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ARTICLE III.

THE BENEVOLENCE THEORY OF THE ATONEMENT.

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[NOTE.—The present writer printed in the *Bibliotheca Sacra* for 1879 a translation of Grotius' *De Satisfactione* which has been recently re-issued (1889) in a volume, with the addition of an historical introduction.[1] Among the various reviews which have been made of the book, with all the kind things that have been said, one mistake has been occasionally made which the writer wishes to correct. It has sometimes been supposed that he presented the Grotian as a completely satisfactory theory of the atonement. On the contrary, he took pains to say in the notes (p. 278 ff. and elsewhere) that the theory is incomplete, since the idea upon which it must rest, if it is to have any power or consistency, is not at all developed, if indeed Grotius clearly perceived it. The present articles are designed to continue the historical review of the New England theory of the atonement begun in the introduction to the translation of Grotius, and then to state more fully than has yet been done, in connection with its fundamental ideas, this Grotius-Edwardean theory, or, as the writer proposes to the theological world to rename it, the Benevolence Theory of the Atonement.]

I.

HISTORICAL REVIEW.

THE New England theory of the atonement was propounded by Dr. Jonathan Edwards in sermons preached in the year 1785 in New Haven. The immediate occasion of the selection of this topic and the development of this theory was the rise of the Universalist controversy in New

[1] A Defence of the Catholic Faith concerning the Satisfaction of Christ against Faustus Socinus by Hugo Grotius. Translated with Notes and an Historical Introduction by Frank Hugh Foster, Ph. D., etc. Andover: W. F. Draper. 1889. (pp. lvii. 314. 12mo.)

England under the labors in behalf of that doctrine of John Murray.[1] Universalism was then built upon the doctrine of "union," or of imputation, whereby the merits of Christ were literally transferred to those for whom he died. Since Christ made a complete satisfaction to distributive justice, according to the theory formerly received, and this satisfaction was transferred to men, there could be no more claims of justice against them; and since Christ died for all men, there could be no claims against any man, and thus all men were already saved. This theory the New England men met by teaching a new theory of the atonement.

But the Universalist controversy was not the cause, it was only the occasion of the appearance of the New England theory. There had been for many years a preparation in the minds of New England thinkers, which must eventually have led to the theory without any such occasion. It is a deeply significant feature of New England theology as a whole which is suggested to the student by the historical occasion of the development of this and other New England theories. They were all wrought out under the pressure of some practical necessity. New England orthodoxy was never a school of speculation for speculation's sake; but, as the prevalence of imported errors and the sight of decaying piety in the churches first roused the elder Edwards to defend the truth, and to restate it while he defended it, so with all his successors. And thus there had sprung up in the school long before the year 1785 the habit of free modification at any point of theological statement or theory where it seemed in the light of practical necessities that such would serve the cause of truth.

The occasion thus given, the deep operative causes just

himself. Though his theory of the will, by which he met Arminian self-determination with the predication of strict causation in the action of the will, had in itself little affinity for such a principle, he gave, by the emphasis which he laid upon the action of the will as in itself virtuous or vicious, new power to the idea of individuality as a prime characteristic of man. His character is man's own, his responsibility, his punishment. The preaching of ability by Edwards' friends and successors, whether altogether consistent with their theory of the will or not, tended in the same direction. And after Edwards himself had taught that all sin must be voluntary, there was but little ground for any theory of imputation to stand upon which taught the literal transfer of the merits of Christ to the believer. It needed only such an occasion as was offered by the logical though unbiblical application of the doctrine of imputation in establishing Universalism, to induce the New England theologians altogether to reject the idea of imputation in the ordinary sense, whether it were of Christ's merits or of Adam's sin.

