

And while the holiness, justice, and veracity of God seem to require this, there is nothing in His benevolence or placability that precludes it. The benevolence or placability of God could produce merely a readiness to forgive and to save sinners, *provided* this could be effected in full consistency with all the other attributes of His nature, all the principles of His moral government, and all the objects He was bound to aim at, as the Lawgiver and Governor of the universe; and these, as we have seen, throw obstacles in the way of the result being effected. The actings of God,—His actual dealings with His creatures,—must be the result of the combined exercise of all His perfections; and He cannot, in any instance, act inconsistently with any one of them. His benevolence cannot be a mere indiscriminate determination to confer happiness, and His placability cannot be a mere indiscriminate determination to forgive those who have transgressed against Him.

The Scriptures reveal to us a fact of the deepest interest, and one that ought never to be forgotten or lost sight of when we are contemplating the principles that regulate God's dealings with His creatures—namely, that some of the angels kept not their first estate, but fell by transgression; and that no provision has been made for pardoning and saving them,—no atonement or satisfaction provided for their sin,—no opportunity of escape or recovery afforded them. They sinned, or broke God's law; and their doom, in consequence, was unchangeably and eternally fixed. This is a fact,—this was the way in which God dealt with a portion of His intelligent creatures. Of course, He acted in this case in full accordance with the perfections of His nature and the principles of His government. We are bound to employ this fact, which God has revealed to us, as one of the materials which He has given us for enabling us to know Him. We are bound to believe, in regard to Him, whatever this fact implies or establishes, and to refuse to believe whatever it contradicts or precludes. And it manifestly requires us to believe this at least, that there is nothing in the essential perfections of God which affords any sufficient ground for the conclusion that he will certainly pardon transgressors of His laws, or make any provision for saving them from the just and legitimate consequences of their sins. This is abundantly manifest. And this consideration affords good ground to suspect that it was the flat contra-

diction which the scriptural history of the fall and fate of angels presents to the views of the Socinians, with regard to the principles of God's moral government, that has generally led them, like the Sadducees of old, to maintain that there is neither angel nor spirit, though there is evidently not the slightest appearance of unreasonableness in the general doctrine of the existence of superior spiritual beings, employed by God in accomplishing His purposes.

As, then, there is nothing in God's benevolence or placability which affords any certain ground for the conclusion that He must and will pardon sinners, so there *can* be nothing in these qualities inconsistent with His requiring atonement or satisfaction in order to their forgiveness, while other attributes of His nature seem plainly to demand this. God's benevolence and placability are fully manifested in a readiness to bless and to forgive, in so far as this can be done, in consistency with the other attributes of His nature, and the whole principles of His moral government. And while there is nothing in His benevolence or placability inconsistent with His requiring an atonement or satisfaction in order to forgiveness, it is further evident, that if He Himself should provide this atonement or satisfaction to His own justice and law, and be the real author and deviser of all the plans and arrangements connected with the attainment of the blessed result of forgiveness and salvation to sinners, a scheme would be presented to us which would most fully and strikingly manifest the combined glory of all the divine perfections,—in which He would show Himself to be the just God, and the justifier of the ungodly,—in which righteousness and peace should meet together, mercy and truth should embrace each other. And this is the scheme which is plainly and fully revealed to us in the word of God. Provision is made for pardoning men's sins and saving their souls, through the vicarious sufferings and death of One who was God and man in one person, and who voluntarily agreed to take their place, and to suffer in their room and stead; thus satisfying divine justice, complying with the demands of the law by enduring its penalty, and manifesting most fully the sinfulness and the danger of sin. But this was done by God Himself, who desired the salvation of sinners, and determined to effect it; and who, in consequence, *sent* His Son into the world to die in man's room and stead,—who spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all. So

that here we have a scheme for pardoning and saving sinners which, from its very nature, must be effectual, and which not only is in full accordance with the perfections of God, but most gloriously illustrates them all. The apostle says expressly, "that God set forth His Son to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness," or with a view to the demonstration of His righteousness;* and it is true that the shedding of Christ's blood as a propitiation, viewed with reference to its necessity and proper nature, does declare God's righteousness, or justice and holiness; while, viewed in its originating motives and glorious results, it most fully declares God's marvellous love to the children of men, and His determination to save sinners with an everlasting salvation.

Sec. IV.—Objections to the Doctrine of Atonement.

The proper order to be followed in the investigation of this subject, or indeed of any great scriptural doctrine, is the same as that which I stated and explained in considering the doctrine of the Trinity,—namely, that we should first *ascertain*, by a full and minute examination of all the scriptural statements bearing upon the subject, what the Bible teaches regarding it; and then consider the general objections that may be adduced against it, taking care to keep them in their proper place, as objections, and to be satisfied with showing that they cannot be proved to have any weight; and if they should appear to be really relevant and well-founded, and not mere sophisms or difficulties, applying them, as sound reason dictates, not in the way of reversing the judgment already formed upon the appropriate evidence as to what it is that the Bible really teaches, but in the way of rejecting a professed revelation that teaches doctrines which can, *ex hypothesi*, be conclusively disproved. But as the objections made by Socinians to the doctrine of the atonement are chiefly connected with some of those general and abstract topics to which we have already had occasion to advert, it may be most useful and convenient to notice them *now*, especially as the consideration of them is fitted, like that of the *necessity* of an atonement, already considered, to throw some light upon the general nature and import of the doctrine itself.

* Rom. iii. 25, 26, εἰς ἢ πρὸς ἔνδειξιν τῆς δικαιοσύνης αὐτοῦ.

