

# The Atonement

By A.P. Adams

**The common idea of the so-called vicarious atonement is offensive in the extreme, and totally repugnant to the principles of justice and fair play.** Furthermore this popular idea most awfully misrepresents God, distorts the truth of His Word into most ugly deformities, and totally obscures the great truth that Jesus Christ is the image of God, the most perfect revelation of the Father that we have. We are told that man having been created upright, pure and innocent, broke God's law, thereby becoming a child of the devil, and falling under God's wrath and curse the penalty of the broken law is eternal death, i.e. *"a death that never dies,"* i.e., again, endless life in torment. God wishes to save man, but He cannot do it until His justice is satisfied. Man cannot be freely pardoned, and the penalty fully remitted; he, or some one else must suffer the penalty before God, (or His justice, which is one and the same) can be pacified and the sinner forgiven and restored to the divine favor. Now if man suffers the penalty of the broken law it would be his total undoing, since that penalty is endless torment, and yet the law must be vindicated; how shall it be done and yet save man? **Thus orthodoxy answers, the son of God offers himself as man's substitute, to suffer the penalty of the law in his place, instead of him.**

God the Father accepts this substitution, and pours the vials of his wrath upon the innocent Son in lieu of the guilty sinner, and thus **God is reconciled to man,** and pardon granted through Jesus Christ. To still further burden this outrageous dogma with

additional absurdities, we are told that although the substituting of Christ's sufferings is accepted in the room of the sufferings of the guilty, yet he did not suffer the penalty of the broken law at all, but something which by a legal fiction was accepted in place of that penalty; so that there was, not only a substitution of an innocent victim for the guilty culprit, but there was also a substitution of another penalty totally different from the original one incurred by man; as I have already noticed, the penalty according to the popular view was eternal death. Christ does not suffer this penalty, but simply a temporary death; but since Christ was a divine person, (i.e., according to the orthodox view since He is God himself), his sufferings make up in quality what they lack in quantity, so that they are accepted as **equivalent to the penalty of the broken law**. Thus there is a substitution of victims, and a substitution of penalties. the church still further complicates this subject by telling us that it was not Christ's divine nature that died, but his human nature; that **as God, He could not die, but He died simply as man; and yet his temporary death, being that of a divine person, the "God-man," it is considered equivalent to the eternal death of the sinner**; in other words his divinity did not die, and yet it is his divinity that makes his death a full satisfaction to the law. Finally, notwithstanding all this quibble and legal chicanery, worthy only of some pettifogger of the police court, the alleged purpose of it, the pardon and salvation of man, will only be **partially accomplished, a great many being eternally lost in spite of the death of Christ** and this wonderful scheme of atonement; thus it is made to appear as though God had outraged justice and reason in the elaboration of a plan, which after all would in a great measure fail to accomplish the end in view, viz., the redemption of the fallen race.

Now no intelligent, thoughtful, unprejudiced person need be told that this whole scheme is absurd and unreasonable in every particular. In the first place, (as was shown in "**The Purpose**

**Of Evil" End Note A)**, God was responsible for the introduction of evil into the world. He allowed it to come in contact with the man He had made, when of course, He might have prevented it, well knowing what the result would be; furthermore, where is the righteousness or justice in affixing such a fearful doom as unending torture, as the penalty of a single transgression? and yet again **what sort of justice is it that can be satisfied with the sufferings of an innocent person in the place of the guilty party?** And when in addition to all this we are told that Christ did not suffer the penalty of man's transgression, but something else entirely different that was accepted as equivalent to it, and that after all, the whole arrangement will in a great measure fail to accomplish the purpose intended, we have a scheme that is eminently in harmony with the darkened and fantastic imagination of some warped and twisted bigot, but which **is as unlike God, and His ways, as darkness is unlike light.**

Furthermore, such a scheme puts the Father and the Son in contradiction to each other. Jesus so loved mankind that He was willing to die in their stead that they might be redeemed. God was so severe and unrelenting that He would not forgive man without a victim upon whom to visit his wrath, and so unjust as to accept an innocent victim in place of the guilty party; according to this scheme the love of Jesus is magnified, but God exhibits only relentlessness and implacability; if the hymn is true that