But there was another cause more potent than this. To reject the theory of imputation, is only to remove an excrescence from the doctrine of the atonement: there is yet need of some principle upon which the doctrine can be newly constructed, or the result will be confusion rather than improvement and progress. Jonathan Edwards the Elder had given such a principle in his theory of virtue, which only needed consistent application to render a revision of the former theories of the atonement a necessity. Edwards himself made no such application. He seems not to have seen the full scope of his discovery in any department of theology,[1] and it was not seen at once by his successors in the doctrine of the atonement. But such an application was direct, and must inevitably have been speedily made.

[1] See Bibliotheca Sacra, Vol. xliii. p. 19.

According to this theory, love is the essence of virtue. If there is any virtuous action performed at any time, that in it which constitutes it virtuous is the motive of universal love which is its impelling force. God himself is love, and every action of his is governed by love, and is virtuous in consequence of this fact. Hence God has a moral character which is identical in essence with moral character in man. Nothing is virtuous in him which is not controlled by the motive of all virtue, any more than in man. If he inflicts just punishment, the act is not virtuous because it is just. Justice is not a motive which can make an action virtuous. But it is virtuous because love calls in this instance for the doing of justice. And so with every other kind of divine action, even that of mercy. There is no virtue in bestowing mercy except where omniscient, universal love calls for mercy.

Applied to the doctrine of the atonement, this theory works immediate modifications. It destroys the idea of God's arbitrary action at every step. The atonement originates in love—"God so loved the world that he gave his only Son"—not in an arbitrary decree. Its application is not to those elected by the arbitrary decree of God, for the election itself, in order to be moral, i. e. divine, must be governed by love. It is not a provision to satisfy some inexorable justice, since there is never any justice in the government of God but such as is controlled by love. Even the governmental idea, which was evidently introduced into New England by the reading of Grotius,[1] might have been evolved from the theory of virtue, for this love is the consideration of the well-being of sentient beings regarded as a whole, and hence it is the consideration of the interests of all spectators, or a governmental interest,—a consideration of what is necessary to induce right choices, that is to avoid injurious influences, or to permit forgiveness without break-

[1] See Grotius' Defence, etc., p. xliv ff.

ing down righteousness—and hence calls for the atonement as an example, a governmental measure. Thus the New England theory lay in germ in the writings of President Edwards, though he seems to have made scarcely any progress in its development.[1]

In certain respects the theory appeared in a well-rounded and comprehensive form in its earliest defenders, Drs. Jonathan Edwards, John Smalley, and Nathan Strong, a trio of Connecticut theologians who agreed very remarkably in the matter and the manner of their sermons upon it. Their main ideas may be summarily stated in the following form: God out of his infinite benevolence to man has placed him under a moral government, which he administers by laws, whose authority is sustained by sanctions. Man, having fallen into sin, deserves the infliction of the threatened penalty, but the love of God prompts him to spare his guilty creatures. This he cannot do at the expense of his law and government, and so he sets forth Christ, whose sufferings upon Calvary, undergone on account of sin, exhibit his hatred of sin, show his respect to his law, and maintain his authority as effectually as the punishment of sinners could have done, and thus remove the obstacle which prevented the forgiveness of the sinner. Though these ideas ever reappear without essential modification down to President Finney, there is still at many points a true development of conception and of statement. With this we shall now occupy ourselves.

I. THE PROGRESSIVE APPLICATION OF THE THEORY OF VIRTUE.

The theory of the atonement, in the form in which Grotius introduced it, drew its analogies from human governments, and spoke of these in something of the way in

[1] Park's essay, prefixed to Discourses and Treatises (Boston, 1863), pp. xi–xxxix.

which one treats an ultimate fact. The idea underlying the divine government and the provision of the atonement is but faintly suggested. Hence there is something external and artificial in Grotius' presentation of the subject. This defect was not immediately remedied by the New England fathers. True, they began at once, as already shown, to declare that the government of God rested upon his character;[1] and though the great and decisive elements of the theory of virtue in its application to the subject are all involved almost from the first, the form of expression employed still suggests the juridical origin of the theory in the mind of a lawyer. The emphasis laid upon the sovereignty of God in Calvinistic dogmatics, and the theories and issues brought forward by the immediate foes against whom these writers were contending, rather assisted such a tendency than suggested a deeper and more novel treatment. The theory shared the fate of almost all fruitful theological theories. Born in contest, it bore the marks of the early struggle.