Many of the objections commonly adduced against the doctrine of atonement are mere cavils,—mere exhibitions of unwarranted presumption,—and are sufficiently disposed of by the general considerations of the exalted and incomprehensible nature of the subject itself, and of the great mystery of godliness, God made manifest in the flesh, on which it is based. These it is unnecessary to dwell upon, after the exposition of the general principles applicable to the investigation of these subjects which we have already given. Some are founded upon misrepresentations of the real bearing, objects, and effects of the atonement, especially in its relation to the character and moral government of God. Nothing, for instance, is more common than for Socinians to represent the generally received doctrine of atonement as implying that God the Father is an inexorable tyrant, who insisted upon the rigorous execution of the threatenings of the law until Christ interposed, and by His offering up of Himself satisfied God's demands, and thereby introduced into the divine mind a totally different state of feeling in regard to sinners,—the result of which was, that He pardoned in place of punishing them. This, of course, is not the doctrine of the atonement, but a mere caricature of it. Scripture plainly teaches,—and the advocates of an atonement maintain, not only as being perfectly consistent with their doctrine, but as a constituent part of it,—that love to men, and a desire to save them from ruin, existed eternally in the divine mind,—resulting from the inherent perfections of God's nature,—that this love and compassion led Him to devise and execute a plan of salvation, and to send His Son to save sinners by offering an atonement for their sins. The atonement, then, was the consequence, and not the cause, of God's love to men, and of His desire to save them. It introduced no feeling into the divine mind which did not exist there before; though it certainly removed obstacles which other principles of His nature and government interposed to the full outflowing of the love and compassion which existed, and opened up a channel by which God, in full accordance with, and in glorious illustration of, all His perfections, might bestow upon men pardon and all other spiritual blessings, and finally eternal life. This is all that can be meant by the scriptural statements about the turning away of God's anger and His reconciliation to men, when these are ascribed to the interposition and atonement of Christ. This is all

that the defenders of an atonement understand by these statements. There is nothing in their views upon this, or upon any other subject, that requires them to understand these statements in any other sense; and thus understood, they are fully accordant both with the generally received doctrine of the atonement, and with everything else that Scripture teaches concerning God, and concerning the principles that regulate His dealings with men. This objection, then, though it has been repeated constantly from the time of Socinus till the present day, is founded wholly upon a misrepresentation of the doctrine objected to,—a misrepresentation for which there is no warrant or excuse whatever, except, perhaps, the declamations of some ignorant and injudicious preachers of the doctrine, who have striven to represent it in the way they thought best fitted to impress the popular mind.

The only objections of a general kind to the doctrine of an atonement that are entitled to any notice are these: First, that it involves injustice, by representing the innocent as punished in the room of the guilty, and the guilty thereby escaping; secondly, that it is inconsistent with the free grace, or gratuitous favour, which the Scriptures ascribe to God in the remission of men's sins; and, thirdly, that it is fitted to injure the interests of holiness, or morality. We shall very briefly advert to these in succession, but without attempting anything like a full discussion of them.

First, It is alleged to be unjust to punish the innocent in the room of the guilty, and on this ground to allow the transgressors to escape. Now, the defenders of the doctrine of atonement admit that it does assume or imply the state of matters which is here described, and represented as unjust,—namely, the punishment of the innocent in the room of the guilty. Some of them, indeed, scruple about the application of the terms *punishment* and *penal* to the sufferings and death of Christ. But this scrupulosity appears to me to be frivolous and vexatious, resting upon no sufficient ground, and serving no good purpose. If men, indeed, begin with defining punishment to mean the infliction of suffering upon an offender on account of his offence,—thus including the actual personal demerit of the sufferer in the idea which the word conveys,—they settle the question of the penalty, or penal character, of Christ's suffering by the mere definition. In this sense, of course, Christ's sufferings were not penal. But the definition is purely arbitrary, and is not required by general usage, which

warrants us in regarding and describing as penal any suffering inflicted judicially, or in the execution of the provisions of law, on account of sin. And this arbitrary restriction of the meaning of the terms punishment and penal is of no use, although some of those who have recourse to it seem to think so, in warding off Socinian objections;—because, in the first place, there is really nothing in the doctrine of the atonement worth contending for, if it be not true that Christ endured, in the room and stead of sinners, the suffering which the law demanded of them on account of their sins, and which, but for His enduring it, as their substitute, they must themselves have endured,—and because, in the second place, the allegation of injustice applies, with all the force it has, to the position just stated, whether Christ's sufferings be *called* penal or not.

With regard to the objection itself, the following are the chief considerations to be attended to, by the exposition and application of which it is fully disposed of: *First*, that, as we have already had occasion to state and explain in a different connection, the sufferings and death of an innocent person in this matter are realities which all admit, and which all equally are bound to explain. Christ's sufferings were as great upon the Socinian, as upon the orthodox, theory with regard to their cause and object; while our doctrine of His being subjected to suffering because of the sin of others being imputed to Him, or laid upon Him, brings the facts of the case into accordance with some generally recognised principles of God's moral government, which, upon the Socinian scheme, is impossible. The injustice, of course, is not alleged to be in the fact that Christ, an innocent person, was subjected to so much suffering,—for there remains the same fact upon any hypothesis,—but in His suffering in the room and stead of sinners, with the view, and to the effect, of their escaping punishment.

Now, we observe, *secondly*, that this additional circumstance of His suffering being vicarious and expiatory,—which may be said to constitute our theory as to the grounds, causes, or objects of His suffering,—in place of introducing an additional difficulty into the matter, is the only thing which contributes in any measure to explain it. And it does contribute in some measure to explain it, because it can be shown to accord with the ordinary principles of enlightened reason to maintain,—first, that it is not of *the essence* of the idea of punishment, that it must necessarily, and in every

instance, be inflicted upon the very person who has committed the sin that calls for it; or, as it is expressed by Grotius, who has applied the recognised principles of jurisprudence and law to this subject with great ability: "Notandum est, esse quidem essentielle pœnæ, ut infligatur ob peccatum, sed non item essentielle ei esse ut infligatur ipsi qui peccavit:"*—and, secondly, that substitution and satisfaction, in the matter of inflicting punishment, are to some extent recognised in the principles of human jurisprudence, and in the arrangements of human governments; while there is much also, in the analogies of God's providential government of the world, to sanction them, or to afford answers to the allegations of their injustice.