**"Jesus paid it all, all the debt I owe,"**

then certainly I have no reason to thank God for freeing me from the curse, for He has received his full payment; and the only one whom I should praise is Jesus for paying my debt. **But now let us endeavor to learn the truth of this great subject from the Bible.**

In the first place I would say that in order to understand this doctrine, like other Bible doctrines, we must start right. Truth leads on to more truth. Error involves us in still deeper error. If we start out in our investigation of the doctrine of the atonement, from a belief in endless torment, we shall be sure to go wrong. We may also be sure that we can never rightly understand this doctrine while we are ignorant of *"the plan of the ages,"* the purpose of evil, the work of *"the ages to come,"* etc. If, on the other hand, we plainly see these great truths the doctrine of the atonement will be clear and plain.

We start out in this investigation then with the declaration that **"God is love;"** and that **it was God's love that was the great moving cause in the atonement.** It was **not Christ but GOD** that wrought out the wondrous plan. It was not God's justice, but **his LOVE that is most manifested in the plan.** All was love, because God is love. Justice so far as it had any part in the atonement was on the sinner's side, not against him; justice must be satisfied, indeed, but the only way that it could be satisfied was, not by the sinner's, or some substitute's damnation, but by the most abundant provision being made for his salvation. Our God is **"a just God and a SAVIOR"** (Isa. 45:21), a Savior because He is just. **"He that is our God is the God of salvation"** (Psa. 48:20). This is His great distinguishing characteristic from all that are called gods or worshipped as such; compare Is. 45:20. Nowhere in the Bible is the idea advanced that the sufferings of Christ were a satisfaction to the law in lieu of the sufferings of the guilty man. Such an idea is monstrous, totally repugnant to all right principles of justice and righteousness. There is not a single passage that teaches directly or indirectly that the death of Christ was to satisfy the justice of God; but **"TO THIS END Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living"** (Rom. 14:9). God is not the God of the dead (Matt. 22:32), but Christ took upon himself our fallen nature and thus died (for his incarnation was his death), in order that he might

be one with the race in death as well as in life; in his humiliation, Jesus stands at the head of the race, for He was the only human being that was *"holy, harmless and undefiled"* (Heb. 7:26). He also stands at the head of the race in his exaltation, for he is the *"the Beginning, that in all things He might have the preeminence"* (Col. 1:18). Thus, is he **"Lord [head or chief] both of the dead and of the living."**

But to return to the thought with which we started, *"God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten Son,"* etc., the two points for us to notice and keep in mind in our study of this doctrine are, first, **love was the motive power, and second, God was the prime mover;** any view that contradicts or obscures these two facts must be erroneous; a view that makes God's justice the prominent attribute in the atonement to the obscuration or compromising of his love cannot be correct; **a view that exalts Christ as man's Redeemer in opposition or even in contrast with God in the same work is certainly a false view.** Christ is indeed man's Redeemer, **but under God;** God redeems man, just as He judges him, *"by that man whom He has ordained"* (Acts 17:31). Christ is indeed our Savior, but **He is a savior as God's representative, God's agent;** the Father is the original, supreme, *"God our Savior"* (I Tim. 2:3). *"All things are of God"* (Romans 11:36). The error into which the great body of the church has fallen upon this subject is in adopting a scheme that makes Christ loving, tender, and compassionate, and at the same time represents God as harsh, implacable and unjust. I do not say that God is intentionally thus represented, but practically he is so represented. For example, the following orthodox hymn so represents him.

**"Jesus Christ who stands between  
Angry Heaven and guilty man,  
Undertakes to buy our peace;**

## Gives the covenant of grace."

The above hymn represents an *"angry"* God held back and *"bought"* off by a loving, compassionate Savior; thus God's true character and boundless love is obscured, and indeed falsified. All the formulated creeds of *"orthodox"* Christianity set forth the same false view. The **Westminster Confession** formulates the dogma thus: **"The Lord Jesus, by his perfect obedience and sacrifice of himself, which he though the eternal spirit once offered up unto God, hath fully satisfied the justice of his Father, and purchased not only reconciliation, but an everlasting inheritance in the kingdom of heaven, for all those whom the Father hath given unto him."** Here we have that unscriptural and offensive idea of Christ's dying to satisfy the Father's **justice**, the innocent instead of the guilty, and thereby **purchasing** his goodwill; as though God must be appeased and pacified with the blood of a victim, like a pagan deity, before he will look favorably upon a suppliant.