Dr. Jonathan Edwards may serve as the representative of the first group of writers, Edwards, Smalley, and Strong. "When moral creatures are brought into existence," he says,[2] "there must be a moral government. It cannot be reconciled with the wisdom and goodness of God, to make intelligent creatures and leave them at random, without moral law and government." The justice satisfied, about which Edwards spends so much time, for the reasons mentioned above, is "general justice" which "comprehends all moral goodness," it is "general benevolence," and it has in view "the general good of the moral system." Every word in these statements is pregnant with meaning, though the history of the subsequent writers is necessary to enable one to appreciate them.

Stephen West, of Stockbridge, Mass. (1756–1819), though

[1] Defence, p. xlix ff.

[2] Park's Discourses and Treatises, p. 6 ff.

a contemporary of Edwards, for he wrote his essay, "The Scripture Doctrine of the Atonement proposed to careful Examination" in 1785, presented his views, as was possible in an essay of more than two hundred pages, in a much fuller and more satisfactory form. He carries back not merely the atonement, but the creation, to the character of God as its foundation. "A display, or manifestation, of his own true and infinitely holy character was the chief and ultimate end which God had in view in creation."[1] "As . . . . God is most eminently good, it is evident that the real disposition of his infinite mind doth not appear excepting in works of goodness and where some good is actually done. His true character, therefore, cannot otherwise be manifested than in doing good." "The same glorious design which is expressed in creation, will be invariably expressed in preservation, for in strictness of speech, preservation is no more than creation continued. What gave birth to the existence of creatures will direct in the government over them. And should we entertain a thought that God's moral government will not be eternally administered in such a manner as to express to the best advantage his true character, we must at once admit either that he has changed his original scheme, or that the government of so vast and complicated a system is become too unwieldy for its great and original creator, either of which suppositions is atheistical and absurd." The community must have confidence in God; and "the confidence of a community in the character of a governor arises in a great measure from the apprehensions they have of his sincere, benevolent regards for the general good. And they can no further confide in his regards to the public good, than they believe him to be averse from everything that injures the public. As it is impossible that the love of virtue in any being whatever should exceed his hatred of vice, it is impossible for any one to give evidence

[1] Scripture Doctrine, etc. (edit. 1809), pp. 7–34.

of the former when, the object being presented, he neglects expressing the latter in ways becoming his character." "As far as God's love of righteousness and hatred of iniquity can be separately viewed and distinguished from each other, the great end of the death of Christ was to exhibit the latter and not the former. The disposition of the divine mind is perfectly uniform and harmonious. There is nothing in God or in the disposition of his mind, but benevolence and love. Yet general good operates in a different manner toward different objects, and obtains different epithets according to these severally different operations. Should we, for instance, conceive no different ideas of divine justice from those which we entertain of divine mercy, it is evident we should have no proper and adequate conceptions of either. Or, should we form no different ideas of God's love of virtue and of his hatred of vice, it is manifest that we should view him as being indifferent to virtue and vice. Yet the very different ways in which God's love of virtue and his hatred of vice express themselves in fruits, and the extremely different effects they produce in the subjects on whom they are severally displayed, naturally lead us to view them as in some respects exceedingly different from each other, and that, however obviously they discover in their several operations beautiful harmony and uniformity in the disposition of the divine mind." Here we see the government founded upon the character of God, and this presented as goodness, love, which consists in regard for the general good. And what is more important, the maintenance of the government of God is no maintenance of this as a *mere* government, but it is the maintenance of the character *through* the government, and this for the "public good." In other words, the love of God to his creatures, though not this alone, leads him *for their sake* not to forgive without the atonement.