Thirdly, the transference of penal suffering, or suffering judicially inflicted in accordance with the provisions of law, from one party to another, cannot be proved to be universally and in all cases unjust. No doubt, an act of so peculiar a kind,—involving, as it certainly does, a plain deviation from the ordinary regular course of procedure,—requires, in each case, a distinct and specific ground or cause to warrant it. But there are, at least, two cases in which this transference of penal suffering on account of sin from one party to another is generally recognised as just, and in which, at least, it can be easily proved, that all ground is removed for charging it with injustice. These are,—first, when the party who is appointed to suffer on account of the sin of another, has himself become legally liable to a charge of guilt, adequate to account for all the suffering inflicted; and, secondly, when he voluntarily consents to occupy the place of the offender, and to bear, in his room, the punishment which he had merited. In these cases, there is manifestly no injustice in the transference of penal suffering, so far as the parties more immediately affected are concerned; and if the *general* and *public* ends of punishment are at the same time fully provided for by the transference, or *notwithstanding* the transference, then there is, in these cases, no injustice of any kind committed.

The second of these cases is that which applies to the sufferings and death of Christ. He willingly agreed to stand in the room and stead of sinners, and to bear the punishment which they

* De Satisfact., c. iv., p. 85. See also Turretin. De Satisfact., Pars ii., sec. xxxvi.

had merited. And if there be no injustice generally in Christ—though perfectly innocent—suffering so much as He endured, and no injustice in this suffering being penally inflicted upon Him on account of the sins of others,—His own free consent to occupy their place and to bear the punishment due to their sins being interposed,—there can be no injustice in the only other additional idea involved in our doctrine,—namely, that this suffering, inflicted upon Him, is appointed and proclaimed as the ground or means of exempting the offenders from the punishment they had deserved; or, as it is put by Grotius, "Cum per hos modos" (the cases previously mentioned, the consent of the substitute being one of them), "actus factus est licitus, quo minus deinde ordinetur ad pœnam peccati alieni, nihil intercedit, modo inter eum qui peccavit et puniendum aliqua sit conjunctio."* The only parties who would be injured or treated unjustly by this last feature in the case, are the lawgiver and the community (to apply the principle to the case of human jurisprudence); and if the honour and authority of the law, and the general interests of the community, are fully provided for by means of, or notwithstanding, the transference of the penal infliction,—as we undertake to prove is the case with respect to the vicarious and expiatory suffering of Christ,—then the whole ground for the charge of injustice is taken away.

The second objection is, that the doctrine of atonement or satisfaction is inconsistent with the scriptural representations of the gratuitousness of forgiveness,—of the freeness of the grace of God in pardoning sinners. It is said that God exercises no grace or free favour in pardoning sin, if He has received full satisfaction for the offences of those whom He pardons. This objection is not confined to Socinians. They adduce it against the doctrine of atonement or satisfaction altogether; while Arminians,† and others who hold the doctrine of universal or indefinite atonement, adduce it against those higher, stricter, and more accurate views of substitution and satisfaction with which the doctrine of a definite or limited atonement stands necessarily connected. When they are called to deal with this Socinian objection, they usually admit that the objection is unanswerable, as adduced against

* Grotius, de Satisfactione, p. 86.

† Vide Limborch, Theol. Christ., Lib. iii., c. xxi.

the stricter views of substitution and satisfaction held by most Calvinists; while they contend that it is of no force in opposition to their modified and more rational views upon this subject,—an admission by which, as it seems to me, they virtually, in effect though not in intention, betray the whole cause of the atonement into the hands of the Socinians. As this objection has been stated and answered in our Confession of Faith, we shall follow its guidance in making a few observations upon it.

It is there said,* “Christ, by His obedience and death, did fully discharge the debt of all those that are thus justified, and did make a proper, real, and full satisfaction to His Father’s justice in their behalf.” Here the doctrine of substitution and satisfaction is fully and explicitly declared in its highest and strictest sense. But the authors of the Confession were not afraid of being able to defend, in perfect consistency with this, the free grace, the gratuitous mercy of God, in justifying,—that is, in pardoning and accepting sinners. And, accordingly, they go on to say, “Yet, inasmuch as He was given by the Father for them, and His obedience and satisfaction accepted in their stead, and both freely, not for anything in them, their justification is only of free grace; that both the exact justice and rich grace of God might be glorified in the justification of sinners.” Now, the grounds here laid for maintaining the free grace of God in the forgiveness of sinners, notwithstanding that a full atonement or satisfaction was made for their transgressions, are two: first, that Christ, the atoner or satisfier, was given by the Father for them,—that is, that the Father Himself devised and provided the atonement or satisfaction,—provided it, so to speak, at His own cost,—by not sparing His own Son, but delivering Him up for us all. If this be true,—if men had no right whatever to such a provision,—if they had done, and could do, nothing whatever to merit or procure it,—then this consideration must necessarily render the whole of the subsequent process based upon it, in its bearing upon men, purely gratuitous,—altogether of free grace,—unless, indeed, *at some subsequent stage*, men should be able to do something meritorious and efficacious for themselves in the matter. But then, secondly, God not only freely provided the satisfaction,—He likewise, when it was rendered by Christ, accepted it in the room of all those who

* C. xi., s. 3.

are pardoned, and this, too, freely, or without anything in them,—that is, without their having done, or being able to do, anything to merit or procure it, or anything which it involves. Pardon, therefore, and acceptance are freely or gratuitously given to men, though they were purchased by Christ, who paid the price of His precious blood. The scriptural statements about the free grace of God in pardoning and accepting men, on which the objection is founded, assert or imply only the gratuitousness of the blessings in so far as the individuals who ultimately receive them are concerned, and contain nothing whatever that, either directly or by implication, denies that they were purchased by Christ, by the full satisfaction which He rendered in the room and stead of those who finally partake of them; while the gratuitousness of God’s grace in the matter, *viewed as an attribute or quality of His*, is fully secured and manifested by His providing and accepting the satisfaction.

