the highest interests of the universe will, in this way, be greatly promoted.

It has been further objected to the views which have been expressed, that in every case of transgression God's *veracity* is pledged to inflict the penalty of the law. And if it is not inflicted upon the sinner, it must be upon Christ. But does the penalty which God has affixed to his law, bind his veracity, in every case of transgression, to inflict it? If it be so, then certainly it must be inflicted upon the transgressor, and upon no one else. The law knows nothing of a substitute. Its language is explicit: "The soul that sinneth, *it* shall die." If the divine veracity is pledged here, a substitute is out of the question. The transgressor must bear the penalty, and no one else.

But does a simple threatening, in all cases, bind the veracity of the sovereign? We think not. A threatening may be so connected with a promise, or so involved in a covenant, as to pledge veracity; but a simple threatening, setting forth the penalty of law, does not pledge it. The subject is not so understood among men; neither can it be so understood in respect to God. In dispensing pardon, a human government does not necessarily violate its truth; neither does the divine government. Just legislation, like justice itself, implies no necessity for punishment, except as *the ends* of punishment may require it. Let these ends be

answered, and truth would lose the character of a virtue, if it should now prove a barrier to the free exercise of mercy. The penalty of a law, says John Howe, is "not to be taken for a *prediction* of what shall be, but a *commination*, expressing what is deserved, or most justly may be." They who think otherwise, says Calvin, "labor under a delusion as to the meaning of threatenings; which, though they affirm simply, contain in them a tacit condition, depending on the result."

The reviewers have various objections to Dr. B.'s doctrine of the atonement, some of which we shall briefly notice. The view he takes, it is said, is not in accordance with the devotional language of the church, and more especially with its psalms and hymns. But this certainly is new to us. We can sing the psalms of David, from beginning to end, and find our thoughts and hearts going up, without embarrassment, in his expressions of love and penitence, of joy and gratitude, of trust and praise. We can sing the hymns of "the early Christians, of the devout Lutherans, of the Reformed, of the Moravians, of British and American Christians," as arranged, by the thousand, in some of our late collections, and find them but the echo of our sentiments and hearts. We can sing the new song, which John heard sung in the opened heavens: "Thou art worthy to take the book and to open the seals thereof; for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God, by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation." And what need we sing more or better than this?

It is further insisted, that our doctrine is not in accordance with scripture; and numerous passages are cited in proof of this allegation. We have examined these passages anew, and considered the remarks which are made upon them, and they seem to us an often figurative but exact expression of our own views. We believe assuredly that Christ "bore our sins;" that "he made his soul an offering for sin;" that he gave "his life a ransom for sinners;" that he "redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us," — not by going into hell for us, but, as Paul

expresses it, by "hanging on a tree." We believe that Christ is the great high-priest of our profession, and that "he executeth the office of a priest, in once offering up himself a sacrifice to satisfy divine justice and reconcile us to God, and in his ever living to make intercession for us." If our brethren can accept heartily the above representations of scripture and of their own standards, we can do the same; and this shows, again, that our views, whether we know it or not, cannot be very wide asunder.

It is further said, that our view of the atonement presents a different method of justification from that held by the apostle Paul, and advocated by our old-school brethren. But wherein a different method of justification? We believe that men "are justified by faith, without the deeds of the law;" and that "being justified by faith, they have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." We believe that the atonement of Christ is the sole ground of the sinner's justification, and that faith in Christ is the cardinal condition of it. In what respects do our brethren differ from this?

It is alleged that we confound justification and pardon; "whereas in scripture, and in all languages, the ideas of pardon and justification are distinct, and in a measure opposite." But the difference here, as in cases before noticed, is entirely one of terms. Pardon, in the largest, widest sense of the term, is the same as justification; in a more restricted sense, it is not the same. The penalty of the law which pardon remits, is, in its fullest sense, both *privative* and *positive*. It involves the loss of God's favor, and the incurring of his displeasure; the loss of the rest and happiness of heaven, and the endurance of eternal miseries in hell. Such is the full penalty of the law of God, for the removal of which the atonement of Christ furnishes the sufficient and only foundation. In procuring the salvation of those who embrace it, it removes the *positive* part of the penalty, so that they are no longer liable to suffer the pains of eternal death. It removes also the *privative* part, and thus restores them to the forfeited favor of God, and to the

happiness of heaven. All this is implied in freeing the returning sinner from the full penalty of the law; or, which is the same, in forgiveness; using the term forgiveness in the widest sense. But forgiveness, in this sense, is the same, precisely, as justification; the one *restoring* the subject as fully as the other. And so the case was regarded by the apostle Paul. He repeatedly speaks of forgiveness and justification as the same. "Through this man is preached unto you the *forgiveness of sins;* and by him all that believe are *justified* from all things from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses" (Acts xiii. 38). "Being *justified* freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for *the remission of sins*" (Rom. iii. 24). "David also describeth the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works," [or whom he *justifieth*], saying, blessed are they whose *iniquities are forgiven*, and whose sin is covered" (Rom. iv. 6, 7). The apostle here quotes from the thirty-second psalm, in which David sets forth the blessedness of him who had humbly confessed his sins, and been forgiven, representing such an one as *justified;* which shows that, in Paul's theology, justification and full forgiveness are the same.