Dr. Nathaniel Emmons (1745–1840) expresses the con-

nection between the love of God and the atonement by a more orderly deduction. He says:[1] "All the moral perfections of the Deity are comprised in the pure love of benevolence. God is love. Before the foundation of the world there was no ground for considering love as divided into various and distinct attributes. But after the creation new relations arose; and in consequence of new relations, more obligations were formed, both on the side of the Creator, and on that of his creatures. Before created beings existed, God's love was exercised wholly towards himself. But after moral beings were brought into existence, it was right in the nature of things that he should exercise right affections towards them according to their moral characters. Hence the goodness, the justice, and the mercy of God are founded in the nature of things. That is, so long as God remains the Creator, and men remain his creatures, he is morally obliged to exercise these different and distinct feelings towards them. . . . . Now, there never was any difficulty in the way of God's doing good to the innocent, nor in the way of his punishing the guilty; but there was a difficulty in sparing and forgiving the wicked. . . . . This was a difficulty in the divine character, and a still greater difficulty in the divine government; for God had revealed his justice in his moral government . . . . How then could grace be displayed consistently with justice? This question God alone was able to solve. . . . . By inflicting such sufferings upon Christ, when he took the place of a substitute in the room of sinners, God as clearly displayed his hatred of sin, and his inflexible disposition to punish it, as if he had made all mankind personally miserable forever."

Thus again, the government of God is founded upon his character, and ruled in accordance with it. There is still something of the juridical and external in the form of presentation, however, and it needs, perhaps, to be corrected

[1] Park's Discourses and Treatises, pp. 116, 117.

by emphasizing the fact that the government which is here to be maintained is not a government of brute force, but a moral one, a government of moral agents by means of influence. Emmons says:[1] "It belongs to God not only to exercise a natural government over the natural world, but to exercise a moral government over the moral world. The proper mode of governing moral subjects is by laws, rewards, and punishments."[2]

We may pass on, however, for a more satisfactory treatment of this point to Dr. Edward D. Griffin (1770–1837), whose treatise upon the extent of the atonement emphasized more decidedly the freedom of man in connection with this topic, and so had occasion to dwell more at length upon the nature of a moral government. Whatever difference there is, is more of form, however, than of substance. Griffin says:[3] "Considered in relation to its dominion over the mind, a moral government may be called a government of motives; for these are the instruments by which it works. It is a course of acting, not upon the disposition by insensible influence, but upon the reason and conscience of a rational being by manifest motives. . . . . In a limited sense a moral government is the mere administration of law; but in a more general and perfect sense it includes the whole treatment which God renders to moral agents. . . . . A moral government wields all the motives in the universe. It

[1] Works (edit. 1842), Vol. vi. p. 182.

[2] An objection sometimes made to the statement that the interests of God's government required the atonement is, That God is able to take care of his government, and nothing that a sinner can do on account of the free forgiveness of men can ever weaken it. It will be seen upon reflection that this objection views the government of God as a government of force, and not a moral government. It is important, therefore, with reference to the objection, to note, as we proceed, the true conception of the government of God which underlies the governmental view. It will be evident at last, that it is the force theory which is "external," and not the view resting upon the thought of a moral government.

[3] Park's Discourses and Treatises, pp. 293–298.

comprehends the entire system of instruction intended for creatures. The Bible lies wholly within its bounds. It comprehends the public dispensation both of law and gospel, with the whole compages of precepts, invitations, promises, and threatenings. It comprehends the atonement, and all the covenants made with men, and all the institutions of religion, with the whole train of means and privileges. . . . It comprehends a throne of grace, with all the answers to prayer. It comprehends a day of probation, with all the experiments made upon human character. . . . . It comprehends the day of judgment. . . . . It comprehends all the sensible communion between the Infinite and finite minds; all the perceptible intercourse between God and his rational offspring; all the treatment of intelligent creatures viewed otherwise than as passive receivers of sovereign impressions."