These considerations are amply sufficient to answer the Socinian objection about free grace and gratuitous remission, even on the concession of the strictest views of the substitution and satisfaction of Christ; and without dwelling longer on this subject, I would merely remark in general, that it holds true equally of the grounds of this Socinian objection, and of the concession made to it by Arminians and other defenders of universal atonement,—the concession, namely, that it is unanswerable upon the footing of the stricter views of substitution and satisfaction; and indeed, I may say, it holds true generally of the grounds of the opposition made to the doctrine of definite or limited atonement,—that they are chiefly based upon the unwarrantable practice of taking up the different parts or branches of the scheme of redemption, as unfolded in Scripture, *separately*, and viewing them in isolation from each other, in place of considering them together, as parts of one great whole, and in their relation to each other and to the entire scheme.

The third and last objection to which we proposed to advert is, that the doctrine of the atonement is fitted to injure the interests of holiness or morality. The general ground on which this allegation is commonly made is,—that the introduction of an atonement or satisfaction by another party is held to release men from the obligations of the moral law; and that the general tendency of the doctrine is to lead men to be careless and indifferent about the regulation of their conduct and their growth in holiness. This

is just the common objection usually made to the whole scheme of the doctrines of grace ; and in this, as well as in other applications of it, it can be easily shown that the objection proceeds upon an erroneous and defective view of the state of the case, and upon a low and grovelling sense of the motives by which men are, or should be, animated. The whole extent to which the atonement or satisfaction of Christ affects men's relation to the law is this, that men are exempted from paying, in their own persons, the penalty they had incurred, and are saved from its infliction by its being borne by another in their room and stead. Now, there is certainly nothing in this which has any appearance of relaxing the obligation of the law as a rule or standard which they are bound to follow. There is nothing in this which has any tendency to convey the impression that God is unconcerned about the honour of His law, or that we may trifle with its requirements with impunity. The whole object and tendency of the doctrine of atonement is to convey the very opposite views and impressions with regard to the law,—the obligation which it imposes, and the respect and reverence which are due to it.

In order to form a right conception of the moral tendency of a doctrine, we must conceive of the case of a man who understands and believes it,—who is practically applying it according to its true nature and tendency, and living under its influence,—and then consider how *it is fitted to operate* upon his character, motives, and actions. And to suppose that the doctrine of the atonement, understood, believed, and applied, can lead men to be careless about regulating their conduct according to God's law, is to regard them as incapable of being influenced by any other motive than a concern about their own safety,—to imagine that, having attained to a position of safety, they must thenceforth be utterly uninfluenced by anything they have ever learned or heard about God, and sin, and His law, and eternity, and totally unmoved by any benefits that have been conferred upon them. When men adduce this objection against the doctrine of the atonement, they unconsciously make a manifestation of their own character and motives. In bringing forward the objection, they are virtually saying, "If we believed the doctrine of the atonement, we would certainly lead very careless and immoral lives." And here I have no doubt they are speaking the truth, according to their present views and motives. But this of course implies a

virtual confession,—first, that any outward decency which their conduct may at present exhibit, is to be traced *solely* to the fear of punishment ; and, secondly, that if they were only secured against punishment, they would find much greater pleasure in sin than in holiness, much greater satisfaction in serving the devil than in serving God ; and that they would never think of showing any gratitude to Him who had conferred the safety and deliverance on which they place so much reliance. Socinians virtually confess all this, with respect to their own present character and motives, when they charge the doctrine of the atonement with a tendency unfavourable to the interests of morality. But if men's character and motives are, as they should be, influenced by the views they have been led to form concerning God and His law ; if they are capable of being affected by the contemplation of noble and exalted objects, by admiration of excellence, and by a sense of thankfulness for benefits,—instead of being animated solely by a mere desire to secure their own safety and comfort,—they must find in the doctrine of the atonement,—and in the conceptions upon all important subjects which it is fitted to form,—motives amply sufficient to lead them to hate sin, to fear and love God, to cherish affection and gratitude towards Him who came in God's name to seek and to save them, and to set their affections on things above, where He sitteth at the right hand of God. These are the elements from which alone—as is proved both by the nature of the case and the experience of the world—anything like high and pure morality will ever proceed ; and no position of this nature can be more certain, than that the believers in the doctrine of the atonement have done much more in every way to adorn the doctrine of our God and Saviour, than those who have denied it.

There is, then, no real weight in the objections commonly adduced against the doctrine of the atonement. Not that there are not difficulties connected with the subject, which we are unable fully to solve ; but there is nothing so formidable as to tempt us to make a very violent effort—and that, certainly, is necessary—in the way of distorting and perverting Scripture, in order to get rid of it ; and nothing to warrant us in rejecting the divine authority of the Bible, because it establishes this doctrine with such full and abundant evidence. We have already seen a good deal, in considerations derived from what we know

concerning the divine character and moral government, fitted to lead us to believe, by affording at least the strongest probabilities and presumptions, that the method of an atonement or satisfaction might be that which would be adopted for pardoning and saving sinners; and that this method really involves the substitution of the Son of God in the room and stead of those who are saved by Him, and His endurance, as their surety and substitute, of the punishment which they had deserved by their sin. But the full proof of this great doctrine is to be found only in a minute and careful examination of the meaning of scriptural statements; and in the prosecution of this subject, it has been conclusively proved that the generally received doctrine of the atonement is so thoroughly established by Scripture, and so interwoven with its whole texture, that they must stand or fall together; and that any man who denies the substance of the common doctrine upon this subject, would really act a much more honest and rational part than Socinians generally do, if he would openly deny that the Bible is to be regarded as the rule of faith, or as entitled to reverence or respect as a communication from God.