Whatever idea was intended to be conveyed by these creeds the above is practically the idea that they do convey and in fact the words clearly imply that idea. In the creed of the Methodist Episcopal Church, **in the second *"article of religion"* we find it expressly stated that Christ died to reconcile God to man, a statement which is just the opposite of the truth!** The Scriptures invariably put the statement the other way about, that **Christ died to reconcile man to God**, not God to man, and the difference between those two statements is as wide as the difference between a lie and the truth. ***"When we were enemies, we were reconciled to God, by the death of his son"*** (Rom. 5:10), ***"God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself"*** (II Cor. 5:19), not reconciling himself unto the world. See also Col. 1:20-22, and every other passage where reconciliation is spoken of. Let it be noticed also in this connection that the passage quoted from II Cor. 5:19, fully

confirms the statement already made that **God is the prime mover in the atonement.** We usually speak as though Christ made the atonement; He has reconciled us to God; **He is our propitiation; He is our advocate with the Father;** all this is true if we recognize the fact that in all this Christ is God's agent, and that God is really the principal. God is our Savior, Redeemer and Judge, as we have seen, "*by that man whom He hath ordained,*" and God is also our Reconciler, for "*God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself.*" How contrary is this statement to the view presented by the creeds referred to above! **So far from its being true that a substitute must do something to appease God, to conciliate his favor, to satisfy his justice, to purchase his good will, to reconcile him to us, the truth is that God himself endeavors to conciliate man, to reconcile man to himself!** the idea would be absurd, that **God was in Christ reconciling himself to the world;** endeavoring to pacify himself! to conciliate himself! But the truth is most blessed and comforting that "*God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself.*" This is "*glad tidings*" indeed! O that the time might soon come when "all people" would hear it! **There is no "angry Heaven,"** whose wrath must be appeased, and whose favor must be purchased but a **loving Father, who himself is "working"** (Jn. 5:17), to win back the prodigal to the arms that are ever stretched out to receive him, and the heart that has never ceased to love him.

But now someone may ask, "**If the foregoing be true, why do we need any Mediator at all?**" I reply **we need a mediator to make known this great love of God TO us.** It is because we are ignorant of God's "*good will to men*" (Lk. 2:14), and in our blindness and hardness of heart think him harsh and unloving, that we need one who is the "*express image of the invisible God*" (Col. 1:15), and yet at the same time "*bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh,*" to mediate between us and God, not to plead with God on our behalf.

There is no need of that since *"The Father himself loveth us"* (Jn. 16:27), but to reveal the Father to us, as it is written, *"No man knoweth the Son but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father save the son and he to whomsoever the Son shall reveal him"* (Matt. 11:27). *"We love Him because he first loved us"* (I Jn. 4: 19); but we cannot love him for this reason until we learn that He loves us; and this is the very thing that the world does not know; as Jesus said, *"O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee"* (Jn. 17:25). Jesus **"manifests"** the Father's love; through Christ we **"perceive"** that love (I Jn. 3:16; 4:9), and thereby we come to know that God loves us, and we begin to love him, and **so are reconciled to him**, and thus, as *"God shines in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge or his glory in the face of Jesus Christ"* (II Cor. 4:6), *"we are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the spirit of the Lord"* (II Cor. 3:18).

Did you ever think of the strangeness of the expression, *"an Advocate with the Father"* (I Jn. 2:1), taking the term advocate in the legal sense in which it is usually understood? If God is our Father, why do we need an advocate with him? **Does a child have to engage the services of an attorney to represent him and plead his cause to his own father?** If the child were estranged from his father and was ignorant of the father's true character and relation, he might **suppose** that he needed such a go-between; and **this in fact is just what the Christian world do suppose**; but this is not the actual state of the case. The Father is most kindly disposed toward us already; **He is really and truly a Father**; hence no one need plead with him for the children. But the children are estranged; they are ignorant of the Father's great love for them, **hence they need a mediator, an advocate, i.e., as the word strictly means, a helper with the Father. The Father needs no such helper to reconcile him to the children for he was never unreconciled, but the children need it in order to**