Caleb Burge (1782–1838), whose "Essay on the Scripture Doctrine of Atonement" is one of the very best of the New England treatises upon the subject, reproduces these ideas in various forms. He employs certain forms of expression, not common elsewhere, which present with special felicity the substitute which New England theology has to offer for the doctrine that the atonement satisfied the distributive justice of God. Its emphasis upon the individuality of man forced it to the position that, as justice demanded the punishment of the sinner himself, no other arrangement could satisfy exactly this demand. Yet there was something in God himself which must be satisfied by an atonement, which Burge styles his "justice to himself." He says:[1] "Every good being, in order to do justice to his own character, must manifest his goodness. A wise being, in order to do justice to his character, must manifest his wisdom; or, at least, he must not manifest anything which is opposite to wisdom. All must allow that if one

[1] Park's Discourses and Treatises, p. 450.

being should knowingly give a wrong representation of the character of another, who is wise and good, he would be very unjust. But if a good and wise being should give a wrong representation of his own character (if this were possible) there would be the same injustice done which there would, if the same representation were made by another." Hence, in order properly to represent his own character, and be *just to himself*, God must forgive only upon a provided atonement. This is the truth underlying the incorrect statements of the strict satisfaction theory.

We pass on rapidly to Dr. N. W. Taylor (1786–1858). He placed the moral government of God in the forefront of his theology, and two-thirds of his printed lectures are occupied with the elaboration of his teachings upon this topic. But they are only the development of what had been taught from the first in New England. This appears in the very form of the definition of a perfect moral government given at the beginning of the treatise. Taylor defines thus:[1] "The influence of the . . . . rightful authority of a moral governor on moral beings, designed so to control their action as to secure the great end of action upon their part, through the medium of law." Moral beings are defined as "beings capable of moral action." The points which Griffin had emphasized, form the main staple of Taylor's argument, except that the new theory of the constitution of the mind, which, beginning with Asa Burton, had now in Taylor's hands given American theology a better division of the faculties

obedience." Taylor views "benevolence on the part of the moral governor and its manifestation as one essential ground of his authority." "In this fact is involved another. The moral governor who is truly and perfectly benevolent, must feel the highest approbation of right moral action and the highest disapprobation of wrong moral action on the part of his subjects. These particular emotions in view of the true nature and tendency of right and wrong moral action are inseparable from the nature of benevolence in every mind. Again, benevolence, in the specific form of it now stated as the character of the moral governor, must, from the very nature and design of his relation be supremely concerned and absolutely committed to secure so far as he is able, right moral action in every instance, and to prevent wrong moral action in every instance by the influence of his authority."[1] Even the legal sanctions ratify God's authority by manifesting his benevolence. And so, when men have sinned, their salvation can be given only upon an atonement, since otherwise God would not appear to hate sin, or would disregard the obligations imposed by benevolence to maintain the authority of the law.

It is unnecessary to quote from the writings of Charles G. Finney (1792–1875). The same views would be found to be repeated in connection with his more radical and correct opinions upon the freedom of the will. The meaning of a moral government; the character of God as love, which constitutes the divine response to the immediate affirmations of His own intellect as to obligation; love as having respect to the moral system as a whole and demanding a satisfaction to "public justice;" and the perfect adaptation of the divine government and of the atonement to securing the best good of all concerned; are brought out by him in terms largely identical with those employed by his predecessors, but with

[1] Lectures on the Moral Government of God, p. 86.

the added clearness which correcter views as to the nature of the mind and moral agency rendered possible.

Our whole review up to this point has shown us that while the New England writers emphasized the divine government as the sphere within which the atonement was wrought, they all with increasing clearness founded that government upon an ethical idea, a conception of the character of God as love, which redeems the theory from the charge of artificiality and superficiality, though they did not seek to make the ethical idea prominent, or generally to deduce the whole theory from the ideal basis of it. But even the points already discussed cannot be made as full and clear as they should be, till we have read further. We therefore pass on without delay to

II. THE RELATION OF ELECTION TO THE ATONEMENT.

The question of the extent of the atonement was prominently brought before the New England writers from the first of their investigations upon the subject. The Universalists had made the proposition that Christ died for all, a principal step in their argument. The old theories had avoided their conclusion only by denying that he died for all; but this truth was too plain to admit of denial, in the opinion of the New England thinkers. So, from the first, they taught the doctrine of a general atonement.