Sec. V.—Scriptural Evidence for the Atonement.

We cannot enter into anything like an *exposition* of the Scripture evidence in support of the commonly received doctrine of the atonement, the general nature and import of which we have endeavoured to explain. This evidence is collected from the whole field of Scripture, and comprehends a great extent and variety of materials, every branch of which has, upon both sides, been subjected to a thorough critical investigation. The evidence bearing upon this great doctrine may be said to comprehend all that is contained in Scripture upon the subject of sacrifices, from the commencement of the history of our fallen race; all that is said about the nature, causes, and consequences of the sufferings and death of Christ; and all that is revealed as to the way and manner in which men do, in point of fact, obtain or receive the forgiveness of their sins, or exemption from the penal consequences to which their sins have exposed them. The general observations which we have already made about the Socinian mode of dealing with and interpreting Scripture, and the illustrations we gave of these general observations in their application to the

doctrine of the Trinity and the person of Christ,—the substance of all that we have stated in the way of explaining both how scriptural statements should and should *not* be dealt with, and what are the principles which, in right reason, though in opposition to self-styled rationalism, ought to regulate this matter,—are equally applicable to the subject of the atonement—are equally illustrative of the way in which the scriptural statements bearing upon this point should, and should not, be treated and applied. I shall therefore say nothing more on these general topics. The few observations which I have to make on the scriptural evidence in support of the doctrine of the atonement, must be restricted to the object of giving some hints or suggestions as to the way in which this subject ought to be investigated, pointing out some of the leading divisions under which the evidences may be classed, and the leading points that must be attended to and kept in view in examining it.

That Christ suffered and died for our good, and in order to benefit us,—in order that thereby sinners might be pardoned and saved,—and that by suffering and dying He has done something or other intended and fitted to contribute to the accomplishment of this object,—is, of course, admitted by all who profess to believe, in any sense, in the divine origin of the Christian revelation. And the main question discussed in the investigation of the subject of the atonement really resolves, as I formerly explained, into this: What is the relation actually subsisting between the death of Christ and the forgiveness of men's sins? In what way does the one bear upon and affect the other? Now, the doctrine which has been generally received in the Christian church upon this all-important question is this: That Christ, in order to save men from sin and its consequences, voluntarily took their place, and suffered and died in their room and stead; that He offered up Himself a sacrifice for them; that His death was a punishment inflicted upon Him because *they* had deserved death; that it was in a fair and reasonable sense the penalty which they had incurred; that by suffering death as a penal infliction in their room and stead, He has satisfied the claims or demands of the divine justice and the divine law; and by making satisfaction in their room, has expiated or atoned for their sins, and has thus procured for them redemption and reconciliation with God.

The scriptural proof of this position overturns at once both

the Socinian theory,—which restricts the efficacy of Christ's sufferings and death to their fitness for confirming and establishing truths, and supplying motives and encouragements to repentance and holiness, which are with them the true grounds or causes of the forgiveness of sinners,—and also the theory commonly held by the Arians, which, without including the ideas of substitution and satisfaction, represents Christ as, in some way or other, acquiring by His suffering and death a certain influence with God, which He employs in obtaining for men the forgiveness of their sins. The proof of the generally received doctrine overturns at once both these theories, not by establishing directly and positively that they are false,—for, as I formerly explained in the general statement of this subject, they are true so far as they go,—but by showing that they do not contain the whole truth; that they embody only the smallest and least important part of what Scripture teaches; and that there are other ideas fully warranted by Scripture, and absolutely necessary in order to anything like a complete and correct representation of the whole Scripture doctrine upon the subject.

One of the first and most obvious considerations that occurs in directing our attention to the testimony of Scripture upon the subject is, that neither the Socinian nor the Arian doctrine is reconcilable with the *peculiarity* and the *immediateness* of the connection which the general strain of scriptural language indicates as subsisting between the death of Christ and the forgiveness of sinners; while all this is in fullest harmony with the orthodox doctrine. If the death of Christ bears upon the forgiveness of sin only indirectly and remotely through the medium or intervention of the way in which it bears upon men's convictions, motives, and conduct, and if it bears upon this result only in a way in which *other* causes or influences, and even other things contained in the history of Christ Himself, do or might equally bear upon it,—and all this is implied in the denial of the doctrine of the atonement,—then it seems impossible to explain why in Scripture such special and peculiar importance is ascribed to Christ's death in this matter; why the forgiveness of sin is *never* ascribed to any other cause or source of right views or good motives,—such, for instance, as Christ's teaching, or His resurrection; and why the death of Christ and the remission of men's sins are so constantly represented as most closely and immediately connected with each

other. This constitutes a very strong presumption in favour of the generally received doctrine upon the subject; but in order to *establish* it thoroughly, it is necessary to examine carefully and minutely the meaning of the specific statements of Scripture which make known to us the nature, objects, and consequences of Christ's death, and the actual connection between it and the forgiveness of sin. And we would now briefly indicate the chief heads under which they may be classed, and some of the principal points to be attended to in the investigation of them.