Calvin and other eminent theologians have taken the same view of the subject. "The righteousness of faith," says Calvin, "is a reconciliation with God, which consists *solely* in the forgiveness of sins." "The Lord cannot receive into favor or fellowship with himself, without making him, from a sinner, to be a righteous person; and this is accomplished by *the remission of sins.*" "It appears, then, that those whom God receiveth are made righteous no otherwise than as they are purified, by being cleansed from all their defilements by *the remission of their sins;* so that such a righteousness may be denominated a *remission of sins.*" [1]

It is further alleged, that our views of the atonement

[1] Institutes, Book III. chap. xi. sect. 21.

make faith in Christ of very little importance, and that the direction to believe in him has in great measure, disappeared from our sermons. This announcement will be news, as false as it is startling, to the great body of our orthodox preachers and congregations. We do indeed, as the apostles did, direct the sinner to "submit to God," to "lay aside his rebellion," and "begin to love and serve his Maker;" but our *prominent* direction — that most frequently given and most earnestly insisted on — is precisely that of Paul to the jailer: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." So persistent have we been in giving this simple direction, as to incur the reproach of theologians of another school, who, regarding the sinner as physically impotent, and wholly unable to believe, have urged him to use means, and do what he can, with the heart that he has, hoping that God may at some time interpose, and give him a better heart. The controversy in respect to what was called "the doings of the unregenerate," which raged among us near the close of the last century, is not yet forgotten by our older ministers and Christians.

We are told, finally, that Dr. B.'s view of the atonement has "done more to corrupt religion and promote Socinianism, than any other of the vaunted improvements in American theology" (p. 116). This is the old and oft-reiterated objection: "It is your New England theology which has wrought so much mischief in your churches, — which has led so many of them to renounce the faith of their fathers, and relapse into Unitarianism." But a little inquiry will satisfy any one, that the very opposite of what is here stated is the truth. It is historically certain, and is susceptible of the fullest proof, that what of Unitarianism there is in New England came in upon us, not from *our particular explanations of the established faith*, but *from a perverted view and application of old-school Calvinism.* As men could not make to themselves new hearts and new spirits, they were taught to do what they could with such hearts as they had. They must read and pray, and attend public worship, and join the church, and go to the sacrament, in hope that through these

pipes of God's own providing, they might receive an infusion of living water; in hope that in a diligent use of means, God would meet them, and bestow upon them converting grace. In consequence of instructions such as these, the churches came to consist very considerably, in many places, of unconverted members, — of those who *regarded* themselves as unconverted, and who came to the Lord's table as a means of regeneration. And when the door was once opened for persons without piety to enter the church, there was no let or hindrance to their entering the ministry. And unconverted ministers (whatever creed they may profess for a time) are prepared, in the spirit and temper of their minds, for just such errors as ere long began to show themselves in New England.

There was no marked division among our ministers till near the close of the Whitefieldian revival, somewhat more than a hundred years ago. The revivalists of that day were those who imbibed the views and adopted the explanations of President Edwards. And their pupils and successors constitute at this day, and have ever constituted, the great body of the orthodox Congregational clergy of New England. While those in general who opposed the revival, — old Calvinists at the time by profession, but holding a lifeless and perverted Calvinism, and giving little evidence of true spirituality, — ere long came to be known, first as Arminians, then Arians, and then Socinians or Unitarians of the lowest stamp.[1]

Such, in brief, is the manner in which Unitarianism gained footing in New England. Its course can be traced as surely, from step to step, as any historical sequence whatever. We see, then, how unjust it is to ascribe its entrance and prevalence here to what has been called the New England theology. It entered in *spite* of this theology, rather than by its means. The advocates of this theology constituted

[1] The late Dr. Chauncy, for some sixty years pastor of the first church in Boston, was the great opponent of Whitefield and the revival. At the close of the revival he professed to be a Calvinist; but he lived to become an Arian and a Restorationist. A similar course was pursued by many others.

the chief barrier which opposed it. They are the men, almost without an exception, who have withstood its progress, obstructed its influence, and brought it, under God, into its present disorganized and decaying condition.

From the want of a thorough acquaintance with our religious history, the reviewers of Dr. B. may be sincere in what they have said as to the influence of our particular views of the atonement in promoting the spread of Unitarianism in New England. But can they be justified in affirming, as they repeatedly do, that our doctrine "is even below that of Socinus," and that "the Socinian view is, in some respects, much easier reconciled with scripture than that of Dr. Beman" (pp. 95, 113). We hold all the great facts of the atonement as firmly as these reviewers themselves; as firmly as any class of Christians have ever done, since the crucifixion of Christ. Socinians reject the atonement in everything, unless it be the name. We build upon the atonement all our hopes of justification and final salvation. They build their hopes on an entirely different ground. We differ from our brethren at Princeton, as has been proved in the foregoing discussion, in very little except the meaning of words. Socinians differ from us both in everything that is essential to the gospel of Christ. And now in view of these facts, which the reviewers understand as well as ourselves, we ask again whether they can *think* themselves justified in representing the faith of Socinians in this most important article of our religion — which really is no faith at all — as in some respects better and more scriptural than our own? The answer to this inquiry we leave to their own consciences; and conclude with suggesting, whether it may not be better for both of us to unite in defending this fundamental article of our creed against those who deride and oppose it, rather than waste our energies in magnifying differences and widening divisions between those who agree in this life, in everything essential to the doctrine, and who expect to rest upon it the salvation of their souls forever.