Dr. Edwards says nothing in particular upon this point in his three sermons. West, however, proceeds to draw the conclusion which could but follow so soon as the premises of the new theory were adopted.[1] The atonement was sufficient for the whole world, not in the sense that it "super-

vine mind is perfectly conformable to the true spirit of God's written law." "The direct end of atonement is answered," he says, "and such a manifestation made of divine righteousness as prepared the way for a consistent exercise of mercy. Now, God would not appear to give up his law even though he pardoned the sinner." West then dwells largely upon the dignity of the person of Christ as exalting the atonement made by him, and contributing to its perfection, and so to its universality.

Emmons is axiomatic and incisive, as usual. The proposition of his sermon upon the necessity of the atonement is: "That the atonement of Christ was necessary entirely on God's account," i. e., not at all upon man's. Hence he argues:[1] "Then it was universal, and sufficient for the pardon and salvation of the non-elect. . . . If it has rendered it consistent with the justice of God to exercise pardoning mercy to one sinner, it has rendered it equally consistent with his mercy to exercise pardoning mercy to all sinners. . . . It opens as wide a door of mercy to the one as to the other." If the only obstacles were upon God's part, once removed they were removed.

The great treatise upon this part of the subject was, however, Griffin's. We shall not fully understand his argument unless we have somewhat clearly in mind the course of New England thought upon the whole subject of the will, for Griffin seeks to find a solution of the difficulties between the maintainers of limited and of general atonement by sharper distinctions upon moral agency. The freedom of the will was the great first question which engaged New England theology when Edwards began his contest with the Arminians. His solution, while providing for the divine sovereignty, and an external freedom of the man to do what he willed, did not provide for the freedom of the will itself. This was felt by his contemporary and successor, Samuel

[1] Park's Discourses and Treatises, p. 119.

Hopkins, who brought forward the idea that freedom was an inalienable attribute of the will as such, and made it to reside, not in Edwards' external freedom, but in the very exercise of volition. Emmons, who was fond of paradoxical forms of statement, emphasized human agency as much as he did divine sovereignty, and often employed much the same terms to describe each. God governs man through motives, and yet when motives have been presented, he acts upon the will, which without his action never could respond to their stimulus. Thus God "produces" our volitions. In fact, all action in the universe is God's. But on the other hand, by a mysterious connection between man and God, man acts exactly as if God did not act. He is perfectly free, and this in the same sense as God himself is. Under his universal agency, man has a real agency, which must no more be neglected than that of God. With varying success as to the theory of the will, the deepening tendency of the New England school was to view the divine and human operations in the matter of volition as if they were two concentric spheres. The ultimate question as to the possibility of the communication of independence to man, they did not attempt to solve. The fact of natural powers was enough. But in such instances of co-operation as regeneration, for example, the act of repentance was all the act of God in the sphere of influence, and all the act of man in the sphere of power. No such radical theory of the will was ever promulgated by any other theological school.