First, we would notice that there are some important *words*, on the true and proper meaning of which the settlement of this controversy essentially depends, and of which, therefore, the meaning must be carefully investigated, and, if possible, fully ascertained. The words to which I refer are such as these: *atonement*,—used frequently in the Old Testament in connection with the sacrifices, and once (*i.e.*, in our version) in the New Testament; *bearing* and *carrying*, as applied to sin; *propitiation*, *reconciliation*, *redemption*, etc. The words which express these ideas in the original Hebrew or Greek,—such as, *hattath*, *asham*, *kopher*, *nasa*, *sabal*, in Hebrew; and in Greek, *ἵλαω* or *ἰλάσκομαι*, and its derivatives, *ἰλασμός* and *ἰλαστήριον*, *καταλλάσσω* and *καταλλαγή*, *ἀγοράζω*, *λυτρόω*, *λύτρον*, *ἀντίλυτρον*, *φέρω*, and *ἀναφέρω*,—have all been subjected to a thorough critical investigation in the course of this controversy; and no one can be regarded as well versant in its merits, and able to defend the views which he has been led to adopt, unless he has examined the meaning of these words, and can give some account of the philological grounds on which his conclusions, as to their import, are founded. Under this head may be also comprehended the different Greek prepositions which are commonly translated in our version by the word *for*, in those statements in which Christ is represented as dying *for* sins, and dying *for* sinners,—*viz.*, *διὰ*, *περί*, *ὑπέρ*, and *ἀντί*,—for much manifestly depends upon their true import.

The object to be aimed at in the investigation of these words is, of course, to ascertain, by a diligent and careful application of the right rules and materials, what is their natural, obvious, ordinary import, as used by the sacred writers,—what sense they were fitted, and must therefore have been intended, to convey to those to whom they were originally addressed. It can scarcely be disputed that these words, in their obvious and ordinary meaning,

being applied to the death of Christ, decidedly support the generally received doctrine of the atonement; and the substance of what Socinians, and other opponents of the doctrine, usually labour to establish in regard to them is, that there are some grounds for maintaining that *they may* bear, because they *sometimes must bear*, a different sense,—a sense in which they could not sanction the doctrine of the atonement; so that the points to be attended to in this department of the discussion are these: First, to scrutinize the evidence adduced, that the particular word under consideration must sometimes be taken in a different sense from that which it ordinarily bears; secondly, to see whether, in the passages in which, if taken in its ordinary sense, it would sanction the doctrine of the atonement, there be any necessity, or even warrant, for departing from this ordinary meaning. The proof of a negative upon *either* of these two points is quite sufficient to overturn the Socinian argument, and to leave the passages standing in full force as proofs of the orthodox doctrine; while, in regard to many of the most important passages, the defenders of that doctrine have not only proved a negative upon these two questions,—that is, upon one or other of them,—but have further established, thirdly, that, upon strictly critical grounds, the ordinary meaning of the word is *that* which ought to be there adopted.

But we must proceed to consider and classify statements, as distinguished from mere words, though these words enter into most of the important statements upon the subject; and here I would be disposed to place first those passages in which Christ is represented as executing the office of a Priest, and as offering up Himself as a sacrifice. That He is so represented cannot be disputed. The question is, What ideas with respect to the nature, objects, and effects of His death, was this representation intended to convey to us? The New Testament statements concerning the priesthood and sacrifice of Christ are manifestly connected with, are in some sense taken from, and must be in some measure interpreted by, the accounts given of the priesthood and sacrifices under the law, and of the origin and objects of sacrifices generally,—in so far as they can be regarded as affording any indication of the principles which regulate the divine procedure with respect to the forgiveness of sin. This opens up a wide and interesting field of discussion,—historical and critical,—comprehending not only all that we learn from Scripture upon the subject, but likewise anything to be gathered

from the universal prevalence of sacrifices among heathen nations, and the notions which mankind have generally associated with them.

The substance of what is usually contended for upon this topic by Socinians and other opponents of the doctrine of the atonement is this,—that animal sacrifices were *not* originally appointed and required by God, but were devised and invented by men,—that they were natural and appropriate expressions of men's sense of their dependence upon God, their unworthiness of His mercies, their penitence for their sins, and their obligations to Him for His goodness; but that they were not generally understood to involve or imply any idea of substitution or satisfaction,—of propitiating God, and of expiating or atoning for sin: that they were introduced by God into the Mosaic economy, because of their general prevalence, and their capacity of being applied to some useful purposes of instruction; but that no additional ideas were then connected with them beyond what had obtained in substance in heathen nations: that the Levitical sacrifices were not regarded as vicarious and propitiating; and that their influence or effect, such as it was, was confined to ceremonial, and did not extend to moral offences: that the statements in the New Testament in which Christ is represented as officiating as a Priest, and as offering a sacrifice, are mere allusions of a figurative or metaphorical kind to the Levitical sacrifices, employed in accommodation to Jewish notions and habits; and that, more especially, the minute and specific statements upon this subject, contained in the Epistle to the Hebrews, are, as the Improved or Socinian version, published about forty years ago, says, characterized by "far-fetched analogies and inaccurate reasonings."* In opposition to all this, the defenders of the doctrine of the atonement generally contend that animal sacrifices were of divine appointment, and were intended by God to symbolize, to represent, and to teach the great principles which regulate His conduct in regard to sin and sinners,—that they expressed a confession of sin on the part of the person by, or for, whom they were offered,—that they indicated the transference of his sin, and the punishment it merited, to the victim offered, the endurance of the punishment by the victim in the room of the offerer,—and, as the result, the exemption of the offerer

* "The Improved Version," p. 544. Ed. 1817.