**make known the Father's good will to them**, and to awaken their confidence in him and so to bring about harmony between them, i.e., to "***set them at one again***" (Acts 7:26); and this is the **at-one-ment**. The need of an atonement implies two parties at variance with one another whom it is desired to bring into harmony, union, oneness, and the means that effects this unity or reconciliation is called the atonement. Now in the case of God and man, the estrangement is all on man's side; **he is alienated from God, not God from him; hence in order to bring about harmony between them, man alone need be reconciled.**

**The word rendered *reconcile* means to change completely**; this is the strict meaning of the word. **Now who is it that must be changed in order to bring about harmony between God and man? Not God surely, but man; he must be changed, or reconciled**, and he alone; hence we can see how correct the Scriptures are in the use of this word, and how far out of the way are the creeds. to say that the atonement was to reconcile God to man, is to say that God must be changed, in order to bring about harmony between him and his creature; a sentiment that we might well pronounce blasphemous. The Bible way of putting it, however, is right, viz., that Christ's death was to reconcile man to God, i.e., **to change man from an enemy to a son**, and thus "***to set him at one***" with the Father.

In order to make the foregoing still clearer and to further confirm it we should take into connection with it the great truths of God's plan of creation. We are God's workmanship, the purpose of evil, "***The restitution of all things***" (Acts 3:21), etc. **In the light of these truths we shall see that the fall of man and his consequent alienation from his maker, was a part of God's plan, and was to ultimate in his good; hence the abundant provision for his recovery is simply in keeping with that plan, and indeed necessary to its final**

**accomplishment.** If God allowed man to fall into sin and to become estranged from himself for man's good, then surely he would not fail to provide a way whereby man might be delivered from his sin, the "*enmity*" (Rom. 8:7; Eph. 2:15), be destroyed, and a perfect restoration effected, to his former position of harmony and union with God. Thus we see that in the light of the great truths above referred to, the atonement, exactly as we have endeavored to set it forth, is a necessity and a natural outcome.

Furthermore, in the light of these truths, we shall see that there was no need of, and no place for, Substitution, in the scheme of atonement. In the first place, these truths deliver us from that false dogma of endless torment, so that we know that this is **not** the penalty of the broken law; man never was in peril of any such doom, and needed no substitute to suffer it for him, or to **pretend** to suffer it for him by a legal quibble; this step of itself relieves the doctrine of the atonement of many of the absurdities with which the popular view burdens it. Moreover if evil is one of man's educators, and always ultimate in good, if all God's punishments are for man's benefit, that "*he might be partaker of his holiness*" (Heb. 12:10), if man, like his Lord, is "*made perfect through suffering*" (Heb. 2:10), then why does he need a substitute to save him from any of these experiences? **All these are God's benefits, blessings in disguise, and the idea of a substitute to endure them instead of man, is a scheme whereby man is to be robbed of a part of his blessings, a portion of his inheritance.** Substitution is as much out of place in the doctrine of the atonement as it is in the doctrine of sanctification. But if the above be true, how shall we understand such scriptures as the following? He "*tasted death for every man*" (Heb. 2:9), the "*just for the unjust*" (I Pet. 3:18), "*he bore our sins*" (I Pet. 2:24), etc., etc. All this class of scripture is made plain when we notice the difference between two prepositions, **for** and **instead**. Christ died **for us, but he did not die instead of us.**

In his death, He was man's companion, associate, "*elder brother*," but he was **not man's Substitute**. He suffered **with man**, and **on man's behalf**, being "*made in all things like unto his brethren*," and we follow him, as our **forerunner**, in just the same way that he trod, sharing **his** sufferings, bearing **his** reproach, "*being made conformable unto his death*" (whatever that death was), and thereby coming at last to be "*like Him*" (I Jn. 3:2). There is not a particle of substitution in all this, but **perfect identity of experience; we are one with him in his humiliation, suffering and death, and one with him in his exaltation, glory and resurrection life**. Christ does not endure a penalty and certain sufferings, and a death, in order that we may **not** endure the same, as He would do if He were our substitute; but He endures the **same** sufferings and the same death that we endure, and He walked in the **same "ways of life"** (Acts 2:2) in which we must walk in order to reach "*the same image*." Even that supposed stronghold of substitution, the 53rd chapter of Isaiah, is in perfect harmony with the foregoing view. Read verses 4 and 5; now turn to Matt. 8: 16,17, and see how this was fulfilled. Christ "*bore our griefs and carried our sorrows*," not as a substitute, but as a sympathizing companion and friend. He was man's great Burden-bearer (sin included, see John 1:29, margin) not that man might be exempted altogether from the burden (for "*every man shall bear his own burden*" Gal. 6:6), but that man might be taught **how** to bear it, the **reason** for bearing it, and above all, might be delivered from the death-load (Rom. 7:24-25) in God's "*due season*." And this brings me to notice another point.