Now Griffin approaches the problem very much after the manner of Emmons. His purpose is to reconcile the two schools of thought upon the extent of the atonement, and he says: "One party contemplate men as passive receivers

agents; and their question is, How many did God intend to furnish with a means of pardon which they should be under obligations to improve to their everlasting good? The answer is, All who hear the gospel. And so say our brethren. . . . . The mistake of our brethren, as we view it, has arisen from not keeping these two characters of man distinct [viz., passive subjects and agents]. . . . The two characters are about as distinct as body and soul; and on their marked separation the solution of almost every difficulty in metaphysical theology depends."[1]

This idea is more fully brought out as follows: "None but moral agents bear any relation to law, obligation, guilt, pardon, rewards, or punishments. . . . . This is what we mean when we say that the atonement was a measure of moral government. . . . . Now one of the things which essentially belong to a moral agent is, that he must act, and on his action his happiness depends. . . . You cannot therefore contemplate a man as needing an atonement, without contemplating him as one, who, if he has opportunity, is to act towards the atonement, and is to enjoy or lose the benefit according as he receives it or rejects it. . . . . Anything, therefore, which is done for a moral agent is done for his use after the manner in which things are for the use of free moral agents, or creatures governed by motives and choice and bound to act. That is, it is done that he may use it if he pleases, and that he may be under obligation to use it."[2]

The statement of Griffin's fundamental thought here is as follows: "The foundation of the whole divine administration towards the human race lies in this, that men sustain two relations to God. As creatures they are necessarily dependent upon him for holiness, as they are for existence, and as such they passively receive his sanctifying impressions; and they are moral agents. Now the great truth to be

[1] Park's Discourses and Treatises, p. 252 f.

[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 262, 263.

proved is, that these two characters of men (passive receivers and moral agents) are altogether distinct and independent of each other. And the proof is found in the single fact, that their moral agency is in no degree impaired or affected by their dependence and passiveness, nor their passiveness and dependence by their moral agency. That is to say, they are none the less dependent (as Arminians would make us believe) for being moral agents; and on the other hand (and this is the main point to be proved), they are none the less moral agents (as Antinomians seem to suppose), that is, are none the less susceptible of personal and complete obligations, for being dependent. For instance, they are none the less bound to believe because faith is 'the gift of God,' nor to love because love is 'the fruit of the Spirit.' Their obligations rest upon their capacity to exercise, not on their power to originate; on their being rational, not on their being independent. On the one hand, the action of the Spirit does not abate their freedom. The soul of man is that wonderful substance which is none the less active for being acted upon, none the less free for being controlled. It is a wheel within a wheel, which has complete motion in itself while moved by machinery from without. While made *willing*, it is itself voluntary, and of course free. On the other hand, the absence of the Spirit does not impair the capacity on which obligation is founded. The completeness of moral agency has no dependence on supernatural impressions, and on nothing but a rational existence combined with knowledge. The bad, equally with the good, are complete moral agents, the one being as much deserving of

these according to truth, there will be a counterpart of them in the heavens; he himself will sustain two characters. . . . altogether independent of each other. As he stands related to the moral agent, he is the Moral Governor; as he stands related to the mere passive receiver, he is the Sovereign Efficient Cause. . . . . Now the atonement was certainly provided by the Moral Governor, because it was a provision for moral agents. It follows, then, that in making this provision he had no regard to the distinction of elect and non-elect [in distinguishing between which he acts as the Sovereign Efficient Cause]. An atonement made for agents could know nothing of passive regeneration or any decree concerning it."[1]

These ideas represent the highest point attained by the New England writers upon the subject. They all re-echo more or less distinctly the teaching of Griffin. Burge says: "The atonement of Christ is, in a strict and proper sense, for all mankind. Christ tasted death for every man; for the non-elect as much as for the elect. Indeed, election has nothing to do with atonement, any more than it has with creation, resurrection from the dead, or the general judgment."[2] He adds immediately: "From the necessity and nature of the atonement it is evident that its extent is necessarily universal. . . . . The death of Christ completely removes them [the obstacles which stood in the way of God's pardoning sinners]."

But we hasten to the last topic of this historical review.

