

Original Contributions.

The Vicarious Atonement.

In reply to our friend, Mr. Crawford, in his comments on my article on the "Vicarious Atonement," I need only say that he is the one (and not I,) who "fails to comprehend what is meant and commonly taught" by this doctrine. Like those who murdered the Lord of glory, I am sure it is advocated "through ignorance," for did they "comprehend it" they would not thus "charge God foolishly" with an act so unnatural, so unreasonable and so wicked.

I was well aware that it was perfect nonsense to talk about "punishing sin in the abstract;" but will our friend please tell me how much more nonsensical, not to say wicked and blasphemous is it to charge God with the infinite injustice of *substituting* a harmless and innocent person for punishment, and letting the guilty go free? If this is not punishing sin in the abstract, what is it? I deny that Christ ever suffered for the purpose of punishment, or that any benefits of such punishment could be transferred to the guilty, if he had.

He says, "man is the guilty party." That is true. He adds, "Not only this but *man* (not sin) [nor *law* either] is in a state of condemnation." This is also true. God and man are the only parties concerned in this matter, before Christ came. To talk about "punishing sin in the abstract," is almost as nonsensical as to talk about "healing a broken law," or substituting the innocent for the guilty for punishment.

He then adds, "The question now arises, how can man be pardoned, or redeemed from the curse of this righteous law?" This is very muddy. It is this loose and incoherent use of words that produces such confusion and darkness. He ought to know that civil or statutory law may provide for "pardon," but it can never forgive or remit sin; and that God never pardons, but that he alone can forgive, or remit sins. So under the civil dispensation of commanded law by Moses, we often find the word pardon, while in the New Testament this word is not found. To pardon means to remit the penalty of violated law. This God never does. But to forgive or to remit sins, is this, that when men are drawn back into union and

harmony with God, then God forgives, or "heals them." Now if he had asked "how can men turn to God and I [or God in Christ] should heal them?" or in other words, "how can men be reconciled, or be at-one-ment with God?" I answer, "I thank God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." Don't our friend know that the word "at-one-ment" in the Old Testament is the same word that is translated "reconciliation" in the New Testament, and *only* means reconciliation or at one ment, as in Rom. 5: 11, and in 2 Cor. 5: 19, 20.

I would ask our friend, if there is any way of being "redeemed from the curse of our sins" (or the penalty or results of our sins) except to "break off our sins," "turn to God" and for God to heal us? What would he think of the intelligence of a "doctor" who, after telling him that his sickness had been caused by a "violation of God's righteous law," and that before he could "heal him," he must be "redeemed from the curse of God's righteous law," "by declaring" that some innocent person "as a substitute" must step forward "to receive the penalty" of your deeds "in order to conserve the interests of good government?" Then the heathenish and unjust idea of asking or allowing an innocent person to act as a "substitute" in receiving the penalty of another man's sin! Does our friend not know, that the punishments of men, and of all civil laws, *are always arbitrary?* or according to the will or choice of the law maker; but that the punishments of God, are always the natural results of the sin, or transgression? That God never inflicts arbitrary punishment; but that the penalty is the result, and the result is the penalty of sin? Did he ever know of a man who fell in the fire, and the *burn and pain* was transferred to another? Or one who destroyed his eyes, and another took the penalty of blindness? Or of one who jumped into the river, and a substitute was drowned? Or one who ruined his health with opium or whisky, and a substitute took the penalty of weakness and disease? Why will "foolish men" "charge God foolishly," or with such nonsense?

Does he not know that in God's righteous government, "every one shall bear his own sin?" That "the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself; and that the wickedness of the wicked shall be

upon himself?" And though it is God's natural law that "the soul that sinneth, it shall die" (if it "be finished" as Jas. 1:15 says; or if it be "a sin unto death" as John says) yet God and reason both say, if it be "a sin which is not unto death," "if the wicked will turn from all his sins and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die." Ezk. 18:21. Is not this reasonable and just?

Can my friend tell me of any ignorant human government, civilized or savage, that would ever accept for punishment, a harmless and innocent person, as a "substitute" for a guilty one? Did he ever hear of a legislative body corrupt and gross enough to enact such a law? or a court wicked and venal enough to enforce it? or an officer hard hearted and unjust enough to execute such a law? I know he has not. But it remains for the "cruel friends" of our kind Father, to charge him with an act more harmful and "damaging to the cause of our Master," of common sense and of humanity, than the hardest sayings of Robert J. Ingersoll. But as I am sure that they have both "done it through ignorance" I can pray "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do." In the Scriptural doctrine of the reconciliation or at-one ment through Christ, as taught in the Gospel, I can clearly see and explain the most perfect wisdom and unbounded love of God. But in the dogma of the substitutional punishment of Christ for the sinner man, I can see nothing but the odious and repulsive features of infinite nonsense and infinite injustice.

I might have fully answered our friend, with this closing statement and inquiry. If one of his servants had sinned against his law and not wishing to punish him our friend should improvise a man of straw "as a substitute for punishment," and inflict upon that the penalty due to the guilty servant, "in order to conserve the interests of his good government," don't you think that he ought to be confined in a lunatic asylum? But if our friend "through his mercy, and love," should crucify on the gibbet, his obedient and loving son, as a substitute for the guilty servant; what else would he be but a cranky, wicked murderer? Just like "the wicked hands" and "murderers" of our dear Redeemer.

And instead of being *loved*, of how much sorer punishment think

you would our friend deserve, than that he had so foolishly, and unjustly inflicted on his harmless son?

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Salem, Or., Sept. 4, 1882.

"Ye Are Not Under Law, But Under Grace."

NUMBER IV.

Having shown that the children of God are not under a law of "carnal commandments," or of statutes, I now proceed to explain the *kind* of "law" that the godly man is under, and is governed by. The former, Paul designates as "the law of sin and death," while the latter he calls by antithesis, "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus." If the first consisted in "keeping commandments" and "in observing days and times and Sabbaths," the other certainly does not. The enquiry then arises, in what does it consist and what is the real nature of "the law of the Spirit." I am sure that the difference is just as great as "the circumcision of the flesh" is different from "the circumcision of Christ." Being governed by "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus," is evidently the same as being "under grace," and the same as being "led by the Spirit of God," or "to be spiritually minded," or to "have the spirit of Christ." For we are told that if we "are under grace," then "we are the children of God" and are "not under condemnation;" that "if we are led by the spirit of God," then "we are the sons of God," and "to be spiritually minded, is life and peace;" and if we have the spirit of Christ then we *are* his. As statutory and commanded law is "weak and beggerly" and "unable to make the comers thereto perfect," the enquiry arises, is there any kind of "law," or rule of action that *can* make a man perfect? Nothing but a perfect law can make a perfect man, and a perfect law will certainly make a perfect man.

James speaks of "the perfect law of liberty," and evidently refers to "the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus," referred to by Paul in Rom. 8: 2. But "liberty" is only a state or condition of freedom, and is not a law, or rule of action. Now there is but one perfect law, of moral and spiritual action, in all the universe of God, and that is the law of love. This law makes heaven, in the spiritual world, and would begin heaven on earth. It is one of the infinite attributes of God, for "God is love."