The common idea is that Christ suffers for us, as our substitute, to save us from the **penalty** of sin, which is eternal death. The truth is that Christ dies, as our Forerunner, to save us, not from the **penalty** of sin, but from **sin itself, not from death (there is no such thing as eternal death)** but "*out of death*," see Heb.

5:7, New Version, margin. The penalty of sin is salutary and beneficial, and it would be no kindness to man to save him therefrom; and moreover if it was best for man to be saved from the penalty of his transgressions, God could and would remit that penalty without the interposition of any substitute or Savior (see Ezek. 28:21). God himself is *"a just God and a Savior."* But how shall man be saved from sin? How shall the sinner be made a saint? The question is not, **how shall his sins be pardoned? how shall he escape the penalty? but how shall he change his nature, from "a child of wrath" (Eph. 2:3) to a "child of God?"** How shall he be delivered *"from the body of this death?"* (Rom. 7:24). The answer comes, *"through Jesus Christ our Lord"* (Rom. 8:1) by a *"new creation"* (II Cor. 5:17; Eph. 2:10). **This is the purpose of the atonement, nothing less than the deliverance of the "whole creation" "from the bondage of corruption" (Rom. 8:21); and this work, Christ (or "God in Christ") does. He is "the lamb of God that beareth away the SIN of the world" (Jn. 1:29); not the sins, as though it meant the particular transgressions of each individual; but the SIN, as though all the sins of the race, and the hideous "death-body" of the sinful nature, were laid in one dread heap upon him, and He bears it away; thus God "made the iniquity of us all to meet on him" (Isa. 53:6, margin). The perfect type of this is in the law, in the "scapegoat work of the day of the atonement (Lev. 16:20-22) of which we cannot now speak particularly,"** but we have said enough to show the error of the popular theology upon this point. But again, the purpose of the atonement is not to save us **from death, but to save us "out of death."** *"If one died for all then were all DEAD"* (II Cor. 5:14). Hear it, and mark it well! It does not say that all were in **peril** of death, and Christ died to prevent that peril from becoming a reality. **Man was already dead, and the purpose of the atonement was to give him life.** Christ came *"to seek and to save the lost;"* not those who were in danger of being lost, but those who were lost

already; so Christ died to give life to a dead world, a world **already** dead (John 6:33,51), as it is written, ***"I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly"*** (John 10:10).

O how low are our ideas of God's ways! Verily his thoughts are not our thoughts, nor are his ways our ways! (Isa. 55:8-13). **The highest idea that many Christians have of the atonement is that it is a scheme whereby they are to be saved from the penalty of sin, an endless hell; when the truth is, God's purpose is to make out of this world of demon-possessed sinners, a race of godlike saints; to lift mankind out of this condition of death into "life and immortality." "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts." (Is. 55:9). "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" (Rom. 11:33).**

In this view also we see how thoroughly and absolutely the entire work of the atonement was ***"of God."*** If man is lost, he cannot find himself; if man is dead, he cannot give life unto himself, or help himself in the least; ***"We are God's workmanship"*** (Eph. 2:10). Let it be noticed that it is in connection with this work of the atonement that Paul makes the statement that ***"all things are of God;"*** read it, ***"All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation, to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then [this great work of reconciliation being all complete and perfect, a finished work], we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God [God is reconciled to you; He has never been unreconciled; now be ye reconciled to Him). For He***

*hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him"* (II Cor. 5:18-21). Let it be noticed that the **finished, completed** work of reconciliation is made the **ground** of the invitation to the sinner to be reconciled to God. In the popular theology of the day it is put just the other way about. **Preachers invite sinners to repentance and obedience in order that the work of reconciliation may be accomplished. Paul teaches us to tell the impenitent sinner that the work of reconciliation is already done! THEREFORE be ye reconciled to God. So far as God is concerned, the work is all done, now then submit yourself unto God that you may know this great truth practically, and may enjoy it to your heart's great comfort.** (Read II Cor. 1:3-7, from the New Version). **The preacher should not call upon the sinner to turn unto God in order that he may be redeemed, but he is to declare unto him first, full redemption, and make that the ground and the reason why he should turn unto God.**