III. ARTIFICIAL ELEMENTS OF THE DOCTRINE REJECTED.

Among these the principal is the doctrine of imputation, with its associated idea of the strict equivalency of Christ's sufferings to our punishment. Doubtless the prime motive force in this modification of the old theology was the sense of reality and spirit of honesty which were characteristic of

[1] Park's Discourses and Treatises, pp. 269, 273.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 525.

the New England thinkers. It is interesting to note the workings of President Edwards' mind upon these topics. His treatise upon Original Sin is a very important work as illustrating the operations of his mind and the character of his theology in their relations to conservatism and progress. On the one hand he will have nothing to do with "treating men as" they are not; but on the other he cannot avoid a connection with Adam and a guilt for Adam's sin, and so he struggles with theories of identity and with ideas of divine constitution, till he makes us one with Adam in some sense, and yet declares that we are not guilty of Adam's sin by imputation till we are participators in it by "consent." But such efforts in behalf of imputation were in vain. Edwards' successors regarded the idea with more and more distrust, and the Universalist controversy put an end to every effort to retain it. At this time it became an evangelical interest which contended against the theory. Universalism and some forms of orthodoxy maintained that there was no grace in saving men, since the atonement had merited salvation for them, and the merits of Christ were directly imputed to believers. Hence eternal life was bestowed as a thing which had been duly bought by this infinite price. The New England thinkers found this too abhorrent to the gospel. We are saved by grace, they said, and they devoted a large part of those various discourses and treatises which we have been reviewing in this article, to proving that an atonement is consistent with the exercise of grace. Smalley protests against forms of expression which the revered Thomas Hooker, of Hartford, had once employed, as if the sinner could *claim* forgiveness from God. "Where do we find," he asks, "our infallible Teacher instructing his

from the standpoint of the New England theory of the atonement, as when he says: "Though Christ suffered, the just for the unjust, though he made his soul an offering for sin, and though he suffered most excruciating pains in the garden and on the cross, yet he did not lay God under the least obligation, in point of justice, to pardon and save a single sinner. . . . . By obeying and suffering in the room of sinners, he only rendered it consistent for God to renew or not renew, to pardon or not to pardon, to reward or not to reward, sinners; but did not lay him under the least obligation, in point of justice, to do either of these things for them."[1] But he also appeals to our sense of the majesty of God, who "is above being bound by any being in the universe." And, in general, he rests upon the fundamental absurdity of teaching that the character of one man can be transferred to another, since a character consists in acts which, done by one man, cannot be also acts done by another. Burge is perhaps as pointed as any of these writers. He says: "The righteousness of Christ, like that of every other holy being, consists entirely in his actions, feelings, and attributes. Essentially it consists in his love to God and other beings, and is as unalienably his as is any other attribute of his nature. Is it even possible that the actions which Christ performed while here on earth, in which his righteousness in part consists, should be so transferred from him to believers as to become actions which they have performed?" He says trenchantly, in reference to the idea that believers receive the righteousness of Christ by faith: "It is confidently believed that neither Scripture nor reason affords any more warrant for the opinion that it is even possible for the believer's faith to receive Christ's faith, or love, than for the opinion that a believer's walking in the highway receives Christ's walking upon the water." When it is said that "God views and represents them [sinners] as righteous, by

[1] Park's Discourses and Treatises, p. 121.

virtue of the righteousness of Christ; then the inquiry which arises is, Whether God do not view and represent things precisely as they are?"[1] In all this, which is the style of remark pursued by later New England divines as well, it should be remembered that the antagonist had in mind was the ignorant Universalist preacher with his Rellyan doctrine of "union." But though the form of answer was thus determined, the New England divines held that the substance of their argument was valid also against the exaggerations of the Old School.

We have thus briefly and imperfectly sketched the course of the doctrine in the New England writers, have shown the determining influence of the doctrine of Edwards as to the nature of virtue, which furnishes the ideal side of the theory; the influence also of increasing light as to the freedom of the will; and the strong effect of the idea of individuality introduced into the school by its founder. We may now pass to the systematic statement of the theory from the starting point of love as the essence of virtue, by which it is hoped the theme may be placed in a light somewhat new.

[1] Park's Discourses and Treatises, pp. 504–506.

[*To be concluded.*]