from the punishment he deserved; in other words, that they were vicarious, as implying the substitution of one for the other, and expiatory or propitiatory, as implying the oblation and the acceptance of a satisfaction, or compensation, or equivalent for the offence, and, as a consequence, its remission,—that these ideas, though intermingled with much error, are plainly enough exhibited in the notions which prevailed on the subject among heathen nations, and are fully sanctioned by the statements made with respect to the nature, objects, and consequences of the divinely appointed sacrifices of the Mosaic economy;—that these were evidently vicarious and expiatory,—that they were appointed to be offered chiefly for ceremonial, but also for *some* moral offences, considered as violations of the ceremonial law, though, of course, they could not of themselves really expiate or atone for the moral, but only the ceremonial, guilt of this latter class,—that they really expiated or removed ceremonial offences, or were accepted as a ground or reason for exempting men from the punishment incurred by the violation or neglect of the provisions of the Jewish theocracy, while their bearing upon moral offences could be only symbolical or typical;—that, in place of the New Testament statements about the priesthood and sacrifice of Christ being merely figurative allusions to the Levitical sacrifices, the whole institution of sacrifices, and the place which they occupied in the Mosaic economy, were regulated and determined by a regard to the one sacrifice of Christ,—that they were intended to direct men's faith to it,—that they embodied and represented the principles on which its efficacy depended, and should therefore be employed in illustrating its true nature and bearings; while everything to be learned from them, in regard to it, is fitted to impress upon us the conviction, that it was vicarious and expiatory,—that is, presented and accepted in the room and stead of others, and thus effecting or procuring their reconciliation to God, and their exemption from the penal consequences of their sins. All this has been maintained, and all this has been established, by the defenders of the doctrine of the atonement; and with the principal grounds on which these various positions rest, and on which they can be defended from the objections of adversaries, and from the opposite views taken by them upon these points, all students of Scripture ought to possess some acquaintance. The most important and fundamental of the various topics comprehended in this wide field of discussion,

are involved in the settlement of these two questions,—namely, first, What was the character, object, and immediate effect of the Levitical sacrifices? were they vicarious and expiatory, or not? and, secondly, What is the true relation between the scriptural statements concerning the Levitical sacrifices, and those concerning the sacrifice of Christ? and what light does anything we know concerning the former throw upon the statements concerning the latter? These are questions presenting materials for much interesting discussion; and it is our duty to seek to possess *some* knowledge of the facts and arguments by which they are to be decided.

Secondly, another important class of passages consists of those which bear directly and immediately upon the true nature and the immediate object of Christ's death. There are some general considerations derived from Scripture, to which we have already had occasion to refer, which afford good ground for certain inferences upon this subject. If it was the death, in human nature, of One who was also a possessor of the divine nature, as Scripture plainly teaches, then it must possess a nature, character, and tendency altogether peculiar and extraordinary; and must be fitted, and have been intended, to effect results altogether beyond the range of what could have been accomplished by anything that is competent to any creature,—results directly related to infinity and eternity. If it was the death of One who had no sin of His own, who was perfectly innocent and holy, we are constrained to conclude that it must have been inflicted upon account of the sins of others, whose punishment He agreed to bear. A similar conclusion has been deduced from some of the actual features of Christ's sufferings as described in Scripture, especially from His agony in the garden, and His desertion upon the cross; circumstances which it is not easy to explain, if His sufferings were merely those of a martyr and an exemplar,—and which naturally suggest the propriety of ascribing to them a very different character and object, and are obviously fitted to lead us to conceive of Him as enduring the punishment of sin, inflicted by God, in the execution of the provisions of His holy law.

But the class of passages to which we now refer, are those which contain distinct and specific information as to the real nature, character, and immediate object of His sufferings and death; such as those which assure us that He suffered and died

for sin and for sinners; that He bore our sins, and took them away; that He was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities; that He suffered for sin, the just for the unjust; that He was made sin for us; that He was made a curse for us, etc. Such statements as these abound in Scripture; and the question is, What ideas are they fitted—and therefore, as we must believe, intended—to convey to us concerning the true nature and character of Christ's death, and its relation to, and bearing upon, our sin, and the forgiveness of it? Now, if we attend to these statements, and, instead of being satisfied with vague and indefinite conceptions of their import, seek to realize their meaning, and to understand distinctly what is their true sense and signification, we must be constrained to conclude that, if they have any meaning, they were intended to impress upon us the convictions—that our sin was the procuring cause of Christ's death, that which rendered His death necessary, and actually brought it about,—that He consented to occupy the place of sinners, and to bear the punishment which they had deserved and incurred,—that, in consequence, their guilt, in the sense of legal answerableness or liability to punishment (*reatus*), was transferred to, and laid on, Him; so that He suffered, in their room and stead, the punishment which they had deserved and incurred, and which, but for His enduring it, they must have suffered in their own persons. And as this is the natural and obvious meaning of the scriptural statements,—that which, as a matter of course, they would convey to any one who would attend to them, and seek to realize clearly and definitely the ideas which they are fitted to express,—so it is just the meaning which, after all the learning, ingenuity, and skill of adversaries have been exerted in obscuring and perverting them, comes out more palpably and certainly than before, as the result of the most searching critical investigation.