So God speaks to his ancient people by his prophet, *"I have blotted out as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and as a cloud, thy sins; return unto me, for I have redeemed thee* [not return unto me and I will redeem thee, but, because I have redeemed thee]. *Sing, O ye heavens, for the Lord has DONE it! shout, ye lower parts of the earth, break forth into singing ye mountains, O forest, and every tree therein; for the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel"* (Isa. 44:22-23). O how glorious is the glad tidings of great joy, *"which shall be to all people!"* (Lk. 2:10). But, alas, **how we mutilate it, and twist it out of shape, with our wretched man-made theology, and make it sad tidings of great sorrow to many, who, lost and dead, and "without strength"** (Rom. 5:6), fail to fulfill the

conditions, which the church and **not** the Word, has made the prerequisites of redemption! Thus now, as of old, God's nominal people *"shut up the kingdom of heaven against men"* (Matt. 23:13). They put the cause for the effect, and the effect for the cause; they make the **ground of man's repentance, the end of that repentance, thus making the accomplishment of God's work dependent on poor, weak man, and thereby representing the "covenant of promise" as no better than the law covenant. *"Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter! Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight!"* (Isa. 5: 20, 21). Surely there is an infinite difference between God's *"I have **DONE** it,"* and, **I will do it IF you will do thus and so.** In regard to the last verse of the passage quoted, I will only say now that Christ, *"who knew no sin, was made sin"* (II Cor. 5:21), by fully partaking of man's fallen nature (See. Heb. 11:14-18); and we are *"made the righteousness of God in him,"* by just as fully partaking, through Christ, of God's *"divine nature"* (see II Pet. 1:4).**

I will notice next, another error of the popular theology similar to the one just noticed. According to the common view, **the atonement is made the cause of God's love, when in reality it is the effect.** God is represented in the common view as being very wrathful and furious against man for having broken his law, but Christ steps in and pacifies the Father by the atonement, and his anger is turned away and he begins to love mankind; **thus the atonement is made the cause of God's love; The love of God is represented as a result flowing out of Christ's work of reconciliation; the language of the creeds fully imply this; and this in fact is practically the view of the majority of Christians. But the truth is the opposite of this. God's love led to the atonement; it does not flow from it.** All Scripture puts it this way, as we have abundantly quoted in this article. *"God so loved the world [and*

the result was] *that He gave his only begotten Son*" (Jn. 3:16), etc. The atonement "*manifests*" the Father's preexisting, but unknown love, and "*hereby we perceive it*" (I Jn. 3:16; 4:9), so that discovering that "*He first loved us,*" we begin to love Him. Perhaps the reader has heard the story of the mother who said to her little boy, "**Now, Johnny, if you are good and obedient, mamma will love you, but if you are naughty, I can't love you**" to which un-motherly speech the child plaintively replied, "**Anybody will love me when I am good, can't you love me when I'm bad?**" "*God commendeth his love toward us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us*" (Rom. 5:8); thus does the Word make it plain that God's love was the cause, and not the effect of the atonement. This is the blessed truth, but the church goes on, reversing God's truth, putting darkness for light, and light for darkness.

Finally, I will notice one more point of error in the popular view. **The Atonement will not be partial, but a complete and absolute success!** The creeds that inculcate the errors that I have noticed may well culminate with the statement that after all that God and Christ have done, myriads, through ignorance and perversity, will fail to reap any benefit from the atonement but will perish forever; thus Christ will only **partially** accomplish the purpose for which He died, to **reconcile the world unto God** and will only **partially** "*destroy the works of the devil.*" (I Jn. 3:8). Is it so? Will the joint work of the Father and the Son thus weakly fail of full completion, and fall short of a perfect triumph? **Nay, verily!** So far from its being true that the atonement will only be partially sufficient to accomplish the work intended, the truth is it will be "**much more**" than enough. Read the 5th chapter of Romans and see this glorious truth set forth therein. Notice Paul's "**much mores,**" and let all doubts as to the "*exceeding abundance*" of God's provision for man's universal redemption forever depart from your mind. **Was God in Christ reconciling the world**



**unto himself and yet will there be myriads of souls unreconciled to him through all eternity? Did the Father send the son to be the Savior of the world (I Jn. 4:14), and yet will there be a large portion of the world lost forever? Will God's plans and purposes miscarry like this, or shall "*his word (Christ is "the Word of God") accomplish that which He pleases, and prosper in the thing whereto He sends it?"*** (Isa. 45:8-13). Most assuredly the latter. Let those who wish to "*limit the Holy One of Israel*" (Psa. 78:41), do so, as for me, I believe that God will do all He has promised to the full, yea more, for "*he is able to do exceeding abundantly, above all that we can ask, or even think*" (Eph. 3:20).

Thus, friend reader, I have endeavored to set forth this glorious doctrine of the atonement; whether I have spoken according to "*the oracles of God,*" judge ye; and in your judgment be sure of one thing, that nothing that I have said is **better than the truth**; that is not possible. It is impossible that anything should be too **good** to be true, though sometimes we so speak. We may very properly say that a thing is too **bad** to be true, as, for instance, the doctrine of endless torment; but no finite being is able to conceive or imagine a thing too **good** to be true, to do that would be equivalent to thinking of something better than God. If I have erred at all in the foregoing (and it would be very remarkable if I had not) I have erred in not seeing **all the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, of the love of God**, and so have made his works and ways **less grand, and less glorious, and less loving than they really are**. It is only "*with all saints*" that we are able to comprehend the **marvelous fullness of the love of God**. I have by no means exhausted the subject, but I must drop it for the present; but before I do so I will give a brief

## SUMMARY

of the points noticed in the article, that the reader may have the whole subject before him in as compact a form as possible.

- 1. The atonement was not to satisfy God's Justice, but to reveal His Love.**
- 2. The justice of God is not against the sinner, demanding his condemnation, but for him, insuring his salvation.**
- 3. God is not in contrast with, much less in opposition to Christ in the atonement, but in perfect harmony and accord.**
- 4. The atonement is not the exclusive work of Christ in order to reconcile God unto the world, but it is the work of "God in Christ" to reconcile the world unto himself.**
- 5. Christ does not have to plead with God in order to make him willing to pardon the sinner, but God, by his ministers, "beseeches" (II Cor. 5:20), the sinner to make them willing to be pardoned.**
- 6. Hence the atonement is not to propitiate God, but man; not to make God favorably disposed toward man, but to make his already existing favor known to man.**
- 7. Christ did not die as our substitute, but as our companion and associate; not instead of man, but with him and for him.**
- 8. Christ did not die to save us from the penalty of sin, but from sin itself.**
- 9. Christ did not die that we might not die, but to deliver us out of a death in which we were already involved.**
- 10. The sinner is not redeemed because he repents, but he is called upon to repent because he has been redeemed.**
- 11. The atonement is not the cause of God's love to man, giving rise to that love, but the effect, flowing out of that**

love.

## **12. The final outcome of the atoning scheme is not a partial success, but a perfect, absolute, and universal triumph!**

In every one of these particulars, the popular theology is just the opposite of the truth. I do not say that the creeds and standards formally enunciate all these errors (although even this is true of some of them), but I do say that the language of the creeds and standards inevitably lead to these errors, and the popular utterances upon the subject inculcate and confirm them, so that practically they are the belief of the vast majority of Christians. **And I would repeat what must be apparent to every thoughtful mind, that these errors are not small and unimportant, slightly differing from the truth, but they are just the opposite of the truth;** those who hold and teach them, *"call evil good and good evil: they put darkness for light, and light for darkness, bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter;"* and the present effect is **Babylon** (i.e. confusion), and the final outcome will be ruin. (Isa. 24:10.).

My purpose is to write at least three more articles on this subject in order to cover as far as possible the whole ground; one in explanation of the various terms used in connection with the atonement, such as propitiate, ransom, bought, redeemed, etc., one on the subject, **'Why did Christ die?'** and one on the atonement as set forth in the law. I mention this in order to suggest to any who may think that they see unanswerable objections to the position taken in this article, that they suspend their judgment until I have had time to present the whole subject.

[Home](#)