Suffering and dying for us means, according to the Socinians, merely suffering and dying on our account, for our good, with a view to our being benefited by it. It is true that Christ died for us in this sense; but this is not the whole of what the scriptural statements upon the subject are fitted to convey. It can be shown that they naturally and properly express the idea that He died in our room and stead, and thus constrain us to admit the conception of His substitution for us, or of His being put in our place, and being made answerable for us. The prepositions translated

for,—when persons, *we* or *sinner*s, are the objects of the relation indicated,—are *διὰ*, *ὑπέρ*, and *ἀντί*. Now, it is admitted that *διὰ* naturally and properly means, on our account, or for our benefit, and does not of itself suggest anything else. It is admitted, further, that *ὑπέρ* may mean, on our account, as well as in our room, though the latter is its more ordinary signification,—that which it most readily suggests,—and that which, in many cases, the connection shows to be the only one that is admissible. But it is contended that *ἀντί*, which is also employed for this purpose, means, and can mean only, in this connection, instead of, or in the room of, as denoting the substitution of one party in place of another. This does not warrant us in holding that, wherever *διὰ* and *ὑπέρ* are employed, they, too, must imply substitution of one for another, since it is also true that Christ died for our benefit, or on our account; but it does warrant us to assert that the ordinary meaning of *διὰ*, and the meaning which may sometimes be assigned to *ὑπέρ*,—namely, on account of,—does not bring out the whole of what the Scripture teaches with respect to the relation subsisting between the death of Christ and those for whose benefit it was intended.

The prepositions employed when sins, and not persons, are represented as the causes or objects of Christ's suffering or dying, are *διὰ*, *ὑπέρ*, and *περί*; and it is contended and proved, that, according to Scripture, what the proper ordinary meaning of dying for or on account of sin,—*διὰ*, *ὑπέρ*, *περί*, *ἁμαρτιαν*, or *ἁμαρτίας*,—is this,—that the sin spoken of was that which procured and merited the death, so that the death was a penal infliction on account of the sin which caused it, or for which it was endured.* Bearing or carrying sin, it can be proved, has, for its ordinary meaning in Scripture, being made, or becoming legally answerable for sin, and, in consequence, enduring its punishment. There are, indeed, some other words used in Scripture in regard to this matter, which are somewhat more indeterminate in their meaning, and cannot be proved of themselves to import more than the Socinian sense of bearing sin,—namely, taking it away, or generally removing it and its consequences, such as *nasa* in the Old Testament, and *αἴρω* in the New; but *sabal* in the Old Testament, and *φέρω* or

* The impulsive or meritorious and final cause. See Grotius, *De Satisfact.*, c. i.; Stillingfleet on Christ's Satisfaction.

ἀναφέρω in the New, have no such indefiniteness of meaning. They include, indeed, the idea of taking away or removing, which the Socinians regard as the whole of their import; but it can be proved that their proper meaning is to bear or carry, and thus by *bearing* or *carrying*, to remove or take away. As to the statements, that Christ was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities, that He was made sin and made a curse for us, and others of similar import, there is really nothing adduced, possessed even of plausibility, against their having the meaning which they naturally and properly convey,—namely, that our liability to punishment for sin was transferred to Him, and that He, in consequence, endured in our room and stead what we had deserved and incurred.

Thirdly, The third and last class of passages consists of those which describe the effects or results of Christ's death,—the consequences which have flowed from it to men in their relation to God, and to His law, which they had broken. These may be said to be, chiefly, so far as our present subject is concerned, reconciliation to God,—the expiation of sin,—and the redemption of sinners,—*καταλλαγή, ἰλασμός, λύτρωσις*. These are all ascribed in Scripture to the death of Christ; and there are two questions that naturally arise to be discussed in regard to them, though, in the very brief remarks we can make upon them, the two questions may be answered together: First, What do they mean? or what is the nature of the changes effected upon men's condition which they express? Secondly, What light is cast by the nature of these changes or effects, when once ascertained, upon the true character of the death of Christ,—and more especially upon the great question, whether or not it was endured in our room and stead, and thus made satisfaction for our sins?

Reconciliation naturally and ordinarily implies that two parties, who were formerly at variance and enmity with each other, have been brought into a state of harmony and friendship; and if this reconciliation between God and man was effected, as Scripture assures us it was, by the death of Christ, then the fair inference would seem to be, that His death had removed obstacles which previously stood in the way of the existence or the manifestation of friendship between them,—had made it, in some way or other, fully accordant with the principles, the interests, or the inclinations of both parties to return to a state of friendly intercourse. We

need not repeat, in order to guard against misconstruction, what was formerly explained,—in considering objections to the doctrine of the atonement founded on misrepresentations about the eternal and unchangeable love of God to men,—about the atonement being the consequence and not the cause of God's love, and about its introducing no feeling into the divine mind which did not exist there before. If this be true, as it certainly is, and if it be also true that the death of Christ is represented as propitiating God to men,—as turning away His wrath from them,—and as effecting their restoration to His favour,—then it follows plainly that it must have removed obstacles to the manifestation of His love, and opened up a channel for His actual bestowing upon them tokens of His kindness; and if these obstacles consisted in the necessity of exercising and manifesting His justice, and maintaining unimpaired the honour of His law, which men had broken, then the way or manner in which the death of Christ operated in effecting a reconciliation between God and man, *must have been* by its satisfying God's justice, and answering the demands of His law. Socinians, indeed, allege that it is not said in Scripture that God was reconciled to men by the death of Christ, but only that men were reconciled to God, or that God in this way reconciled men to Himself; and that the only way in which the death of Christ operated in effecting this reconciliation, was by its affording motives and encouragements to men to repent and turn to Him. It is admitted that it is not expressly said in Scripture that the death of Christ reconciled God to men; but then it is contended, and can be easily proved, that statements of equivalent import to this occur; and more especially, that it is in accordance with Scripture usage, in the application of the word *reconcile*, that those who are said to be reconciled, are represented, not as laying aside their enmity against the other party, but as aiming at and succeeding in getting Him to lay aside His righteous enmity against them; and this general use of the word, applied to the case under consideration, leaves the argument for a real atonement, deduced from the asserted effect of Christ's death upon the reconciliation of God and man untouched, in all its strength and cogency.

The next leading effect ascribed to the death of Christ is that it expiates sin, as expressed by the word *ἰλάσκειν*, and its derivatives. The statements in which these words occur, bring out somewhat more explicitly the effect of Christ's sufferings and